

Community Libraries Repaired with FEMA Funds

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The allocations for these projects go over half a million dollars

Guaynabo, PUERTO RICO ? Repairs to several libraries in the municipalities of Barceloneta, San Lorenzo and San Juan were recently completed with an allocation of over \$652,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The projects are aimed at supporting the educational activities of these facilities, which serve over hundreds of visitors each month.

“Libraries are a fundamental tool for students, teachers and citizens in general. These spaces facilitate information and provide resources, in addition to providing learning opportunities where critical thinking, creativity and teamwork are developed. For FEMA, these are important characteristics that contribute to the comprehensive recovery of Puerto Rico, not only today, but their impact will reach the next generations,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

One of the entities that received a federal allocation to repair its facilities was the Sixto Escobar Library in Barceloneta, inaugurated in 1994 and organized by a committee of volunteers. With the obligation of over \$532,000, glass and aluminum windows, light fixtures, doors, acoustic ceilings, air conditioners and several monitors, among other things, were replaced. This project included a share of nearly \$102,000 for hazard mitigation measures, such as anchoring systems for the air conditioners and adding a waterproof asphalt membrane to the roof.

“The library provides services to approximately 600 to 1,800 participants each month. The repairs are extremely important because they preserve the building and, therefore, benefit tourists and the community. In addition, these repairs allow us to guarantee our collections and equipment,” said the supervisor of Federal Programs for the Municipality of Barceloneta, Berenice Reyes Machado.



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Meanwhile, in the Cerro Gordo neighborhood of San Lorenzo, two educational and community service facilities received FEMA funds. The Josefa Domingo Virtual Library received an obligation of just over \$61,000, while the Josefa Domingo Community Learning and Recreation Center was granted nearly \$40,000. Both spaces are located in a disused school that was refurbished for this new purpose and which were named after the late educator Josefa Domingo Cordon, a native of Andalusia, Spain, who worked for many years in this facility built in 1950.

The virtual library offers internet, computer, government document processing and photocopying services. It also has a conference room, books and magazines in digital and printed format. Here, the roof waterproofing system, acoustic panels, an air conditioning unit and signs, among others, were replaced. Mitigation measures, such as the installation of a secondary waterproofing system, were carried out with a share of nearly \$17,200.

Likewise, at the community center, the roof waterproofing system was replaced. The share of over \$13,600 for mitigation was used to install a reinforced waterproofing system on the roof and correct a slope to prevent water accumulation; and to reinforce the roof to prevent it from being blown off by the wind.

According to the San Lorenzo Recovery Office director, Héctor Román, educational and social activities and training workshops are held at the center. In addition, it serves as the headquarters of the Community Board meetings and from where the community resilience plan is developed.

Román added that both facilities serve mostly seniors and students, at a rate of about 100 people per month. “The importance of this type of center is that it serves as a backbone for technological advancement and for adult populations in need of services.”

Furthermore, an allocation of over \$19,400 was granted to the Francisco Oller Library of the Puerto Rico School of Plastic Arts and Design (EAPD, for its Spanish acronym) for a different restoration task. The entity is located in the former Nuestra Señora de la Concepción Hospital in Old San Juan and received the funds to address a specialized cleaning: restore eight boxes of books with mold and water damage; and replace a total of 69 damaged books. Specialized



repairs were also made to 21 framed pieces and one piece of 12 frames.

This library offers services to college students, researchers and the general public, such as group and individual counseling, workshops, bibliographic searches, and the loan of educational materials and audiovisual equipment. The library serves an average of 1,900 students and 100 visitors each month.

According to the EAPD Library director, Estrella Del R. Vázquez Domínguez, the library has stood out for having the most complete art and design collections in Puerto Rico.

“Both the repairs and the cleaning, disinfection and mold control service allowed our staff to return to work inside the facilities, as the priority was to protect the health of employees and users. Also, the installation of a new air conditioner allowed us to deal with the proliferation of fungi that affected our collections,” she added.

For his part, the executive director of the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, said that “the work carried out in these libraries, in addition to providing structural resiliency, preserves the material and tools that students need for their academic performance. According to the Quarterly Progress Report as of June 30 of this year, some 15 libraries are in the process of reconstruction at a cost of approximately \$3.7 million. Our team will continue to assist the municipalities in this important process that contributes to the preservation of our island’s libraries.”

To date, FEMA has obligated nearly \$34 billion for over 11,000 recovery projects in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane María

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

JOSEFA DOMINGO VIRTUAL LIBRARY, SAN LORENZO, PR



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San Lorenzo, PUERTO RICO (September 21, 2023) — Repairs to several libraries in the municipalities of San Lorenzo, Barceloneta and San Juan were recently completed with an allocation of over \$652,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The projects are aimed at supporting the educational activities of these facilities, which serve over hundreds of visitors each month. In the Cerro Gordo neighborhood of San Lorenzo, two educational and community service facilities received FEMA funds. The Josefa Domingo Virtual Library received an obligation of just over \$61,000, while the Josefa Domingo Community Learning and Recreation Center was granted nearly \$40,000. Photo FEMA/Eliezer Hernández

