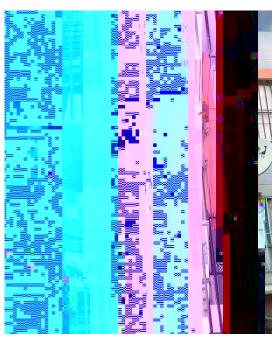
Using Urban Planning to improve the quality of life of the residents of Puente Alto

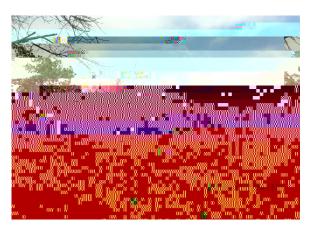
roughly 10.6% of the population falls below the poverty line. My field research brought me to this sector of Puente Alto since the municipality of Puente Alto is in the process of revitalizing this neighborhood using urban planning principles some of which include: storm water management, CPTED principles, increasing connectivity and green areas as well as allocating healthcare and social services. My research included site visits, participating in a workshop and speaking with local women as well as members of council and the mayor of Puente Alto.

These collaborative efforts and projects are a necessity for Bajos de Mena. My first few days in Bajos de Mena were spent conducting a site visit and talking to residents. Walking the streets of Bajos de Mena only reaffirmed the sense of poverty that I had



were trapped, not protected. Many people had also installed grids in the entrances of their apartments for security which blocked the entrance between floors and doors of different apartments.

The physical structure of the community contributes to the aforementioned poverty. The sector is characterized by vacant land and social housing units which were built 30 years ago and are famous for not being waterproof. The neighbourhood is physically isolated from the rest of Puente Alto by a major highway and there is only one road connecting it to the rest of the



commune. This isolation, when paired with a severe lack of amenities which I noticed on my site visit has increased the social vulnerability of the population. These lack of amenities and access including pharmacies, stores, bank branches, plazas or medical aid was very surprising given that the community has 120,000 residents, a similar size to the City of Kingston. Only recently was the neighborhood of Bajos de Mena given funding for a police and fire station.

To start opening up the community, a park was created on 13 hectares of land that previously functioned as an illegal dump. The park now includes an outdoor church, soccer field, splash pads and children's games, exercise machines, picnic tables and various trails. When visiting the park, I noticed large poles throughout the park which were placed there to allow for the monitoring of garbage smells and deterioration of the illegal dump site still located underneath the park. An amazing community effort spearheaded by a group of women emerged: the women monitor the park and make sure that it is kept clean. They work in shifts so that the park is monitored, kept safe and clean for 24 hours. While they have done work increasing green areas and decreasing crime, the next step of the plan seeks to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants through addressing overcrowding.

While in Bajos de Mena, I also had the pleasure of interviewing a group of women and getting a view of a resident-perspective. Most of them arrived to Bajos de Mena because of a housing subsidy. The women, who not only are the leaders of the community, have made a