

FEMA Invests in the Recovery of Puerto Rico's Cultural Heritage

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GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico — Recently, FEMA obligated nearly \$14.3 million in federal funds to the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office for permanent work to restore the Cuartel de Ballajá in Old San Juan.

The work to be completed includes electrical repairs, removal and replacement of wood windows, stain-glass windows and wood doors, as well as interior and exterior repairs. Replacing the Wi-Fi system will maintain a touch of modern technology to this over 160-year-old structure.

The grant also provides funding for architecture and engineering design costs related to the design and drawings of the windows and shutters.

“We are proud of our collaboration with the State Historic Preservation Office and COR3 that resulted in this important obligation. These funds not only help the island’s recovery, but also help preserve Puerto Rico’s cultural heritage for generations to come,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico operations, Alex Amparo.

Part of FEMA’s mission includes the protection and enhancement of environmental, historic and cultural resources on the island. Through its Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation program, the agency provides environmental and historic preservation technical assistance to local, state and federal partners and grantees.

“During the recovery and reconstruction process of Puerto Rico, at COR3 we encourage addressing critical projects across all sectors. Preserving cultural heritage, which develops and maintains economic growth, in addition to our historical memory, is also part of the factors that are analyzed when assisting sub-recipients while they develop their projects. We will continue to work daily in coordination with FEMA to ensure the much-needed recovery,” said Executive Director for the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience



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(COR3), Ottmar Chavez Piñero.

Architect Carlos A. Rubio Cancela, director for the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office, mentioned this obligation provides a unique opportunity for Ballajá. “I have been looking forward to begin, to repair the walls, paint the building, rebuild the green roof and fix the floors that were quite damaged by Irma and María. In short, to have the Ballajá Barracks shine once again for the enjoyment of the people of Puerto Rico and those who visit us from other parts of the world,” added Rubio Cancela.

Built between 1854 and 1864 by the Spanish monarchy to house members of the military, the Ballajá building includes the Museo de las Américas, which has exhibitions about the American continent with an emphasis on Puerto Rican culture, and houses several educational and cultural organizations. The site is also home to the Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office.

For more on Puerto Rico’s recovery from Hurricane María, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339, facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico and recovery.pr

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