# A STRATEGIC AND SUSTAINABLE AGENDA FOR SAN PEDRO GARZA GARCIA, NUEVO LEÓN, MEXICO: AN EXPERIENCE OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND MIXED VENTURES

*Dr. Celia Esther Arredondo Zambrano*

Instituto Tecnologico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, Ave. Eugenio Garza Sada # 2501 Sur, Monterrey, Nl, Mexico, Email: celia.arredondo@itesm.mx

**ABSTRACT:** On August 27th 2008 the IMPLAN of San Pedro Garza Garcia, organized a series of sessions as part of a new methodology, in order to produce a strategic and sustainable agenda, as an innovative planning approach for this municipality. San Pedro Garza Garcia is one of the 13 municipalities that make up the metropolitan area of Monterrey Mexico. In the past few years, Institutes of Municipal Planning or IMPLAN have been established in several municipalities in Mexico. These organisms decentralized from public administration have their own judicial personality, and study the social, economic, ecologic, and political phenomena that influence cities, with the intention of guiding public and private sectors so as to produce a sustainable and ordered development. The IMPLAN´s main objective is to encourage the quality of life of its inhabitants and to generate sustainable urban growth. With this in mind, San Pedro´s IMPLAN hired CEPA (Centre of Environmental Studies) an Argentine organization of urban studies, to generate the main structure of this agenda. The agenda was conceived with the help of over 40 participants of San Pedro from 40 diverse public and private associations, as a result, all of them are considered to be co-authors of this agenda.

This strategic and sustainable agenda is nothing new; it joints concepts from New Urbanism and Sustainable Urbanism. Still, its main contribution consists of being a true example of citizen participation and an honest attempt at introducing sustainable notions and design strategies for future urban transformations. The participants as authors not actors have generated a common enthusiasm that has provoked the integration of diverse committees heading projects that are currently being developed together with other activities like conferences and courses. The sponsorship of different public and private sectors has allowed the agenda to remain autonomous as a joint effort of the community. This is expressed in the agenda´s main objective, which is to reach collective and shared agreements in the joint endeavor of creating a sustainable city. The structure of the agenda, though concluded in December 2008, is considered a live and open instrument with established aims and ideals, but with an open-ended configuration that allows unlimited new projects to be introduced. In light of the coming state and municipal elections in July as well as with new metropolitan legislations soon to be introduced, it is interesting to see how this planning example withstands these tests and its resiliency.

**KEYWORDS:** design strategies, local identity, urban design, public participation, sustainability.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

On August 27th 2008 the IMPLAN of San Pedro Garza Garcia, organized a series of sessions as part of a new methodology, in order to produce a Strategic and Sustainable Agenda, as an innovative planning approach for this municipality. This Strategic Sustainable Agenda has been a learning process and according to Confucius there are three methods by which we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third, by experience, which is the most bitter. In this case the three methods may have been employed. Through a brief **reflection** on how to produce sustainable urban change, the municipality of San Pedro through the IMPLAN decided to **imitate** other cities that had been experiencing interesting planning and political policies of sustainable urban development and renewal. Cities like, Curitiba, Portland, and Medellin were analyzed with the idea of introducing some of their tactics in order to **experience** a positive change. Although this is not a new planning approach it is indeed new for San

Pedro, for Monterrey and for Mexico. My recount of this agenda will centre basically in the methodology used and the philosophy that sustains it. My individual insights as both a participant and as an urban landscape architect and urban designer will colour for sure my comments and conclusions. So in order to begin my personal account of this experience, it would be desirable to start by describing the municipality of San Pedro Garza Garcia.





