

St. Croix **Real Estate**
reviews

Featuring real estate market updates and local news of St. Croix, USVI

MAY 2009

TAXES DUE JULY 1

All Virgin Islands 2006 property taxes are due July 1 of this year, under a recent executive order issued by Governor John deJongh Jr.

Unpaid property taxes will be declared delinquent if they're not paid by July 31, 2009, resulting in penalties and interest. Property tax owners who wish to contest their 2006 bills have until August 14 to file an appeal.

In theory, 2006 property taxes were due in 2007, but the government has been mired in a U.S. District Court case brought by a group of St. Thomas business owners who claim the government unfairly taxes businesses in a different way than residential properties.

A decision in the case eventually resulted in a court-ordered property revaluation, but residents continued to pay property taxes based on their 1998 assessed values. The government hasn't sent out any property tax bills since those issued for 2005.

Acting Tax Assessor Bernadette Williams said the 2006 bills are based on property values determined under the District Court revaluation.

The 2006 bills initially went out starting in August 2008, but former Tax Assessor Roy Martin said in November 2008 that residents should ignore the due date because of ongoing court issues.

As for the 2007 property tax bills, which in theory were due out in June 2008, Williams said, "They're being processed. We're hoping to have them out by August." The 2008 bills will be issued sometime next year.



Dear Friends and Neighbours,



Lorine Williams

Our 2006 real estate taxes are now due. Yes, the Governor has issued the order that the 2006 real estate taxes are due by July 1, 2009. The absolute deadline in July 31, 2009 to avoid any penalties. No new bills will be issued, so if you tossed your bill in the circular file thinking you'd get a new one, call the Assessor's Office to get your amount due. Their numbers are 340-773-6459 then press 1 and press 1 again to get to the Christiansted's Tax Assessors office or call 340-772-3115 for the Frederiksted office. If you have your bill, remember to pay IN PERSON and get your bill stamped paid. That will serve as your "sacred" record of your paid receipt. It is your responsibility to maintain your records in the event you need to prove that you have paid your taxes. This is very important when you go to sell your home or obtain a building permit. You must be able to show that your real estate taxes have been paid.

Another option if you are off island is to pay via credit card. Call into the Christiansted Assessor's office and talk to the Cashier and she will process your payment. You will then have your credit card receipt and the Assessor's office stated they would also mail you a paid receipt.

As I've previously offered, I will hand carry your check along with the bill to pay these for you in person. Mail me your check and the bill and I'll take care of it for you. That will insure that they are paid in a timely manner and you will have a paid receipt that I will then mail back to you. I am happy to offer this as a personalized service for you. (I'm doing my civic duty as the government needs money. ☀)

Tell your friends and neighbors about the Tourism Department's Summer Sizzlin' Sample package. Gather a group of friends and treat yourself to a great vacation. The special offers great deals on a combination of air flights and local hotels. The fourth night will be free, plus two \$50.00 coupons. Log on to www.usvitourism.vi.

According to our statistics, I feel we are turning the corner on the STX housing market. Last year only 79 houses sold from June 2008 to June 2009. Already just in the last quarter, 29 homes have gone "under contract". If we continue at that rate, that's an impressive improvement.

Enjoy your summer.

Lorine

Lorine R. Williams, GRI, CRS
2006 REALTOR of the YEAR

THE CAPTAIN LANDED



It was a bright day for St. Croix and the entire U.S. Virgin Islands when ground was broken for the new Diageo distillery earlier this month.

Construction of the facility will create jobs on the island and produce Captain Morgan rum for sale in the United States.

The plant is to begin production in 2010 and continue to produce for 30 years, eventually bringing in more than \$100 million a year in new revenue to the government of the Virgin Islands.

The festivities drew some 200 people to the St. Croix Renaissance Industrial Park, where the plant will be built. Guests included Governor John deJongh Jr., Lieutenant Governor Gregory Francis, key executives with Diageo, several Virgin Island senators, and plenty of other friends and supporters of the project.

The traditional "turning of the first shovel" was given a burst of life by the presence of Captain Morgan himself. The captain is the symbol of Captain Morgan's Spiced Rum, one of the most well known of Diageo's many brands and the main product to be produced on St. Croix. The Captain called on the assembled dignitaries to drop a little of their dignity and "rock the pose," emulating the image of Captain Morgan, one leg up on an imaginary treasure chest, one hand on the raised knee and the other on the hip.

Before the afternoon ceremony, Diageo invited several hundred local contractors, vendors and service providers to a conference focusing on opportunities to support construction and operation of the facility.

FEATURE HOME OF THE MONTH



Call Lorine Williams at
340-690-9628 or
email: lorine@lorinewilliams.com

202 SUGAR BEACH

Very Tropical, Immaculate two-bedroom condo on the Beach. Enjoy the balmy breezes day and night, the twinkling lights of historic Christiansted and all resort amenities, pool, tennis, snorkeling.

