

Aguada Flood-Park: Recovering a Post-Industrial Urban Stream in Santiago de Chile

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The Santiago Inner Ring Initiative is an Urban Recovery Strategy promoted by the Chilean government as one of the emblematic projects for the celebration of the bicentenary of the Republic in 2010. The inner ring concept was developed early on by a group of students and researchers at the Universidad Católica,¹ who detected the opportunities for recovering the urban areas degraded by the presence of abandoned railway infrastructure and under-utilized industrial zones around the old belt-line of Santiago. The development potentially covers about 250 hectares located near the center of the city, most of which is owned by the State Railway Company, the Office of National Assets, the Housing and City Planning Service (*SERVU*), and some municipalities. This significant amount of land owned by governmental agencies makes it possible to implement a strategic management plan that is driven by the public sector.

The Inner Ring Initiative aims to create the conditions necessary to convert degraded areas into neighborhoods equipped with better public spaces, new green areas, community services, and enhanced connectivity and transportation.² These improvements will trigger the necessary real estate development to increase building density in the city center, reduction of travel time and pollution, and the creation of a new urban image for this neglected section of Santiago. The old railway line coincides with the boundary between the municipalities of Santiago and the twelve municipalities that surround it; an inter-district sector structured over four axes: the Mapocho River to the north, Exposición and Matucana Avenues to the west, the Zanjón de la Aguada to the south, and Vicuña Mackenna Avenue to the east. Fig. 1

The inter-district nature of the ring required a strategy based on high levels of community participation, from the preparation of the diagnosis to the definition of the Urban Master Plan that would incorporate local expectations. In this context the *Aguada Park* concept



Fig. 1: Scheme of downtown Santiago depicting the area comprised by the Inner Ring Initiative, red lines correspond to former rail yards.

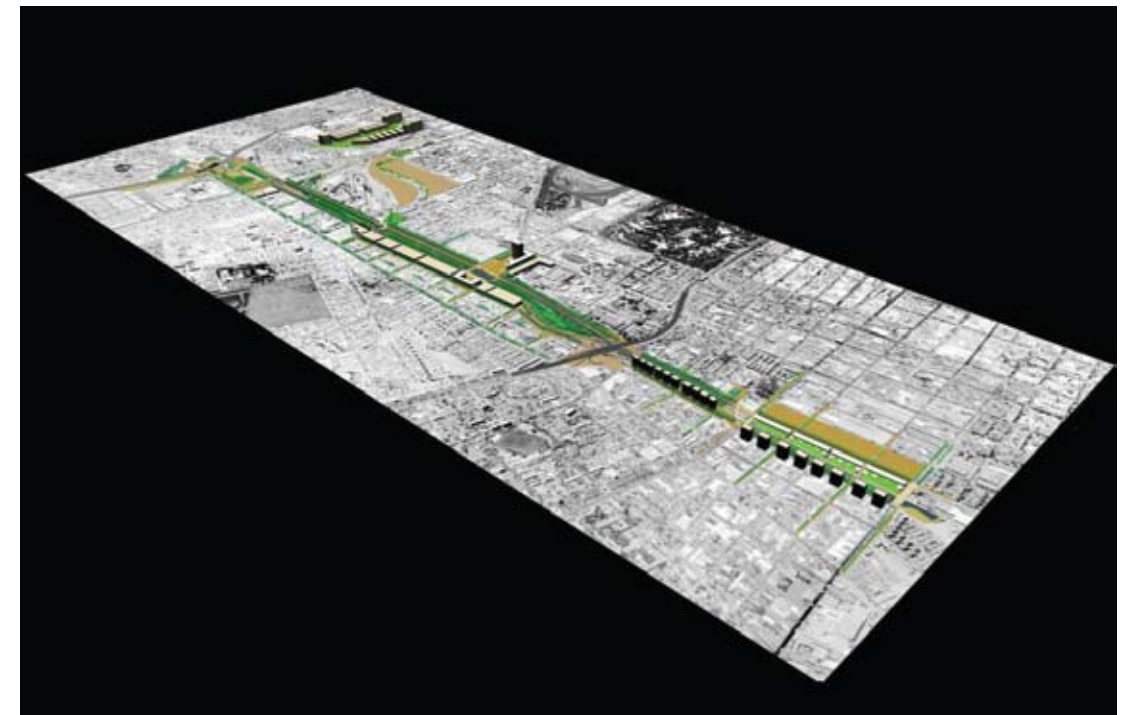


Fig. 2: Schematic aerial view of the *Aguada Flood-Park*.

¹ Presented in 1995 as part of their undergraduate thesis work, Marcelo Reyes and Roberto Moris under the guidance of Professors Gustavo Munizaga and José Rosas presented the opportunity opened by the vacant rail yards surrounding downtown Santiago. The proposal was later presented in early 2000 by Hans Muhr and a group of researchers at the Pontificia Universidad Católica to the Presidential Bicentennial committee in order to be considered among the priority urban projects by the government.

² The potential of this area has been recently recognized with a significant amount of investment, both public and private, including new urban highway concessions, the extension of the subway system (Metro), the recent construction of the 120,000 m² New Justice Center, the Quinta Normal Intermodal Station, the Matucana 100 Cultural Center, and the new Regional Library, totaling more than US\$ 350 million in construction and implementation.