

2012: A Year of Promise

Vieques has been suffering from severe budget constraints and extreme local unemployment that have created economic misery and a true depression. But there is some good news and reason to be optimistic about our situation in 2012.

Despite governments' efforts to stimulate the economy from top to bottom, it has taken time to move projects through the stages of planning and into construction. Finally, however, good things are evolving: we have reached the beginning of an explosion of new community projects and programs. Mayor Evelyn Delorme Comacho is overseeing millions of dollars in new construction throughout the island in the coming year.

The mayor's voluminous list of budgeted and funded projects includes:

- \$ 65,000 Alcacia – restoration of the tower and overall painting
- \$ 60,000 Casa de Ursina Guzman
- \$275,000 Multiple Use Center
- \$269,000 Gonzales Carmareno Coliseum
- \$300,000 Housing rehabilitation – Federal funds
- \$630,000 Police – Move to Ernesto Rosario School plus new equipment
- \$ 10,000 Skateboard track – Parque 22 de Marzo
- \$225,000 Improvements for new youth affairs office
- \$250,000 Malecon del Norte – Phase I – Gringo Beach area
- \$250,000 Alcacia – rehabilitation work
- \$200,000 Hogar Infantil
- \$500,000 Parque Pasivo
- \$275,000 Nelson Dieppa Coliseum – make operational
- \$100,000 Ball court – Secondary school
- \$221,500 Municipal parking lot
- \$ 50,000 Centro Comunal
- \$ 60,000 Antigua Escuela Eugenio Maria de Hostos
- \$ 65,000 Municipal legislatura
- \$100,000 Refugio (Refuge)
- \$477,000 Artesanos (Artisans)
- \$300,000 Road construction

These projects represent \$4,682,500 worth of work beginning now. Over \$4,000,000 of new road work is being initiated all over the island. Additionally, a contract for \$8,000,000 has been awarded for the re-construction of the new ferry terminal in Isabel Segunda.

Other approved projects that should move forward soon are:

- \$ 30,000 Housing rehabilitation
- \$ 30,000 Sidewalks and gutters
- \$ 15,000 School of Fine Arts Mobile
- \$250,000 Ball court in Las Marias
- \$150,000 Ball court at German Rieckehoff School

- \$750,000 Park in Florida - Federal funds
- \$ 24,000 Humane Society
- \$ 75,000 Weight lifting gym – former municipal archive
- \$700,000 Punto Faro improvements
- \$400,000 Mambiche bridge
- \$500,000 North Fishing Village

Another \$4,000,000 has been earmarked for 1st phase improvements to the unfinished and abandoned sports complex in Lujan. The municipality became owner of the facility (including 52 cuerdas) last year.

Several more projects (totaling over \$4,000,000) are in the process of finishing up or have already been completed this year:

- School of Fine Arts
- VA (Veterans) clinic
- Cemetary expansion
- Water services to Monte Carmelo
- Malecon (Esperanza)
- Rehabilitation of the disability center
- Gobeo bridge in Florida

Las Marias has seen the completion of 83 housing units for low income families. So far, 33 families have completed the screening process and are currently enjoying life in Coca Gonzales (\$11,700,000 PR government project). Vetting of the applicants is quite thorough. All units are expected to be filled by March.

Other programs:

- Vieques Basket - \$200,000 has been allocated to an extensive island wide basketball program for young people.
- Proyecto Senda (Project Path) - a new program to assist those needing medical care on Isla Grande for multiple days. It will enable patients to remain off island as required and bring them back when they are able.
- Under Law 52, 105 government related employment opportunities (jobs) have been authorized for Vieques.

The above progress is the result of much effort on the part of our municipal government and is great news for Vieques. We get many needed improvements and additional economic activities at the same time: a true win-win!