

# Balvanera sur, Buenos Aires

Balvanera Sur, the site for this competition, is located approximately 1.5 kilometres west of the centre of the city of Buenos Aires. It is in the south of Balvanera neighborhood. The site is a large 36 block area, with a population of around 18,905. It is made up of mainly middle, lower-middle and low class households.

Balvanera Sur, is well connected, in terms of public transport, with a dozen bus lines and one metro station (line H). Daily needs, such as grocery stores and pharmacies, are well served within the neighborhood. However, Balvanera is one of the neighborhoods with the lowest meters of green space per inhabitant in the city. It is an area with few options for neighbors to meet and do outdoor activities. There is only one green space, Velasco Ibarra Square (*Plaza Velasco Ibarra*).

The lack of green space, along with high rates of crime (mainly muggings), homelessness, and poor urban hygiene means the area has become degraded.

There is now an opportunity to regenerate the area to create new spaces where people can meet, and which promotes healthy habits and economic development within the area.

Through this competition, students have the opportunity to examine the urban realm, in particular streets and underutilized spaces, degraded buildings and infrastructure. In doing so, they will identify opportunities to develop the neighbourhood into a connected, diverse, inclusive and sustainable place, which also requires the creation of instruments for coordination and incentives for private owners to transform their buildings.

Students should focus on developing a strategy and targeted solutions to achieve this across the wider neighbourhood, focusing on the principles of the 15 minute city, advancing climate action, improving social outcomes and preserving the landscape and the heritage value.



### Approx. Site Area:

53 hectares. 36 blocks form the area. Some of them are atypical.

### Demographics:

Approximately, 18,900 inhabitants in 8,400 houses, (the average household consists of 2.24 people) 46% men and 54% women with middle and low- incomes with a trend to low incomes.

### Priority Areas & Main City Expectations:

To regenerate public space, streets and underutilized infrastructure throughout the site in a way that improves scenery, provides places where people can interact, improves the environment and promotes healthy lifestyles. Attention could also be given to how the city can help private land owners improve degraded buildings and improve their sustainability.

## Presentation of the Site



Figure 1- Showing site boundary

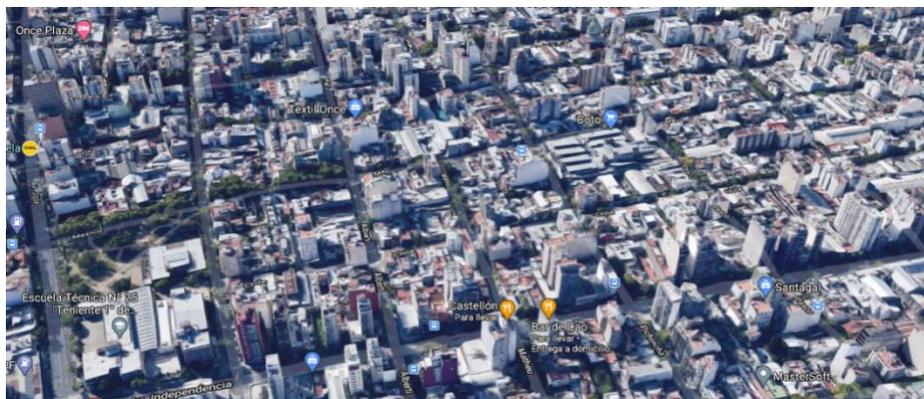


Figure 2 - Aerial view of South Balvanera

The site chosen for this competition is a 53ha area within South Balvanera, enclosed by Independencia, Belgrano, Jujuy and Entre Ríos avenues.

There is limited data relating specifically to the site area. However, data from the wider Balvanera area provides some useful insights. Data from the 2019 Annual Household Survey shows that overcrowding in households – defined as two or more persons per room - in the third commune (made up of Balvanera and San Cristobal neighborhoods) stood at 10.6%, well above the 7.8% city average. Furthermore, one in three households reported earnings below the total income basket in 2018 (the city average is one out of four households).

