

Village on the Rise

Contributed by Administrator

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In the late afternoon, as the sun sets in the distance over BVI. Dinghies and small fishing boats make their way into the neighbourhood home landing. Fishermen young and old line up to weigh their day's catch, as passers by bid for their evening dinner. The mood is joyful and emits a sense of appreciation for all of life's simple pleasures and rewards. This is Carrot Bay, and the scene today carries a striking resemblance to the bustling village town as it is remembered by its elders.

Today, however, the topic of change is hot in the air. The question of whether the traditional village can maintain its old school charm while facing a predicted population growth and increased foot traffic has the community and its leaders considering plans to bring widespread change to its infrastructure and design. Since 2010, developers and community members have been meeting to discuss proposed plans that could bring a dock to local fishermen, a multi-purpose centre containing a combined fish and agricultural market, a local heritage centre and an off-shoot of the Maritime Museum from the H Lavity Stoutt Community College. Plans to widen the narrow roads are also on the books, and could include further reclamation of land off Carrot Bay's coastline. A Carrot bay Community Development Plan 2010-2020, which was made public to the community for one month, currently sits at the office of Town and Country Planning before it is expected to reach legislators for final approval.

Along with a goal to meet sustainability with growth, the plan also points to "pressures" for immediate improvement, including:

- Pressure for subdivision and development approvals on unstable, environmentally-sensitive land
- Severe erosion of hillsides and ghuts which badly affects the village
- Prolonged damage by ground seas to existing coast protection and the seawall
- Inappropriate development in potentially difficult locations
- Lack of any formal guidance on future development opportunities

Louis Potter and Associates were officially asked to undertake the work, in conjunction with Town and Country Planning, and jointly embarked on the project's planning in July 2010. According to Development Planning Statistics, Carrot Bay currently has about 252 "dwellings" and 25 other buildings, and a population of roughly 700. The development committee suggests that that number could increase exponentially over the next 10 years, increasing the human footprint on the community to an alarming rate.

The plan suggests a range of proposals, including one that would reclaim a wide area of land across the village's 480-foot coastline; a "coastal defense" plan that would reposition the coastline and seawall; an agricultural regeneration plan to reestablish that industry in the village; a village conservation plan; and also one that would promote ecotourism in the traditional village. As the proposal currently sits with Town and Country planning, it's unclear what the future holds for Carrot Bay. However, Frank Mahoney, president of the Carrot Bay Community Council, said he remains optimistic about plans for the village's future.

"What we're doing is taking a responsible approach to how we develop in the long term, especially with how we build and precautions we need to take," he said about sprawl that could move further up into the hillside. "We didn't just look at today, but we're looking at what Carrot Bay will look like in five years, fifteen years, fifty years from now and what changes we'll face."

The Carrot Bay resident spoke of "positive impact" plans will be aimed at growth that promotes the community's history and heritage.

When other community members were asked about the proposal, some shared Mr Mahoney's enthusiasm, while others questioned its feasibility. Leroy Donovan, a 75-year resident of the community, hadn't had a chance to mull over the proposal, but agreed that some changes need to be made for the betterment of the community.

"I want to see them widen that waterfront, especially where there's shallow water and [the reefs] are all dead," he said, stressing the importance of widening the roads. The longtime resident shared the view of others asked about the community's growth, reiterating that growth should be embraced but approached cautiously. "Quiet is good, but we need those tourists around," he said as we sat next to a quiet roadside table where he sold an assortment of local fruits. "In Carrot Bay, we have our unity in our old strength—and we should live and grow that way."