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FEMA Provides \$9 Million to Begin Design of New Charles Harwood Medical Center in Richmond

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Charles Harwood Facility in Richmond, St. Croix By. ODR

ST. CROIX — FEMA has approved \$9 million for the Department of Health to fund the architecture and engineering services necessary to reconstruct the Charles Harwood Medical Center in Richmond, Christiansted through its Public Assistance Program, the Office of Disaster Recovery (O.D.R.) has announced. The funding was announced in 2018 during the Governor Kenneth Mapp administration; at the time, Mr. Mapp said it would cost 128 percent more to repair the facility than it would to demolish and rebuild it. “The federal government is going to pay for the demolition and reconstruction of a new clinical facility at that site,” then-Governor Mapp [said in August 2018](#). The O.D.R. said FEMA officially approved the rebuild on Feb. 12, 2019.

Built in 1952, the 82,400 square foot medical center was the hub for all the Department of Health's operations prior to Hurricane Maria. Residents visited the Charles Harwood Medical Center for a wide range of services to include medical and dental facilities, WIC, epidemiology, vital records and statistics, family planning, labs, immunizations, mental health, and other services, according to the O.D.R.

This facility was once the only hospital on the island of St. Croix until the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital was constructed in 1982. Roof failures and water intrusion caused by Hurricane Maria proved to be too much for the facility causing extensive and irreparable damage.

Dept. of Health Commissioner Justa E. Encarnacion spoke of her emotional ties with Charles Harwood Medical Center as she and most of her siblings were born in the complex. However, she commented, "I am excited to collaborate on innovative ideas surrounding a public health care delivery system that meets the needs of our community. I envision creative approaches to showcasing our Regulatory Division, rooms equipped with telemedicine access, kiosks providing electronic access to files and applications, clinical settings with state-of-the-art equipment and supplies, and links to other outpatient clinical programs."

Ms. Encarnacion added, "The obligation of this funding is timely as we are in the process of finalizing both our strategic and community assessment plans."

In April 2019, with the support of over \$2 million in federal funding from FEMA, temporary buildings were constructed, and DOH moved all its functions to 66 modular units behind the permanent structure.

"Future funding from FEMA will allow the Department of Health to rebuild stronger and in line with current industry standards," said O.D.R. Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien. "The department will issue a solicitation to select a firm to design the new Charles Harwood Medical Center. Once contracted, the design process should take approximately eight months to complete."

The solicitation for architecture and engineering services will be drafted and released in August, O.D.R. said.