

# St. Croix Real Estate *reviews*

Featuring Real Estate Market Updates and  
Local News of St. Croix, USVI

NOVEMBER 2011

## Sustainable Farming in the Rainforest

While “sustainability” has become the latest hot topic worldwide, St. Croix is home to an actual working sustainable farm that offers classes, organic slow food dinners, eco-hikes and literally tons of tomatoes--not to mention salad greens, mixed herbs, passion fruit, pomegranate, avocados, pineapples, root crops, corn and chicken eggs. It's called the Virgin Islands Sustainable Farm Institute, and it's on the Ridge to Reef Farm.

Formerly known as the Creque Dam Farm, the Ridge to Reef Farm is located on 200 acres of rolling hills on the island's west end. The Virgin Islands



*Local tropical fruits.*

Sustainable Farm Institute was founded there in 2003 by a young Georgia gentleman named Ben Jones. These days, Mr. Jones has turned his focus to the healing arts and Nate Olive runs the farm. “It's really owned by everybody,” he says, modestly. “We're more of a shared atmosphere here. Call me the director.” The only USDA certified organic farm in the USVI, the Ridge to Reef Farm has a mission. Nate Olive, who enjoys teaching people to grow things, says, “Our goal is to make an impact on the island for more sustainable agriculture.” There's a philosophy behind his hands-on approach. “I'd rather teach a man to fish than give him a fish,” he says.

You don't have to have a green thumb, however, to indulge in the bi-monthly slow down dinners at the farm. Featuring fresh organic produce and local lamb, Senepol beef or fresh fish, an island chef prepares and presents an amazing meal in five beautiful courses. It's on the veranda and there's no need to rush.

## Message from Amy...

Whoever said October was quiet on St. Croix? The sounds of German beer drinking songs along with the notes of Oom-Pa-Pa and the taste of Bavarian brew were prevalent. St. Croix has a gregarious contingent of German residents who are delighted to sport lederhosen, break out the tubas, and dance the night away on occasions like Oktoberfest. The Agricultural Fairgrounds and Cheeseburgers in America's Paradise were both venues for celebration; Spaten Beer was on tap and proceeds went to the St. Croix Animal Shelter. We wound up the month with the ever-anticipated annual VICARE Halloween Party held at The Palms at Pelican Cove. People plan their costumes months in advance, some bringing them in from their travels. Others are handy with a sewing machine. A “Spanish Dancer” brought authentic fabric and trim from Madrid. Everyone turned out in extravagant disguise and had a ball for the benefit of VICARE.

Here comes season! The Landmarks Society's Candlelight Concert Series is back on the docket at Whim Greathouse, beginning on November 11th. The Golden Hook Wahoo Tournament is set for the weekend of the 12th and 13th with big prizes for boats bringing in the most weight in wahoo. Art Walk resumes its festive Christiansted gallery openings on November 17th and will continue every third Thursday through June 2012. You can catch Sunset Jazz the following night in Frederiksted.

And then, of course, there's Thanksgiving, when we all gather in appreciation of our bounty here on this beautiful island. On St. Croix, friends become family on holidays, and I cannot imagine anyone being left to his own devices. People here have big hearts and open arms. Jump Up follows on the heels of Thanksgiving; folks hit the streets of Christiansted for an evening of high times with Caribbean music on every corner and Mocko Jumbies parading about like Pied Pipers. Shops and restaurants, decorated for Christmas, offer specials while vendors hawk their local foods and famous holiday Coquito.

Let the season begin!



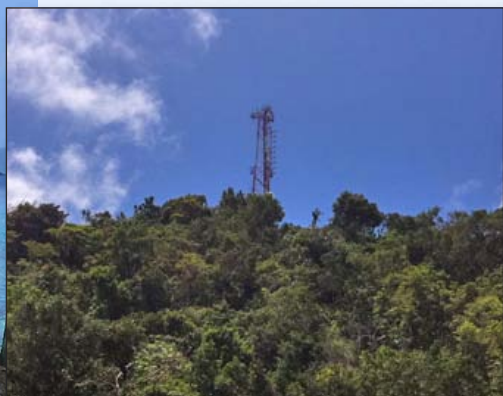
*Amy Land-de Wilde*

Amy  
Amy Land-de Wilde, Broker/Owner  
Coldwell Banker Land-de Wilde Realty

## New Cell Towers May Be on the Rise

What was meant to be a six-month moratorium on cell tower construction in the territory has lasted nearly three years. But that's about to change.

Governor John deJongh, Jr. has approved most of a bill that would end the moratorium, establish new application and public hearing procedures, and allow the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) regulatory powers over tower construction. The bill further requires DPNR to rule on tower applications within 150 days if a hearing is necessary or within 90 days otherwise. The Governor did, however, deny a provision of the



*The cell tower at the top of Bordeaux Mountain on St. John.*

bill requiring tower owners to grant the government complimentary use of tower space. Calling it unconstitutional, deJongh would not sign-off on government use of

private property without compensation.

Concern over the potential for a preponderance of unregulated cell towers and conjecture about liability issues prompted the moratorium back in December, 2008. Now that these concerns have been addressed and the Governor has approved much of the bill, cell tower construction should make a comeback.

## Broadband Initiative Back in Action

In mid October, the territory regained access to four federal grants awarded the USVI for its broadband initiative in September of 2010 but frozen last August.

