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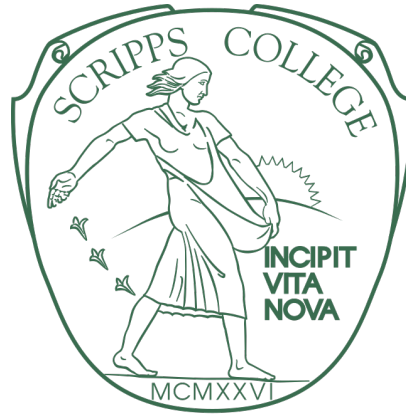
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LA FLORESTA; AN APPRECIATION AND REIMAGINATION OF MY *BARRIO*



by
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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

SENIOR THESIS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**PROFESSOR MARINA PÉREZ DE MENDIOLA
PROFESSOR CHAR MILLER**

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Glossary

aguacate - avocado

árbol de navidad - Christmas tree

avenida - avenue

carretera - highway

casa embrujada - haunted house

charla - a conference or speech, usually with a more personal and informal tone.

barrio - neighborhood, insinuation of a type of community and sense of belonging to the physical space and other people that live there.

busero - public bus driver, it is usually a male job so it is unusual to use *busera*.

doña - lady, similar to *señora*.

Güitig - an Ecuadorian brand of sparkling mineral water.

hacienda - farm estate but in colonial times these had a plantation style economic structure to them

humitas - a type of corn cake, wrapped in a leaf and cooked slowly in a pot. Visually similar to Mexican tamales, but different in terms of ingredients.

Kichwa - 1st most common indigenous language spoken in Ecuador

macetas - planters

mercado - market

menú del día - menu of the day, usually the cheapest meal offered at small, informal, unofficial restaurants.

mestizo - a person of mixed race, especially of Spanish and indigenous descent.

minga - indigenous tradition of cooperative and voluntary work for the common good.

mora - black berry

muro - wall, in this text used to describe the walls that enclose houses for security purposes, very common in Latin America, especially in the city.

navidad - Christmas

patrimonio cultural - cultural heritage, cultural patrimony, in this case used mostly to refer to buildings that are categorized under this title.

panaderias - bakery

periódicos - newspapers

pasajes - passage, small narrow street.

Quiteña - a woman from Quito, Ecuador.

Quiteño - a man from Quito, Ecuador.

Quiteñas - women from Quito, Ecuador.

Quiteños - a group of people from Quito, Ecuador, either a group of men and women or only men.

quinta - farmhouse, not an *hacienda*, just a second home in the countryside

redondel - roundabout

sastre - tailor

señor - formal way of referring to an older man directly or about them in conversation, similar to man, Sir or Mr.

señora - formal way of referring to an older woman directly or about them in conversation, similar to lady, Ms. or Mrs.

seño - short for *señora*, usually used for older women when there is no previous relationship or connection to the woman, especially women who are street vendors, not used for señor (Mr.).

solcito - diminutive of sun, in reference to beams or rays of sunshine.

tienda - small shop with the basic needs that families may need that are too small or insignificant to make a formal trip to a supermarket.

urbanización - residential development, usually a gated community. In the case of Zaldumbide it was simply a residential development for higher socioeconomic social groups.

veci - short way of saying *vecino* or *vecina* in a friendly manner, mostly used for neighbors who own a *tienda*.

vecina - female neighbor (singular)

vecino - male neighbor (singular)

vecinas - neighbors, female (plural)

vecindad - neighborhood, more focused on the interpersonal relationships of the *vecinos* within a neighborhood

vecinos - neighbors, either male and female or just male (plural)

vereda - sidewalk

zapatero - shoemaker, cobbler

Introduction: A walk through the *barrio*

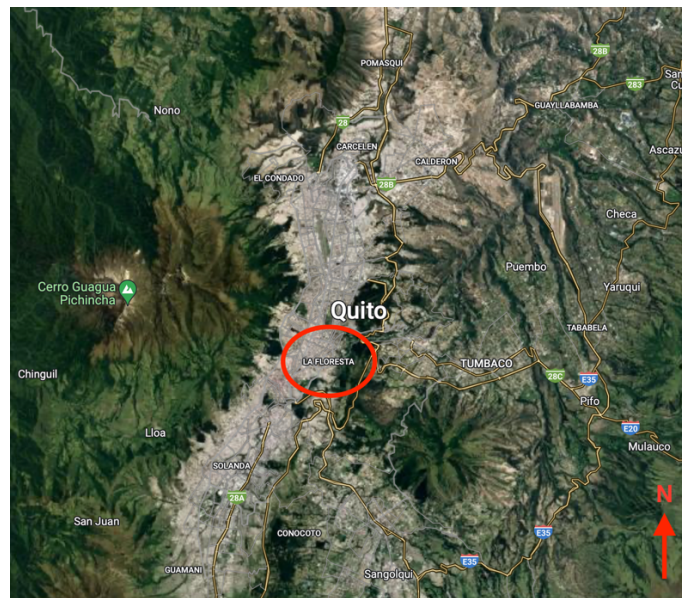


Figure 1. Map of the city of Quito, Ecuador. In red is located La Floresta, almost perfectly in the middle of the modern Latin American capital. Markings by Ana Rodríguez. Image from Google Maps, 2022.

The sun comes up in the equatorial city of Quito at around 6am every morning year-round. But you can already hear loud and competitive *buseros* picking up people for work between 5am and 5:30am –which is about the same time you can hear birds singing their sweet cheerful songs, as the light slips through the window. Mornings are usually crisp and cold, forcing you awake in this mesmerizing city located in the heart of the Andes at 2,850m above sea level. Even though mornings are quite cold, you are usually greeted with a clear, cloudless sky, allowing for a picturesque view of Pichincha which sits between the capital and descending slopes to the Pacific coast. I became very fond of Pichincha because growing up I had a little tradition of waking up and peeking through the curtains of my bedroom window and based on the weather I would choose what to wear. Cold, rainy and foggy? Long sleeves and a jacket. Clear blue sky and a couple of clouds? Jeans and a short sleeve shirt and a light sweater or cardigan. Now when I visit home, I still like to engage in this little morning routine, and oddly

enough the outfits I choose usually get me through the entire day without being too cold or too hot. It is very difficult to get an accurate weather forecast for Quito –I cannot recall why even though papi has explained it to me multiple times– you can ask any of my friends, so I’ve learned to read the sky and Pichincha.

-mi pichincha, siempre bien puesta

tu tan linda siempre bien puesta
 sea con un vestido elegante de boda
 o un vestido de oro.
 cada mañana me invitas a celebrar la vida
 sea con el calor o el frío.
 te pido que me digas que ponerme
 cuando saco mi cabeza por la ventana.
 te veo sin importar donde vaya
 sea el valle o la tienda
 ahí estás siempre bien puesta.

-my pichincha, always well-dressed (translated)

you so pretty, always well-dressed
 whether with an elegant wedding dress
 or a dress of gold.
 every morning you invite me to celebrate life
 whether it is warm or cold
 i ask you what to wear
 when i peek my head through the window.
 i see you no matter where i go
 whether i’m in the valley or the *tienda*
 you are always there well-dressed.

A poem I wrote in 2020 about my tradition of looking out my window to appreciate Pichincha’s beauty.

By the time I get dressed, put the leashes on the dogs and walk out the door at 7am, I will see a *vecino* or two on the *vereda*, either just soaking up the *solcito*, feeding the pigeons or walking their dogs as I am doing. I usually like strolling down Vizcaya –my street which is named after one of the seven provinces of the Basque Country– towards the alternative, indie movie theater and bar Ocho y Medio. As I stroll down Vizcaya, leashes in hand, being pulled by the furry Luna and Stella, I usually greet *doña* Hilda who owns the *tienda* “Viveres Victoria” where we buy most of our sodas as well as our favorite sparkling mineral water, Gütig. All of our sodas and Gütig is sold in glass bottles, which are returned and then reused meaning we create very little waste. However, this process of returning our used bottles and receiving a new, refilled one also means creating a tight bond with *doña* Hilda. The *tienda* culture in La Floresta, but in other parts of Ecuador as well is unique. Having these small stores with a variety of

necessities, limits our need to go to a larger grocery store or supermarket, supporting our local economy and creating tight bonds and relationships with people in our *barrio*. *Doña* Hilda for example, always asks me how my family and I are doing, welcomes me back if I have been abroad for a couple of months and will joke about asking about my love life and whether I have a partner -sometimes she simply says to stay away from men in a joking manner.

