

Ciutat Meridiana, Barcelona

Ciutat Meridiana neighbourhood, Nou Barris district, Barcelona.

The site is situated in the Ciutat Meridiana neighbourhood, within the district of Nou Barris, in the northeast of Barcelona. It is located on the outskirts of the city, bordering the Serra de Collserola Natural Park, the Torre Baró and Vallbona neighbourhoods as well as the municipality of Montcada i Reixac.

It is a mainly residential area, with multi-family dwellings, with development beginning in 1963. The topography at the base of the mountain has a significant impact on the neighbourhood's layout, accessibility, and mobility.

The Ciutat Meridiana neighbourhood is also highly vulnerable. The social and economic quality indicators have revealed significant inequalities, such as high unemployment rates, low levels of education, low family income, residential insecurity, substandard housing and lack of open spaces.

The site is characterised as an outlying, single-function housing estate and therefore students are expected to develop proposals that:

(1) promote a varied city; enhance activities that support daily life, generate local employment, as well as promote commerce and local economy.

(2) better integrate the neighbourhood into its urban surroundings, and improve citizen access to the Collserola Park, by looking at the park's boundaries and entrances

(3) improve accessibility, promote equal access to public spaces and services, and active citizen participation in society.

Students should also consider new ideas and innovative solutions that will promote a more inclusive and mixed city to tackle social segregation and the environmental, economic and energy crisis.



Source: North Zone Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2024

Approx. site area:

35.50 hectares

Key Information:

11,152 inhabitants; 33.3% foreign population; 7.8% of the population with a university education; 12% of the working-age population are unemployed (July 2022).

Priority areas & main expectations:

The project should develop strategies that focus on the following areas:

- (1) Mixed uses and solutions to boost the local economy;
- (2) Generate local employment through plans that fill currently empty sites with local businesses and services;
- (3) Better integrate the community, the neighbourhood and the Collserola Natural Park into its urban surroundings;
- (4) Improve physical, environmental and social accessibility;
- (5) Enhance the environmental and functional use of residual urban spaces and spaces between buildings;
- (6) Boost community work and bring the community together

Presentation of the site and expectations for regeneration



Figure 1: Aerial picture of Ciutat Meridiana
Source: Barcelona City Council

During the period of highest migration to Barcelona (between 1952 and 1975), mass housing estates were constructed across many typologies. Large housing estates were constructed during this period to create a functional city and standardising this type of housing unit was extremely economically efficient. This, therefore, created a repetitive and serial composition of isolated blocks with large spaces between them allocated for green areas. However, this typology has disconnected neighbourhoods from the rest of the city, leaving them lacking amenities and shared infrastructure, and without clearly defined public spaces.

Because of these trends, the Font Magués Partial Plan was approved in 1963, giving rise to the Ciutat Meridiana neighbourhood, which was originally intended for 15,000 inhabitants and 4,000 residences dispersed in various types of blocks and towers. The site was characterised by steep slopes and humidity, located on the outskirts of Barcelona. The neighbourhood is therefore disconnected from the rest of the city, where the construction of amenities would take several years.



Figures 2 - 3: Pictures of the origin of the neighbourhood
Source: Archive of the Institut Cartogràfic i Geològic de Catalunya

It is worth noting some of the population's socio-economic characteristics that illustrate the high levels of vulnerability and inequality: (1) Foreign-born residents constitute 33.3% of the neighbourhood's population, with a greater presence of Honduran, Moroccan and Pakistani nationalities. This is higher than the average of 25.1% in the city; (2) Low educational level. Only 18.3% of people have completed their high school education, compared to the 25.1% average in Barcelona, whilst only 7.8% have attended university/higher education. 69.1% of the neighbourhood's population choose not to study beyond their compulsory studies, whilst this is only the case for 37.8% of the population in the rest of the city; (3) Low average income per person/ household, with an unemployment rate of 12% (4) High occupation of vacant/derelict dwellings, high rate of evictions, presence of uninhabitable buildings, and several problems amongst communities that share common areas and spaces.

