

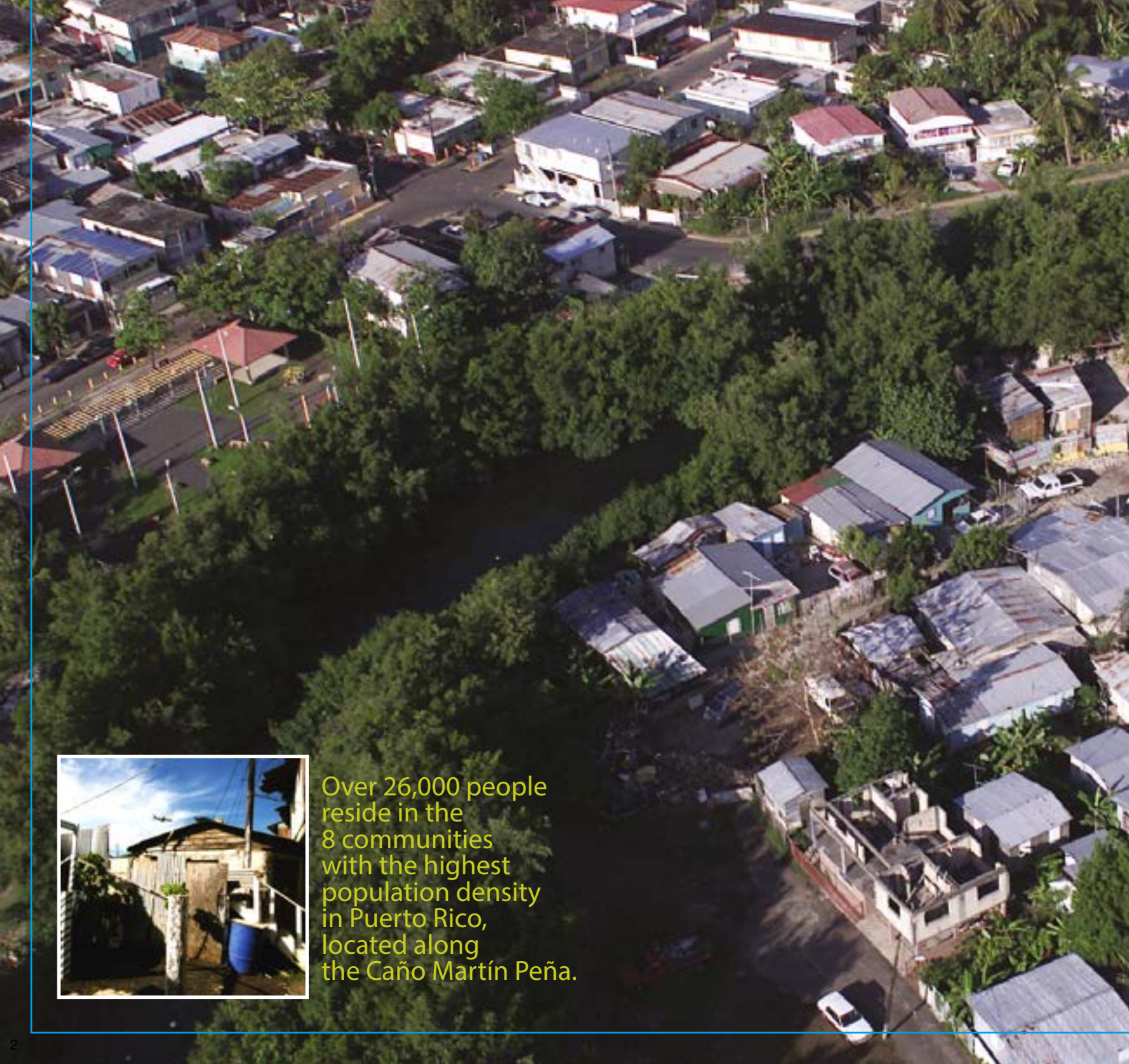


# Transforming a City

People • Health • Environment • Governance

San Juan, Puerto Rico  
October, 2014





## Turning Challenges into Assets

As one of the wealthiest and most livable capital cities in the Caribbean, San Juan is full of contrasts and possibilities. Nowhere is that more evident than in the eight marginalized communities along the Caño Martín Peña, a tidal channel and main artery of the San Juan Bay Estuary.

Despite their proximity to Puerto Rico's most important financial hub, the communities' more than 26,000 residents—nearly a tenth of the city's population—face a harrowing environmental and health crisis. The Caño is clogged with debris, sediment, and organic waste.

The ENLACE Caño Martín Peña Project is grounded in the enormous opportunity to transform this challenge into an invaluable economic, environmental, and recreational asset for the city, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean. It embodies a transformative model under which empowered communities are the protagonists of the region's comprehensive development in partnership with the government, foundations, universities, and the private sector.



Over 26,000 people reside in the 8 communities with the highest population density in Puerto Rico, located along the Caño Martín Peña.





