

Coral Bay Preliminary Vision Statement - Draft 1
Circulation Draft for discussion and modification
January 10, 2005

Background and Purpose:

Area Definition: Coral Bay as a community includes all of Coral Bay Quarter and East End Quarter on St. John.

Vision sessions: Beginning in April 2004 and continuing through October, vision sessions were held with small groups of residents representing a cross section of people in Coral Bay to gain their input on three questions vital to the future of Coral Bay and creating a vision and framework for citizen-based planning, in cooperation with the V. I. government.

Purpose: This is a first report based on those discussions and includes some background statistics. The next step is active discussion of this draft - encouraging residents to comment on it, make improvements, and work toward achieving a written draft of a Vision for Coral Bay that has community consensus for final approval and adoption.

The Vision Statement will be used as a guiding document in land use and infrastructure planning for Coral Bay. (Details in Appendix.)

ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

When the vision group participants were asked to comment on **“What do you like most about living in Coral Bay?”**:

The most frequent (and always among the first) attribute mentioned is “Quiet” - meaning both in noise and style. Also “less people”, “country”, “not too crowded”. Outdoor living, lots of green space, access and closeness of water, appreciation of nature and beautiful views are key elements in Coral Bay residents’ feelings about what they like about living in Coral Bay.

Another aspect that broadly appeals to the people of Coral Bay is the contrast it represents to other popular lifestyles. We who choose to live in Coral Bay (whether for generations, or a few years) are glad “it’s not St. Thomas”, “not Cruz Bay”, and “not like the states”. We vehemently don’t want Coral Bay to follow these development paths in the future.

The newcomers mention “the diversity in population” and “respect for local culture and nature” as positive factors. The people who are born here, watching the change around us, “want to feel we still belong here”, that our “culture is respected” and that we can retain our nature-based life style, openly walking the countryside and beaches, and eating from fruit trees..., with unrestricted water access to boats and fishing. As a small example, retaining place names is preferred, rather than choosing new names for subdivisions.

All mention the closeness of the community, “taking care of each other” and family as very important aspects of living in Coral Bay. We have a series of tight knit family-style communities.

Residents adapt themselves to living here, rather than newcomers insisting that all the big house stateside comforts be brought here. Living here will always be different from living elsewhere - the price of food and other neighborhood services will always be higher. We will always be distant from some important services, and have the expense in time and money to get them. This affects the choice to live here. There are tradeoffs that need to be recognized and accepted for the future.

We live outdoors - want to be able to continue to do this, safe from crime, congestion, and man-made noise.

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT:

When asked “**What do you think Coral Bay might look like in 10 years if development continues at the current pace or even increases**”, people responded by envisioning both negative and positive aspects of development.

People see that the current and likely future pace of development is leading to very negative environmental consequences: erosion, runoff, permanent scarring of hillsides and more.

While development is likely to bring more services, conveniences and jobs, without careful advance planning by the community and government and private investors, it has the potential to turn Coral Bay into a congested mess, with stresses on infrastructure. There should be a plan for Coral Bay’s future. Public services and recreation areas, parking, water access, sidewalks and roads should be planned and funded first, before allowing large scale developments requiring rezoning to take place.

We must protect the ocean from the consequences of poor development: sediment runoff from steep slopes, nutrient additions from septic tanks, and shoreside sewage systems, and fertilizers.

Today, construction equipment sporadically shatters the quiet. If certain kinds of development, such as marine development: barge, marina, fuel dock, cruise ships happen, the engine and loudspeaker noises of the vessels could sweep up the hills permanently destroying the quiet - as they do in Red Hook and Charlotte Amalie.

We fear unplanned, congested development. We don’t want to be St. Thomas or Cruz Bay. Plan ahead for adequate parking, keeping the shoreline and views open. (We may wish we had a local K Mart, but by the fact we live here, we wish MORE for quiet, less traffic, and country living. There are choices and tradeoffs that we make.)

