



# A GREENER AND MORE CONNECTED CITY

A new urban highway and the adjacent system of pedestrian green spaces in Buenos Aires City

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Buenos Aires, Argentina, is the country's largest city and the second largest city in Latin America, with a total area of 200 square kilometers and almost 3 million people living in the city proper (13.5 million people in the metropolitan area). Originally founded on the western shores of the Río de La Plata (a river which stretches 220 kilometers where it meets the Atlantic Ocean), Buenos Aires has grown by claiming land from the river and also by concentrating urban growth in the extensive available plains located to the south, west and north of the original settlements and port.

The Central Area, which displays the country's most important institutional, financial and cultural buildings, such as the Pink House (the official workplace of the president of Argentina), is adjacent to Madero Port (Puerto Madero), a 170 hectare-area which was fully developed during the 1990s. This piece of land adjacent to the river and a 350 hectare-Ecological Preserve was the object of a large urban transformation process which renovated the deactivated city's first port and the adjacent abandoned areas; almost thirty years later Puerto Madero is one of the most completed,



culturally diverse, visited and iconic districts of Buenos Aires. However, the lack of pedestrian connections with the central area and a fine vehicular connection with the rest of the city, especially in the north-south direction, was a problem never solved which grew stronger over time.

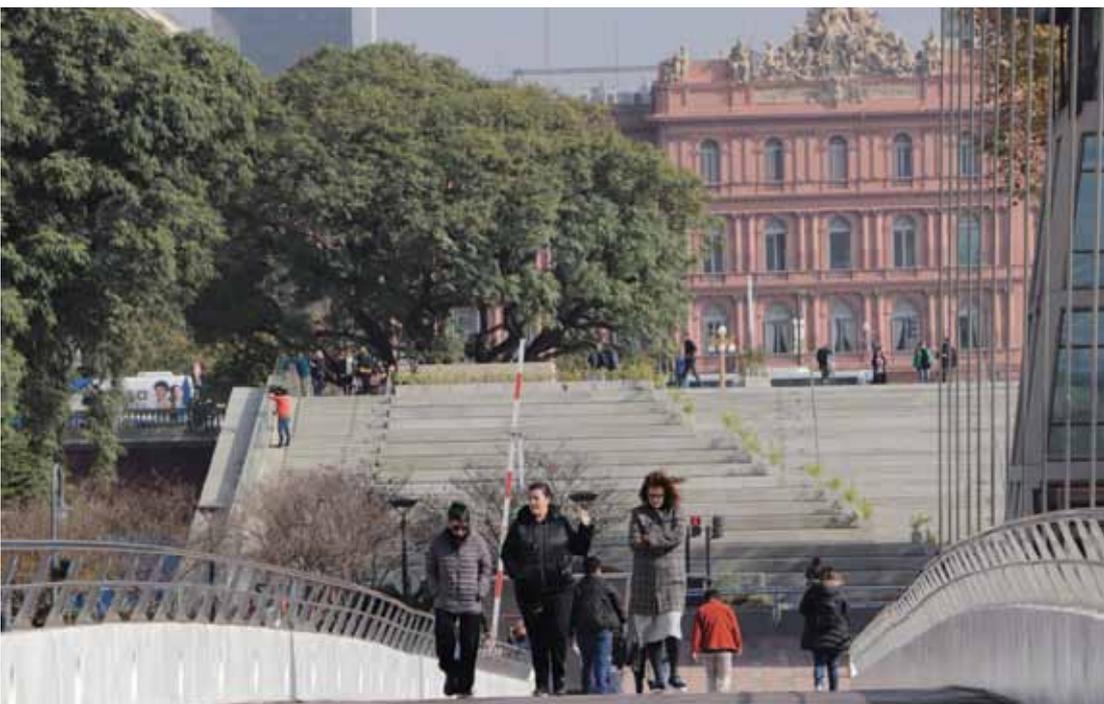
In 2016 the National Government requested the funds (a loan covering up to 60% of the project's total cost) from the Latin American Bank of Development and in 2017 started the redesign and construction of a new highway, connecting the north and south ends of the city's central area. Now, a new seven kilometer-long highway runs below-grade along the western border of Madero Port and its four lanes are restricted to trucks and long-distance buses, generating a car-only avenue at ground-level and a new 10 hectare-system of pedestrian-oriented connections, promenades, plazas and green spaces in the Central Area.

