

The Road to Recovery Continues: Strengthening Public Housing in the U.S. Virgin Islands

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ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands -- In September 2017, the strong winds and heavy rains of hurricanes Irma and Maria shattered windows, damaged roofs and displaced many families from public housing complexes on St. Thomas and St. Croix.

Through a collaborative effort, FEMA, the U.S. Virgin Islands Office of Disaster Recovery and the Virgin Islands Housing Authority (VIHA) are working to repair and rebuild public housing and community centers to better withstand future storms. Hazard mitigation measures are being applied to construction projects that received funding under FEMA's Public Assistance program to stop the repetitive cycle of disaster damage and reconstruction,

Through FEMA's Public Assistance program, \$909 million has been obligated to VIHA to revitalize public housing in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Funding includes \$11.6 million for Hazard Mitigation measures to reinforce homes — making them resilient against torrential downpours and hurricane-force winds.

One example of FEMA's support of making public housing structures more resilient in the U.S. Virgin Islands is funding the reconstruction of the Walter I.M. Hodge Pavilion on St. Croix. The \$72.5 million project can move forward thanks to coordination between FEMA, U.S. Housing and Urban Development and the Virgin Islands Housing Authority.

FEMA has obligated nearly \$52 million to this project through its Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant programs; \$26.7 million and \$25.3 million wind retrofit, respectively. The work being done under the PA program also includes Hazard Mitigation measures to upgrade damaged vinyl flooring, doors, window weatherstripping, gutters, and exterior security lighting.



Restoration projects of other St. Croix public housing developments damaged by Hurricane Maria, include:

- **Marley Additions and Marley Homes** -- FEMA obligated \$7.6 million for repairs. Nearly \$100,000 will go toward Hazard Mitigation measures to upgrade damaged gutters, vinyl flooring and bathroom sheetrock with the addition of weatherstripping for doors.
- **John F. Kennedy Terrace** -- FEMA obligated \$12.9 million for gazebo, pump house, office, community center and 31 apartment buildings.

On St. Thomas, FEMA is providing about \$80.96 million toward the revitalization of the Tutu Hi-Rise housing community which was severely damaged by hurricanes Irma and Maria. FEMA approved the demolition of five buildings in the development. Through FEMA's Public Assistance Alternative Procedures program, the Virgin Islands Housing Authority will spend \$19 million of the \$71.9 million to demolish and repair the buildings as part of the Estate Donoe redevelopment project.

Hurricane repairs for 12 additional apartment complexes at Tutu Hi-Rise will be funded by a combined \$4.5 million. With a contribution of \$6.3 million for renovations to the Tutu Community Center and the Housing Authority's main office, FEMA is committed to support the revitalization of the community at Tutu Hi-Rise. Funding for the community center and office includes nearly \$395,000 in Hazard Mitigation measures to install wind-resistant roof gutters, air conditioning, security guards, roll-down shutters over doors and windows and roof and wall panels.

Other St. Thomas public housing recovery projects include:

- **Paul M. Pearson Gardens and Community Center** -- FEMA obligated \$3.8 million toward hurricane repairs. The Public Assistance project includes more than \$500,000 in Hazard Mitigation measures to replace damaged roofs, replace damaged wood doors with metal doors, and other repairs.
- **Oswald Harris Court** -- FEMA obligated \$9.5 million toward repairs through its Public Assistance program. The project includes nearly \$800,000 in Hazard Mitigation measures to install structural reinforcement for solar panels, flooring, lighting and reinforcement of exterior walls. Through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, FEMA has also obligated \$1.3 million for architectural and



engineering design cost toward eventual
\$17.4 million for wind retrofit.

FEMA will continue to support plans to repair and rebuild housing communities throughout the territory to ensure an equitable recovery for all U.S. Virgin Islanders.



Roof repairs advance in July 2021 at Paul M. Pearson Gardens Housing Community on St. Thomas. Numerous roofs at Pearson Gardens were damaged from the winds and rains of hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017. FEMA committed \$3.8 million toward hurricane repairs at Pearson Gardens. *FEMA/Eric Adams*

