The increased violence rates in Ciudad Juárez resulting from its strategic position in the drugs and arms trafficking and the current administration’s war on drugs has reached almost 10,000 casualties since 2007, making Ciudad Juárez one of the most dangerous cities in the world.

The current social, economic and territorial conditions of Ciudad Juárez are a clear result of its border characteristics. The textile industry that has risen from the US-Mexico border has served as the greatest source of employment (70% of the working population) and has become 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 northwest sector is clearly one of the most affected areas with a weakened local economy affected, not only from the job dependency in the city center and industrial areas, but also from the extortions of local retail. 9,653 casualties in Cd. Juárez since 2007. 80% of the commerce has closed due to extortions. 70% of total population is employed in maquiladoras.

A. CIUDAD JUÁREZ

Urban Regeneration Master Plan, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.
An alternative to counter violence while reconstructing community

As a reaction to the Juárez current situation, the federal government has launched the “We are all Juárez” strategy, composed of 160 “commitments” or projects to address issues of security. The involvement of the ministries of security, economy, health, social development, education and job creation is crucial for its success.

The master plan for the Northwest sector is one of these projects. It seeks to strengthen existing public services and infrastructure in the Francisco I. Madero neighborhood, while creating new safe public spaces.

In our proposal the sense of security is not created by federal police reinforcement, rather it comes from the creation of community-based public spaces, encouraging social integration through physical improvements of the built environment.

The existing community center has already been renewed and the complementary public spaces will use two existing water retention basins to create seasonal parks that include productive and recreational activities. These small-scale interventions can lead to a decrease in crime rate and a reduction of the environmental risks but most important to an improvement in the quality of life.
Participatory workshop

The protocols of design deployment seek to understand the multiple stakeholders involved in the project while recognizing the neighborhood’s community as the main actor. The community workshops, held at the local community center, were a key factor in understanding the collective needs and aspirations. More than 70 community members provided programmatic and design ideas for their new center. The community’s ideas were translated into an integrated program and architectural proposal that will decrease environmental risks, mitigate the current rates of violence and create a healthy, active neighborhood.

Different activities such as surveys and walkthroughs were an important part of the workshop, while our role focused on making visible their potentials, integrating and communicating them.

Four main strategic categories were identified in the workshop: security, land use and density, accessibility, and social and environmental interventions.

Survey results

Which improvement do you need most urgently?

- Yes: 30%
- No: 70%

Do you perceive a sense of community?

- Yes: 82%
- No: 18%

What should a public space include?

- Playground: 16%
- Streets: 7%
- Vegetation: 17%
- Lighting: 21%
- Neighboring watch: 9%
- Public space: 28%
- Parks: 7%
- Others: 18%

Which actions could improve your sense of safety?

- Minimal: 17%
- Others: 7%

Which is the biggest issue in your neighborhood?

- Minimal: 17%
- Others: 28%
Productive public spaces

The performance of the public space is the result of a combination of activities that respond to the current economic, social and environmental demands of the neighborhood. Through the transformation of two existing water retention basins, new seasonal public spaces are created while preventing the imminent flood risks by containing rainwater.

The prosperity is embedded in the spaces for local modes of production. A community workshop building complements the community center while earning more autonomy from it. The configuration is flexible and it can grow with the users needs. An area for urban agriculture is reserved on the style to provide local food and activities for senior citizens. The new progressive social housing has a commercial plinth, to ensure street activation through local retail development.

The series of economic and productive activities carried out in the retention basins would provide not only an extra income for the inhabitants but also will ensure resources over the projects necessary for its preservation.

$ 2. PROSPERITY

Urban Regeneration Master Plan, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.
Progressive social housing

The project is based on local building technology, which not only would keep the costs low but also would allow the participation of the community in the construction process. By doing this, the knowledge acquired would be transmitted to others, reinforcing the educational process.

One of the most visible examples of progress would be the innovative social housing model created in order to introduce higher density and mixed use in the neighborhood. The housing units are proposed as modules that could expand either by its own inhabitants or by other federal housing programs, such as 4x4 SEDESOL’s program. This program currently provides a detached room for the houses, by integrating it in our proposed modules, the inhabitants will take advantage of the program.
Water infrastructure as public space

The risk of flash floods in the area is in combination with unpaved roads and eroded slopes make it difficult for the inhabitants to feel safe in their own 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 treated water. On the other hand, an increment on the local vegetation would dramatically reduce the 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 line would decrease the car dependency while non-motorized modes of mobility are encouraged through the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian paths.

The Gordo’s retention basin is a good example of how these water infrastructure facilities can house other recreational and productive uses, such as the skate park, and the agricultural terraces.
Proposed street sections

1. MAIN COMMERCIAL STREET

2. "GREEN" STREET

3. STREET WITH TEMPORARY MARKET

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 pavement 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 tasked the project higher, creating a coherent strategy that goes from the general to the particular.

The strategy’s strength relies on its replicability. The identification of similar conditions and situations in Juarez leads not only to a specific design but also to a broader array of protocols that can trigger new interventions. The success of a safe public space and a better quality of life relies on the combination of these elements and the engagement with their community. When the strategy replicates a complete sense of security is spread through the neighborhood.

Replicability

5. PROFICIENCY