



Urban Agenda Platform

The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.

Date Tu Casa (Give Yourself a House)

Region	Latin America and the Caribbean
Award Scheme	Guangzhou Award
Themes	Housing Slum Upgrading
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Summary

The local government of Curridabat through its official vision Sweet City (approved by the citizens through the 2016-2010 Government Plan) seeks to improve the experience of city inhabitants by focusing on five overlapping dimensions: Biodiversity, Infrastructure, Habitat, Coexistence and Productivity.

Background and Objective

Under this vision, the Municipality encourages planned/strategic investment in its territory through the Municipal Regulatory Plan, Spaces of Sweetness (Curridabat's master plans that have been developed through inclusive community design processes and has recently won a UN Habitat Award), and other innovative planning tools. The Municipality has sought to improve and update its Municipal Regulatory Plan in order to densify urban areas historically used for low-density residences. This means re-activating land use towards more modern, sustainable and optimal uses. This new plan, approved in 2013, and winner of a CNU Charter Award for Best City Plan in 2014, discourages horizontal expansion of the city, and stimulates vertical construction by offsetting building height with area devoted to public space, hence furthering the pacification and improvement of the pedestrian experience and the "beautification" of a small-size city (that was built without beauty and landscaping base concepts). These measures seek to prevent further stress on limited natural resources and promote local economic development. Previous versions of the Municipal Regulatory Plan segregated the city into mainly single-use areas, like industrial zones and residential zones. The new plan allows and promotes mixed-use zones, in which housing and commerce can occur in a more organic and harmonious way within the city, creating local job opportunities and closeness such that fewer time and resources are spent travelling and commuting. This will help Curridabat in its evolution towards a more pedestrian-friendly city.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION Date Tu Casa (Give Yourself a House) seeks to focus on the dimensions of Habitat and Coexistence in order to offer solutions (corrective models) to particular market problems that negatively affect our citizens. This case corresponds to the local real estate market, which is currently establishing barriers to housing access for the middle economic strata of the population and has already started to unleash serious gentrification problems in the community. The Municipality has identified an unequal use of its territory, where low residential density has limited the densification of the most urban parts of the city, and where increasing property costs (due to capital gain/higher commercial activity, strategic location within the Metropolitan area, local government reliability) have marginalized sectors of the population when it comes to maintaining or acquiring their own home. This project would break socio-economic paradigms by seeking to aggregate and empower the demand and provide the necessary tools to solve their needs, fostering an organized community with a collaborative spirit. The initial surveys registered more than 3,600 people interested in participating, and has touched multiple institutions, financial entities and associations.

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aggregated and coordinated demand in achieving common interests and the development of an inclusive city. This project launched in February of 2018, and has already identified its first citizen cluster. Currently, the members of this cluster are being guided through the process of securing credit, and construction of the first apartment building is expected to begin in early 2019. At the moment the project is mainly a public-community partnership but is also becoming a public-public partnership. At a public level, the project is being promoted and financed initially by the Municipality of Curridabat. The Municipality developed the idea and hired the services of private companies that were willing to participate in this prototype, which includes to be part of an innovative open contract with the Municipality. One of these companies is MERIDIA Desarrollos, which specializes in project management, and acts as a facilitator of collaborative processes and cost calculations. Another one is the legal advisory firm Deloitte, as support in the legal structuring and agreements between the parties. The urbanism advisory firm Tandem provides support on sustainability-oriented render design, construction costs and compliance with the Municipality Regulatory Plan. In addition, a massive campaign was carried out in local media and social networks. A database of 3,600+ people interested in participating in this innovative project and in shaping this new community was created. To date, and after several filters, there are 32 family cores ready to move forward with the process. Additionally, the project has been supported by the Ministry of Housing and Human Settlements (MIVAH), the National Bank of Costa Rica (BNCR), the National Housing Bank (BANHVI), as well as other public institutions and private companies. Due to the recently elected Central Government and the most recent housing public policies, some agreements are positively advancing. One of the most attractive solutions at the moment is looking at feasible investors in the financial market, and the possibilities range from national public banks, to specialized social development banks to large co-op organizations and financial associations. An innovative project where non-organized community participation is sought, and which also has limited resources, requires an initial economic boost. The Municipality of Curridabat has provided a share of these initial costs procuring the project management services of MERIDIA, the legal advice of Deloitte and the urban planning expertise of Tandem, as well as a massive media campaign through the Municipality Communications team and Double Digit (an advertising firm). These companies are responsible for developing a feasible model for affordable housing within the city, targeted at mid-level income families, who are not eligible for government handouts, but are also not ideal candidates for bank loans. The most important contribution is in human terms: citizens that are willing to talk, to negotiate, to coordinate and to invest time in achieving their lifestyle goals.