**Fig.1** Map of Mexico, the state of Nuevo Leon and Monterrey    **Fig. 2** Map of Monterrey and San Pedro

San Pedro Garza Garcia is one of the 11 municipalities that make up the metropolitan area of Monterrey, capital of the state of Nuevo Leon, located in the northeastern part of Mexico. It was founded as the *Hacienda Los Nogales,* the 20th of November 1596, with its first urban settlements appearing until 1870[1]. Located at an altitude of 540 meters with 69.4 square kilometers in territorial extension, this municipality consists of a valley contained by a river bed to the north and the spectacular Sierra Madre to the south. It was conceived as a suburb of Monterrey in the 40´s on what was then agricultural land. It now houses a population of 125,978 inhabitants that reside in 128 neighbourhoods, and has one of Mexico´s highest income per capita. In the past ten years, this municipality has been facing serious changes. Housing areas have not only been transformed into commercial and financial districts, but also have been displaced towards the Sierra Madre and out of this municipality. This creates intense vehicular activity and deteriorates the balance of this mountain and valley ecosystem[2]. With this in mind, San Pedro´s **IMPLAN** decided to pursue the challenge of producing a Strategic and Sustainable Agenda, in an attempt to control the urban sprawl, reduce traffic, and preserve San Pedro´s character.





**Image. 1** Suburban character of San Pedro. activities.    **Image. 2** Introduction of commercial and financial

## 2    ORIGIN OF THE AGENDA

**IMPLAN** stands for (Municipal Planning Institute)[3]. There are about 30 of these institutes in Mexico and their original concept was born in Curitiba, Brazil some 30 years ago. These organisms are decentralized from public administration and have their own judicial personality and financial management. They study the social, economic, ecologic, and political phenomena that influence cities, with the intention of guiding public and private sectors so as to produce a sustainable and ordered development, through participation and the

development of an urban culture. Their main objective is to enhance the quality of life of its inhabitants and to generate sustainable urban growth, while attempting to transcend the three year period of each municipal government.

The IMPLAN in San Pedro was established in 2005 in response to the complexity of San Pedro´s urban development and high level planning, conversely to its lack of real achievements and implementations. The main objective of San Pedro´s IMPLAN is to give continuity to the strategic plans and projects in spite of the political and administrative changes of this municipality. It is organized as an entrepreneurial model with an Administrative Council and a General Director. Its members come from public initiatives, professional associations, neighborhood representatives, and civil advisors, all with the same objective; to serve their community. One of its most important achievements was the Strategic Sustainable Agenda. This Agenda was created to face and cope with San Pedro´s impending problems. For this purpose the IMPLAN hired **CEPA**, (Centre of Environmental Studies)[4], an Argentine institute of urban studies, in order to produce the main structure of this agenda. The agenda was generated with the help of over 40 participants of San Pedro from 40 diverse public and private associations. These participants were enlisted because they represent various local, social, political, academic or entrepreneurial groups within San Pedro or because of their professional experience. Most of them accepted immediately, others later on as they recognized the seriousness of the project, and finally other professionals experts ask to join the group as advisors. All of them are considered to be co-authors of this agenda.

## 3    THE AGENDA: METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION

**CEPA** were selected based on their cost and the quality of their service. They were chosen among other Latin American options for their sustainable vision. Ruben Pechi, director of CEPA, headed the group and initiated with general concepts stemming from sustainable urbanism[5], strategic planning[6] and new urbanism[7]. Their methodology which in reality is based on a participatory decision-making process mixes concepts of New Urbanism and landscape analysis, as well as, general notions of strategic planning and SWOT analysis[8]. Using the concept of urban interface also known as peri-urban interface[9], it establishes two main issues: the environmental and social issue. In doing so, it divides the decision-making process in two groups: the Eco-form and the Socio-form. Eco-form was defined as the form of the ecosystem considering its depth, integrity and complexity in order to generate the basis of its natural condition and the identity of its cultural landscape in both its micro and mega dimensions. Socio-form, on the other hand was defined as the social form of a city has based on its local development, its ability to generate employment, the quality of life it offers, and the integration of all of its sectors.



**Image. 3** Eco-Form participatory group.



**Image. 4** Socio-Form participatory group.

Four key sustainable premises were established as the Eco-form, Socio-form, Time-form and Negotiation-form. These premises gave shape and main structure to the agenda and to the projects and programs it generated, as well as, to their management and operation. The Eco-form premises were based on the protection of the natural habitat and its flows of material and energy. While the premises for the Socio-form were based on a multi-centre city system created by economic urban attractions that encourage participation, local development and social inclusion with a free flow of information and social spaces. The Time-form premises determined various stages and the socio-economical and environmental feasibility of the agenda´s programs and projects. It also considered their flexibility and adaptability in time. While the

Negotiation-form premises took into deliberation the social, economic and institutional negotiations, as well as the participation process needed to reach social consensus in addition to legal, cultural and political policies.