I usually greet *señora* Inés as well, who lives on the corner of Vizcaya, two doors down from *doña* Hilda, in an old, more traditional single floor home made from adobe and that recently has been painted a light magenta. You can usually find her sitting outside *doña* Hilda's *tienda* gossiping or sitting on the front steps of her house next to her gardens, with her small white dog, watching the day go by and greeting passerby. She has always been so proud of her *macetas* on the *vereda*, with different types of flowers and a tall araucaria tree which she decorates for *navidad*, blessing the entire neighborhood with a communal *árbol de navidad*. I remember she also used to have chickens which she would put in a cage and place safely on the *vereda* so they could soak up some much-needed *solcito*, or at least that is what she would say.



Figure 2. Señora Inés' home on the corner of Vizcaya and Pontevedra. The tall araucaria tree resembles a pine tree, which is likely why it is so perfect when decorated for Christmas. Drawing by Ana Rodríguez.

Crossing Pontevedra, yet another street named after a place in Spain, I may peek to see if the *sastre* is open –since he is always closed when we need clothes hemmed or mended– just in case my mamma needs something I can let her know when I get home. I usually keep an eye out for the *zapatero*, who is *vecina* Inés' neighbor, because he loves coming up to my family and telling us crazy stories. I keep walking, thinking about how the *sastre* used to make all of my Halloween costumes when I was a little kid. Going into his little shop and having him measure me while I stared at the calendars he had hanging and the pictures of models and clothes he clearly ripped out of magazines and stuck on the wall as decorations. The costume I probably have the best recollection of, is a green Tinker Bell outfit I wore when I was 6; mamma might still have it stored somewhere but I can still vividly recall the confusion on the *sastre*'s face as my mother tried to explain to him who Tinker Bell was. Although Halloween is not celebrated in Ecuador, I attended an American school that observed both US and Ecuadorian traditions. Something I truly love about the *barrio* is that no matter how much time passes, some things never change; the *sastre* will always be closed when we need him, *señora* Inés always going to look the same and walk at the same pace with her hands behind her back and white dog at her feet and *doña* Hilda will always greet me and wish me a good and safe walk.

After trying not to slip on that one section of *vereda* that is made from smooth tiles, I reach Botánica, a coffee shop that brands itself “laboratorio de café” or coffee laboratory. It is inside what used to be a small apartment building, only two or three floors but was remodeled for the coffee shop around 6 or 7 years ago. Walking past it in the morning is torture, all I want to do is walk in, order a warm coffee and sit inside because of their chic and simple interior design with a lot of wood materials and large tree growing from the ground right in the middle of the

café. Oddly enough it is not the only coffee shop in the *barrio* with a tree growing right in the middle of it. It is as if every one of the *vecinos* is trying to live up to the *barrio*'s name in one way or another. La Floresta means forest and it makes sense that it is the name of the *barrio* since its first 30 years it was isolated from the city and was in a greener more country-esque location. It is not uncommon to see a wide variety of flora in the neighborhood on the *veredas* as well as in *vecinos*' front and back yards or having *vecinos* who use the *vereda* as their yard like *vecina* Inés with her araucaria.

Just across the street from Botánica is *la casa embrujada*, which is not at all haunted it simply looks that way because no one has the money to rebuild it. Because it is a *patrimonio cultural* building, a cultural heritage site, it can only be rebuilt using the original blueprints - which I doubt even exist at this point. It always breaks my heart a little to think that we are losing such a magnificent historical house and its ramshackle look is starting to make the neighborhood look rundown and unkept. The Ministry of Culture and Heritage rules on the reconstruction of heritage sites is so specific and bureaucratic that in cases like *la casa embrujada* they are not actually contributing to the preservation of the neighborhood but rather the inability to maintain it. So many sites which were torn down without permission, half empty lots, because no one is willing to reconstruct the exact same building from scratch due to the cost. Over the summers when I would visit my grandparents in the US, I would find myself watching HGTV and all the shows that were centered around the reconstruction and remodeling of homes and when I got back to Quito, I would walk through the *barrio* and would tell *mamma* that when I grew up, I would redo all the old houses. I would love to do that still, I don't wish to see my childhood memories disappear if I can prevent it.

Someone has taken upon themselves to knit little colored squares and hang them on *la casa embrujada* as well as the trees on its *vereda*. It has become a little artistic corner in the *barrio* with knitting, images and photographs that hang from the branches from wool -which, have been laminated to protect them from the heavy rains, but do little to protect them from the sun damage that we are exposed to here from being on the equator-, the painted *macetas*, and the beautiful outdoor seating that the theater made with built-in *macetas*. The *vecinos* really like living up to the *barrio*'s name and although they are intentionally and consciously hanging knitted squares in the *barrio*, they are unconsciously interweaving themselves into its history and identity as well. They are living up to the idea that this community is more than a place where many people live in their specific lots, it is a place where the *vereda* is as much as people's homes as their front lawn and therefore deserve the same amount of care and love, which is done in community.



From left to right:

1. Me walking Stella on Vizcaya on the way to Ocho y Medio, walking past a *maceta*. By Leonardo Fiore.
2. Street view from Pontevedra of *la casa embrujada*. By Ana Rodríguez.
3. The *zapatero*'s house next to *señora Inés*' with two *macetas* in front of them. By Ana Rodríguez.

I like walking down Valladolid because although there is more traffic than on other streets, there are so many beautiful homes: some *patrimonio cultural*, which date back to the 1910s with traditional Spanish missionary architecture. Some are not that beautiful architectonically, but are full of colorful murals, posters and other fun little art pieces. There is one house, white with green details, that has a beautiful backyard and I always forget how rare it is now to see houses with big yards in the city. It is one of the first things friends mention when they come over to my house --which has a yard that wraps around the house. It is rare nowadays for houses in Quito. Every time I pass by that house I tell myself that I will live there when I am older, and everyone in my family knows my dream; mamma even sends pictures of it, saying “your house” anytime she walks past it. Although La Floresta is in the heart of the city –the capital city of Ecuador– I always feel like I live in a small town because of the familiarity with the spaces and the people, the rhythm at which life happens here and the fact that there is no need for a car or a mall or all the other infrastructure that one imagines is necessary for a modern, capital city.



Figure 3. Two analog photographs taken on the street of Valladolid of art on the *muros* of various houses. On the left a graffiti of a woman’s face on the door of a store. On the right a mosaic of a woman wearing a red veil on the *muro* of a private residence. By Ana Rodríguez.

Towards the end of Valladolid where it meets Madrid, La Floresta starts to feel more like the city, and you realize that you are no longer in a quiet calm *barrio* as you start walking in the

shadow of buildings higher than 7 stories, which is the maximum allowed in the *barrio* according to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. Madrid is also a much busier two-way street leading to the university district which contributes to the feeling of walking through a portal away from the calm *barrio* lifestyle into that of a capital city. On the corner of Valladolid and Madrid there is a yellow house that is shaped like an L with a patio in the middle and a fountain that does not work. It looks so elegant and gives us a glimpse into the past as to what old *hacienda* homes used to look like. Knowing that La Floresta used to be considered the suburbs and even the countryside of the city, it makes sense that the first houses built have a more colonial and *hacienda* feel to them.

I always dislike crossing Madrid because, like everywhere else in the city, no one respects crosswalks: you must look both ways before stepping into the street at full speed and hope to make it across before a fast-moving car or bus appears out of nowhere. But in the early morning, during my walks with the dogs, it is usually safer, and less chaotic. Once I make it across everything gets much quieter. Sometimes I don't even think people live on this side of Madrid because I never see people come in or out of their homes; there aren't even that many cars that travel up and down these smaller, more narrow streets. The cars that are roaming this side of La Floresta are usually the Aneta cars, which is the driving school and is located just a couple of streets south. I remember when I did Aneta and they loved taking me to drive on this side of Madrid because of the hills; it is important that we all know how to start and stop a manual car on these hills since almost no streets in Quito are flat. I haven't driven since then and have yet to get my driver's license.

I usually like taking different streets on these walks so that I can admire different houses, their vivid colors like red and yellow or their modernity clashing with the Spanish missionary

style just across the street; I am fascinated by how different and unique each one is. The silence that exists here is so beautiful and always allows me to dive deeply into my thoughts, almost making me forget where I am. There have been multiple times when I seem to go on autopilot and suddenly find myself having looped back to Madrid ready to cross back to my side of the *barrio*. This is close to the *redondel*, which is the center and main area of the *barrio*, always lively in the morning, with people buying bread from the *panaderias* and fruit from the “Más por menos” *tienda* -which translates to “more for less”. There is nothing better than walking past multiple bakeries in the morning and smelling all the fresh bread being made. I will sometimes see a *vecino* and say hello, other times I will meet a new *vecino* who just started working in a *tienda* or who I have not met because of being abroad.

