

Over \$277 Million in FEMA Funds Propel Recovery in the South

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GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico — There are 168 projects underway to rehabilitate the areas and structures that were affected by the 2020 earthquakes. Projects include allocations for the municipalities of Mayagüez and Ponce. Around \$185,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are earmarked to repair the Castillo Serrallés, the Salazar Museum and a senior citizen center in Ponce, as well as the Casa de Pilar Defilló Museum and a community center in Mayagüez.

“Our goal is to complete all earthquake-related inspections this year to facilitate the recovery of the southern area. It is our priority to help repair the structures that were damaged by last year's earthquakes,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico, José G. Baquero.

Nearly \$22,000 was allocated to the municipality of Ponce to repair the cracks in the theater, foyer, and hallways of the iconic Castillo Serrallés. This architectural jewel dates back to 1930, when it served as home to the Serrallés family and today represents the main tourist attraction of the city known as “ciudad señorial” (stately city), where it receives approximately 25,000 visitors a year.

Likewise, another \$102,000 will help repair the Casa Zapater, the Barrio Mameyes Memorial Hall and Casa Salazar museums. In the latter, the walls, ceilings, moldings, facades, beams and concrete slabs will be repaired. The Casa Salazar houses the Ponce History Museum, which has an annual attendance of 7,800 people, including local and international tourists.

Similarly, at the Cruz Espada Center for the Elderly in Ponce, the roofs, concrete beams and columns, among others, will be repaired with a federal contribution of \$33,000. This center offers food preparation, nutrition, health, social work, recreation and day care services to more than 115 participants.

To date, over \$916,000 has been awarded to the municipality of Ponce for earthquake-related projects.



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“For the Municipality of Ponce and the people we serve the award of reconstruction funds is extremely significant, as it allows us to reopen places where we provide important services. First, the Cruz Espada Senior Center is an oasis for elderly residents; it is where they have the opportunity to be accompanied while receiving balanced meals. Secondly, the museums are places full of history and culture that provide recreation for residents and visitors alike. All of this is part of the revival that Ponce and its people need,” said Ponce Mayor, Luis M. Irizarry Pabón.

On the other hand, in the western side of the island, over \$28,600 will help repair the Museo Casa de Pilar Defilló and the Castillo Community Center in Mayagüez. At the museum, a 19th century mansion in honor of the mother of renowned cellist Pablo Casals, the balconies, railings and walls will be repaired. The building is listed as historical heritage of the Institute of Culture of Puerto Rico.

In addition, some 410 families who receive direct services at the Castillo Community Center, such as use of the electronic library, access to sports activities and the walking track, will have access to repairs at the facilities with the obligation of over \$21,000 for the center. Improvements to the kitchen area and the operation of the virtual library will benefit about 2,400 people a year, who also use the space to hold community and school meetings.

“The projects are close to entering the proposals phase to begin the contracting process, complying with all applicable laws, rules and regulations. We are grateful for the diligence in obtaining these funds that will have an impact on our communities,” said Olga López de Krumhansl, from the Public Relations Office of the Municipality of Mayagüez.

Meanwhile, Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience (COR3), Engr. Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, said that they continue working with FEMA to maximize the resources destined to the reconstruction of the areas affected by last year's earthquakes. “These projects in the southern and western areas of Puerto Rico, which are carried out under the Public Assistance Program and include risk mitigation works, are a positive step to ensure the preservation of part of Puerto Rican history and above all will strengthen the structures for the safety of those who frequent those spaces,” said Laboy. “At COR3 and FEMA, we remain focused on the goal of culminating this year with the inspections of the areas impacted by the earthquakes.”



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FEMA works with COR3 through the agency's Public Assistance program to obligate recovery funds to private nonprofit organizations, municipalities and Puerto Rico government agencies.

For more on Puerto Rico's recovery from the earthquakes, visit fema.gov/disaster/4473.



PONCE, Puerto Rico – FEMA allocated nearly \$22,000 to the municipality of Ponce to repair the cracks in the theater, foyer, and hallways of the iconic Castillo Serrallés. This architectural jewel dates back to 1930, and today represents one of the main tourist attractions of the city. FEMA Photo/Eduardo Martínez.



