

Alternate or Improved Projects: FEMA Options for Community Needs

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Guaynabo, Puerto Rico – Communities evolve and their needs change. Faced with this reality, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides the options of alternate or improved projects to meet their new realities. Two projects in the municipalities of Orocovis and Yabucoa demonstrate these alternatives with a total obligation of nearly \$5.2 million.

Under FEMA's Public Assistance program, an alternate project is one where the applicant decides not to restore the pre-disaster function of the damaged facility and chooses to change it, as long as it is a permanent work that benefits the same community. Meanwhile, an improved project is one that restores the pre-disaster function and add improvements or changes to its pre-disaster design.

“These projects show that our agency is focused and committed to achieving the most practical solutions for the particular situations of the municipalities and their communities. Likewise, we emphasize the importance that these works comply with established requirements and standards to withstand future disasters”, said FEMA’s Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

In the municipality of Orocovis, an alternate project was approved with an obligation of nearly \$953,200 to demolish a former Head Start center to turn it into a batting cage. This project is located at the Arnaldo Hernández Sports Complex, named after a beloved athlete from the Saltos neighborhood.

The new concept will benefit nearly 150 families and aims to continue promoting different types of sports, especially among the youth. “The complex has several areas, and it will now have a batting field, an alternative to improve the batting skills of our children and youths,” said the municipality’s Planning director, Marlon Meléndez Ayala.



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This project, which is in the design and auction planning stage, includes demolishing the center, clearing vegetation, preparing the site and applying asphalt. Additional work also entails the installation of a multi-lane batting cage netting system and automatic batting machines, air conditioners, lighting fixtures and metal fencing. An award of nearly \$19,200 was allocated for mitigation measures such as anchoring systems for air conditioning units.

The Saltos neighborhood recreational leader, Miguel A. Pérez Rivera, mentioned that this facility is used by softball, baseball and soccer teams. “It is widely used by the community and people use it for exercise and health wellness. For example, Alexander Torres, the first Puerto Rican to win the San Blas half marathon, trains at this facility every morning,” he said.

Moreover, in the municipality of Yabucoa, FEMA awarded over \$4.2 million for the improved project of the Diagnostic and Treatment Center (CDT, in Spanish) located in 901 Road at Pueblo neighborhood. The center's administrator, Mariángela Alvarado Soto, said that the improvements and compliance with current building codes ensure quality, excellence and safety for patients, staff and medical faculty.

She also noted that having a facility in optimal conditions generates an efficient, productive work environment and better service. “In addition, it provides the opportunity that, should an atmospheric or other event arise, it can serve as a shelter, operation center and ensure that patients continue to receive their treatments.”

The project, which also serves people from neighboring towns such as Maunabo and Humacao, has a share of over \$2.3 million for mitigation measures such as the installation of motorized shutters, air conditioning units anchoring systems and an insulation treatment for the roof.

The CDT serves 1,550 patients ever month and improvements are focused on updating the structure to meet the current codes and standards, which adds value to people’s health.

Through its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), FEMA has contributed to the updating of these building codes by obligating over \$79.4 million to the PR Planning Board and Permits Management Office so that they could increase their



staff to enforce building codes. Likewise, \$5.5 million were obligated to review and implement the 2018 Puerto Rico Building Code.

For his part, the executive director of the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, said that "as part of our commitment at COR3, we continuously guide the subrecipients on the process involved in the development of alternate or improved projects with the purpose of maximizing the use of funds allocated by FEMA, according to the need of the communities. This guidance is key to ensuring that permanent projects are executed in compliance with federal agency requirements and allowable activities."

To date, FEMA has obligated nearly \$31.9 billion for over 10,900 recovery projects and over \$4.2 billion for more than 6,400 municipal projects in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane María.

For more information about Puerto Rico's recovery, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339, fema.gov/disaster/4473 and recovery.pr. Follow us on our social media at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and [Twitter @COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr).





Yabucoa, Puerto Rico (August 22, 2023) - In the municipality of Yabucoa, FEMA awarded over \$4.2 million for the improved project of the Diagnostic and Treatment Center (CDT, in Spanish) located in 901 Road at Pueblo neighborhood. The project, which also serves people from neighboring towns such as Maunabo and Humacao, has a share of over \$2.3 million for mitigation measures such as the installation of motorized shutters, air conditioning units anchoring systems and an insulation treatment for the roof. Photo FEMA/Eduardo Martínez.

