

FEMA Supports Economic Development in Waterfronts and Boardwalks

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FEMA allocated over \$5.7 million to repair these structures in several of the island's municipalities

GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico - Fernando Rodríguez Gil owns one of the nine restaurants on the *Costero del Sur* boardwalk located in the Capitanejo neighborhood of Juana Díaz. For eight years, his business has enriched the culinary offer at the boardwalk.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved over \$5.7 million for this and other waterfronts (known as *malecón* in Spanish) and boardwalks to repair structures damaged by Hurricane María.

“Aside from their importance in mitigating coastal erosion in these areas, waterfronts serve as spaces for family entertainment and economic development. These funds will contribute to the repairs of 13 projects throughout nine municipalities on the island, which we trust will revitalize these spaces,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

For this project, which is in the permitting stage, FEMA obligated nearly \$2.9 million to the municipality of Juana Díaz. The project includes a support system for decks and piers to strengthen them against storm surges and flooding, among other natural events, in order to reduce coastal erosion by allowing the natural movement of sand and other sediments.

For Rodríguez Gil, when these repairs are completed, economic activity is expected to increase for about ten fishermen in the area that sell lobster and a variety of local fish. “Tourism will increase since it will look better and [this will] impact the people who visit it which is positive for everyone,” said Rodríguez Gil.

The mayor of the City of Kings, Ramón A. Hernández, explained that the development and maintenance of the boardwalk helps to maintain formal and



supervised activity in the area.

“It is a highly attractive space due to the coastal landscape and the variety of seafood and Puerto Rican Creole cuisine; this tends to bear positive results such as avoiding the deterioration of a community that has an area of great positive social and economic exchange for all,” Hernández added.

Revitalization beyond the coastal zone

Meanwhile, residents of the Jagual neighborhood in Patillas will benefit from improvements to the boardwalk located on Lake Patillas. Mayor Maritza Sánchez explained that the site receives hundreds of visitors weekly.

“The structure highlights the beauty of the lake, where activities such as fishing, kayaking and other events take place,” according to Sánchez.

As part of the work following the agency’s nearly \$482,000 allocation, the atrium, benches, gazebo and sidewalk will be replaced or repaired. Also, utility poles will be replaced with hurricane-resistant aluminum poles as part of the project’s mitigation measures, which add up to nearly \$10,000.

Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, executive director for the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), said that the repairs to be made will stabilize the operations of businesses during a time when Puerto Ricans are looking for different ways to bond with their families and return to normalcy after two years of the pandemic. “In COR3, we will continue supporting throughout the process so that these permanent repairs come to fruition,” said Laboy Rivera.

To date, FEMA has obligated over \$29 billion under its Public Assistance program to help Puerto Rico recover from Hurricane María.

For more information on Puerto Rico’s recovery from Hurricane María, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339 and recovery.pr. Follow us on our social media at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and Twitter @COR3pr.

