

Venerable Priests Residence, Bilbao

Virgen de Begoña, 41 (48006 / Distrito 4: Begoña)

The Venerable Priests Residence stands as an iconic building located in the heart of the city, with a rich history and impressive architecture that combines historical elements with modern flair. Originally built as a place of residence for elderly clergymen, the building has witnessed important moments over the years. Among its strengths is its central and accessible location, making it an ideal place for cultural and social activities. The building is surrounded by gardens and fields, providing opportunities for different outdoor activities: vegetable gardens, an outdoor dining area and a space for events. However, the building also faces some challenges, such as the need for renovation and modernization to adapt to present-day

demands and meet sustainability and accessibility standards. The site owners, Bilbao municipality and BBK Foundation, aim to transform the building into an innovative hub for sustainability and inclusion, with a central focus on gastronomy. The vision for this site is to host an innovative restaurant concept, with a focus on sustainability and food waste reduction. Additionally, the site will feature educational facilities and other activities. The redevelopment represents a unique opportunity to revitalise a historic building and turn it into an engine of positive change for the community through innovative initiatives in sustainability and inclusion, with gastronomy at the core.



Plot Area:

Total site area is 3.603,30 m².
PB, P1, P2 = 982,64m² (above the surface)
P-1 (basement floor)= 372.46 m² (below the surface)

Expected Land Use: The overarching vision for the site revolves around sustainability and inclusivity, with a focus on sustainable food production and consumption.

Site Ownership: The site is currently owned by BBK Foundation, a private organisation that enhances regional economic growth by investing in local companies, and will soon be transferred to BISUBI Foundation.

Type of Property transfer intended and implementation:

BISUBI has a 15-year agreement with the building owners, with an option to extend for an additional 15 years. The winning team will enter into a contract with BISUBI Foundation to implement the project jointly. Teams are encouraged to propose different forms of collaboration with BISUBI Foundation. BISUBI Foundation is open to exploring different contract typologies and proposing ways to support the winning team with implementation. More information can be found in the section below.

Deadline for the submission of the Expression of Interest:

Thursday 6th February 2025, 4pm CET

Presentation of the site and development expectations

The area in which the Venerable Priests building is located is just above the Old Town of Bilbao, next to the Basilica of the Virgin of Begoña, patron saint of the city. This is a must-see location for both city visitors and residents alike, serving as a hub for walks, pilgrimages and a meeting point for all the city's festivities.

The site can be accessed by several means of transport including intercity buses as well as the metro, with the site being less than 7 minutes walk from both stops. The area is also home to the Hospital de la Virgen Blanca, the headquarters of the Bishopric of Bilbao and the "Garden of Memories", a project transforming an old cemetery into a green space. The park will be divided into two sections: a central garden and a botanical gallery or perimeter ring, primarily shaded by trees to mitigate surrounding noise. A quiet, green area, with minimal tall buildings (except for the Basilica) where both the residents of the neighbourhood and many visitors to the area coexist.



Figure 1: Site plan for Venerable Priests Residence, Bilbao

The building is constructed with high-quality materials, and the renovation budget is primarily allocated for reconfiguring the floor plan, replacing windows, and installing a geothermal system and solar panels. The estimated renovation cost ranges from 1.3 to 1.8 million euros. Please note that this budget does not include furniture or equipment for the restaurant or other floors.

In addition to free access to a network of 225 basque chefs and participation in various solidarity, sustainable and unique events and projects, the BISUBI Foundation is open to different forms of funding for phase 2 in order to make the project a success.

Teams may want to involve an institution, foundation, company, or individual who genuinely believes in the project and its positive impact, and is willing to fund the building adaptation costs.

Teams may also opt to design and manage specific spaces to generate revenue, as long as these efforts align with the foundation's mission of promoting sustainability, solidarity, and gastronomy. In which, BISUBI could pay a monthly fee for as long as necessary.

More details on additional providers and financial support for renovation and project implementation will be provided in Phase 2 and will be negotiated with the winning team.

