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*Patron: Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy
Governor General of St. Lucia*

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PRESS RELEASE

Grass Street Urged to Take Ownership of the Walcott Place Project



It was an atmosphere of great expectation as residents of Grass Street and environs gathered on the Grass Street basketball court for a meeting to further discuss the Walcott Place Project. This transformational project being headed by the Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) has numerous partners who displayed their commitment by attending the meeting. Agencies present were the Cultural Development Foundation, Ministry of Social Transformation, Ministry of Physical Development, St. Lucia Social Development Fund, St. Lucia Workers Credit Union and Royal St. Lucia Police Force.

The meeting which was held on September 29th had approximately 60 participants and was chaired by Mr. Gandolph St. Clair, a member of the Walcott Place Project - Interpretation Working Group. He began by explaining the significance of the project and the historical context of the community which gave rise to Warwick, Alix, Derek and Roderick Walcott, Harold Simmons, Arthur Jacobs, Dr. Didacus Jules and Allen and Sir Arthur Lewis, a few Saint Lucians who have contributed richly to arts and other spheres of the island's development.

Thereafter, SLNT Councilor and member of the Walcott Place Heritage Committee, Mr. Calixte George Jr. delivered a PowerPoint presentation which showed how the space will be transformed to facilitate a theatre, a gift shop and other amenities. He also gave an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the project. Mr. George reassured the residents that most of the lots to be acquired are vacant, however, suitable relocation packages will be made after consultations with residents who might be affected.

Mr. Augustin Poyotte of the Ministry of Physical Development used the opportunity to explain the concept behind the project, and the need to maintain as much of the rich architectural designs of the Walcott's residence. There were rounds of applause when the residents saw the proposed transformation of the space and one gentleman filled with elation said, "I can't wait for this to materialize".



The residents were then reminded that although they have the support of the Governor General of Saint Lucia, the Government, the Trust and its numerous partners, it is imperative that they take ownership of the project in order for it to become a success. Mrs. Barbara Jacobs Small, who is also on the Walcott Heritage Committee, went on to urge the residents to form a Grass Street Association which will give them a unified voice in determining the outcome of the Walcott Place Project. Residents will be offered training in activities, such as craft making, music and theatre arts which will ensure them employment within the scope of the project. At that point they were formally introduced to Social Transformation Officer, Mr. Miguel Trim, who would assist them with the formation of their association.

Several residents indicated that they are pleased with the project and are looking forward to its commencement. They reiterated that there were many talented residents living in the Community, and they would be more than happy to give of their time and talent to the project. However, one gentleman encouraged several residents congregated on the periphery of the basketball court to come into the meeting, as greater numbers would demonstrate the community's commitment to the project.

Apart from establishing the Grass Street Association, the residents agreed to a suitable day and time in October for a movie night showcasing "Poetry is an Island", a documentary about the Honourable Derek Walcott by Film maker, Ida Does. They were also informed that a corporate launch to raise funds for the project is tentatively scheduled for the latter part of October, while a sod turning ceremony is tentatively planned for November 2014.