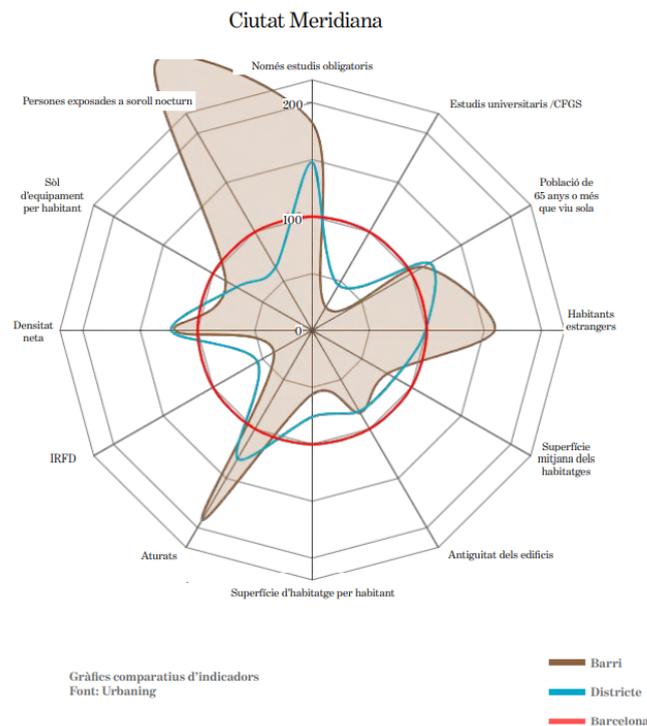


Figure 4: Indicator comparative chart
Source: North Zone Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2024 (data as of December 2020)

There are two primary areas that make up the neighbourhood. This includes a lower metropolitan and business district, where the most important shops and facilities of Ciutat Meridiana, Vallbona and Torre Baró are located. Plaza Roja and Plaza Verda are considered more prosperous, transcending the reputation of the neighbourhood. There is also the upper zone, which is mostly residential, structured as a linear block located on a steeply sloping piece of land. Most recently, another block was created with metro access, alongside several public spaces and other facilities.

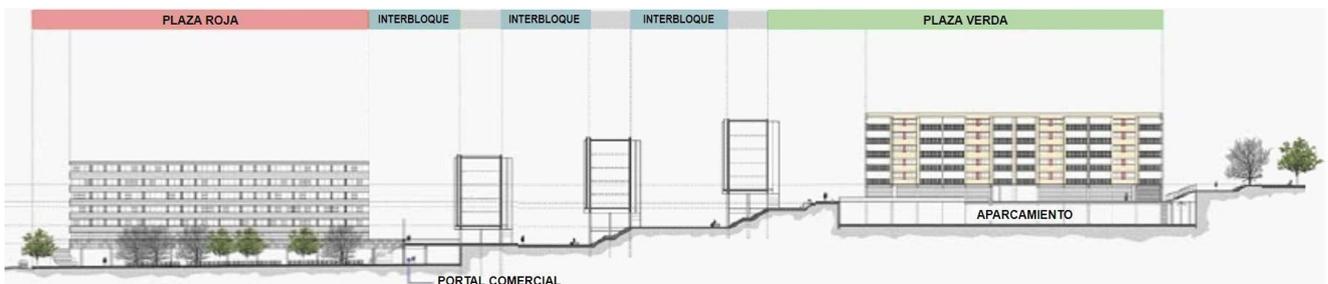


Figure 5: Section of the metropolitan and commercial zone
Source: Castro Mellado, J.L., (2017).
Public space in housing estates: Montbau and Ciutat Meridiana.



Figures 11-14: Ground pictures of accessibility and mobility elements
Source: Barcelona City Council

Ciudad Meridiana has been chosen for this competition based on its location, history, the model through which it was originally urbanised, and its socio-economic characteristics. Even though in a global context, Barcelona is seen as a well-connected, compact city with a good public transport system, inconsistencies can be found across its different neighbourhoods.

Proposals should promote a neighbourhood that is versatile, that accommodates movement and housing, whilst proving good environmental quality and a good balance between uses. Students should also include facilities and services for both the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and those in surrounding neighbourhoods. This will help to reduce the need to travel and therefore reduce CO2 emissions, in line with the concept of the "fifteen-minute city".