I recall going into this one particular *tienda* on Madrid by the *redondel* when I was around 12 years old and being amazed by a watch that came with multiple colorful bands and cases so you could switch it out to whatever color you wanted. As soon as I got home, I ran to mamma and told her about it and a couple of days later we went back to the *tienda* and I got the watch. Usually, you can find everything you need in the *barrio*, which is all within walking distance, and the longest distance you would have to travel by foot for any necessities is probably around 10 minutes, but it is highly unlikely it would more likely take 5. I can go buy shoes, clothes, zero waste products, jewelry, tennis balls, go to a bar, a cheap restaurant or an expensive one, watch an alternative film, take a film photography course, go indoor rock climbing, buy traditional food, eat Italian or vegan, buy curtains or furniture, get a degree in cinematography, have a mechanic fix a car, take dogs to the vet, taking driving lessons, get my pictures framed, go to the dentist, grab a coffee or buy orchids all within a 1km radius.

I also like strolling past the women who sit on the corner of Madrid by the *redondel* selling *periódicos*, because they usually sell some fruits and vegetables on the side and their *aguacates* are always perfectly ripe. It is funny to think that the women who sell the *periódicos*' *aguacates* are much better than the ones that the *aguacatero* sells, announcing his arrival to the entire *barrio* three or four times a week, walking through every street yelling “AGUACATEEEEEEEEE” and ringing the bells of previous buyers. Whenever I hear his voice announcing that he has *aguacates* I always think that he has great potential to be an opera singer; he can hold a note for nearly 30 seconds and is never out of tune.

At the *redondel*, all the streets in the *barrio* meet, making it the heart of the community. Although the *redondel* is the main plaza in the *barrio* it is rundown, with overgrown grass, broken paths and quite dirty. It would be nice to see it redone and allow for people to congregate and enjoy a clean comfortable space. To be fair though, being in the middle of the *redondel* has its own issues since crossing the street to the plaza is dangerous with all the cars that drive by. I usually start walking back towards the house on Coruña, from the *redondel* which is equally or even more busy with traffic than Madrid due to the *buseros* who are coming from the valley via Guápulo. Coruña is much prettier than Madrid since there is a median with grass and trees of all sorts, even a palm tree here and there. It is always astounding to think about palms growing at 3,000m above sea level, but that is the uniqueness of Quito's climate. Coruña has a lot of small, artsy shops, where I have probably bought at least one thing in each one, from natural deodorant to clothing designed by Ecuadorian fashion designers. There are so many things to look at and so many little trinkets and toys that I want to buy, I seem to always be restricting myself to one purchase per week, but never seem to accomplish it.

As I walk home, if I have time and am not in a rush, I continue towards Zaldumbide street, which is not technically considered to be within the boundaries of La Floresta but culturally still a part of it. Here is where some of the more expensive homes are located, which is no surprise since it is the divider between La Floresta and Gonzales Suarez, one of the most expensive streets in the city, full of tall buildings with unimaginable views of the valley and Pichincha.

The main reason I like to walk through Zaldumbide is because my favorite coffee shop, Paccari, is located here. It began as a vegan chocolatier and then opened a coffee shop and now offers a wide array of products and café menu items including traditional food items like *humitas* which are a type of corn cake, wrapped in a leaf and cooked slowly in a pot -visually similar to Mexican tamales, but different in terms of ingredients. When you walk in you can smell the scent of chocolate and coffee and your mouth starts watering. On warm, sunny days I usually like to order an ice cream of *mora* and will take it to go so I can enjoy the *solcito* and continue appreciating my personal time with my thoughts. On cold days I usually order some sort of tea or *infusión de frutas* -fruit infusion tea- and will take a seat under a heater and put on one of the complimentary ponchos they offer customers to stay warm.

However, I also like to walk through Zaldumbide because of the empty lot next to the Uruguayan Ambassador's residence. It has been empty for as long as I can recall and is sealed off by a black metal garage-looking door with a lock, likely 4 meters wide and 2 meters tall. Where the lock is located there is a small peek hole, cut out in the door, which I always peer through to see the magnitude of the lot, which is not common for the *barrio*. Based on my calculations and the satellite view from Google Maps I estimate the lot to be approximately 5,000 square meters. It is mostly covered with overgrown grass but on the southern corner of the

lot, there are a couple of bushes and trees. I love this lot because it contains an endless array of possibilities of what this space could be: a house, a school, a rock-climbing gym, a park, a community center.

Us *vecinos* are very close since we are interacting on a daily basis and we do care deeply about each other's wellbeing. The same way *doña* Hilda asks me about how my family and I are doing, I do the same with all the *vecinos* I know; I ask them how they are, their children and grandchildren, make some jokes and demonstrate the appreciation I have for them, considering I have known them for as long as I can remember. However, we do not have place to truly interact and come together as a community, as a *barrio*, we have made do with the *tiendas* and *vecino's* stores as well as the streets and *veredas* as our place of meeting and interaction. And while we have managed to maintain a close-knit community, it is important that we have a place where we can all come together, where no one is serving the other, or have any type of power dynamic, a place that is home to everyone. It is for this reason that I am proposing a community center in the empty lot mentioned previously, where *vecinos* can come together and share. This project proposal integrates various previous project proposals for the *barrio* by the Comité Pro-Mejoras del Barrio La Floresta to create a more versatile and concrete one.

History of La Floresta

The beginning of a *barrio*



Figure 4. First plans for the *barrios* of La Floresta and Las Mercedes. Likely designed by Gualberto Pérez.¹

La Floresta is located 3 kilometers from old town Quito, now the historical center, on a small hill, east of the Pichincha volcano and overlooks the valley. On May 24, 1917, the urban plan for the creation of the neighborhoods of La Floresta and Las Mercedes were approved (see F4.), and the first homes were built. For its first thirty years, however, it was isolated on its hill from the main city, allowing the *barrio* and its people to create strong ties to the physical space, developing a unique identity and community. Much of its ability to so easily establish a way of life centered around daily interactions with *vecinos* is thanks to the urban plan which centered a *redondel* and plaza at the heart of the *barrio*, surrounded by bakeries, shops, the church and other

¹ Alfonso Ortiz, *Damero*, Fonsal, Quito, 2007, pg. 191

stores, crucial to life on this lonely hill. With unclear city limits and neighborhood delimitations, La Floresta was “spontaneously molded by an array of different social agencies, from city folk to rural farmers and middle-class people, even big and medium owners of estates who took advantage of the expansion of the city to use the free land to their advantages,” (Comité Pro-Mejoras del Barrio La Floresta 14).

The growth of the nearby neighborhood, La Mariscal, increased the demand of different resources like public transportation, bricks for the construction of roads and homes, artisanal and domestic labor that the city center could not provide. La Floresta, which was made up of a population with an array of professions, was more than willing to be the provider of these resources requested by La Mariscal, forcing the *barrio*'s socioeconomic status to be made up of mostly low and middle working-class. This informal development in addition to the lack of basic services and public works -which were implemented in the 1950s-, forced the inhabitants of this area to organize and provide for themselves and others in a successful manner.

The first 30 years of La Floresta's trajectory also reveal the evolution between two different urban development models. The first one, from 1917, which appears in the original design of La Floresta, responded to planning parameters completely different to those from the one of 1947, the year in which La Floresta was recognized as a neighborhood in relation to an expanding Quito. This analysis seeks to demonstrate the heritage of the urban structure of the *barrio*. Hereupon, I will examine the different moments of this process between 1917 and 1960.

The urban model of 1917

On May 24th of 1917, Quito's county council approved the plans to create the “Barrio de La Floresta y de las Mercedes,” which highlighted a town with very defined boundaries. The

barrio was organically intertwined to the road of Guápulo, which winds down the ravine on the east side of La Floresta down towards the town of Guápulo before leading to the valley of Yarqui -nowadays a mere expansion of the city into the lower altitude valley. Various historical sources of the time indicate that this road was designed by the engineer Gualberto Pérez, who was the most important cartographer and engineer of his time and the most prestigious in Quito. The project that best describes his work is the famous plan of Quito of 1887, which has been used as a reference for future maps of the city.² The resemblance between the 1917 plans of La Floresta which connect to the road of Guápulo and the original design of the *barrio*, leads to the conclusion that it was Gualberto Pérez who may have conceived the first urban patterns of La Floresta.