The site expectations are:

1st floor (Mandatory): - The restaurant, equipped with dedicated cooking and storage areas, will adopt an inclusive model that caters to people from all social backgrounds. Operated and supported by BISUBI and its team of expert chefs, the restaurant will promote a culturally relevant menu that will prioritise local and diverse dietary preferences, with a strong emphasis on sourcing local, agro-ecological products. Additionally, it will serve as a central hub for repurposing surplus food from markets, the food industry, and other businesses, whilst developing innovative strategies to minimise food waste.

Basement (Mandatory): - For the coordination of the restaurant, a kitchen office that must cater to 10-15 chefs. The basement floor can house other facilities. Additional facilities, including refrigeration machinery, a wine cellar, storage rooms, and elevators, will be located on the basement floor.

2nd and 3rd floor (Open): - Teams can propose additional activities linked to innovation and education, in line with the requirements. For instance, teams may propose a training academy / educational centre, areas for educating on food waste reduction and sustainable consumption, and spaces for research and innovation, etc. Teams are also welcome to propose other profitable uses and services.

The outdoor space (Open): - The space can serve multiple purposes, including food production, events, and temporary installations, fostering a vibrant and accessible area for the community.

Partners involved in the project

Bilbao Municipality

Bilbao is the most important city in the province and throughout the Basque region. Strategically, the city sees this as an opportunity to enhance its global standing as a hub committed to sustainability and social inclusion. Bilbao has focused on cultivating its image as an innovative and transformative city, emphasising not only infrastructure but also initiatives that promote social welfare, environmental respect, and sustainable economic development. By participating in *Reinventing Cities*, the city would showcase how gastronomy can drive social and environmental change, complementing its local policies and positioning Bilbao as a leader in global sustainability initiatives.

BBK Foundation

[BBK FOUNDATION](#) are the owners of the building, a private entity that supports the regional economy by investing in local companies. BBK's vision centres on social transformation, promoting a fairer and more sustainable future through initiatives such as BBK NEXT, which seeks to universalise sustainability through gastronomy. BBK is known for supporting projects that enhance social welfare and stimulate local economic development. This competition serves as a platform to amplify the impact of initiatives such as the Utopia Restaurant, which addresses both environmental sustainability and social inclusion, reflecting BBK's values of justice and social cohesion. In this context, BBK views BISUBI's participation as a means to bolster its involvement in global initiatives that transform local communities, foster sustainable business innovation, and create jobs in strategic sectors. Additionally, engaging in an international competition would elevate the visibility of BBK's sustainability efforts and its role as a catalyst for positive change in Basque society.

BISUBI Foundation

[BISUBI Fundazioa](#) is a non-profit organisation that was established in 2022 to provide value through gastronomy and help society. Currently, BISUBI is made up of 225 chefs united by the same philosophy and vision, the Gastroutopia. The BISUBI Foundation has the support of Bilbao Municipality, the Provincial Council of Bizkaia and the Basque Government to carry out the activities described in the strategic plan.

Key initiatives of BISUBI foundation

UTOPIA Restaurant, led by the chefs of the BISUBI Foundation, will be the first solidarity gastronomic restaurant in Spain, designed to provide exceptional culinary experiences centred around the region's cuisine. The aim is to establish a supportive, sustainable, and delicious gastronomic space that offers a captivating culinary experience at no cost to individuals and families facing challenges. Paying customers will contribute to providing these experiences for selected vulnerable groups who might not otherwise have such opportunities. Throughout the year, each week, a different chef will showcase their culinary creations on the menu in a program titled "52 Weeks, 52 Chefs." Prior to the assigned week, the chefs will come to the UTOPIA Restaurant to train the UTOPIA Restaurant staff. The restaurant aims to set a benchmark for innovation and quality in gastronomy, led by chefs committed to their community and region. It will serve as an open platform for training, cultural activities, artistic projects, and research, positioning Bizkaia's gastronomy as a key player in generating economic and social value.

The Utopia Restaurant is part of the broader BBK NEXT initiative, which envisions the transformation of the Venerable Priests Residence site. This facility includes the Utopia Restaurant, the foundation's offices, an educational training area, and a research centre. The programs are designed to train a new generation of culinary professionals equipped with exceptional technical skills and a comprehensive understanding of the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of gastronomy. It is a space that promotes research in critical areas such as sustainability, nutrition, culinary innovation, and social gastronomy. The aim is to generate knowledge that fosters positive change within the gastronomy industry and society as a whole. It will also serve as a creative and collaborative environment for food entrepreneurs to develop and prototype new ideas and projects. From initiatives focused on reducing food waste to innovative approaches for promoting healthier eating, BBK NEXT supports the development of projects with significant social impact and transformative potential.

