

FEMA Assistance to Revitalize Plazas in Puerto Rico

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Guaynabo, Puerto Rico – Luquillo, Fajardo and Naguabo are the most recent municipalities to join the over 67 recreational plazas that will be transformed with \$9.7 million. This approval of federal funds by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be used to repair damage caused by Hurricane María and will include hazard mitigation measures for future disasters.

Some of the town squares include the Luquillo Market Plaza, the Fajardo Market Plaza and the Naguabo Recreational Plaza. The reconstruction projects approved by FEMA include the protection and improvement of environmental, historic and cultural resources, where the Agency's Environmental and Historic Preservation Division is involved.

According to FEMA's Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator in Puerto Rico, José G. Baquero, Puerto Rico's recovery process impacts several sectors, including the recreational facilities and the ones that promote the municipalities' economic, historic and cultural development.

"The plazas are places for gathering and transit. They also promote the economic activity of small businesses, where historic buildings of great cultural value are still preserved. All these qualities make their recovery one of our priorities," added Baquero.

For local entrepreneurs like Linette Reyes López, who has been selling commercial pool maintenance products at the Luquillo Market Plaza since 2016, these funds represent an economic rebound and better quality for their products and services.

Reyes stated that these funds will benefit the local merchants and customers who visit the plaza. "The improvements will impact my business in a positive way. These are necessary repairs so that all areas of the building can operate at their best and be of great benefit to merchants and customers," explained Reyes.



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Meanwhile, the Fajardo Market Plaza has already begun its remodeling. The historic structure's design maintained its façade that dates to the 20th Century. FEMA allocated nearly \$98,000 for improvements that will rehabilitate the space to its pre-disaster conditions.

The market trader José Manuel Ríos has been selling fruits and vegetables in this plaza for 28 years. This businessowner contributes directly to the local harvest, as he works with local farmers to offer a variety of fresh produce.

"The plaza had to close due to the devastation caused by Hurricane María. We hope that with these renovations we can expand the business and capture a new audience. Our interest is also to teach young people about harvesting," he said.

Likewise, the Naguabo Recreational Plaza, the second largest plaza in Puerto Rico, will receive nearly \$48,000 to restore its facilities to their pre-hurricane design, function and capacity. Surrounded by lush trees, this colorful plaza features five water fountains and several historical monuments including the town's first Catholic Church and the statue of one of Puerto Rico's first comedians, Ramón Rivero (Diplo).

Meanwhile, at Ponce's historic Isabel II Merchant Plaza, they will be able to replace the roof's panels, air conditioners, glass, columns, theater seats, elevators and more, thanks to an allocation of \$1.3 million.

For his part, the Executive Director for the Central Office for the Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), the engineer Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, stated that COR3 will continue collaborating with technical matters related to the development of these projects. "Through this reconstruction process, the merchant and recreation plazas' structures are strengthened and modernized to give resiliency to these important and necessary spaces to local merchants, consumers and those citizens attracted by the cultural daily tasks," added Laboy Rivera.





FAJARDO, Puerto Rico (November 23, 2021) – The Fajardo Market Plaza has already begun its remodeling. The historic structure’s design maintained its façade that dates to the 20th Century. FEMA allocated nearly \$98,000 for improvements that will rehabilitate the space to its pre-disaster conditions.

Photo FEMA/Dasha Castillo

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, please visit fema.gov/es/disaster/4339 and recuperacion.pr. Follow our social media pages at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and [Twitter @COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr)



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