

News

Puerto Ricans Suffer Apocalyptic Nightmare After Hurricanes

By Barrington M. Salmon (NNPA Newswire Contributor)

It's been nearly a month since two historic hurricanes savaged Puerto Rico, and despite the utter devastation left after the storms, the island's 3.4 million residents are still waiting for substantive relief from the federal government.

Help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has been slowed, because of glaring lapses in coordination, a lack of guidance of medical and other personnel, as well as what critics and Puerto Rican officials have said was an almost total breakdown in distribution and supply chains. The result has been a yawning gap between the burgeoning humanitarian disaster and the urgent life-and-death needs of the shell-shocked populace.

Nearly 85 percent of the island is still in darkness, because the storms destroyed the electrical grid. Governor Ricardo Rosselló estimates that it will cost about \$5 billion to repair the island's power grid that was decimated by Hurricane Maria. Cellphone service towers across the island are slowly being restored; there is a critical shortage of food, medicine and other basic supplies; meanwhile, more than half of the commonwealth's residents are living without potable water.

The official death toll is 48, but there are reports that the medical examiner's office in San Juan is holding 350 bodies. There are also fears that, as the authorities reach the most remote parts of the island and as water-borne and other diseases take hold, that the death toll will inevitably rise.

Last week, FEMA scrubbed important statistics about the avail-



In this Oct. 23 photo, a resident sweeps at a camp set up on the shore of Laguna de Condado in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The man was homeless before the Island was hit by the hurricane and was living at a shelter, but he is now living back on the street.

ability of clean drinking water and the paucity of electricity on the island, from its website.

The fierce winds of Hurricanes

“We’ve fought for and bled for this country. We’re part of America

Irma and Maria left catastrophic damage, tore roofs from buildings, toppled power lines and transformers; stripped trees bare; triggered mudslides and flooding; flattened and demolished trees; and blocked roads. Beleaguered Puerto Ricans can only buy food, supplies and other materials in what is now a mostly cash-only society.

Yet, in the midst of all this need, more than 10,000 shipping containers loaded with food, medicine and other needed supplies have sat idle at the Port of San Juan and elsewhere, because of red tape, bureaucratic bungling and logistical logjams.

Aurora Flores, a New York-based activist, painted a harrowing picture that is slowly emerging as information seeps out of the soaked island.

“Oh, my God! I have such a combination of feelings. This is outrageous,” said Flores, a noted cultural historian and musician. “This is Trump’s Katrina. We’re in a dire situation. There is no electricity; people are waiting in line eight, nine hours for gasoline, food and other needs. Right now, we need the United States Army trucks and drivers. There’s no housing...we need cruise ships to come in.”

Flores continued: “We also need to secure the streets. Armed gangs are roaming. This is horrific. We’ve been shunned, pushed to the side.”

Flores said that she had been in contact with family in Puerto Rico, despite the communications difficulties. She assailed the Trump administration for its slow response

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Alberta Commons Commercial Affordability Program

As the construction of Alberta Commons nears completion, Prosper Portland is beginning a first review of applications for its affordable commercial tenancy program at the site. The program will follow a rolling, first-come first-serve review process until all spaces are filled in the Natural Grocers-anchored project on the corner of NE Martin Luther King Boulevard and

ic development agency, Prosper Portland continues to support small business and maintains its commitment to support development opportunities to meet community needs. In addition, every project, program or investment now begins with the question: Who will benefit, and how will the agency ensure that equity and inclusion are central considerations in both the process and the outcome?

“The program offers small, diverse businesses access to affordable commercial space

NE Alberta Street.

Prosper Portland is committed to the success of Alberta Commons to provide needed goods and services to the neighborhood and create lasting, beneficial relationships with the Northeast community.

The agency launched the affordable tenancy program to address a recent dramatic increase in retail rents and decrease in vacancy rates in the city of Portland which have resulted in the displacement of small businesses from Portland's urban neighborhoods. The program offers small, diverse businesses access to affordable commercial space to grow and succeed, advancing Prosper Portland's commitment to generating equitable outcomes from its investments that contribute to shared prosperity throughout Portland.

As an agency, Prosper Portland has embarked on a strategic direction that focuses on building an equitable economy. We work very intentionally on projects and initiatives that realize benefits for all Portlanders – especially Portlanders of color and Portlanders with low incomes – by focusing on four cornerstones: creating vibrant neighborhoods and communities, job creation, advancing opportunities for prosperity and collaborating with partners for an equitable city.

As the city's econom-

That is the thinking behind Prosper Portland's investment in affordable commercial space, not only at Alberta Commons but also at two sites in the Lents Town Center and other locations in the future.

Alberta Commons presents a unique opportunity for small businesses, including those owned by people of color, women, and those from low-income neighborhoods, to gain a foothold in the retail mix of the area. The new tenancy program offers affordable commercial space; lease priority to existing local businesses, particularly those owned by people of color; tenant improvement allowance and/or reduced rates; opportunity to build community among tenants; and connections to business-building resources, all designed to lower the barriers to entry for small and emerging businesses.

Available space in the affordable tenancy program at Alberta Commons totals 5,125 square feet and can be divided into smaller units.

For more information visit prosperportland.us or contact program manager Alison Wicks, 503-823-3949 or wicksa@prosperportland.us. Prospective tenants may also reach out to the project broker, Jessie Burke, Workspace, 503-862-3416 or jessie@urbanestpdx.com for more information.

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