BBK NEXT aims to generate a significant impact in different coordinates:

- **Social Transformation:** By promoting inclusivity and creating employment opportunities in the sector, BBK NEXT seeks to reduce inequality and foster social cohesion.
- **Economic Transformation:** Promoting sustainable gastronomic entrepreneurship and business innovation to generate local and territorial economic growth in Bizkaia.
- **Environmental Transformation:** Commitment to promote environmentally friendly gastronomic practices, from the reduction of food waste to the promotion of local and sustainable products. BBK NEXT believes in the potential of gastronomy to help address global environmental challenges.

Specific planning rules and regulations

Scope of Application and Regulatory Nature

- The General Urban Development Plan (PGOU) of Bilbao establishes that all alterations must comply with the specific and general urban development regulations defined in the plan documents.
- Any modification or intervention must be in line with municipal ordinances and respect the heritage characteristics of the building.
 - Article 1: Scope of Application. This Plan will be applied throughout the municipality of Bilbao from its entry into force.
 - Article 3: The documents of the General Plan and its normative or orientative character. It includes documents such as the Report, Urban Development Regulations, Economic and Financial Feasibility Study and General Plans.

Urban Regime

- The building is intended for complementary uses, mainly teaching and education. Reforms must respect these uses and comply with the specific regulations for these types of facilities.
 - Article 82: Regime of use of the plots of land for educational facilities. Defines the characteristic, complementary and prohibited use for plots intended for teaching.
- The plots for educational and teaching use are subject to an urban planning regime that contemplates both the floor occupation and the number of floors and the permitted height. These parameters must be strictly followed during the renovation.
 - Article 61: General building parameters and conditions. This includes criteria for measuring the height of the building, constructions above and below ground level, and parameters relating to the plot and building.

Heritage Protection

- The building, being classified with a level of protection, may not be demolished in whole or in part without prior authorisation from the Heritage Commission.
 - Article 176: Works on protected buildings and complexes. Defines the regime of action in cultural assets with special protection.
 - Any intervention must maintain the original volumetric configuration and alignments of the building. The exterior façades must be restored according to the criteria of "Scientific Restoration" and the interiors according to "Conservative Restoration".
 - Article 178: Regime of application for cultural assets under Special Protection. It includes authorised interventions and specific conditions for action.
- The installation of elements necessary for the improvement of energy efficiency or telecommunications must minimise the visual impact and follow the legal provisions in force.

Conditions of Intervention

- Permitted works include the restoration of exterior and interior façades, with the possibility of partial modifications provided that they do not alter the unity of composition and that the stylistic elements of value are respected.
 - Article 183: Authorised interventions on cultural assets of Local Interest Level B. Partial modifications are allowed as long as the original values of the building are respected.
- The modification of the interior layout is permitted, provided that the conservation of the typological, formal and structural elements of the building is ensured.
 - Article 185: Authorised interventions in cultural assets of Local Interest Level C. Defines the conditions for permitted actions within listed buildings.

Additional Considerations

- It is essential to draw up an Urban Development Action Plan (PAU) that includes the execution of the planning and the approval of the necessary urban development projects within the specific deadlines determined by the PGOU.
 - Article 4: Rank and normative binding of the determinations of the General Plan. It describes the types of determinations and the procedure required for their modification.
- The reform must consider sustainability and comply with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), using materials and processes that guarantee the environmental and economic viability of the project.