Once this structure was established as the theoretical background, the large group of over 40 institutions, organisms and local neighborhood representatives were divided into two groups, the Eco-form and Socio-form. Using a participatory decision-making method, very similar to the Delphi method[10], that uses focus interactions between participants to built relationships; improve awareness, learning and negotiation; these two groups were assigned their own facilitator in order to reach agreements and compromises. One day workshops were then established monthly during six months, in order to proceed with the following process:

1. Diagnosis of conflicts and of potential opportunities.

2. Identification of decisive primary conflicts.

3. Identification of key potential opportunities and premises for solutions.

4. Elaboration of a preliminary proposal as an action model or diagram based on: Power Ideas, Programs and Projects.

5. Elaboration of a preliminary spatial model or diagram locating on a map the programs and projects established in the proposal.

6. Definition of different phases (short, medium and long term), as well as different of policies.

7. Definition of managerial forms considering the diverse levels of action (national,      metropolitan, or local).

The result of these workshops were revised and adjusted by the IMPLAN and CEPA team.
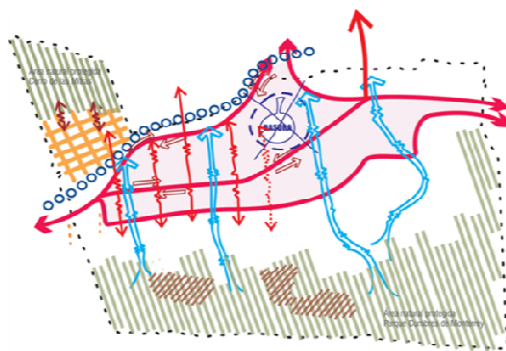


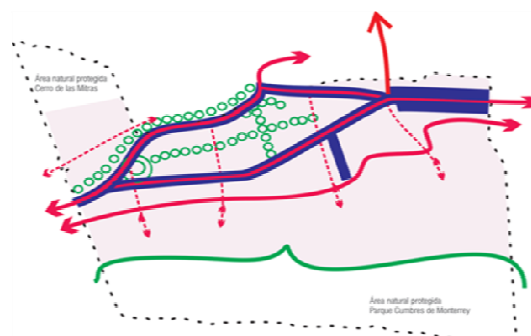**Fig.3** Diagram of Eco-form Conflicts
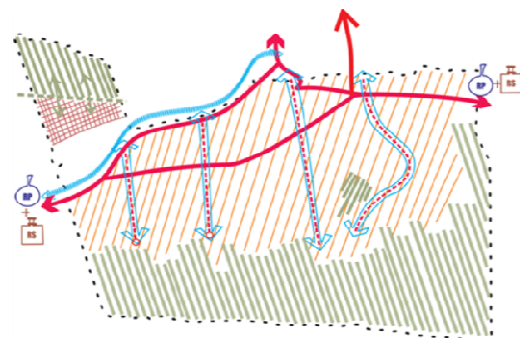