The aim of this competition is for students to propose specific strategies and proposals that will strengthen the community and local life, regenerating Ciutat Meridiana into a more multifunctional neighbourhood, and repair the issues created by the urban model on which the neighbourhood was originally built. The proposal should seek to boost the quality of daily life in the neighbourhood, promoting a closer, more accessible and more human neighbourhood using the following actions:

- Promote infrastructure mix of uses, boosting social and sustainable economy, as well as local commerce.
- Regenerate the neighbourhood through a shift in urban model, incorporating climate parameters into all processes of transformation and management of the urban form, boosting greenery, making the city more permeable, and freeing up space occupied by private vehicles.
- Improve connectivity and accessibility between and within neighbourhoods.
- Strengthen the environmental character of the neighbourhood by working on the functionality and ecological aspects of the public spaces and between blocks, as well as the areas of contact and access to the Collserola Park, through the implementation of environmental and recreational activities.
- Integrate local renewable energy production systems in buildings and public spaces.
- Incorporate inclusion and diversity of culture and origin in all areas of community life, strengthening social cohesion as an essential objective to create a fairer, more inclusive, sustainable and resilient city.



Figures 15-18: Pictures of ground floor commercial spaces, public spaces and between blocks and view of Collserola Park

Source: Barcelona City Council

City climate priorities and specific environmental challenges

The city is committed to multi-functional, efficient and compact city model that improves the quality of life of its citizens. The planning criteria are based on the search for sustainable solutions to urban, socio-economic and environmental issues. This means that the planning criteria must be introduced at the outset to increase and diversify urban green spaces, provide the urban fabric with multi-functionality by creating new centralities, reduce forced mobility of citizens and take advantage of public transport, as well as increase energy efficiency and water saving.

In addition to emission reduction targets, teams must address the following major environmental challenges: climate change-related impacts such as heat waves and hot nights, heavy rainfall, drought and biodiversity loss.

Barcelona wants to reclaim its neighbourhoods and streets for its residents, creating public spaces to share, socialise and enjoy. To map out the future, it plans to implement multiple actions that transform public space, reduce parking, and exemplify a new city model. A regenerated city that encourages the creation of meeting spaces, reactivates the local economy and promotes neighbourhood life.

The following are the most representative points to work on within the framework of the competition for the sustainable development of the city of Barcelona:

- Consolidate a pedestrian network and create green infrastructure.
- Create meeting spaces and encourage citizen and neighbourhood interaction.
- Reactivate the local economic and commercial fabric.
- Maximise the introduction of nature and the permeability of the built-up area.
- Improve the connectivity of the neighbourhood with the city and within the neighbourhood itself, and promote more actions to improve accessibility for buildings and public spaces.
- Strengthen the relationship between the neighbourhood and its boundaries with the protected natural park of Collserola, create functional spaces and encourage public use.

- Enhancing the benefits of the cultural mix of the neighbourhood.
- Thinking about the city from a gender perspective, such as the lighting of public spaces or the passive surveillance generated by people in the street that produce a sense of security.
- Encourage the use of ground floor premises to achieve a more active and safer street for all, as well as the mix of uses that allow the needs of the people in the neighbourhood to be met within a radius of less than 15 minutes walking distance from their homes.

Climate Emergency Plan 2018-2030

In 2018, Barcelona launched a rigorous, integrated and ambitious [Climate Plan](#), with two main commitments and targets for 2030:

- Reduce the city's CO2 equivalent emission levels by 40% per capita compared to 2005.
- Increase urban green space by 1.6km² i.e., 1km² for every current resident.

The four key axes of the Plan are mitigation, adaptation, citizen action and climate justice. It focuses on people climate change directly affects the health and quality of life of citizens. The Plan seeks to transform the city in a holistic way to address risks and turn them into opportunities, accelerating efficiency, renovation and the introduction of renewable energies to help adapt more effectively. It approaches this through a process of co-production and participation with the city's neighbours.

Specific planning rules and regulations

Originally, the land in Ciudad Meridiana was intended entirely for the construction of housing. Many years went by and there were many protests from neighbours before the necessary facilities were built for the number of people living there. At present, the data show that most of the land is used for residential purposes. Residential land = 40.2% (18) - Equipment land = 15.6% (7) - Urban park land = 15.4% (6).

Regarding Ciutat Meridiana in particular, there are three challenges pending in relation to urban planning:

- Resolve the issue with the spacing between blocks, currently owned by the communities of owners, which creates many disparities when it comes to interventions (cleaning, works, maintenance, occupation with parking, etc.).
- Carry out the appropriate modifications to allocate land for the construction of the pending facilities.
- Improve the relationship with the Collserola Natural Park.

