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GERS Struggles to Find Contractors as Major Recovery Projects Dominate Construction Industry

With most builders tied up under Rebuild USVI's multi-billion-dollar program, the GERS has failed to attract bidders for its ADA compliance renovations, forcing officials to re-advertise the project amid a territory-wide labor crunch.

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GERS headquarters in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

With the territory's construction industry largely occupied with the multi-billion dollar hurricane recovery program dubbed Rebuild USVI, some organizations are finding it difficult to attract attention to their smaller projects.

During Friday's meeting of the GERS board, Administrator Angel Dawson provided trustees with updates on operational matters, including upgrades to security systems and the routine building repairs and maintenance. He pointed to one major issue that remained outstanding for GERS on St. Thomas: “the renovation of the restrooms and lobby to bring them into ADA compliance.”

So far, a lack of interest from contractors has meant no progress can be made in that regard. “We did issue an RFP, unfortunately we did not get any responses,” Mr. Dawson said. “I think what we're beginning to experience is a lot of contractors being tied up with government's work, particularly in the schools.”

The V.I. Public Finance Authority recently [awarded a slew of new contracts](#) for the rebuilding of five elementary schools on St. Thomas, fire stations across the territory, and St. Croix's senior citizens' home. During the last meeting of the PFA board, Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne Williams-Octalien cautioned that challenges for manpower and resources would arise as recovery projects move into the construction phase.

According to Mr. Dawson, the GERS RFP will be re-advertised. “Hopefully we will get some contractor that will have a response for us.”