



the obsolete developments and building viable replacement developments to ensure that we have desirable, state-of-the-art housing with a useful life of 40 years,” he says. “When we right-size, we will reduce at least 500 units of the 800 vacant units, and in some cases we will receive replacement vouchers for what we are currently demolishing. So we are reducing the number of public housing but we’re replacing that number with new developments and an increase in the number of vouchers, where possible.”

One of VIHA’s newest developments is the Louis E. Brown public housing development, the largest redevelopment effort ever undertaken by the agency. The first two phases – 102 family units and 40 senior villas - have been completed and Graham says that negotiations are ongoing with a developer for Phase III. Ultimately, the plan is to have a total of 224 one- to three-bedroom units for families and seniors. And in an effort to reduce its residents’ utility bills, the prop-

erties come equipped with solar lighting, solar thermal water heaters, energy efficient appliances, and rain-fall cisterns. “That development is very, very attractive. It is, in my estimation, the best-looking and best-designed development on St. Croix,” Graham exults. “Many residents feel that way, as well, because our public housing waiting list for 1,200 older public housing is 800; the waiting list for this development is at least twice that. So, the demand is for new, affordable, attractive housing.”

Like many other HAs, VIHA offers its public housing residents other services including educational opportunities, job training and employment programs, and support programs for the elderly, as well as home ownership programs for qualified families. “We have a home ownership program in one development where we’re selling to current residents single-family, one to three bedroom units, as is. Graham says. “They have some deterioration, but we will repair them so they