After an administrative audit and site visit in June, the V.I. Next Generation Network (viNGN) was found remiss in certain obligations, primarily in regard to organizational structure, internal financial controls, timelines, and plans for vendors. In August, the federal government ordered a "stop-work" on the project and blocked access to the grants (amounting to nearly \$70 million dollars) until a satisfactory corrective action plan had been established.

viNGN immediately set about addressing the issues, forming a team dedicated to developing a corrective action plan. viNGN created the Business Operations Committee to oversee and implement the plan and elected board member Alfred Boschulte as head. The committee also worked with advisors from the U.S. Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the agency administering the grants.

On October 3rd, the V.I. submitted its plan. A letter of approval arrived October 17th, and, with that, the broadband initiative was back in business.

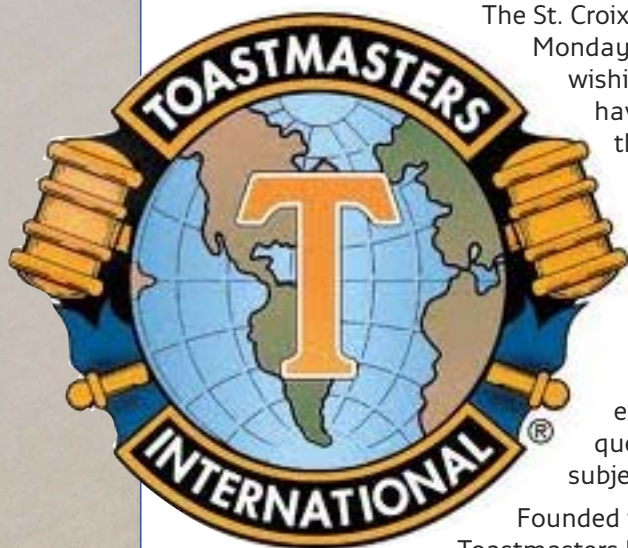
"I was always confident that our team would draft a plan to address our initial setbacks [and] meet all requirements necessary to resume the work these four grants were intended to fund," said Governor John deJongh, Jr.



*Governor John deJongh, Jr.*

## Here-Here, Toastmaster!

As the season of toast-making approaches, members of the St. Croix Toastmasters Club 933 hone their public speaking skills and put a little polish on the art of spontaneous conversation. Even more basic than that, they endeavor to overcome deep-seated anxieties regarding public speaking. It's an ongoing sort of thing.



The St. Croix Toastmasters Club 933, which meets every first and third Monday evening at the Governor Juan Luis Hospital, welcomes anyone wishing to improve communication skills. Typically, members who have volunteered at a previous meeting will present a speech for their peers to evaluate in this casual setting. Speakers avail themselves of a Toastmasters International Competent Communication manual, which offers a guide for topics and various kinds of speeches appropriate for all levels of oratory. Friendly feedback is forthcoming and by the book. Watch out for audible pauses like *ah, er, um, well, and, you know.*

Another aspect of the club, called Table Topics, focuses on listening skills and developing the ability to speak extemporaneously. Members are given a topic or asked a question and then must deliver a short impromptu talk on the subject.

Founded in 1924 by Ralph C. Smedley at a Santa Ana, California YMCA, Toastmasters has become a worldwide non-profit organization. The St. Croix Toastmasters Club 933 has been active for 28 years.

# Feature Property of the Month



## Carambola Villa - #25 Sweet Lime II

None other like it, this beautiful courtyard villa in Carambola is professionally renovated with an upscale, relaxed island living style. The living room with its grand two-story ceiling and mahogany windows adjoins the gorgeous new kitchen with an additional entertaining kitchen as well. Guaranteed luxury and comfort living with 3 spacious bedrooms and 3 grand baths. The 670 sq.ft. covered terrace is perfect for relaxing both day and night. Caribbean breezes caress, tropical landscaping delights, all set on a Robert Trent Jones Championship golf course, delightful swimming pool just steps away. MLS #10-2096. Newly reduced to **\$479,000**

## ISLAND PROPERTIES

### 47 Estate St. George

Beautiful newly renovated 3-bedroom house with panoramic views. Granite



kitchen, new bathrooms and floors. \$449,000. MLS # 11-1239



### North Shore Lot

Above Cane Bay beach. \$55,000. MLS# 10-558



## November's DEAL OF THE MONTH

Arguably, the **Buy of the Year**. 11 acres with a 1-bedroom cottage and terrific historic ruins including a 1797 wind mill, a chimney, remains of the overseer's house, plus many partial buildings and walls of the era. Estate Orange Grove was an identifiable estate in 1758. The parcel is 4 separate lots, all with no covenants and restrictions. This property has many possibilities and no match in the V.I.

MLS # 08-1660 **\$350,000**

### Reef Villa

Gorgeous, completely renovated 2-bedroom. \$326,000. #11-1788



## ST. CROIX REAL ESTATE MARKET WATCH

**CLOSED SALES COMPARISON : 10/31/09 - 10/31/10 VERSUS 10/31/10 - 10/31/11**

|                     | 2009-2010 SOLD | AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET | AVERAGE SOLD PRICE | 2010-2011 SOLD | AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET | AVERAGE SOLD PRICE |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Home Sales          | 121            | 302                    | \$427,648          | 90             | 297                    | \$472,748          |
| Condo Sales         | 49             | 301                    | \$208,522          | 63             | 290                    | \$210,742          |
| Land under \$39,900 | 29             | 252                    | \$30,352           | 30             | 310                    | \$28,117           |
| Land over \$40,000  | 59             | 280                    | \$102,907          | 51             | 303                    | \$87,475           |
| Commercial          | 7              | 144                    | \$334,286          | 8              | 504                    | \$577,375          |

Information from the St. Croix Multiple Listing Service

\* The average sales price and the average days on market could be skewed greatly by only one sale or because of the small number of annual sales.