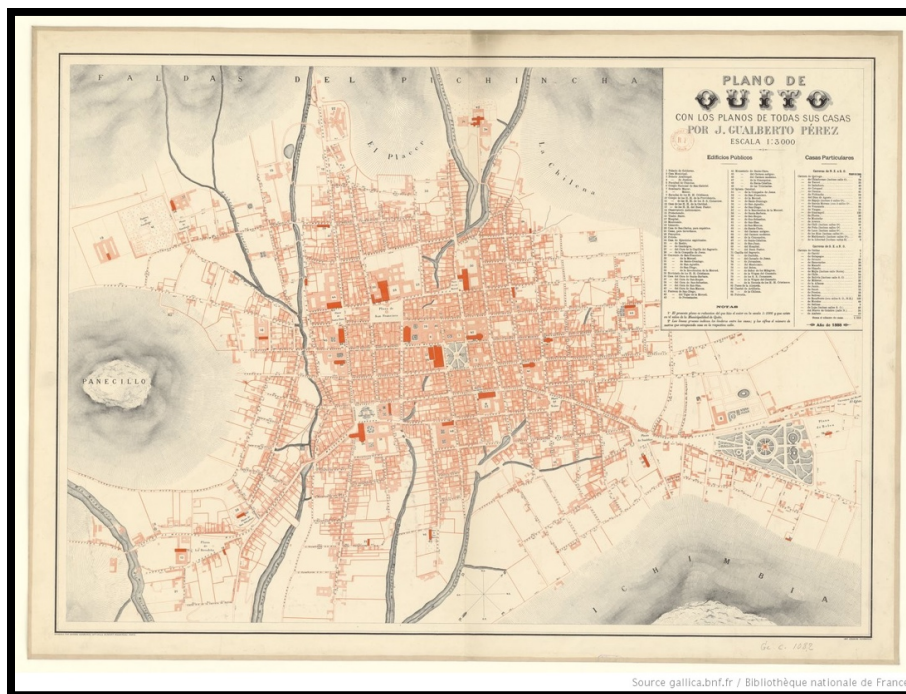


Figure 5. Urban plans for a modern Quito from 1888 by J. Gualberto Pérez.³

² Idem, pg. 145-146

³ Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Pérez's plan of 1910 created the first cartographic representation of a modern Quito and is considered until now, the first framework of Quito of the twentieth century. Pérez had imagined a cosmopolitan city expanding towards the periphery of the historical center, in other words, just as much north as south with the hills on east and west as city barriers. The urban structure that he designed was made up of several centralities that reproduced and gained form based on the configuration of the soil, adapting to its irregularities and leaving the rivers and ravines exposed. This urban design did not establish any type of socioeconomic segregation.

The plan of *el Quito porvenir* –the Quito to come– was given to the Municipality by Gualberto Pérez in 1911 and functioned as the first regulatory framework for the city's expansion in the first two decades of the XX century. Decisions like the outline of *avenida* Colón from the *avenida* Colombia (nowadays *avenida* 12 de Octubre) –which needed to be elongated in order to connect the road to Guápulo (nowadays Madrid) with the *carretera del Norte* and el Batán– looked to Pérez's plan. Nonetheless, this plan lost its relevance at the start of the 1930s, because it could not foresee the city's population nearly doubling within only a decade. Although Pérez did not leave as big an impact of the urban development of the city, he was able to leave a small part of his proposal in the original design of La Floresta.

One only needs to look at the sketches of Itchimbia -a park between La Floresta and the historical center- in the map of Quito of 1910 to discover the similarities with the plans of the *barrio* of 1917. In fact, the latter shows the urbanistic microcosms that Pérez imagined within the model of multicentralities. His was also the first attempt to break away from the colonial checkerboard model -were all the city blocks are the same size and streets point in the same directions, a common model of Roman cities- a characteristic of the historical center. In the case of la Floresta, this model was replaced with “a concentric-hexagon outline adapted... to the

topographic characteristics of the pronounced hill in which the *barrio* was located” (Ortiz, 185). Initially La Floresta’s *redondel* was supposed to be a hexagon but when the plans were modernized it was made into a circle.⁴ This special shape that centralized a public park, created the ideal conditions for social confluence and the establishment of *vecindad* bonds.

It began as a small centrality isolated from the city that started growing with its own dynamics. Pérez’s model left an unforgettable impression in the urbanistic culture of La Floresta, demonstrating that urbanism plays a fundamental role in the configuration of social systems.

The *barrio* on the hill

The existence of the road to Guápulo and the expansion of the *barrio* La Mariscal stimulated the early urbanization of La Floresta. These circumstances aroused the interests of estate owners in the area to commodify their properties. The plan of 1917, also served as a lotting framework legalized by the municipality to serve companies’ demands particularly dedicated to development businesses. La Sociedad Anónima La Colmena, in the case of La Floresta, led the business of buying and selling lands and allowed the conversion of estate owners into urban businessmen.

Some estate owners also sold or transferred ownership to farmers that eventually commercialized them. Juan Morillo, an original inhabitant of the *barrio*, an illustrious and very dear leader of the community, would sell lands at low prices on the slope between the street Gerona and the road to Guápulo to *arreadores* –people who are not farmers or landowners but herd animals for a living and for survival– stationed near La Floresta, who became small landowners and dedicated themselves to the production and transportation of bricks. Among

⁴ Alfonso Ortiz, *Damero*, Fonsal, Quito, 2007, pg. 185

these buyers were the families Guamanzara, Albán, and Figueroa, that lotted and sold such lands, allowing for the semi-rural habitat to be transformed with time, into a compilation of urban popular homes.⁵

Thanks to the document of settlement of the community of La Colmena, in 1920, it is possible to recognize the original boundaries of La Floresta, which comprised, all the lands bought by the *señor* Vicente Urrutia Olano:

...la propiedad conocida con el nombre de fundo Clavijo, Girón, situado en las parroquias Benalcázar (Mariscal) y Guápulo y venden también al mismo señor Urrutia Olano la parte del fundo denominado Las Mercedes situado igualmente en la parroquia de Guápulo y conocida con los nombres de Santa Lucía, San Nicolás Grande y San Nicolás Chiquito.⁶

Translation: ... the property known by the name of estate Clavijo, Girón, situated in the parishes of Benalcázar (Mariscal) and Guápulo and sold also to the same Mr. Urrutia Olano the portion of the estate called Las Mercedes, equally situated in the parish of Guápulo and known by the names of Santa Lucía, San Nicolás Grande y San Nicolás Chiquito.

The area mentioned previously extended from the road to Guápulo until the current zone of Girón, the western part of La Floresta. In the same document, the need to outline a road to connect both points were established “following to the extent that is possible the delineation of the approved plan by the municipality...” (notary Dr. Daniel B. Hidalgo). In other words, this

⁵ Interview with Juan Morillo, January 2018, conducted by the Comité Pro-Mejoras del Barrio La Floresta for *La Floresta: Testimonios de Vecindad y Patrimonio*.

⁶ Written testimony of the sale of the lands issued by the society of La Colmena in favor of Vicente Urrutia Olano in the presence of the notary Dr. Daniel Hidalgo. April 15 1921. Archivo Nacional de Historia.

transaction established the boundaries of the *barrio* Las Mercedes y La Floresta that were reflected in the plans of 1917.

Aside from the fact that in the first years one of the six streets that were supposed to join the others at the *redondel* was never built, the design of 1917 maintained its essential traits as outlined in the plan of Quito of 1928. The naming of the streets of this community appears in a map of 1934, which shows the delimitation marked in the southwest by the streets L rida, in the southeast by Gerona and the road to Gu pulo; in the west by Pontevedra and Vizcaya -my street (see Figure 6). Madrid connected the community with the urban perimeter which back then began at *avenida* Colombia (now 12 de Octubre).