There is a fear of not belonging anymore. Concern is widely held about the influx of stateside values in development and construction - big houses, air conditioning. (These are common

sentiments in any small rural community overtaken by newcomers and development. Even the older newcomers feel it strongly.) We need to create institutions that span old timers and newcomers and create common goals for the future. CBCC, churches, and government need a vision that represents values of old timers and that is stated in such a way that potential newcomers who read it will know whether they will fit into the community.

A PLANNED FUTURE

“What do you want Coral Bay to look like in the future?” After considering the first two questions, participants moved on to our aspirations for Coral Bay.

We need a plan to deal with parking and business needs, yet preserve environmental quality.

We need to evaluate and reduce the negative impacts of all kinds of sewage treatment here, on the fragile environment in the Bay. This includes hillside, shoreline and boat sewage.

We need to plan areas for commercial and residential development, placement and funding of infrastructure, public parks and recreation, public access to the water, and protection of the environment. The government, community and landowners and developers need to work together on this -- or we will end up with Cruz Bay or St. Thomas here.

We would like a post office, bank, more groceries, and other conveniences.

Development should provide additional conveniences and infrastructure, but not at the expense of other values.

Retain Views - rural feeling, nature and outdoor access.

Protect the Mangroves, subtle beauty of the whole Coral Bay area, and its productive natural fish nursery areas.

Plan the infrastructure, especially the roads (and storm drainage) BEFORE development happens.

We are “laid back”, “live and let live” people. Unity is in Respect for the individual and nature. As more people arrive, some take personal advantage of this attitude and the environment. They can ruin the landscape, make money -- and leave. We who live here are stuck with the results of their botched projects. How do we educate people and encourage them to voluntarily do things that help sustain the environment and our future? What should government do? What rules and what enforcement are necessary?

Though tourism is acknowledged as the base of the economy in the USVI, the current tourism uses of Coral Bay -- and projected future uses -- as rental villas, and a “lunch stop” are regarded as preferred “unseen tourism”. Most people want to see tourism remain at this level, and not

reach a level that interferes with the quiet Coral Bay life style and ambiance. If there are hotels, they should be small and “unnoticeable” in design.

Tourism should not be the “overwhelming sort” - where cruise ships unload tour taxis full of people, creating noise and congestion.

We need more attention on locally available education, affordable housing, a home for the elderly, recreation facilities. Police, fire, ambulance, public transportation, health and other services should be available.

We need appropriate attention to rules, regulations and enforcement to reduce negative impacts of construction.

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Please send your ideas and comments to CBCC, and participate in meetings. We also invite you to become a Member.

Appendix

POSSIBLE PLANNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Affirm the quiet and safe essence of everyday living in Coral Bay
2. Insure the best possible quality of land and water use - Recognize tradeoffs and priorities and responsibilities.
3. Preserve and protect the local culture and history.
4. Identify and support economic growth and development that is consistent with the vision.
5. Plan and find ways to fund infrastructure prior to and in concert with development.
6. Create active community involvement and participation in all government and development planning and activities in Coral Bay.

DETAILED PURPOSES:

The Vision Statement will be:

- 1) A tool for expressing what our community is based on, and our vision of the future,
- 2) A guide to working in conjunction with the VI government to develop and engage in genuine community-based land use plan that includes conservation and infrastructure planning for Coral Bay, including an Area of Particular Concern plan.
- 3) A first step in getting grant moneys for CBCC and the government – to conduct detailed planning.
- 4) A focus for public and private investment efforts in order to achieve and maintain the vision.

The groups did not discuss the appropriate land areas for specific development or conservation or public use. This should be a principal task of the next planning stage.

CENSUS STATISTICS: The first printing included census statistics that we discovered on January 15th only covered part of the geography of Coral Bay. Therefore, we have removed the data. As of mid- February, revised census information will be available in the CBCC office, and perhaps on the website.