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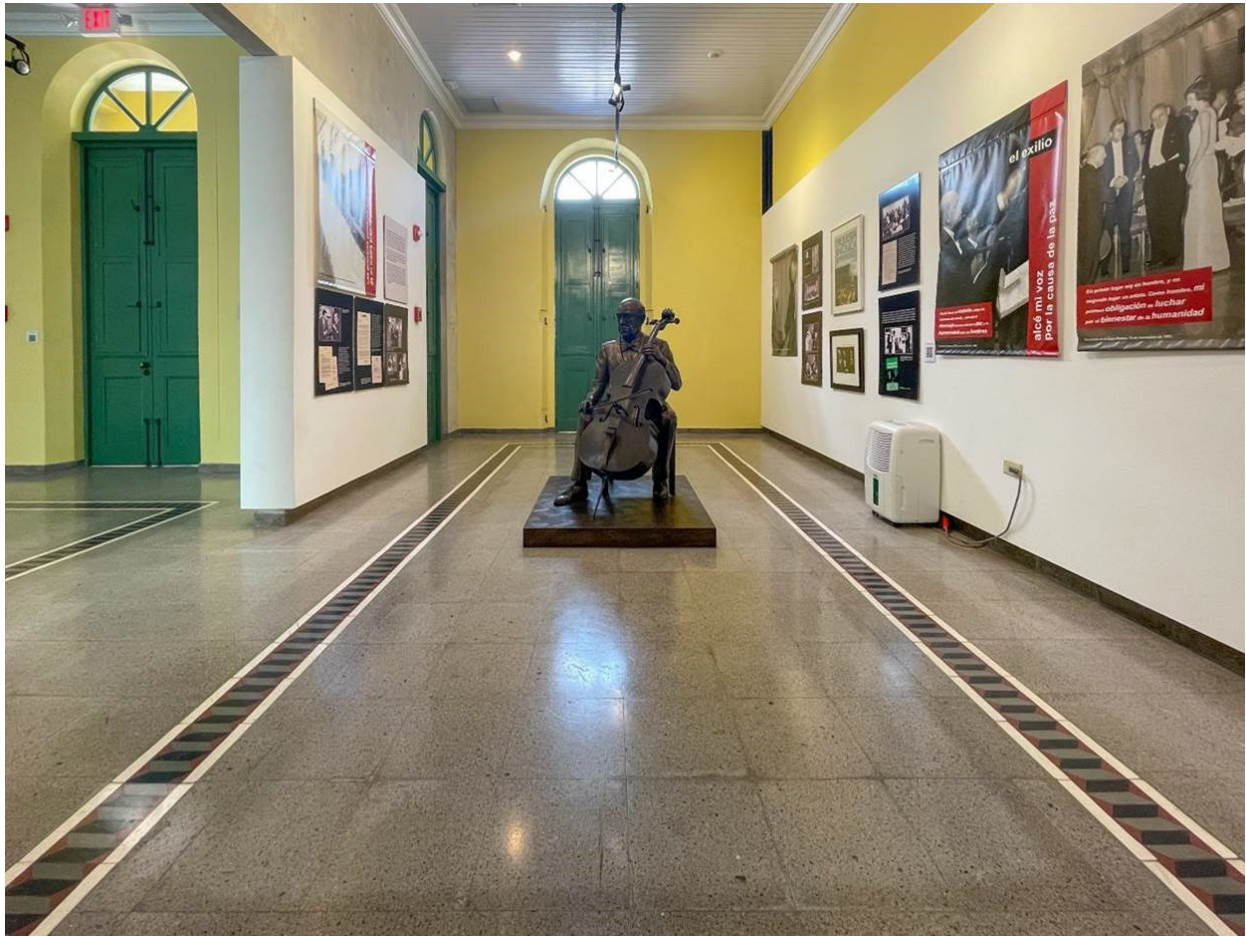


PONCE, Puerto Rico – Another \$102,000 approved by FEMA will help repair the Casa Zapater, the Barrio Mameyes Memorial Hall and Casa Salazar museums in Ponce. FEMA Photo/Carmen Edith Torres



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MAYAGUEZ, Puerto Rico – In the western side of the island, over \$28,600 approved by FEMA will help repair the Museo Casa de Pilar Defilló and the Castillo Community Center in Mayagüez. At the museum, a 19th century mansion in honor of the mother of renowned cellist Pablo Casals, the balconies, railings, and walls will be repaired. The building is listed as historical heritage of the Institute of Culture of Puerto Rico. FEMA Photo/Lorraine Valle



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