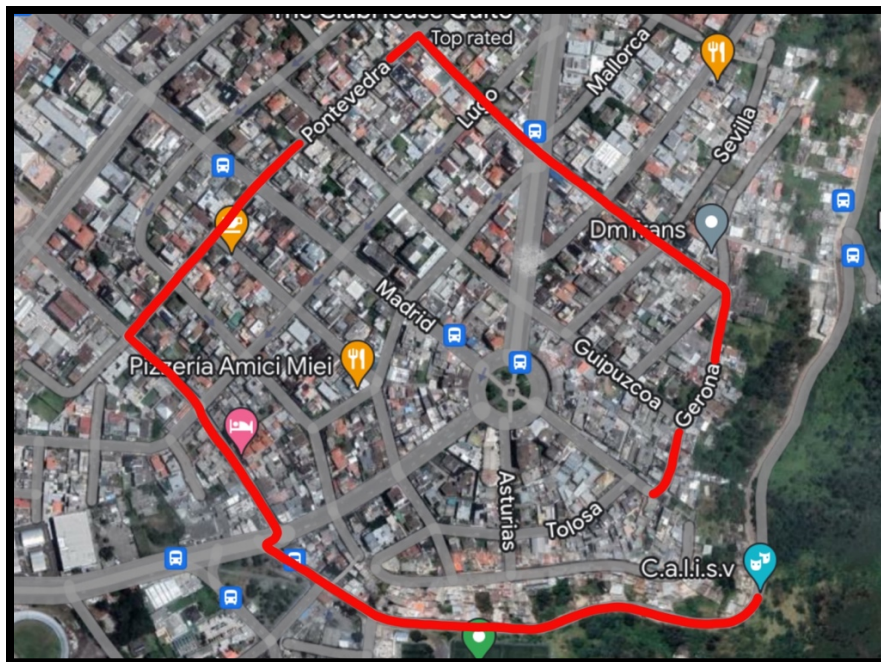


Figure 6. Map of the delimitations of La Floresta in 1934. Boundaries drawn by Ana Rodr guez. Image from Google Maps, 2022.

It is highly likely that the Hispanist -referencing Spain, Spanish culture and colonial times- naming emerged from the Sociedad de Estudios Hist ricos, in charge of the municipality,

since 1911 of naming the streets during Quito's expansion.⁷ The Hispanist affiliation that the group possessed influenced the naming of the streets and plazas, converting La Floresta into a reserve of an imaginary, nostalgic colonial Quito. It is interesting that the *barrio* was created with the idea of Spanish colonial times and a tie to the colonial power when La Floresta is the opposite of these institutions. It is diverse both socioeconomically and racially and seeks to be a collaborative and community centered place.

The 1930s



Figure 7. Topographic map of Ecuador, 1928, Geographic Military Service.⁸

This map indicates the clear division that exists between La Floresta and the historical center, the lack of streets connecting the two and the large number of empty lots.

⁷ *Gaceta Municipal*, No. 80, August 12, 1910

⁸ Hoja 40 del Mapa Topográfico del Ecuador, Servicio Geográfico Militar, 1928

Between 1904 and 1936, Quito experienced rapid growth, from 51,858 to 101,668 inhabitants.⁹ This grand urban expansion, in large part informal, surpassed regulations established by the municipality, forcing them to approve plans presented by private entrepreneurs which in turn would help sustain the rapid urbanization of the city. Because the urban process was out of control and not enough resources existed to invest in public works, the town halls forced private businesses that profited from soil, to create new *barrios*, take charge of the cost of piping, potable water, hygiene, roads, electricity, order and security. For the “hills that dominate the city” (Comité Pro-Mejoras del Barrio de La Floresta 22) the creation of special ordinances were created, which allowed the municipality to require specific conditions from employers and landlords of new *barrios*. This arrangement was abolished in 1938 by the Chamber of the Senate (Cámara del Senado)¹⁰ leaving the decision to provide public works in the new *barrios* to private businesses until 1942, when the regulation plan of Jones Ordiozola came into effect. This meant that all new public works from then on would be provided by the state and meet the same standards. The *Gaceta Municipal* spoke widely about this issue and its effect on the urbanization of Quito and its inhabitants throughout the 1930s.

From an announcement in 1931, in the newspaper *El Comercio*, the sale of lots in the area was on the rise precisely due to the initiative of Vicente Urrutia. Mr. Urrutia tried to meet the obligations the municipality had imposed on urban businessmen and in 1931, the inhabitants of the *barrio* thanked him for installing the first channeling and distribution of water to this area by presenting him with a plaque. He also distinguished himself for his philanthropy; aside from donating lands to people from humble backgrounds, in 1939 Urrutia and his wife Laura Gómez

⁹ Guillermo Bustos “Quito en la transición: actores colectivos e identidades culturales urbanas,” *Enfoques y estudios históricos a través de la historia*, Serie Quito, Dirección de Planificación del Municipio de Quito-Junta de Andalucía, 1999, pg. 173

¹⁰ *Gaceta Municipal*, No. 94, 10 de noviembre de 1939

de la Torre de Urrutia, donated “*de forma gratuita*” –for free– two of their lots in Las Mercedes, a total of 1,663 square meters to the archdiocese of Quito and the parish of Guápulo. Today, both the local church and the central park or *redondel* are located on these lands.¹¹ During this time, the main street, Madrid, already had lighting and new streets were made.

The community experience

During the presidency of General Enríquez Gallo (1937-1938) a member of the liberal socialist coalition, who focused on advancing labor codes and laws protecting children also established The *Ley de Comunas* -Law of Municipalities. This represented a halt in the interests of private businesses and businessmen because it allowed urban territories to formalize on a community-based approach and not business. Documents provided by historian Víctor Jácome indicate that most of the inhabitants of La Floresta protected under these legal frameworks, formally processed the creation of a commune. Once this petition was approved by the *Previsión Social*, the commune of La Floresta was legally established, with its own town hall, delimited territory and constitutive acts.

Based on the documents researched by Jácome, the commune extended between the street of Galicia, *avenida* 12 de Octubre, the road to Guápulo and the current street of Ladrón de Guevara (see Figure 8). These also registered a population of 520 inhabitants in 1937, which included Indigenous peoples, *mestizos* and Whites,¹² evidence that La Floresta was an

¹¹ Written copy of the donation of the lands by Mr. Vicente Urrutia, particular archive, Quito, August 3, 1939

¹² Research conducted by historian Víctor Jácome for his doctoral degree thesis, *De comunas a barrios en el desarrollo urbano de Quito, 1930-1990*. Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar.

intercultural, interracial *barrio*, rare for a time period in which ethnicity was subject to exclusion and isolation.

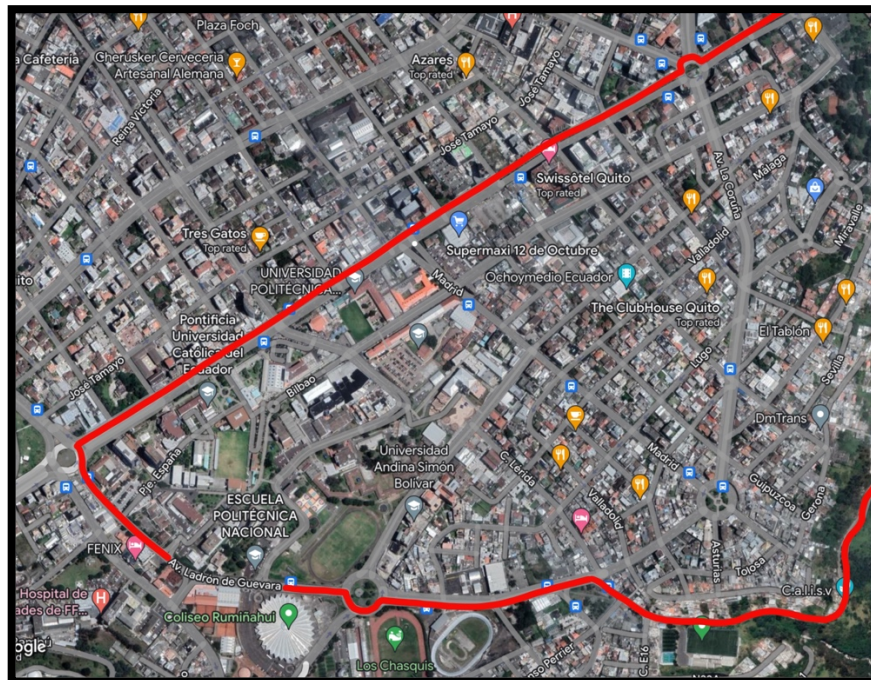


Figure 8. Boundaries of the commune of La Floresta. Boundaries by Ana Rodríguez. Image from Google Maps, 2022.