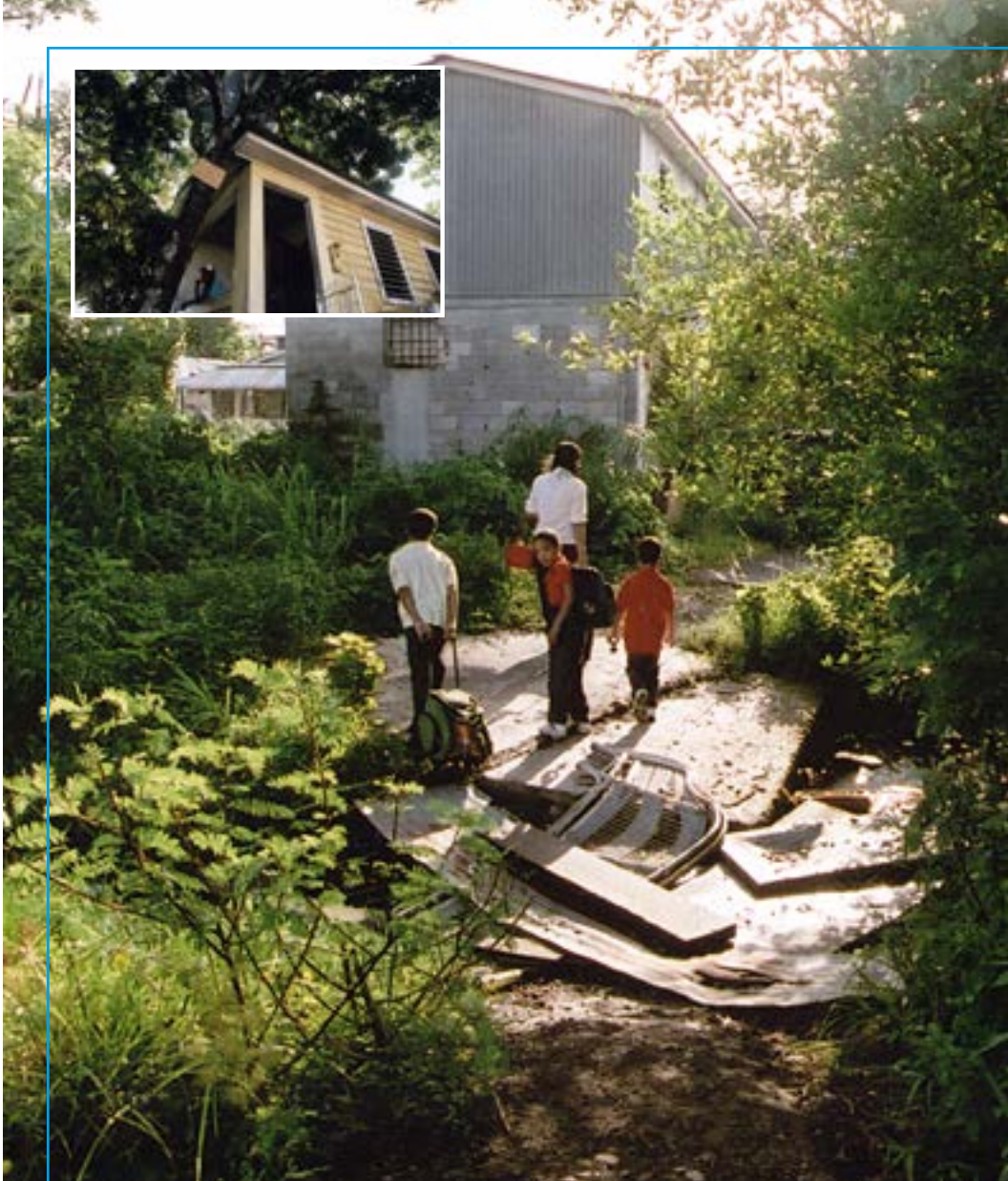
The plan that is guiding the redevelopment of the area, which is the result of over 700 participatory planning activities in 2 years, received the 2009 American Planning Association's Paul Davidoff National Award for Social Change and Diversity.

**A Restored Caño Martín Peña, A Livable City**

ENLACE was born in 2002 as a response to the deteriorating conditions of the channel and the negative impact it has on the quality of life in the neighboring communities.

By dredging the Caño Martín Peña, ENLACE seeks to recover and protect this extraordinary and unique natural resource, while providing access to new green spaces, plazas, and walkways for residents and tourists to enjoy. A rehabilitated Caño will al-

low for the use of kayaks for recreation and water taxis for transportation to airports, cruise ports, hotels, the financial and the convention center districts, shopping malls, museums, parks, and historic neighborhoods located within 8 municipalities in the San Juan



Metropolitan Area. Safe, quality homes for the nearly 1,000 residents that need to be relocated, as well as improvements to vital infrastructure are central to achieve a just, equitable development. Opportunities to shape this new city will emerge throughout its course.

