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FEMA Awards Over \$800 Million for Juan F. Luis Hospital Reconstruction

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The Juan F. Luis Hospital & Medical Center. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

In a monumental move forward, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has awarded the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center a grant of \$834,471,422.15 to aid its reconstruction. The hospital had sustained significant damage from Hurricane Maria and had been in disrepair for several years prior to the 2017 storms.

The initiative to replace the hospital initially commenced under the Mapp administration, and has significantly accelerated under the Bryan administration, through the efforts of the Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR), the Territorial Hospital Redevelopment Team, and Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett.

Plaskett announced the award with notable satisfaction, acknowledging the hard work that went into securing these funds. "This award is for the prudent replacement standard which will be integral for improving our preparedness and resiliency against natural disasters," Plaskett said. She praised her team for their diligent work in advocating for changes in the provisions of the Stafford Act, which handles rebuilding after U.S. disasters.

The Delegate to Congress underlined that the standard for the hospital's recovery was markedly different than that applied to the mainland. "In this instance, JFL was evaluated for prudent replacement and found to be eligible. The work to be completed includes the demolition of the existing 231,655 square feet (SF) hospital facility and the replacement of a 426,609 SF facility that will adhere to current building codes and standards," she added.

Plaskett commended the efforts of the Governor Bryan and his team in ensuring that the grant incorporated all the community's needs and the actual damages from the storm.

It's worth noting that, since 2019, the hospital's rebuild has seen a significant funding influx. The first installment of \$80 million was released in 2019, followed by an additional \$10.5 million in November the same year. "JFL is a critical part of our territory's healthcare system, and we are working to ensure we rebuild it to meet the healthcare needs of our residents," Bryan [said in November 2019](#). "We now have an opportunity to build a facility that is more comfortable for the staff and patients, more energy efficient and resilient enough to withstand the rigors of our changing climate."

In May 2020, O.D.R. Director Williams-Octalien reiterated the importance of the reconstruction project, stating, "The reconstruction of the territory's hospitals remains a top priority. Building a resilient healthcare system will encourage more confidence in the quality of care offered in the territory."

Meanwhile, [hospital operations are being moved to JFL North](#), the temporary modular facility just north of the main hospital.