The urban parish

By 1947, the *barrio* considered an urban parish and was already much more integrated into the larger city but maintained its unique identity in comparison to neighboring sectors. The municipal ordinance 658 of that same year, legally formalized the establishment of La Floresta as an urban parish but it did not highlight the importance of inhabitant's organization and mobility in the development of the *barrio*.¹³ Historian Ana María Goetschel found that the municipality used and promoted this mechanism to help guide collective work towards public works especially in *barrios* that were growing in an informal manner like La Floresta. Mayors of

¹³ Archivo Histórico Municipal de Quito, *Libro auténtico de ordenanzas*, 3 de enero, 1947

Quito, like Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño (1946-1948), José Ricardo Chiriboga Villagómez (1948-1952) and Carlos Andrade Marín Malo (1955-1959), used the *minga* -indigenous tradition of cooperative and voluntary work for the common good- to mobilize the human workforce of the *barrios*. It was in this manner that various works were accomplished like widening and leveling streets in San Juan, San Roque and La Floresta. Similarly, *barrio* committees were funded by these mayor offices, in particular Chiriboga Villagómez, who gained popularity due to his financial investments.¹⁴ These practices were inspired, generally, in a Catholic assistance ideology sustained by social organizations that played an active role in the configuration of an urban structure and by parish identities. It is also important to highlight the role of women as key figures in these places, due to their roles in the *mingas* and creation of *barrio* identities. In La Floresta, the practices of involving the community in *barrio* development have been consolidated as a tradition that exists to this day.

Once an urban parish, La Floresta acquired its official boundaries which would slightly change from previous years, specifically the dividing line with the *barrio* of La Mariscal with the new *avenida* 12 de Octubre. The urban perimeter of La Floresta was expanded towards the northwest with the creation of the new *urbanización* of Zaldumbide, whose formation was made possible thanks to the ordinance of November 28 of 1947. The municipality of Quito granted Gonzalo Zaldumbide, owner of the sector, the permits to develop an *urbanización* -nowadays a gated community, but in this time period just a high-end neighborhood- for people of high socioeconomic status.

¹⁴ Ana María Goetschel, “Quito: hegemonía y sociedad (1930-1950),” in *Ciudades de los Andes: visión histórica y contemporánea*, CIUDAD, 1992, pg. 335-337. Municipal documents of the time highlight the lack of resources to handle public works in contrast with the active role of the civil society. A formal petition to the *Reina de La Floresta* (Queen of La Floresta), Aída Castro Vallarino was made asking to clean up the street Guipúzcoa, which had turned into a “dumpster and public latrine”, was denied due to lack of funds. “Informe de la comisión de obras públicas, mayo de 1948, Municipalidad de Quito”, Archivo Histórico Municipal, Fondo de la Secretaría Municipal. Comisión de obras. 1947-1948.



Figure 9. Boundaries of *urbanización* Zaldumbide in the 1950s. Boundaries by Ana Rodríguez. Image from Google Maps, 2022.

The boundaries of the *urbanización* Zaldumbide were in the north, the US ambassador's residence; in the south, the street Francisco Salazar; in the west the extension of the street Muros, and in the east the property of Mr. Jorge Moeller (see Figure 9). Among other specifications, it was recommended that the buildings be "of residential style or chalets, with four facades, between 1 and 3 floors with at least 5 meters from the *veredas* and at least 3 meters from the neighboring home."¹⁵ By then, urban lots located on high ground, characteristic of La Floresta, revealed a distinct status suitable for the enjoyment of ventilation between homes and enough brightness and ample gardens, all things desired by the wealthy class. In fact, the scenic walk on the west border of La Floresta, sponsored by the municipality of the 1950s, demonstrated of the value of the entire sector. It is not an accident then, that the Zaldumbide family built their

¹⁵ "Informe de la Comisión de Obras Públicas, marzo de 1948", Municipalidad de Quito, Archivo Histórico Municipal, Fondo de la Secretaría Municipal. Comisión de obras. 1947-1948.

residence on the highest point of the *urbanización*. It provided an incomparable view of Quito, with the historical center in the background. During this time, the media made the Zaldumbide building and other homes in this northwestern part of the *barrio* into symbols of the new modern architecture of the capital.¹⁶

The exclusive criteria with which the *urbanización* Zaldumbide was created, favorable to the installation of large urban properties, had to be redesigned, in part to attract financing on the basis of diversifying the offer towards other social sectors. Gonzalo Zaldumbide was forced to present a project to reform the *urbanización*, which was approved by the municipality in 1948 under the following terms:

El proyecto original consultaba una urbanización de barrio de primera clase (...). Esta lotización habría sido la más aconsejable para este sector; sin embargo, la situación económica de la mayor parte de los habitantes de la ciudad no permite sino a un pequeño número la adquisición de lotes tan valiosos (...). Como el barrio de La Floresta puede considerarse un barrio de transacción como barrio de primera categoría y uno de vivienda media, estimamos que se puede autorizar el tipo de lotización y edificación económica que se proyecta, pues sería una solución para el problema de vivienda económica de numerosos empleados públicos y particulares...¹⁷

Translation: The original project consisted of an *urbanización* of a first-class *barrio* (...). This sale of lots would have been the most recommended for this sector; nonetheless, the economic situation of the majority of the inhabitants in the city would

¹⁶ Homes like the corner house on Salazar and Coruña –already torn down–, built by Sixto Durán Ballen, was considered by *El Comercio* another one of the modern architectural expressions in La Floresta.

¹⁷ “Informe de la Comisión de Obras Públicas, marzo de 1948”, Municipalidad de Quito, Archivo Histórico Municipal, Fondo de la Secretaría Municipal. Comisión de obras. 1947-1948.

allow only for a small number to acquire these valuable lots (...). Since the *barrio* of La Floresta can consider itself a *barrio* of category 1 and of middle-class housing, we estimate that the projected type of land allotment and affordable edification can be authorized, as it would be a solution to the problem of affordable housing of numerous public and private workers...

As a result, various blocks were modified with the creation of more streets, shrinking the size of lots and therefore lowering lot prices. It was specified that homes in front of the smaller streets or *pasajes* should not be enclosed or have high fences, so that the gardens remain integrated with the streets. The model of the city-garden that *urbanización* had to make space and integrate other social classes, for example, public employees who had access to loans for housing provided the *Caja de Pensiones* and social security. The office of the Plan Regulador – Odriozola’s plans– oversaw not only the urban aspect of development but also architectural design. To the approval conceded to Gonzalo Zaldumbide, the plans of “typical houses that were built in the small lots” (30) were added clarifying that his plan contained a caveat, that new constructions must “meet the essential requirements for a residential *barrio*” (30).

The unification and compression of La Floresta would take place in the 1940 and 1950’s.¹⁸ In this process, the establishment of K-12 schools like Quintiliano Sánchez (1948), Heredia Bustamante (1957), and Americano (1946) and Cardenal Spellman (1957) attracted a population of different social statuses, embracing the vocation of La Floresta as a place of diversity and harmonious coexistence.

¹⁸ The sector now known as “El Naval”, towards the south of Lérida, started developing in the 1970s.

The possibility to rely on public spaces of gathering and socialization were fortified with the creation of the *mercado* of La Floresta in 1952 and the establishment of the ecclesiastic parish in charge of religious Franciscans, an urbanistic milestone that would make the *redondel* the point of confluence of social life, symbolic and organizational of the entire *barrio*.

Project Proposal



Figure 10. Sketch of La Floresta. The red heart indicates my home on Vizcaya. Drawing by Ana Rodríguez.

Why a community center

This historical background has highlighted how relatively new the *barrio* of La Floresta is. But it also indicates how unique it is in comparison to other areas of the city of Quito, especially in regards to diversity of race and socioeconomic status. Growing up in La Floresta, I learned to interact with people from different backgrounds and see them as equals, no matter what job they had, the type of home they lived in, or the color of their skin. This is something very uncommon for Quito and Ecuador in general.

Ecuador is by no means perfect and has a lot of work to do when it comes to improving the lives of the vast majority of citizens, especially those who are of Indigenous descent or are *mestizo* or members of the lower-middle class. However, La Floresta offers and almost utopian

view of what the country could look like if it chose to set aside our differences and work as a community, uplifting and improving our lives and the lives of the people we interact with on a daily basis. The culture and sense of belonging that exists in each and every *vecino* is deeply rooted in the history of this place, a place that sustained itself, alone on its hill, for thirty years, before becoming part of the capital city. And it must be acknowledged that the development and creation of the *barrio* came mainly from the community wanting to create a place that welcomed diversity, where the culture of *mingas* was what made the community function, survive, and thrive.

