FEMA Supports the Restoration of Historic Buildings in San Juan

Release Date: 5? 12, 2021

The multi-million obligation includes La Fortaleza, La Casa del Libro and several historic cemeteries

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico— Iconic structures such as Santa Catalina's Palace, known as La Fortaleza, La Casa del Libro museum/library and several historic cemeteries in San Juan will be repaired with an obligation of over **$7.4 million** from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The award aims to bring the facilities to their pre-Hurricane María conditions. Also, funding combines nearly **$678,000** for mitigation measures that will increase the structures' resiliency in the face of future disasters.

Due to the great architectural and cultural value that these protected landmarks have, all repairs must comply with federal and local regulations for historic preservation. This will ensure that many generations to come can also enjoy these sites," said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico, José G. Baquero.

Over **$2.8 million** is earmarked for work at La Fortaleza, which include the replacement of wooden floors and beams, the roof, the waterproofing system, brick and mortar walls, and historic windows and doors louvers. Mitigation measures at this site designated as a National Historic Landmark and World Heritage Site by UNESCO will include reinforcing downspouts and installing more resistant windows and doors.

According to the Executive Director of the State Historic Preservation Office, architect Carlos Rubio Cancela, FEMA has become an important ally of his Office in the efforts to recover and rehabilitate historic buildings affected by Hurricanes Irma and María.

“It is very important that the obligation of these projects occurred within the commemorative period of the 500th anniversary of the founding of the city of San Juan. This gives FEMA's contribution and the obligation of these projects a monumental importance because it’s our responsibility that this city, which is reaching its 500th anniversary with the beauty that we all admire, continues in this way for the next 500 years,” Rubio Cancela added.

The four historic cemeteries that will be repaired with **$2.7 million** are the La Capital Cemetery, built in 1954 with five mausoleums and a chapel; Santa María Magdalena de Pazzis Cemetery, built in 1863 with multiple mausoleums and located between EL Morro and the sea coast; Villa Nevárez Cemetery, built in 1930 as a public cemetery with family concrete crypts; and Villa Palmeras Cemetery, built in 1920 on 10 acres with a chapel and a family-owned mausoleum.These municipal cemeteries are in areas considered to be critical habitats for endangered species such as some turtles, manatees and the Puerto Rican boa. Work on the cemeteries will cover the removal and replacement of Victorian streetlight fixtures, jalousie wood windows, among others.

Likewise, **$1.8 million** will go towards the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture for repairs to La Casa del Libro. This space houses an important collection of antique books, more than 300 published in the 15th century, and documents from 1493. Located in the Old San Juan Historic District, the site is also designated a National Historic Landmark and a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Aside from repairs such as removing and replacing the asphalt roofing and the electrical breaker panel, hazard mitigation measures will take place. These include installing covers for each roof drain and adding weather-strip foam between the door and window frames to prevent water intrusion.

“The repair of these historic buildings supports the resilience of the tourism sector. Local and international tourists will have the opportunity to enjoy these centers of great cultural value in a safe manner. Our team is committed to providing assistance in matters related to the recovery processes of these areas,” said Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, Executive Director of the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience (COR3).

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339 and recuperacion.pr. Follow us on our social networks at

Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and Twitter @COR3pr.



SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (May 4, 2021) – Over $2.8 million is earmarked for work at La Fortaleza, which include the replacement of wooden floors and beams, the roof, the waterproofing system, brick and mortar walls, and historic windows and doors louvers. Mitigation measures at this site designated as a National Historic Landmark and World Heritage Site by UNESCO will include reinforcing downspouts and installing more resistant windows and doors. Foto FEMA/Eliezer Hernández



SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (May 4, 2021) – The four historic cemeteries that will be repaired with $2.7 million are the La Capital Cemetery, built in 1954 with five mausoleums and a chapel; Santa María Magdalena de Pazzis Cemetery, built in 1863 with multiple mausoleums and located between El Morro and the sea coast; Villa Nevárez Cemetery, built in 1930 as a public cemetery with family concrete crypts; and Villa Palmeras Cemetery, built in 1920 on 10 acres with a chapel and a family-owned mausoleum. Foto FEMA/Eliezer Hernández



SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (4 de mayo de 2021) – A total of $1.8 million will go towards the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture for repairs to La Casa del Libro. This space houses an important collection of antique books, more than 300 published in the 15th century, and documents from 1493. Located in the Old San Juan Historic District, the site is also designated a National Historic Landmark and a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Foto FEMA/Eliezer Hernández