

Bronze Award Latin America

Urban regeneration master plan, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

Project data

Project group Landscape, urban design and infrastructure projects
Client Secretary of Social Development
Project background Public commission
Estimated start of construction July 2011



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Comment of the Holcim Awards jury Latin America

The jury was impressed by the thoughtful and uncomplicated approach. The project has a great potential not to remain a singular action, but generate an impact for the local communities and neighborhoods and thus the entire city on an urban scale. Highly appreciated elements were the versatile focus, the inclusive approach to community workshops and NGOs, as well as the high aesthetic quality which validates the entire action of reuniting the society.

Project description by author

The increased violence in Ciudad Juárez that has resulted from its strategic position in drugs and arms trafficking and the current administration's anti-drug trafficking program has resulted in 3,000 murders in the city in 2008 alone, becoming one of the most dangerous cities in the world. As a reaction, the federal government has launched the "We are all Juárez" strategy to radically improve the city's social, economic and physical conditions. The strategy is composed of 160 government commitments to address the safety concerns of Juáreznses. The Master Plan for the northwest sector of Ciudad Juárez is one of these projects, creating public spaces that provide economic, educational and recreational activities that will mitigate delinquency, reduce environmental risks and strengthen community networks.

The current social, economic and territorial conditions of Ciudad Juárez are a clear result of its border morphology. The intense textile industry that has risen along the US-Mexico border has served as the greatest source of employment – 70% of the working population – and the main economic engine of the city. However, the lack of proper urban infrastructure such as medical and educational facilities, public services, jobs and economic activities in the peripheral areas creates isolated low-income communities with unfavorable living conditions that provoke domestic violence, gang membership and eventually lead to organized crime.

The strategy for the northwest sector of Ciudad Juárez is based on encouraging social integration through physical improvements and the creation of places for economic, cultural, educational and recreational activities. The proposal was developed based on participatory workshops that were held with the local community in Ciudad Juárez to understand the needs and wants of its members. More than 75 community members provided programmatic and design ideas for their new center. The community's proposals were translated in an integrated program and architectural proposal that will decrease environmental risks, mitigate the current rates of violence and create a healthy, active neighborhood.

Through the transformation of two existing water retention basins, new public spaces are created while preventing the imminent flood risks to the area by captivating natural rainwater. These spaces include agricultural terraces, workshops, commercial lots, playgrounds, sports facilities, a skate park and progressive housing units; that will all contribute to activating and creating a more cohesive community as well as empowering the inhabitant's local economy and providing local food and other products. Recreational spaces ensure that children, young Juáreznses, senior citizens and handicapped people are included. This resilient space will grant the community more autonomy from the city center and provide better environmental, social and economic conditions for this Juárez neighborhood.

Relevance to target issues by author

Innovation and transferability – Progress

The project is based on basic building technology which not only would keep the costs very low but also would allow the participation of the community in the construction process. By doing this the acquired knowledge would be transmitted to others. It is innovative in the way that new public spaces are proposed that would not only serve as recreational but also as productive spaces that would reinforce the sense of community of the area.

Ethical standards and social equity – People

Due to the character of the project, its main focus was to improve the social conditions in the northwest sector of Ciudad Juárez. It is only by attending the social aspects that the crime and delinquency rates can diminish. With community workshops the needs and wishes from the inhabitants were addressed and eventually solved programmatically as well as spatially. A link between the government, NGOs and the inhabitants was established, while the role of the architects and urban planners was to serve as mediators. The involvement of the inhabitants since the first stages of the project ensures the project's preservation.

Environmental quality and resource efficiency – Planet

The risk of flash floods in the area in combination with unpaved roads and eroded slopes make it difficult for the inhabitants to feel safe in their houses. The consolidation of the existing water retention basins not only would prevent further floods in the area but at the same time it would tackle environmental issues by re-using the contained water. The addition of local vegetation would reduce dramatically the impact of heat waves in the area as well as the frequent dust storms. New land use and density policies would allow a more condensed city that would take advantage of the existing infrastructure. The implementation of a new BRT (bus rapid transit) line would decrease the dependency on the auto while non-motorized modes of mobility are encouraged through the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian paths.

Economic performance and compatibility – Prosperity

The project proposes alternative modes of financing the proposal, and of providing the maintenance needed for the public spaces. The community is involved from an early stage, based on participatory workshops we explore the different possibilities to strengthen their local economy. The series of economic and productive activities carried out in the retention basins would provide extra income for the inhabitants while it ensures resources over the project's life for its preservation.

Contextual and aesthetic impact – Proficiency

The improvement of the context is an imminent result of the improvement of such residual spaces as the neglected retention basins. The consolidation of sidewalks and paving of streets as well as the introduction of vegetation would lift the neighborhood not only aesthetically but also socially. The disciplines of architecture, urbanism and landscape design are tackled by the project, creating a coherent strategy that goes from the general to the particular.



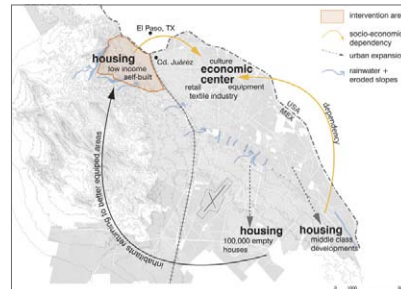
The transformed retention basin includes spaces for community workshops and local commerce, acting as a complement to an existing community center.



PROGRAM

1. Plaza and temporary market over a parking lot
2. Community workshops complex
3. Self constructed social housing program
4. Garcia retention basin
5. Linear Park
6. Balderas retention basin

The conversion of retention basins into public spaces seeks to activate the neighborhood socially and economically in order to mitigate the current violence rates.



Socio-economic processes.

SUSTAINABILITY			
	SOCIAL	ECONOMIC	ENVIRONMENTAL
SAFETY	security	autonomous economic engines	natural disaster prevention
ACCESSIBILITY	universal access	multicentralized communication / services	non polluting mobility
DENSITY AND LAND USE	engaged communities	efficient footprint = effective mix use	low carbon footprint
PUBLIC SPACE	as spaces of social interaction	areas for local production	retention basin as a park

Scopes of sustainability.



Social and spatial marginality.



Community workshop.



Neglected retention basin.



New park / local workshops.



Risk due to eroded slope.



Skatepark / urban agriculture.