Nonetheless, there are many things that need to be improved about La Floresta, and it is imperative that these changes occur because if they do not, it is possible that a shift in the unique identity of this place may come to an end. The creation of a central location, a place where *vecinos* can gather to discuss, share, contribute and find comfort, a place that will lead future projects and invite newer generations is so crucial. That is why I am proposing the creation of a community center. The establishment of a communal home would incentivize the less formal and more *minga* approach to the revitalization of La Floresta. In these next sections, I will discuss projects that have been proposed in the past, the potential limitations of building a community center and show how my design responds to these various challenges, both past and present.

Previous and current project proposals

The following project proposals were provided by the Comité Pro-Mejoras del Barrio La Floresta in their book *La Floresta: Testimonios de Patrimonio y Vecindad* in their chapter *Utopía*. These projects do not have authors, so all credit is given to the committee.

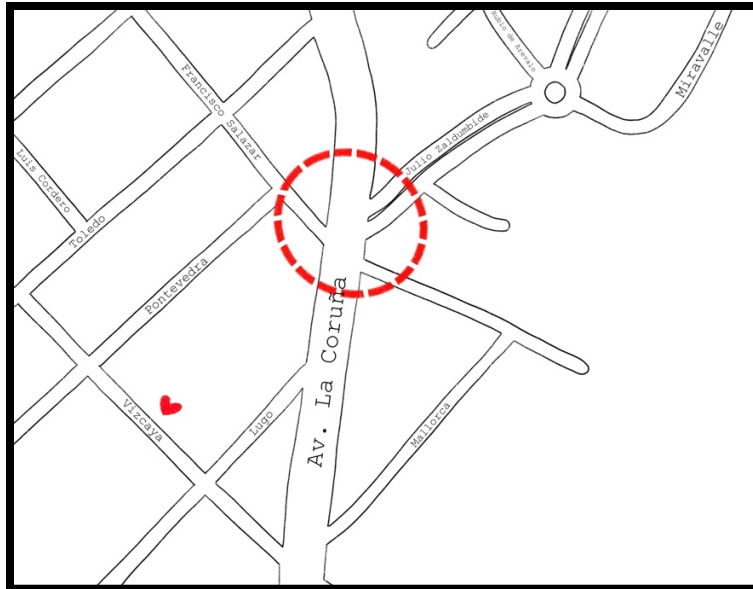


Figure 11. Location of the project proposal *Pacificación de vías*. Diagram by Ana Rodríguez.

The first project proposed is the *Pacificación de vías* or Pacification of roads, which seeks to redesign the intersection of *avenida* Coruña, Francisco Salazar and Julio Zaldumbide (see Figure 11), by making Coruña a more walkable street.

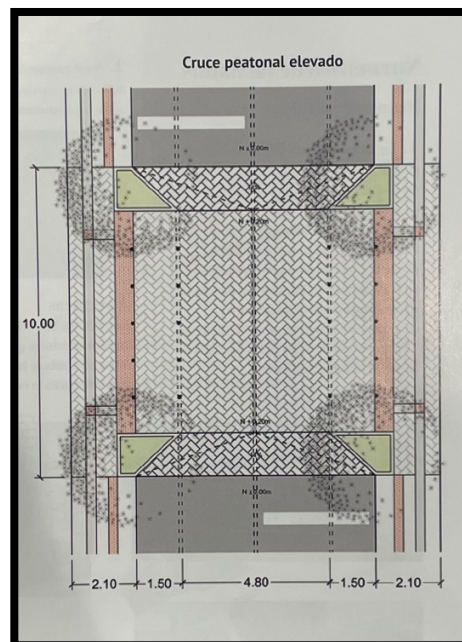


Figure 12. The proposal for an elevated crosswalk.¹⁹

¹⁹ “La Floresta: Testimonios de Vecindad y Patrimonio”, *Comité Pro-Mejoras del Barrio La Floresta*, pg. 146-147, Imprenta Abilit, 2020.

This would be accomplished by having only one lane in each direction, each 3 meters wide as well as a segregated bike path, ensuring the safety of cyclists. To alleviate La Floresta's lack of parking in its small streets, the *veredas* will be widened to allow for parking on both sides. Pedestrian safety is also an important issue to consider, which is why the project proposes to elevate crosswalks –like a type of speed bump– forcing drivers to slow their speed and let people cross. This project would be completed in multiple stages allowing for the *barrio* and the rest of the city to get used to the changes occurring in this intersection.²⁰



Figure 13. Example of a more cohesive and consistent view of building's facades from the street.²¹

The second project proposal is the *Normativa de fachadas* or Facade Regulations which aims to make the community more aesthetically and architecturally consistent. The project contains 3 approaches to improving the appearance of the *barrio*: General Regulations, Entrances, and Doors. For general regulations the project proposes to respect the cultural landscape of La Floresta by maintaining harmonious colors and plants as well as refer to traditional types of architecture and artistic patterns of the *barrio*. The proposal states that facades should not divide homes from the street, and one must be able to see out into public

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Idem, pg. 148 - 149

spaces to maintain the feeling of a connected community and not a segregated, enclosed one for each *vecino*. For entrances –specifically for stores, restaurants and other services– it is encouraged that the entrances have a number of windows and doors and ensure that enough light is entering the interior space and can be visually accessible from the outside. These should also seek to be diverse rather than all identical to each other, in order to feel the uniqueness of each entrance. In the case of long facades, the project encourages implementing many doors and windows, allowing for social interactions to occur easily and naturally. Finally, the section on doors encourages that all doors be identifiable from the *veredas*. In other words, they should stand out from the facade and not be in any way hidden.²²

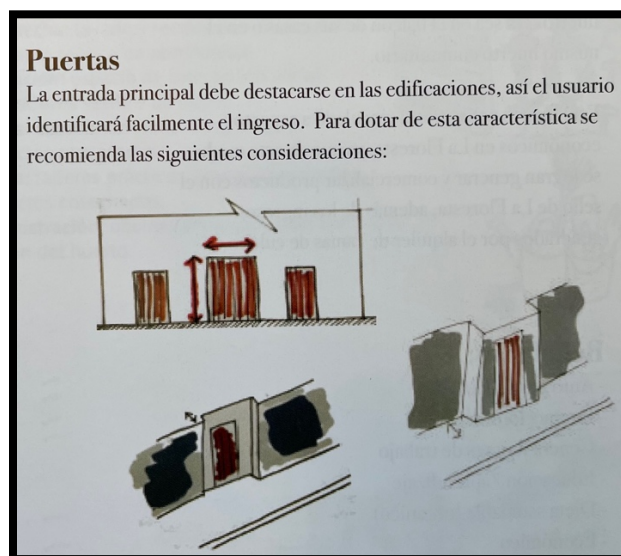


Figure 14. Examples of how entrances and doors should look like. Main entrances should be larger and stand out.²³

The last proposal is the creation of a communal garden. It would foster a healthy lifestyle through a healthful diet, education and social interaction, making it not only a place that revolves around food but also a place of communal gathering. This center would also provide workshops

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

it has been achieved, and the ties both to the physical space and the people is present, a community center project could contribute to the improvement of community-based projects and programs as well as impact the larger Quito community.

Limitations

Before I dive into my project proposal, I would like to acknowledge the various limitations or barriers that may present themselves in the proposal and creation of this project. First, finding enough funds to start and complete this project would be extremely difficult, as the proposal is a large-scale construction, located within a sizable lot. The funds used for this construction would likely have to come from the municipality but also from private investors or philanthropists if the project is to be completed in the way I have envisioned. Secondly, it is possible that residents and *vecinos* who live near the empty lot where I seek to build the community center will be opposed to the project. In Quito, having a public lot next to your home is usually seen as a security hazard, since people could enter your home via the public space. It would be imperative to invest in security systems to ensure the safety of the community when inside the center but also to alleviate the stress and worries of people who live next to the proposed lot. There is also the issue on how this community center would be sustained and funded once construction is completed. The goal is that members of the community can use this space and take advantage of the resources and courses offered for free. However, for services to be free there would have to be some type of steady income for the center, whether that is through selling the produce from the garden or charging a pay-what-you-can monthly fee to the *vecinos* who use this space. It is possible that if *vecinos* wish to provide a certain type of service based on their personal interests and talents (i.e., an art class) then they could opt out of monthly payments

as gratitude for their contribution. These are the main issues that my project proposal has identified encountering but it is to be expected that more may arise as the project evolves.