**Fig. 4 Diagram** of Eco-form Potentialities

The diagnoses of conflicts and of potential opportunities were identified on a diagram or map based on the four premises and evaluated according to their importance or hierarchy on a chart or table. These diagnoses led to the most creative part of the process which was the construction of action models or diagrams for both the Eco-form and the Socio-form of San Pedro. These diagrams or maps were then used to establish, through their power ideas, the programs and projects for both the Eco-form and the Socio-form.
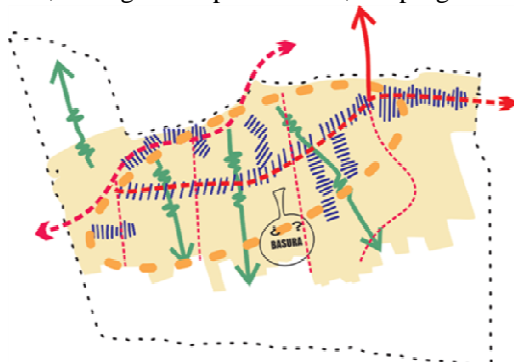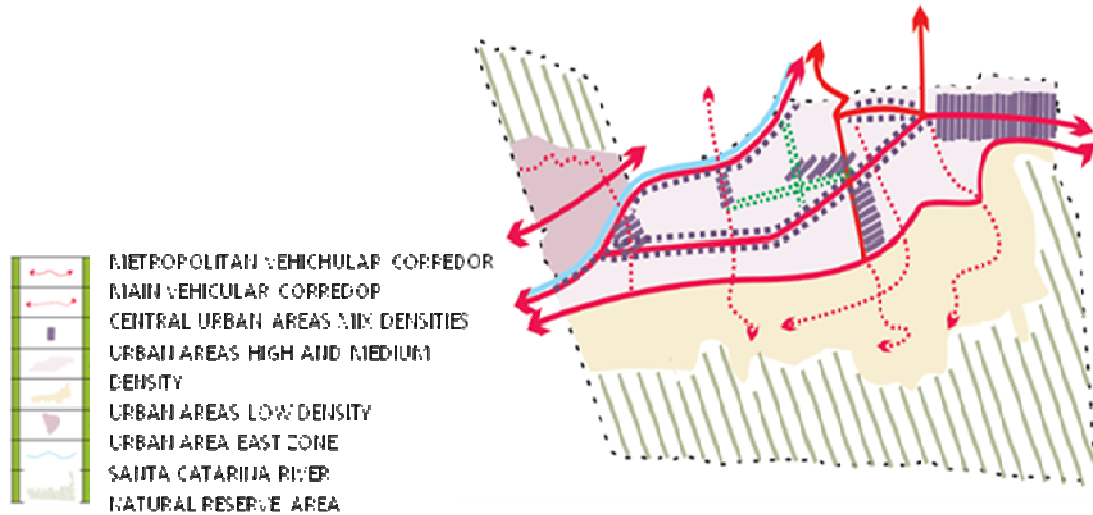


**Fig.5** Diagram of Socio-form Conflicts



**Fig. 6 Diagram** of Socio-form Potentialities

The diagnosis of the Eco-Form was reached by identifying and categorizing the conflicts and potentialities of San Pedro. Tthus arriving to the development of the following Eco-Form Power Ideas:

> Power Idea 1. Sustainable urban development with diversity in order to share and live with quality.
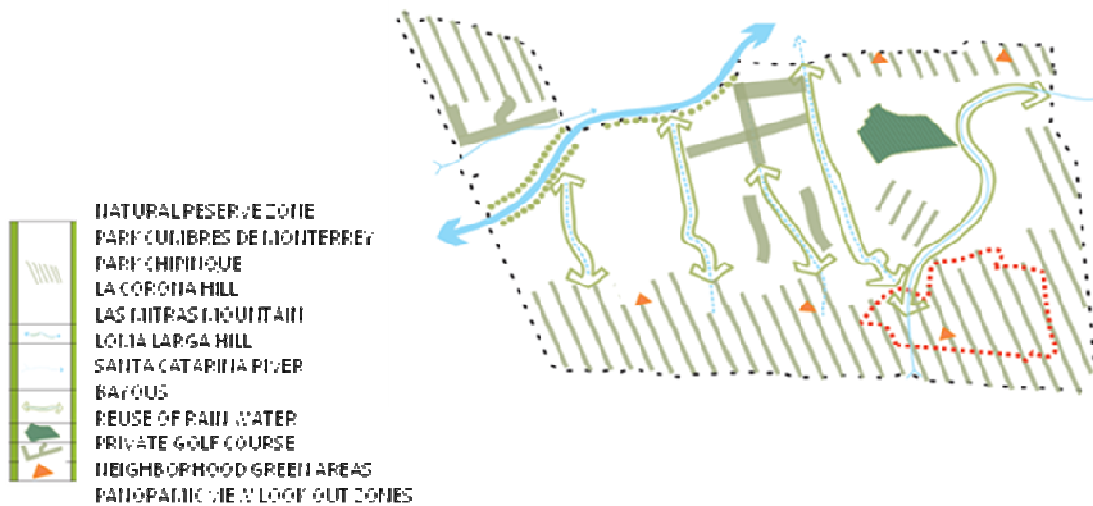> Power Idea 2. Restore San Pedro´s the natural heritage for everyone.
> Power Idea 3. Take care of the natural resources in order to insure our future.
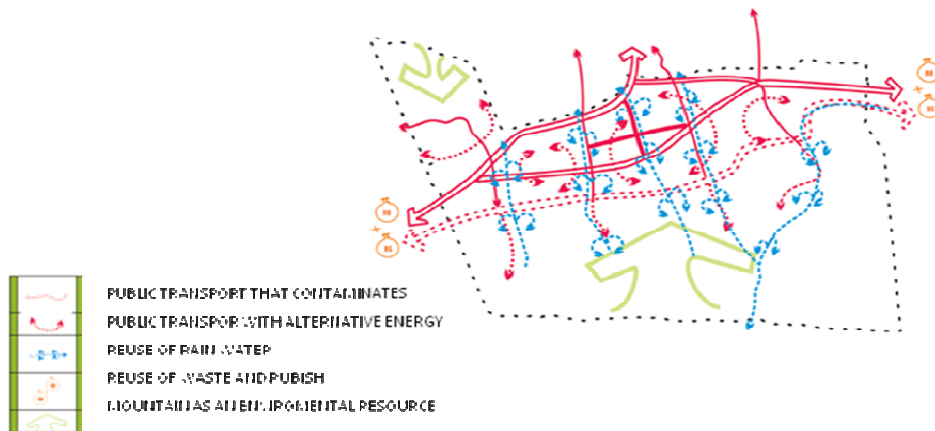


**Fig. 7  Eco-Form Power Idea 1**
Sustainable urban development with diversity in order to share and live with quality



**Fig. 8   Eco-Form Power Idea 2**
Restore San Pedro´s the natural heritage for everyone.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT THAT CONTAMINATES
PUBLIC TRANSPOR WITH ALTERNATIVE ENERGY
REUSE OF RAIN WATER
REUSE OF WASTE AND RUBISH
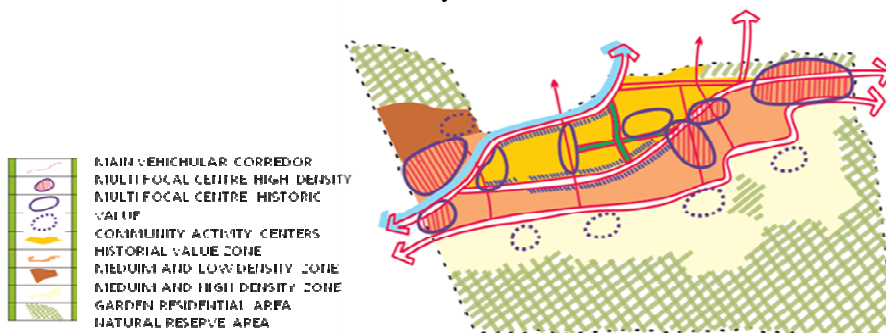MOUNTAIN AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE

**Fig. 9 Eco-Form Power Idea 3**
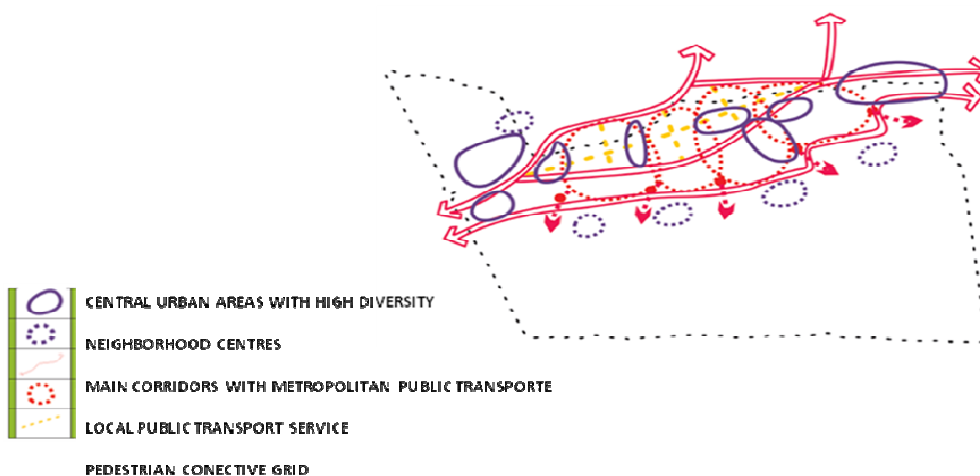Take care of the natural resources in order to insure our future.