Useful links:

- **General town planning rules:**
https://www.bilbao.eus/pgou2022/1_NORMAS_URBANISTICAS_GENERALES_Y_DISTRITOS/Doc_2_1_NN_UU_Generales.pdf
- **Town planning regulations of the district where the building is located (BEGOÑA)**
https://www.bilbao.eus/pgou2022/1_NORMAS_URBANISTICAS_GENERALES_Y_DISTRITOS/NORMAS_URBANISTICAS_PARTICULARES_DISTRITOS_Y_SNU/4_BEGO%C3%91A/04_Doc_2_2_NN_PP_BEGO%C3%91A.pdf
- **Bilbao City Council website** <https://www.bilbao.eus/>

City climate priorities and environmental challenges

Bilbao faces significant challenges due to climate change. The city has developed plans and strategies to adapt and mitigate these effects, focusing on sustainability and resilience. [Bilbao Climate Change Adaptation Plan](#) and [Klima 2050 Monitoring Report](#) sets out Bilbao's key climate priorities including Territorial Efficiency and Resilience, Adaptation to Climate Change, Sustainable Mobility, Water Conservation and Community Awareness and Commitment. The Plan also outlines key environmental challenges, as well as complementary information (see summary below):

Bilbao's Environmental Challenges

1. **Air and Water Quality**
 - Protect and improve water resources and air quality.
 - Implement measures to reduce pollution and improve waste management.
2. **Biodiversity and Ecosystems**
 - Protect and increase biodiversity by creating and maintaining green spaces and ecological corridors.
 - Encourage naturalisation of urban land to increase permeability and reduce flood risks.
3. **Flood Mitigation**

- Extend the Green Belt and reinforce urban and proximity parks.
- Develop infrastructure to improve drainage capacity and reduce flood risk.

4. Heat Waves and Public Health

- Strengthen local capacities to cope with heat waves and high temperatures, especially protecting vulnerable populations.
- Promote the creation of urban environments that reduce the heat island effect.

Additional Information

1. Existing Plans and Strategies

- Bilbao is not starting from scratch in adapting to climate change. Adaptation assets are integrated in several municipal strategic plans, such as the Sustainable Energy Action Plan, the General Urban Development Plan, and the Zorrotzaurre Sustainable Urban Development Strategy.

2. Short, Medium and Long Term Actions

- Short term (up to 2020): To boost the climate resilience of the territory, promote sustainable mobility and improve energy efficiency in municipal buildings.
- Medium term (up to 2025): Expand drainage capacity, encourage community participation in adaptation, and strengthen water resources management.
- Long-term (up to 2030): Incorporate climate change criteria into existing plans and programmes, and promote new markets and economic opportunities arising from climate change.

3. Specific Challenges

- Climate impacts associated with the water cycle, such as floods and droughts, represent important challenges for quality of life and specific sectors such as industry and tourism.
- Planning is required to improve flood safety and assess the capacities of existing infrastructure under climate change scenarios.

The **BISUBI: BBK Next project aligns with Bilbao's climate priorities** by proposing a sustainable gastronomic space that promotes territorial efficiency and resilience, contributing to climate change adaptation. The building's future headquarters will integrate water conservation, waste management and emissions reduction practices, supporting Bilbao's efforts to improve air and water quality. In addition, its focus on creating green spaces will enhance biodiversity and reduce the risk of flooding. Finally, the headquarters will act as a centre for community awareness and environmental engagement, in line with Bilbao's strategies to foster citizen participation and climate resilience.

BISUBI Foundation vision and C40's 10 Climate Challenges

The site must exemplify sustainability and new technologies, and serve as an example for all members of Basque society. Projects are invited to address the ten challenges in an integrated manner. Refer to the guidance for more information.

The project should incorporate optimal systems to ensure minimal energy consumption, maximum efficiency, and an almost insignificant environmental footprint: geothermal, photovoltaic panels, outdoor green spaces for dining, and vegetable gardens. All flowers, trees, and plants in the garden should be edible and suitable for harvesting to be used in the restaurant. Additionally, the garden should serve as an educational space for students and visitors.

Specific climate challenges of the area

Bilbao, a city accustomed to frequent rainfall (65% of the year historically), is well-prepared to mitigate flooding risks. Located on a high ground above the city, the area has minimal

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risk of flooding. Water consumption restrictions have been rare, with only one instance in recent history (1990) following several years of drought. The city's reservoirs and ponds that supply water generally maintain a capacity above 50%. While temperatures increase annually, Bilbao experiences moderate climate conditions, with few days surpassing 35°C and almost none below 0°C in 2023.