Project Proposal: Casa La Floresta

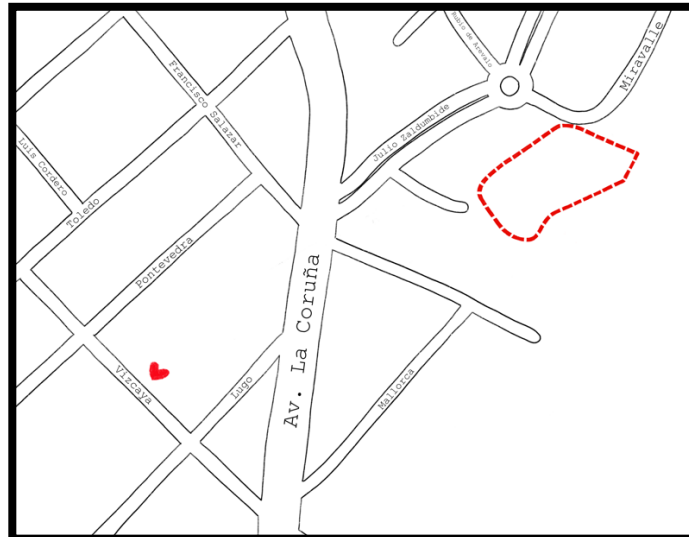
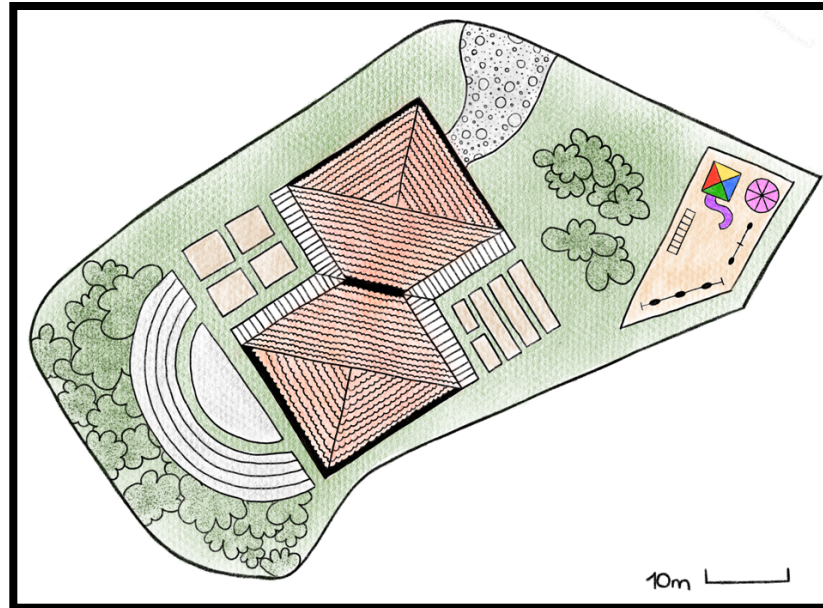


Figure 16. Location of the proposed community center, Casa La Floresta. Diagram by Ana Rodríguez.

My project proposal is called “Casa La Floresta” and will be a community center for the *vecinos* of the *barrio* La Floresta. The plot that I have selected for this project is a 5,000sq meter lot, on Miravalle street (see Figure 16) that has never been developed. This center will have 4 different components: an 800sq meter single floor building, an amphitheater, a playground and a communal garden.



F17. Community center, Casa La Floresta proposal. Diagram by Ana Rodríguez.

1. The buildings

The community center building will be an 800sq meter single floor construction with Spanish-missionary architecture style, honoring the more traditional homes in La Floresta but also maintaining its aesthetic and visual consistency. It is important that the construction has one floor and not multiple to ensure it is accessible for all *vecinos* regardless of their age and disabilities.

The construction will be divided into two, 400sq meter square buildings (see Figure 17). The one closest to the entrance, on the east side will contain a kitchen, restrooms, a library with a computer lab, and small movie room. The kitchen can be used for any event where food needs to be prepared and or stored. It can also be used for cooking classes, hosted by *vecinos* who wish to give back to the community through their passion and love for food. Local restaurants and or coffee shops, like Paccari, are welcome to host community events that would bring revenue to their business but also attract people from outside the *barrio* to learn more about our community and the many services, events, products and culture we have to offer.

The library will contain a wide array of books of different reading levels, genres and languages, to ensure it appeals to all the members of the community. This library will have a book check-out system, to ensure *vecinos* return the books if they wish to take them home to read. *Vecinos* will be encouraged to donate any books they do not wish anymore, growing the library collection and having a variety of different books to offer others. The computer lab in the library will have 5 computers and a printer. While it will be free to use the computers, it will cost ¢5 (per paper) to print in black and white and ¢10 (per paper) to print in color. The money collected from printing will go back into the community center.

The movie room will also be available to all *vecinos*; however, it must be reserved for personal use. Inside the movie room, there will be a variety of sofas, loveseats and armchairs for comfortable seating and a projector connected to a computer. The library will host movie nights once a month to watch Ecuadorian and international films. It is preferable to stay away from mainstream and popular films, and it is important to ensure that any film being shown is not also available to watch at the Ocho y Medio movie theater, so the community center does not take from their business.

The second 400sq meter building, on the west side (see Figure 17), will have 4 classroom-style rooms and a nursery. The classroom-style rooms will contain a whiteboard, individual desks as well as larger tables, a desk with a computer, a projector and chairs. Various meetings can take place in these spaces, whether community based or for personal use if reserved before-hand. If any *vecino* would like to host a *charla* or a college student wishes to present their thesis or dissertation they can use these spaces and share their knowledge with the rest of the community. I would like for these classrooms to also host a variety of workshops that could empower and educate *vecinos* in different areas of their lives. These workshops could include,

environmental and financial literacy programs, bystander trainings, first-aid training and language courses including indigenous languages like *Kichwa*. It is important that the community center be a place where *vecinos* feel comfortable being themselves and feel empowered, however they interpret the concept of empowerment. Empowerment for them may come from educating themselves on environmental issues or learning their indigenous heritage language.

The nursery in this building will be a place where young children can play in a supervised manner while their parents engage in community events like *charlas*, cooking classes, literacy programs or during work hours because they cannot afford private daycares or babysitters. Nursery supervisors will be trained in first aid and will be the only people in the community center with a fixed contract and salary. By allowing community members to take advantage of this nursery, we can ensure that parents are able to work and receive a stable income without having to worry about childcare, which would directly improve their lives and their children's futures. La Floresta has a diverse demographic in regards to socioeconomic class, providing free childcare for those who truly need it would create a more equal quality of life for the entire community.

2. Amphitheater

La Floresta hosts a variety of fairs and events throughout the year, many of which, take place on the *veredas* or streets of the *barrio*. Having an amphitheater within "Casa La Floresta" where bureaucratic processes like closing off streets for a day would not be necessary, allowing for more frequent and diverse events to be hosted by the community. This space can also be used for more artistic performances like dances, plays and concerts. Because the weather of Quito is quite pleasant year-round, the amphitheater would be outdoors and have no roof or overhead

covering. Locating this stage on the west side is strategic, because currently there are large trees and bushes on that end of the lot, and they could provide some shade and greenery for event attendees.

3. Playground

Although there are two parks in La Floresta, there are not well kept, and children are unable to enjoy their free time outdoors. For this reason, I propose a playground within the community center that we can ensure young children can use this space as much as they want without the worry of the infrastructure breaking or already being broken. Placing the playground on the southeast end of the lot (see Figure 17) is important because there is a great view of the valley from here. This would allow parents to enjoy the view and take a break from the busy city life while also spending time with their children.

4. Communal Gardens

Taking inspiration from the proposal of *Huertos urbanos* by the Comité Pro-Mejoras del Barrio de La Floresta, I deemed it important to include a smaller version of communal gardens into the community center of “Casa La Floresta” because of the value it has on the community. All the produce grown in the communal gardens will be accessible for all *vecinos* and any that are left over can be sold at a *mercado*. The proceeds from selling the produce would go back into the community center, to buy more seeds and any other gardening materials that may be needed. *Vecinos* can also use the produce for cooking classes in the kitchens, teaching the community about food sovereignty and healthful diets. The gardens would be managed by volunteers on shifts and schedules, but everyone in the community is welcome to contribute.

Conclusions

The goal of the community center “Casa La Floresta” is to allow *vecinos* to reconnect with each other in a neutral space, designed for everyone. Nonetheless, this place is also supposed to empower, educate and uplift members of the community. This project is very important to me as a Floresta native who grew up using the *veredas* and streets as community spaces, longing for a place we could all call home. “Casa La Floresta” represents my *barrio*’s legacy of inclusion, diversity and how it can continue to push for a more environmentally and socially just place, hopefully impacting the larger Quito community. Con todo mi amor y cariño, te dedico este proyecto a ti, mi Floresta.

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