The contestants are invited to rethink urban planning in order to provide solutions to the needs of the people who live in the territories. Ciutat Meridiana is a mono-functional neighbourhood, and it is feasible that the solution to some of its problems can be found in the change of use of the neighbourhood's land, favouring a mix of uses and encouraging residents to use the street.

For specific planning information on Barcelona, please refer to the [online planning tool](#).



Figure 19: Urban planning map
Source: North Zone Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2024

The following is a compilation of the most relevant existing urban strategies to be considered for the design of proposals. These urban plans define the city's values and objectives for the coming years:

Superilla Barcelona Measure - Urban Regeneration Strategy

This measure brings together actions to remake and reprogramme the city with the aim of making it a more liveable place where the lives of all people can be fully developed while preserving its character and identity. The main strategies of this measure are: Social Justice, Climate Emergency, Habitability, Economic Boost, Memory and Landscape, Urbanism and Economy.



Figure 20: Map of green axes/areas
Source: [Mesura de Govern Superilla Barcelona](#) - Urban Regeneration Strategy 2021

North Zone Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2024

The [Neighbourhood Plan](#) is a tool to understand the plural reality of the territory. where we can find a meticulous analysis and concrete projects that meet the needs of residents the people who live there. The plan has objectives that aim to transform key issues in the areas of education, public health, social rights, gender equity and community action, housing, employment, economic momentum and social economy, public space and accessibility, environmental sustainability and climate emergency.



Figures 21-22: Images from Neighbourhood Plan
Source: North Zone Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2024

Urban regeneration programme

The [Barcelona Urban Regeneration Programme \(PRU\)](#) is a strategy of actions to improve the conditions of urban habitability in neighbourhood environments. The PRU is based on a comprehensive approach to urban metabolism to address the complexity of urban renewal and transcends the usual considerations of comprehensive rehabilitation (improvements in habitability, accessibility and energy efficiency).

The final objective is to improve the habitability conditions of the housing stock (prioritising the most vulnerable neighbourhoods) and to jointly tackle the transformation of households and its environment, considering the multiple dimension of sustainability.

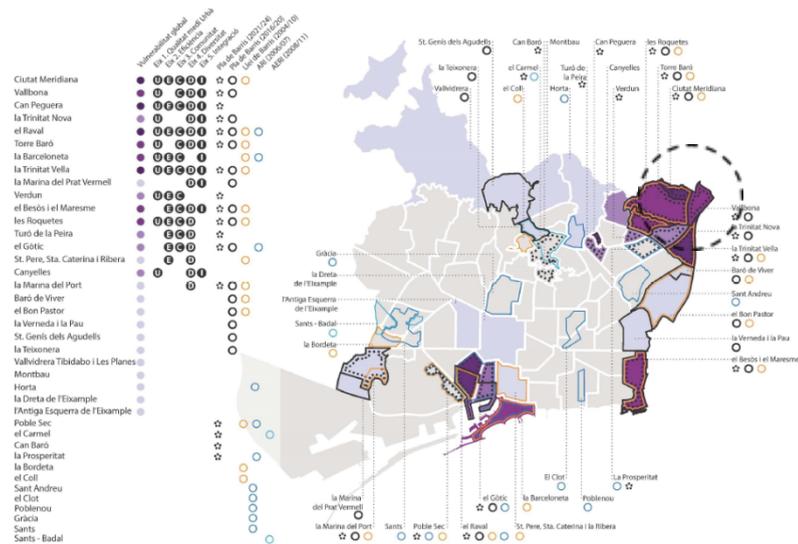


Figure 23: Global vulnerability map
Source: Urban Regeneration Programme

Special Plan for the Protection of the Natural Environment and Landscape of the Serra de Collserola Natural Park (PEPNat)

The [Plan](#) orders and regulates uses and activities in accordance with the Natural Park's objectives of protection, conservation and improvement of the natural heritage and the geological, biological, ecological, landscape, ethnological, agricultural and cultural values of this natural area.

Through the promotion of agricultural activities, the aim is to find a point of balance where, based on the protection of the territory, its ecosystems and its environmental values, activities can be generated that create wealth and contribute to the management and preservation of the park.

The neighbourhood is directly connected to the natural environment, as it borders the Collserola Park.

Language requirements

Students are invited to submit proposals in Spanish, Catalan or English.