South Balvanera has two public high schools and three private healthcare clinics. Nonetheless, there are no public hospitals/health centers in the 36-block area site. Repetition rates of high school students attending public and private establishments in the third commune is 8.6%, slightly higher than the 7.9% city average (2019 Statistical Yearbook). One out of five households in the third commune depends strictly on the public health system, rather than having private health insurance

which is typically provided through registered employment. This aligns with the city average of the number of people relying solely on public health services.

The neighborhood of South Balvanera presents urban decay, mainly related to poor maintenance of old buildings, lack of public green spaces and certain social situations such as homelessness, crime, drug use and a reported general sense of insecurity while walking its narrow sidewalks. The site is affected by the same problems as well. In response to this, it has been identified that the site would benefit from more green space, upgrades to the urban realm to make it more walkable and attractive and safe for cycling and spending time.

The neighborhood's proximity to the central business district makes it an attractive location for working households, since property values are below the city average and commuting to downtown takes between 10 to 15 minutes by bike or public transport. The area is well connected to public transportation, with one metro line (an integration tool between the north and south of the city) and 12 bus lines providing satisfactory coverage. Furthermore, the 25 de Mayo highway, equipped with a BRT (Bus Rapid Transit), is less than one km away. Students should consider how interventions help to connect people with these services in a safe and inclusive way.

The value of business premises and residential flats in the site is below the city average. There is significant opportunity to regenerate and retrofit the urban realm and surrounding buildings in a way that improves urban amenity, provides opportunity and promotes a sense of pride in place. This may help overcome some of these social issues. However, any improvements in the area may produce gentrifying effects. These should be mitigated in order to protect the neighborhood's inhabitants who could be displaced in the case of an increase in property values. Students could consider the role the city could play in encouraging and motivating private land owners to retrofit and improve their buildings.



Figure 2 - Combate de los Pozos and Venezuela



Figure 3 - Pichincha and Av. Belgrano

### City Climate Priorities and Specific Environmental Issues to Address

The City of Buenos Aires is member of the C40 and leader of the South American Region. The city is focused on implementing innovation, sustainability and inclusive strategies to strengthen a [City at Human Scale with zero emissions for 2050](#). As a city with high population density that doubles during a work day, there needs to be a focus on increasing clean mobility, more efficient public transport systems. Through this competition students should consider how to prioritise pedestrians and create a safe and enjoyable environment for people to walk and cycle through and to connect with other transport.

The city also aims at taking action against Climate Change, seeking a change in consumption trends, mobility habits and waste management; and fostering green urban infrastructure to restore natural ecosystems.

We have identified that in the city the main issuing agents of the use of stationary energy are transport and the final disposal of waste. It is necessary to implement strategies to outline short, medium and long-term planning for reducing its impact. This may involve adapting the public space or developing a strategy to be used in the short term; to boost the development of active mobility and the improvement of pedestrian connections among the different commercial areas (*Once, Congreso and Subway stations*).

Initiatives will need to consider the buildings where most of the construction occurred before the first half of the 20th century, and that today face the challenge of being converted into infrastructure and new uses. This competition presents an opportunity to transform the area implementing sustainable mechanisms, environmental consciousness, an efficient consumption of energy, building materials or technology innovation. Students should consider how they can incentivise and enable private land owners to also contribute to this.

The main challenge for the site is to recover the balance between the built surface and the natural ecosystems— being the neighbourhood with the least amount of green area per inhabitant in the city. Some of the topics to work on are the incorporation of an absorbent and biologically active surface, forest recovery with native species and the implementation of innovative and sustainable mechanisms. We are looking for nature-based solutions to environmental problems. For example, by means of the vegetation, the soil becomes a large contributor of carbon to the atmosphere and at the same time slows down and retains the stormwater surface runoff reducing the flow of the network of the urban rainwater system. Another possible solution can be related to the incorporation of native flora instead of exotic species, which can create survival opportunities for different species whose habitat is today threatened by landscape fragmentation.

These type of strategies become a priority to reduce the negative impacts of the effect of climate change in a vulnerable area. By implementing a plan to reduce the level of pollution, it will be possible for neighbours to connect with nature and with an environment with greater biodiversity. It is hoped that this will also have a positive impact on the health and well being of residents.