MLS: 09-787 Price: \$320,000



ROBIN BAY GETS GREEN LIGHT

After 10 years on the drawing board, the Seven Hills Beach Resort and Casino development is one step closer to becoming a reality. It was unanimously approved by the Coastal Zone Management Commission on May 21, receiving a major coastal zone permit for the construction of the planned \$1.2 billion resort and casino on the south-east shore of St. Croix.

"I am elated by the outcome," said Curtis Robinson, one of the founding members of Robin Bay Realty, LLC. "I want to put people to work."

The plan is to construct an 870-room resort, along with 746 residential condos, villas, single-family homes and 56 timeshare villas, on 600 acres near Estate Robin Bay. The site plan also includes an 18-hole golf course, a three-acre water park, meeting and banquet rooms, retail shops, spa, plant nursery, swimming pools, golf clubhouse, restaurants and a casino. The development is to be built in four phases over a 10-12 year time frame.

The developers expect the resort to create several hundred construction jobs and approximately 1,000 permanent jobs after completion. They estimate that tax revenue to the Virgin Islands Government will exceed \$129 million during construction alone.

The project still must secure a SWPPP (storm water pollution prevention plan) permit, building permits and an Army Corp of Engineers permit. It also must obtain submerged lands approval from the VI Legislature. The developers hope to begin construction this fall.

ENDURANCE!

A Shavertown, PA. native, Tim O'Donnell, won the 21st Annual St. Croix Half-Ironman Triathlon, finishing with a course record 4:02:36.

"It's unbelievable -- this is my first professional win," O'Donnell said. "This is definitely the hardest course on the circuit with the hills, wind, heat and humidity -- but it's awesome. The back half of the bike race is really tough with winds."

When asked about taming "the Beast" at the 20-mile mark of the bike race -- a 600-foot climb on a stretch of roadway 0.7 of a mile long with an average grade of 21 percent -- he said it is all about damage control, adding "you don't want to blow out your legs." O'Donnell went on to say he felt confident in the run after a lot of practice over the winter, and the swimming conditions were good.

The second-place winner at 4:03:38 was Igor Amorelli of Brazil, while Richie Cunningham of Australia came in third at 4:05:45.

In the women's division, Catriana Morrison of Scotland came in first with a time of 4:32:38; Defending champion, Mirinda Carfrae, came in second and Caitlin Snow came in third.



HELPING HANDS

The private and public sectors of the community are answering the cry for help from the Boys & Girls Club to help it enrich lives of children on St. Croix.

Recently, the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce and the St. Croix Hotel and Tourism Association filled the need for transportation with the donation of two vans. Funding for the vans was through the Holiday Hope Benefit fundraiser which raised \$60,000 in 2007 and 2008 through silent auctions, live auctions and donations.

The Frederiksted club building is getting fresh coats of paint by six boys from the Department of Human Services Youth Rehabilitation Center. Spartan Concrete donated materials and labor for a new sidewalk. GEC Contractors have donated all electrical work. Frederiksted Community Boating is considering sponsoring a two-week sailing program for 14 children with funding from the Law Enforcement Planning Commission.



STIMULUS FOR HOME BUYERS

The credit for first-time homebuyers has increased. Historically it was \$7,500 and had to be repaid over 15 years. Today, it is \$8,000 and doesn't have to be repaid if borrowers own their house for at least three years. The elimination of the repayment feature is retroactive to the start of this year, but doesn't apply to transactions in 2008.

The higher tax credit, as well as the restoration of last year's high-cost conforming and FHA loan limits of \$729,750, could result in hundreds of thousands of new buyers and move-up buyers coming into the market during 2009.

Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., the original sponsor of the tax credit and author of a Senate provision that would have increased it to \$15,000, told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution in February that he hasn't ruled out additional changes—including making it available to all home buyers.

But these two aspects of the stimulus are just the tip of the iceberg for real estate. The new law includes tens of billions of dollars in other assistance through a variety of programs that impact real estate, such as commercial real estate tax credits and grants for low-income rental housing.

More information is available at http://www.realtor.org/home_buyers_and_sellers/2009_first_time_home_buyer_tax_credit.html. Questions? Contact the government affairs staff at 1.800.874.6500. Tax forms may be accessed online at www.irs.gov.

ST. CROIX REAL ESTATE MARKET WATCH

CLOSED SALES COMPARISON - 04/30/07-04/30/08 VERSUS 04/30/08-04/30/09

	2007-2008 SOLD	AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET	AVERAGE PRICE	2008-2009 SOLD	AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET	AVERAGE PRICE
Home Sales*	160	286	431,058	108	240	506,556
Condo Sales*	92	184	251,830	63	241	237,296
Land under \$39,999	86	314	28,744	73	214	28,819
Land over \$40,000	155	301	160,053	125	290	223,039
Commercial properties*	24	422	665,500	11	287	1,166,636

Information from the St. Croix Multiple Listing Service

*The average sales price could be skewed greatly by only one sale because of the small number of annual sales.