With the object of incorporating a coherent and contemporaneous layout to these new public spaces Madero Port Corporation (Corporación Puerto Madero:

the public-private partnership created in 1989 for the port area's urbanization) carried out a previous comprehensive research and conceptual planning work which set the basis for a national call for designs. In 2017 the City Government, the Madero Port Corporation and the Central Society of Architects launched a national call for the redesign of these areas and for those making up the linear park adjacent to the new highway below-grade, completing a total of new 20 hectares of green spaces in the most central areas of the city.

Before the launch of this competition many steps had to be followed and important decisions had to be made by all institutions involved. In regard to land conversion, a new law passed by the City Legislature in 2017 established that the formerly anticipated Urban Renovation uses would be switched to Park uses. Also, the City's Ministry of Urban Planning worked on the geometric redesign of some specific streets and physical aspects in the central area, the most determining being the reconfiguration of the curve which borders the Pink House's gardens which allowed the creation of a pedestrian-only large promenade connecting north and south ends.

The geometric redesign of this very significant space in the city meant also the relocation of the presidential helipad and the redistribution of some of the most important historic monuments and statues. Certainly, the most meaningful relocation was that of the Monument to South American heroine Juana Azurduy; located in the Pink House's gardens since 2015, weighing up to 25 tons and 9 meter-high, this huge bronze sculpture is now resting on a 3 meter-high pedestal and positioned in the new plaza built in front of a historic and recently renovated Cultural Center. Standing alone and beautiful,





## URBAN DEVELOPMENT



now the figure of the female warrior can be fully appreciated by people walking by.

These kinds of new urban situations, which accompany the implementation of the new highway and its adjacent spaces, are the result of the ideas proposed by the winning team of the aforementioned competition.

This team anticipated a series of novel spaces which seek to 1) strengthen the pedestrian reconnection between the city's Central Area, Puerto Madero and the riverfront (west-east direction) and, in turn, 2) implement a system of separate green pieces extending along the new highway (north-south direction), establishing a linear park with recreational and tourist purposes.

In this sense, the most attractive idea of the team's proposal, or at least the most successfully implemented and embraced by locals in their everyday lives, was the incorporation of a 60-meter wide staircase which negotiates the existing changes in elevation between the two affected areas of the city. Positioned right at the intersection of the west-east axis of the Pink House and the north-south axis of Puerto Madero and the new highway, this large staircase and upper promenade now offer not only a natural connection for pedestrians but also a grand belvedere-like situation, creating new vistas that open up to the docks, the marinas and the distant skyscrapers. This large stairs are also lined up with the Woman's Bridge (Puente de la Mujer), the iconic footbridge of sleek and elegantly curved lines, designed by the globally renowned architect Santiago Calatrava (2001).

This very large urban transformation, whose first stages were just completed and whose last are slated for completion at the end of this year, has utterly changed the dynamics of a vital area in the city.

The acceptance with which locals have responded to the big changes and the delight with which tourists walk the new areas prove how necessary the interconnection of spaces and generation of pedestrian-friendly and green designs were in this central area of the city. The inclusion of extensive planted areas exhibiting only native species, the preservation of large existing trees which are another local landmark in Buenos Aires and the construction of new underground bus parking spaces which at ground level appear as small plazas and green spaces are all separate incorporations which make up one large integrative landscape plan.

Today, the sum of all new and renovated pieces provides an institutional, dignified and symbolic setting for the governmental structures, museums and monuments in the central area and a fresh inviting design for the physical connection with Puerto Madero and the linear park by the new highway.



Location: City of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Date of Completion: First stage: August 2019

Area of the project: 20 hectares (finished: 10 hectares).

National Competition's First Prize and Project's Consultants:

Daniel Becker, Sergio Cavalli, Agustín Olivieri, Joan Marantz.

Previous Research and Conceptual Planning: Corporación

Puerto Madero, Project Managers: Marcela Suarez, Eduardo Albanese.

Project Planning and Construction: Ministry of Transport and

Urban Development (Minister F. Moccia) / Subsecretary of

Planning: SS Carlos Colombo / Subsecretary of Projects: SS

Álvaro García Resta, Director: Martín Torrado / Subsecretary

of Site Works: SS Marcelo Palacio, Director: Gabriel Rosales,

Site's Coordinator: Gustavo Ojeda Ton

Project Documentation and Detail Design: General Direction

of Architecture: R.Szraiber, N.Pinto Da Mota, S.Pietragalli,

H.Sanchez, B.Belascoain, M.Menéndez, M.Cohen /

Landscape Designers: G.Raffo, V.Nerome.