

Ground Broken for New Charlotte Amalie High School as Officials Hail Recovery Milestone

At Thursday's ceremony, officials hailed the new Charlotte Amalie High School campus as a major hurricane recovery milestone, an opportunity to reshape how students learn, and part of a broader effort to rebuild critical infrastructure across the USVI.

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Officials, contractors and education leaders break ground Thursday on the new Charlotte Amalie High School campus, marking a major hurricane recovery milestone on St. Thomas. By. GOV'T HOUSE.

Thursday's groundbreaking ceremony for the new Charlotte Amalie High School campus marked a major step in St. Thomas's hurricane recovery, while also serving as a broader statement about

the territory's rebuilding effort, the future of public education, and the scale of the work still ahead.

Speakers described the project as both deeply personal and institutionally important, highlighting its meaning to the CAHS community, its role in the Office of Disaster Recovery's bundled school reconstruction effort, and its promise to create a campus designed for modern teaching and learning. At the same time, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. used the moment to place the new school within the larger story of the territory's development and to caution residents that major progress will come with real strain.

"Charlotte Amalie High School is more than just a campus. It is an institution woven into the fabric of this community," noted James Benton, partner in the Consigli-Benton joint venture responsible for construction.

The work slated for the oldest high school on St. Thomas was close to his heart and that of the team, Mr. Benton said, noting his familial history as educators and the numerous members of staff who either attended CAHS themselves or had children enrolled at the school.

"This, to us, is not another project on a schedule," he declared. "Our team is committed to delivering this project with the quality and care it deserves."

"This is our first attempt at bundling projects," Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne Williams-Octalien noted, referencing the twin projects of CAHS and the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School.

Because time is always a key consideration for the Office of Disaster Recovery, the project was given the green light even before funds were fully obligated, she disclosed. "We wanted to make sure that we get things started," she said.

With over 38 projects across the territory's recovery bundles, Ms. Williams-Octalien acknowledged the task ahead.

"It's Herculean in nature," she admitted. "It's testing the capacity of everyone – all of our systems, all of our processes...all of our capacity here in the territory."

"But it's working," she ventured.

Education Commissioner Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington said she was excited about what a new campus could mean for education at CAHS.

"It is about creating spaces where we don't just talk the talk, but we actually create spaces for collaborative learning, where walls can be removed and areas opened up for co-teaching – things that as educators we know we should be doing, but the facilities don't necessarily accommodate," she outlined.

"The new CAHS, the home of the mighty Hawks, will not just replace what was lost, it will redefine what is possible," Dr. Wells-Hedrington declared.

With the new dawn of CAHS stretching ahead of him, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. reflected on the school's storied past — from the groundbreaking on the current structure more than seven decades ago, to the young Albert Bryan who sat in the auditorium almost 50 years earlier "excited to go to ninth grade for the first time," and the many engineers, lawyers, doctors and other professionals

who graduated from its halls in the years that followed.

He noted with pride the many modern features in the new design, saying they are intended to serve generations of new learners.

Governor Bryan also placed the new school in the broader context of the territory's development, recalling the massive undertaking to build the St. Thomas airport during the administrations of Governors Cyril King and Juan Luis.

"We do incredible things every day," he said, noting that the island was preparing for another major airport upgrade.

While celebrating the progress represented by these major infrastructure projects, Governor Bryan also appealed for patience.

"The pains of progress are going to be real too – inflation, overcrowding, lack of resources, strained economies, it's all going to come," he cautioned, arguing that success will depend on the entire territory pulling together.

"We're going to get there; you, I, together," he concluded.