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## FEMA Makes Available \$61 Million to V.I. Housing Authority to Restore Housing Communities

Disaster Recovery / **Published On May 04, 2021 11:43 AM /**

Staff Consortium **May 04, 2021**

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**Aerial shot of Tutu Hi-Rise** By. OFFICE OF DISASTER RECOVERY

The Office of Disaster Recovery on Tuesday announced that the V.I. Housing Authority has been obligated \$61,056,862 to continue the renovation of housing communities devastated during the 2017 hurricane season. The funds, provided to the territory by the Federal Emergency Management Agency through the Public Assistance Program, are earmarked to execute eleven projects, nine on St. Croix and two on St. Thomas, O.D.R. said.

Estate Bovoni and Tutu High Rise were severely damaged when heavy rains, high winds and flying debris from Hurricanes Irma and Maria ruined interior and exterior elements. FEMA was awarded \$16.6 million to repair Bovoni's community center and mailroom as well as to replace

solar panels, windows and other components in Buildings A through E, according to the release.

The additional funding for Tutu High Rise will support work that has already begun, O.D.R. said. Demolition started last October on buildings 10, 11, 12, 14 and 22. The recent obligation of \$3.5M will support repairs to Buildings 13, 15, 16, 17, and 18.

O.D.R. said V.I. Housing Authority's properties suffered extensive losses. On St. Croix, \$40.9 million was awarded for V.I.H.A.'s central office and adjacent warehouses in Kingshill along with the Wilford E. Pedro Homes, Walter I. M. Hodge Pavilion, Joseph E. James Terrace, Ludvig Harrigan Court, Mount Pleasant, David Hamilton Jackson, Aureo Diaz and Candido Guadalupe housing communities.

"The Housing Authority is not only very appreciative of the federal funds from FEMA to continue our revitalization efforts, but also extremely appreciative of the patience our residents have shown while waiting for major repairs of their homes," stated Robert Graham, V.I.H.A. executive director.

This obligation is especially critical for the Walter I. M. Hodge Pavilion Revitalization Project, which includes the complete rehabilitation of 250 units and will facilitate a full redevelopment of that community, according to O.D.R.

A solicitation is currently out for bid for a general contractor to complete the work and proposals are due by June 2nd. Construction is slated to begin by October 2021.

"FEMA is proud to partner with the Virgin Islands Housing Authority on its blueprint to strengthen the foundation of public housing across the Territory. Repairs to these housing communities will ensure Virgin Islanders are able to raise their families in homes built to better withstand the rigors of hurricanes. The inclusion of \$4.5 million in hazard mitigation proposals for these projects aims to break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction and repeated damage from disasters," said FEMA's USVI Acting Recovery Director John Covell.

The appropriate solicitations to renovate the remaining housing communities are in the process of being drafted for advertisement, according to the release.

"These funds are critical to the Authority's plans to jump-start the reconstruction of our housing communities and improve the quality of life of its residents," said Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien, O.D.R. Director. "Residents can rest assured that when these projects are complete, their homes will not just be restored to their pre-disaster condition but will be more resilient due to additional hazard mitigation funds."

Funds will also be used to restore the portions of each community's residential, recreational and office spaces that were destroyed during the storms.