

# FEMA Approves Funds to Repair Town Squares in Puerto Rico

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**GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico** – “Town squares are historic places and landmarks of the Puerto Rican culture. Being part of the repair of these spaces is what drives us to continue with our recovery efforts.” These words by the Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Alex Amparo, describe FEMA’s funding obligation of **about \$579,000** for repairs to public town squares in **13 municipalities** throughout the island.

Town squares represent the distinctive history of each municipality and are a vital part of their urban centers. They are considered important areas of the municipal economy where residents visit to shop, meet up with others and take care of everyday errands. Although they share many similarities, each square is a unique representation of its town; hence the importance to repair them.

Two of the plazas that were approved to undergo repairs are the Placita de la Recordación (Memorial Square) and Plaza Pública José A. Busigó (José A. Busigó Public Square) in Sabana Grande with an obligation of **nearly \$103,000**. Built in 1910, the public square is the main meeting place and entertainment venue where cultural and religious activities are held, such as the patron saint festivities. The Memorial Square is located next to the public square, where the bust of The Unknown Soldier is erected, honoring war veterans, among other representations of Sabana Grande’s illustrious people. The funds will be used for the replacement of light fixtures and to paint the pavilions, among other works.

“We hope that once the improvement and reconstruction projects are completed, our urban area will be repopulated, providing recreation and a place for our families and friends to meet. We hope that our residents will feel that it is the ideal environment to enjoy and that they will be able to use the squares again because it is a beautiful place, well-lit and with excellent facilities. Without a doubt, our squares are the perfect place to continue promoting our traditions,” said the mayor of Sabana Grande, Noel Matías Borrelí.



On the other hand, the iconic Plaza de Recreo Ramón Emeterio Betances y Alacán in Cabo Rojo, which used to receive approximately 400 visitors a day before the ongoing social distancing measures, will be renovated with a grant of **about \$65,000**. The square was built when the town was founded in 1759 and is surrounded by structures that tell part of its history, such as the San Miguel Arcángel Church which was designated as a historical landmark in 2004.

“The Plaza de Recreo Ramón Emeterio Betances y Alacán is of utmost importance to our municipality, not only because it is named after one of the most distinguished Puerto Rican patriots, but also because it is part of the historic heritage that surrounds it. The people of Cabo Rojo feel a very particular pride towards the square. Its renovation will provide greater security and will enhance its architectural beauty, as well as the other structures that comprise our Cultural and Historic District,” said Roberto Ramirez, mayor of Cabo Rojo.

Moreover, the Francisco M. Zeno Town Square in the municipality of Cidra, received an obligation of **over \$26,000**. The square, which was named in honor of the historian, journalist, and former mayor of Cidra, will undergo repairs to its pavilion, light fixtures, benches and electrical panels as well as a fresh coat of paint to its fountain, among other repairs, with the funds.

“Our town square is the preferred social gathering place for citizens of all ages. The vast majority of social and cultural activities take place there. Many important commercial activities for the economic development of the city are carried out around the square, since it is a social meeting place that attracts many visitors that make use of our local commerce,” said the mayor of Cidra, Javier Carrasquillo Cruz.

The other municipalities that received obligations to repair their town squares are Arroyo, Barranquitas, Carolina, Cataño, Dorado, Naguabo, Orocovis, Patillas, Rincón and Vieques.

FEMA works with COR3 through the federal agency's Public Assistance program to obligate recovery funds to private nonprofit organizations, municipalities and agencies of the Government of Puerto Rico for expenses related to Hurricanes Irma and María. To date, **nearly \$6.9 billion** has been awarded to Puerto Rico as part of FEMA's Public Assistance program.



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

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