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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR CELEBRATES CHARLOTTE AMALIE'S DESIGNATION AS AN AMERICAN WORLD WAR II HERITAGE CITY

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), and the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is pleased to celebrate the designation of Charlotte Amalie as an **AMERICAN WORLD WAR II HERITAGE CITY** by the National Park Service's American World War II Heritage City Program.

The National Park Service announced the designation on October 16, 2026, recognizing Charlotte Amalie among 10 jurisdictions selected nationwide this year. The congressionally authorized program recognizes communities for their contributions to the nation's World War II home front and their continuing commitment to preserving and interpreting that history.

"This designation is an extraordinary honor for Charlotte Amalie and for the entire Virgin Islands," said Commissioner Oriol. "It recognizes not only the vital role our islands and our people played during a defining moment in world history, but also our responsibility today to safeguard the places and stories that connect future generations to that service and sacrifice."

Commissioner Oriol continued, "Historic preservation allows us to tell our own story and to ensure that the contributions of Virgin Islanders are not overlooked in the broader American narrative. The Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office (VISHPO), together with our community partners, has worked to document and protect that legacy. This national recognition reinforces why that work matters."

The designation highlights Charlotte Amalie's contributions during World War II and the community's continuing preservation of its wartime heritage. According to the National Park Service, the Heritage City program recognizes communities whose contributions to the nation's World War II home front helped secure Allied victory, as well as their continued efforts to preserve that history for future generations.

For the VISHPO, the honor represents an important national acknowledgment of the Territory's historic resources and the people whose experiences give those resources meaning.

“This designation ensures that the history of Virgin Islanders during World War II receives the national recognition it deserves,” said Sean L. Krigger, Director of the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office. “The physical remnants of this period and the memories and experiences of the people who lived through it provide an invaluable connection to our past. Protecting these resources means protecting the evidence of the Virgin Islands' place in a history much larger than our shores.”

During World War II, St. Thomas served as an important center of American military activity in the Caribbean. Charlotte Amalie's harbor and the surrounding area supported military operations associated with the defense of the Caribbean and vital maritime routes between South and North America. In St. Croix that home front support was covered by the U.S. Army Air Forces at Benedict Airfield, now the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport.

The Territory continues to advocate for and interpret sites associated with that wartime history and this WWII Heritage City designation reflects a broader commitment to ensuring that the experiences of Virgin Islanders who served in uniform, worked in support of military installations, and endured wartime conditions at home remain part of the national historical record.

Commissioner Oriol extends his gratitude to Governor Albert Bryan, Jr., Lieutenant Governor Tregenza A. Roach, Esq., Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett, VIHPC Chair Kurt G. Marsh, Jr., and St. Thomas Historical Trust for their letters of support for Charlotte Amalie's nomination, as well as the, veterans' organizations, historians, preservation advocates, and members of the community who have helped document and sustain the Territory's World War II legacy.

Commissioner Oriol concluded “This designation belongs to our veterans and their families, to the Virgin Islanders who contributed to the war effort, and to generations of residents who understood that these stories and places were worth preserving.”

With Charlotte Amalie's designation, DPNR and VISHPO will continue their work to document, preserve, and promote awareness of the Territory's military historic and cultural resources so that the stories of Virgin Islanders and their contributions to the nation remain accessible to generations to come.