### Other Expectations for the Site's Redevelopment

In the site there exist administrative, educational, cultural, religious and mainly residential uses. There are buildings of great heritage value such as *Santa Rosa de Lima Church*. The area is surrounded by emblematic avenues such as *Entre Ríos, Independencia, Belgrano* and *Jujuy*. Under the current legislation, new investments are allowed to contribute to the development of this area of the city. This potential development must, however, protect the identity of the neighborhood. The proposals for recovering, adapting and giving a new function to buildings with a heritage value must maintain and integrate the traditional urban landscape. It will also need to provide for and maintain today's inhabitants, preventing them from being displaced as a consequence of the transformations—particularly, in the internal streets of the selected perimeter.

Public space is where people spend a large proportion of their time. Moreover, it is where people meet; develop their identities and their sense of belonging. It is a place where people with different social, economic, cultural, and environmental identities can come together. A comprehensive strategy to address the public space could result in a revival of the area.

The area is perceived as a place that is not attractive, with limited public space- The Velasco Ibarra Square (*Plaza Velasco Ibarra*) is the only green space in the areas. The limited amount of public restricts the options that people have to meet outdoors at different time, especially for older adults and children. Educational buildings in the area, such as high schools and the National University of the Arts (*Universidad Nacional de las Artes*) branch are also affected by the shortage of green space. It is necessary to take into consideration the diversity of users and functions, generating spaces that make relationships easier, promoting the sense of belonging to a place, connecting the area with the commercial area nearby and making it part of an integrated urban system and suitable and safe for walking to guarantee the access to all citizens.

The current legislation promotes the development of multiple activities to transform the area into a sustainable, friendly and diverse economic environment, implementing a plan to reduce the insecurity, degradation and lack of investment. The current scenery offers participants an opportunity to take action by changing and improving the environment of the area (e.g.: clean energy, green spaces, a new function of existing buildings, among others) with the aim of moving forward towards the objectives of the climate action plan.

On the other hand, according to the legislation currently in place, new investments are allowed to develop this area of the city, but must not risk losing its identity or displacing its inhabitants. It is also necessary to consider the recovery of the buildings and the recovery of deteriorated houses. Students should consider how they can give them a new function, and promote a diversity of activities, while

also maintaining the urban landscape and offering alternatives to today's inhabitants. Particular attention should be given to the internal streets of the selected perimeter.

It is also important to take into consideration that the city suffers from some extreme weather events which should be mitigated, for example, heatwaves, which at the same time generate power outages as a consequence of the excessive energy demand to cool down households, offices and stores.

## Specific City Planning Rules and Regulations



Figure4. Land legislation applicable to the area of the site.

The area corresponds to three different building units established in the Land Code of the City of Buenos Aires. There are High (38m) and Medium-level corridors (31,2m) in the edges of the avenues and there are Sustainable Units of High Height (22,80m) towards the interior of the defined area. The features of the three corridors are the following:

- The **High Level Corridors** are the central corridors of the city. It is where commercial activities, transport and high density development are located. The allowed maximum heights for buildings are in line with the width of the public spaces (streets, avenues) where they are located. The maximum height which is allowed to be built is thirty eight meters, with a minimum height of three meters (3m) for the Ground Floor.
- The **Medium Level Corridors** are the main corridors of the city. It is where activities, means of transport and density with a lesser degree of consolidation are centred. The maximum height which is allowed to be built is thirty one meters twenty centimetres (31,20m), with a minimum height of three meters (3m) for the Ground Floor.
- The **Sustainable Units of High Height** is the area of the city with lower height than the corridors, with heights appropriate to public spaces such as streets and avenues in the neighborhood and with average density. The maximum height which is allowed to be built is twenty two meters eighty centimetres (22,80m) with a minimum height of three meters (3m) for the Ground Floor.

The Land Code suggests mixed and diverse land uses to promote urban, social and commercial life, and pedestrian and vehicle circulation in this area. Every single project must comply with the maximum building height established in the Code. The focus on a new, recovered or adapted building must be placed on affordability households, mitigation of the effect of the heat island, rainwater harvesting, preservation of the urban landscape and the architectural heritage. The aim must always be at regenerating the urban environment and revitalizing the community.

### Language Requirements

The documents for the registration and presentation of the final draft can be submitted in English or Spanish.