Outcomes and Impacts

The expected results for the project are to Create a new bottom-up/collaborative housing development model that is easily replicable inside and outside Curridabat Resolve the absence of financial solutions for a significant sector of the population Promote sustainable housing solutions Integrate (provide inclusiveness) mid-income population into well-located and up-and-coming neighborhoods Promote multi-level governance through real successful cases Densify Curridabat through vertical sustainable solutions and activate the economy through mixed land uses This project aims to improve quality of life, new levels of economic and environmental sustainability, new attitudes and behavior. The goal is for the pilot project to have a national impact, not only a local one. This is mainly due to the Central Government interests and support. Within the achieved outcomes, we should mention that we are already working with a very active and engaged group of people that meets every week and are organized through "role committees". The project is still at an early stage to be able to measure its impact. However, once concluded, success could be determined if two main changes are met: It was possible to solve a need for housing to the largest possible group, generating an innovative financing model, promoting sustainable architecture and in tune with the tastes and preferences of the target families. This project is replicated following an improved methodology based on the lessons learned and the new tools created. The process is being documented since the beginning by the project manager advisor MERIDIA. To implement the project, the municipality has developed several tools: New public-private contracting model (made on a demand basis, which means that the Municipality pays in accordance to different type of professional hours -invested in the project- even if the expected results varies). Aggregation and research of public demand for housing. For the first time a local government is concerned with taking a leading role, researching citizen demand in terms of housing, aggregating this demand, organizing it and facilitating the process for the development of its solution. New financial model. There have been multiple work sessions with different financial institutions and governing entities of the housing sector, where we are looking to create a new financial structure that allows the development of the solution. Work methodology. It has sought to facilitate channels of communication and understanding among the participants, where work committees have been formed for specific objectives. The committees are organized and led by the contracted facilitating company (MERIDIA), however the decision-making rests upon the final beneficiaries. The project will seek to create a new model of development and financing of housing, which would not only empower Curridabat as a leading city in terms of innovation, but would also show that it is possible to generate common ground and meeting points among people who have never met before, but who can come together to resolve their challenges and needs in a collaborative way. The Municipality is committed with inclusiveness. Also, we aim to change the market real-estate rules and organically regulate housing prices on a mid-term period.

Innovative Initiative

The project would be catalogued as revolutionary, understanding that it would be the first time a project like this has been proposed in the country, and that the experience that was used as a base was taken from references of South American nations. However, there are particularities that make this project unique, such as the limited capacity for savings and credit of target families, the public and private involvement, and the methodology of organization that



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has been used. The innovation of the project is applied on several fronts: Public-private contracting process: Which is regularly very limited for innovation, as you are required to specify every detail of the process and the expected results. It took several months to design and publish the official bid paper under the legal government framework. New model of real estate development. The base of this model is that public housing demand dictates the necessary mechanisms to satisfy people's needs, instead of third parties (development companies) promoting a solution to which housing demand must adapt. Collaborative community. Being a vertical housing development, people must learn to collaborate with each other from the earliest stages of development, providing from the beginning a feeling of belonging and community. Creative financing model. The unsatisfied demand for housing in the country covers a sector of society that does not have significant savings capacity nor are they subject to a credit in the amounts necessary to acquire a typical market dwelling. This model aims to create a structure that adapts to the real capacities of each family, where the housing solution would be provided, and at the same time the family would be given the necessary time to accumulate savings or increase its income, which would allow them to opt for a final credit to purchase it. The schemes will possibly involve a mix between housing leasing (not a model currently used in the country), a rent-with-purchase option, trusts and project development funds. Homogenization. The citizen clusters have been analyzed in a way that seeks to identify common interests and preferences, promoting harmony in the process and in the future coexistence of these new neighbours. Multi-level governance policy. To date, several important challenges have been encountered: Government contracting framework which is not designed for innovation processes. It was overcome through profound legal and strategic analysis to accommodate the project and fit. Confidence of the participants: Every pioneer project must always face the first challenge of earning the trust of its target population, since the probabilities of long-term success are not clear from the start and remain nebulous throughout the process. Financial regulation: To date, there are no regulations in the country that allow offering adequate financial solutions to these families, and there are no important incentives given the rigorous legislation to which every financial institution must submit. It is being overcome through intense communication (face to face, phone, meetings), transparency, media campaign, national TV interviews. Availability of land: most of the land plots available in urban areas in the city are relatively small, which limits the possibilities of development. In addition, in many cases, the land is quite expensive, which in turn makes the final housing solution more expensive. We have been tackling this situation working closely with land owners and offering them to be part of the project and receive commercial and housing units in exchange for the land they provide and other strategies. Managing expectations: Many of the people who expressed interest in the project and filled out the survey had different expectations about its nature, which has resulted in a loss of participants due to not meeting important financial or social criteria.

Conclusion

At the local level, the municipality is committed to the project and will seek replication once the success of this first pilot is achieved. The way in which it would be promoted would be the same as what has been done to date, investigating citizen demand and collaborating with the private sector to aggregate said demand and create the technical, financial and legal structure to solve the citizenry's needs. The project can be easily replicable in other cities given the principles promoted and the fact that there will always be a level of unmet citizen demand. Under the Sweet City vision this project aims to be a model for small and medium sized cities, especially within the latinoamerican conditions. RELEVANCE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Target 1: Access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for all