Three institutions lead the efforts to restore the channel and redevelop the area: the G-8, a community based non-profit that brings together 12 grassroots organizations, the Corporación del Proyecto ENLACE del Caño Martín Peña, a public corporation, and the

Fideicomiso de la Tierra del Caño Martín Peña, a community land trust.

ENLACE and its partners have come a long way in the realization of this vision, which entails an investment of \$600M to implement key project components.





## Inclusiveness and Participation, Productivity and Wealth

Inclusiveness and participation are achieved by enhancing the potential of resident and community assets. ENLACE taps on the unrealized value of the land adjacent to the Caño Martín Peña to address poverty, overcome marginalization, and promote a more just, democratic city. It provides opportunities for residents, developers and investors. Conscious of the strategic location of their communities, residents chose to

collectively own 200 acres of land through the Fideicomiso de la Tierra. This innovative land trust allows residents to benefit directly from the rehabilitation of the Caño and from improvements to the area's dilapidated infrastructure. The Fideicomiso prevents gentrification, provides housing opportunities for families undergoing relocation, promotes long term affordability, and stimulates investment. To ensure that new investments foster productivity and community-based economic development, ENLACE spurs the creation of several

micro businesses led by residents and, when possible, contracts them and encourages others to follow suit. This strategy is complemented by a wide range of initiatives to promote critical thought and effective community organizing. These include adult literacy, education, environmental awareness, health promotion, financial education, conflict management, and violence prevention programs. A variety of tools are used to engage residents of all ages as active agents of change who know and exercise their rights.

# People

Over 10,000 residents have participated in more than 30 social development programs.









# Health

The prevalence of gastrointestinal disease in the Caño over a 3 month period is 1.5 times that of Puerto Rico in a full year. Asthma prevalence among children under 5 doubles that of Puerto Rico for the same group.

The severely degraded environmental conditions of the Caño, the lack of sewage and adequate storm draining systems in the area, and discharges from other sectors of the city result in wastewater flooding. Frequently enough, rain translates into raw sewage that enters homes, streets and, schools. Residents face serious health problems related to the constant exposure

to high concentrations of fecal coliforms and other contaminants. Epidemiological and health impact studies conducted by the University of Puerto Rico, the Ponce School of Medicine and Health Science, and the Icahn School of Medicine of Mount Sinai, New York, show alarming levels of gastroenteritis, asthma, and skin conditions among residents living close to the

Caño or in contact with flood waters. ENLACE proposes sewer and storm drainage systems, as well as new potable water distribution systems. The dredging of the Caño would significantly decrease the frequent flooding and remove trash and debris from the area.





# Environment

The San Juan Bay Estuary - the only tropical estuary under the US Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program- is a critical habitat to more than 300 amphibian, reptile, fish, and bird species, as well as 300 plant species, 17 of which are endangered.

The San Juan Bay Estuary is threatened by the dismal state of the Caño Martín Peña. As the historically 200-foot wide navigable tidal channel becomes a wetland that can be crossed by foot, the water no longer flows between the bay and the neighboring San José and Los Corozos lagoons. As the lagoons lose depth, neighboring communities become vulnerable to floods. The lack of oxygen in the lagoons significantly reduces biodiversity, limits marine life and impacts

the livelihood of many artisanal fishermen. The Estuary, where fresh waters from rivers meet the ocean, is home to 33% of the remaining mangroves in Puerto Rico. They help protect the city from hurricanes and storm surges, and provide an important habitat for the reproduction of numerous marine species. The dredging of the Caño Martín Peña will result in an environmental uplift of over 6,000 acres of estuarine ecosystems. By reconnecting the Es-

tuary, the project will help healthy mangroves and coral reefs flourish, increase biodiversity, and in turn, enhance the potential for a Caribbean fisheries hotspot. As the Caño's width is restored to 100 feet, San Juan, its people, as well as critical infrastructure such as the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport will be more resilient and in better position to adapt to climate change. New possibilities for recreation, nature watching, and tourism will emerge.







## The Tools to Build a Better, Sustainable City

ENLACE relies on active citizen participation with a keen interest in integrating this sector of San Juan as a new vital urban area, creating a more livable, vibrant and sustainable city for all. It provides opportunities for residents, developers and investors to help

realize the potential of severely undervalued areas. ENLACE is backed by a well-thought-out urban development plan, and long-standing alliances with more than 100 entities including universities, foundations, banks, and businesses, as well as strong relationships with city, state, and federal government. Thousands of volunteers from diverse backgrounds have

joined ENLACE in the development of its many programs. ENLACE has a legal and institutional framework created through broad participation that provides tools and incentives to foster investment.

The opportunities to transform San Juan, the gateway to Puerto Rico, are available. Find out how you can join.



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## Proyecto ENLACE del Caño Martín Peña

2014 Roberto Clemente Medal

2010 National Achievements in Environmental  
Justice Award

2009 Paul Davidoff Award for Social Change and Diversity  
Case Study for the John F. Kennedy School of Government,  
Harvard University

