GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Contracts Signed for Design Services for Estate House #2 And National Cultural Arena

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The Government of the Virgin Islands has taken a significant step towards strengthening the Territory's cultural identity and modernising public infrastructure with the signing of contracts for the architectural and engineering design of the National Cultural Arena, and design services for Estate House #2 (Oleander House) formerly, the Chief Minister's residence.

The contracts were signed at a ceremony on 10th March hosted by the Recovery and Development Agency (RDA), marking the commencement of the design phase for two projects aimed at enhancing cultural infrastructure and supporting the revitalization of the Government estate.

Speaking at the ceremony, Acting Governor David D. Archer Jr. highlighted the importance of investing in physical infrastructure that reflects the Territory's growth and identity.

"Legacy is built through symbols, structures and systems," Acting Governor Archer said regarding Design Services for Estate House #2. "Today speaks to structures—ensuring that the quality of who we are as a people is reflected in the buildings we create. As we move closer to developing a residence for senior government officials that meets modern standards, we are not only reducing rental costs, but demonstrating that the Virgin Islands continues to grow and build legacy."

The design contract for Estate House #2, formerly known as the Chief Minister's House and located in the McNamara area of Road Town, will guide the redevelopment of the historic property into a modern and energy-efficient official residence for senior government officials.

Premier and Minister of Finance Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley described the project as an important step in revitalising the public estate.

"This initiative forms part of our wider effort to revitalise public estates in partnership with the office of the Deputy Governor.," the Premier said. "The restored facility will be used to ensure that all who work in service to the Territory have safe, functional, and dignified workspaces."

The Premier also confirmed that funding will be made available to advance construction once the design phase is completed and procurement processes are finalised.

The design services for Estate House #2 will be led by Lavina Liburd of TigerQI Architecture who expressed appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to a project with historical significance.

“This structure represents continuity,” Liburd said. “It is fitting that this site continues to serve the civil service by providing a safe, secure and technologically forward-looking, environmentally friendly and sustainable model home.”

The second contract signed during the ceremony supports the architectural and engineering design of the National Cultural Arena, which will be developed behind the Ralph T. O’Neal Administration Complex in Road Town.

The Premier of the Virgin Islands said, “This project is about more than infrastructure. It is about identity. It is about giving Virgin Islanders a dedicated and fit-for-purpose space to celebrate who we are - our music, our creativity, our traditions, and our shared story. Once realised, the national cultural arena will strengthen opportunities for cultural engagement and deepen our sense of national pride.”

The RDA Chief Executive Officer Mr. Anthony McMaster said the project represents a strategic investment in the cultural life of the Virgin Islands.

“The importance of us celebrating our culture, our arts, music, dance, drama and storytelling, food and drinks, celebrations and traditions and creating and maintaining spaces to display and become fully immersed in our culture cannot be overstated,” McMaster said. “The National Cultural Arena will provide a dedicated space for expressing Virgin Islands culture, supporting creative expression and providing an enhanced platform for performances, festivals, cultural and community events.”

The arena will include a performance stage, vendor spaces, concession areas, audience seating including VIP accommodations, restrooms and supporting amenities designed to accommodate a range of public events.

Design consultant Jose DeCastro of 3DE said the project represents a continuation of the Territory's vision for cultural advancement and represents the Baton-passing and transfer of Vision from past leaders to the present generation.

"This arena will allow our culture to be experienced year-round," DeCastro said. "It will provide a permanent stage where the talent of our people—our music, arts and creative expression—can be showcased for residents and visitors alike."

Junior Minister for Tourism and Culture Honourable Luce Hodge-Smith described the arena as a transformative step for the Territory's cultural landscape.

"As Junior Minister, I am particularly thrilled by the contract for the National Cultural Arena. For decades, our Emancipation Festival—the heartbeat of our history—has moved from location to location - from the softball field, to the A.O. Shirley Recreational Grounds, to its current site, always requiring temporary setups and presenting logistical hurdles. By establishing this arena as the permanent home for Emancipation Festival activities, we are giving our freedom celebrations a dignified and 'forever' home right here in District Four."

Once completed, the National Cultural Arena is expected to serve as the primary venue for cultural performances, festivals and community events, while strengthening the Virgin Islands' brand as a premier cultural and tourism destination.

Together, the two projects reflect the Government's broader commitment to modernising infrastructure, strengthening public institutions, and creating spaces that celebrate the identity and culture of the Virgin Islands.

Established in 2018, the RDA is a purpose-built specialist agency responsible for implementing priority recovery and development projects on behalf of the Government of the Virgin Islands. As the Agency transitions toward its expanded development-focused mandate, it continues to support initiatives that strengthen public infrastructure and promote sustainable national growth

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

Highlights from the 10 March, 2026 contract signing ceremony for Design Services for Estate House #2 and the National Cultural Arena.

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