The diagnosis of the Socio-Form was reached by identifying and categorizing the conflicts and potentialities of San Pedro. Thus arriving to the development of the following Socio-Form Power Ideas:
      Power Idea 1. San Pedro San Pedro bets on a community life with urban quality.
      Power Idea 2. Urban development reached in harmony through participation and education
      Power Idea 3. Connections: in San Pedro walking is possible.
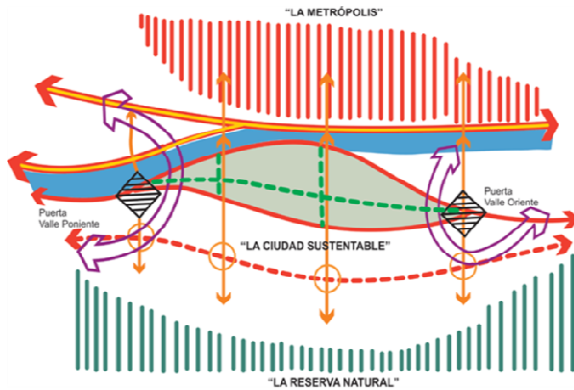      Power Idea 4. San Pedro invests in everyone's future.



MAIN VEHICHULAR CORREDOR
MULTI FOCAL CENTRE HIGH DENSITY
MULTI FOCAL CENTRE HISTORIC VALUE
COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTERS
HISTORIAL VALUE ZONE
MEDUIM AND LOW DENSITY ZONE
MEDUIM AND HIGH DENSITY ZONE
GARDEN RESIDENTIAL AREA
NATURAL RESERVE AREA

**Fig. 10 Socio-Form Power Idea 1**
San Pedro San Pedro bets on a community life with urban quality



CENTRAL URBAN AREAS WITH HIGH DIVERSITY
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTRES
MAIN CORRIDORS WITH METROPOLITAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTE
LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICE
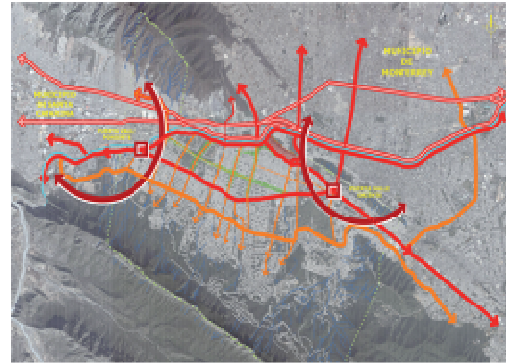PEDESTRIAN CONECTIVE GRID

**Fig. 11 Eco-Form Power Idea 3**

Connections: in San Pedro walking is possible.



**Fig.12** Interpretation of San Pedro´s Urban Structure



**Fig. 13** Interpretation of San Pedro´s Mobility Structure

These power ideas were also mapped in order to determine their situation in San Pedro´s territory and to graphically establish their physical characteristics. This helped each participant to visualize and interpret each power idea. These maps or diagrams were used to establish the Interpretation of San Pedro´s Urban Structure, the Interpretation of San Pedro´s Mobility Structure, the Interpretation of San Pedro´s public transport structure and finally San Pedro´s Urban Conceptual Model. All of these help to determine the programs and projects that would constitute the proposed actions towards a sustainable community.



**Fig.14** Intrepretation of San Pedro´s public transport structure
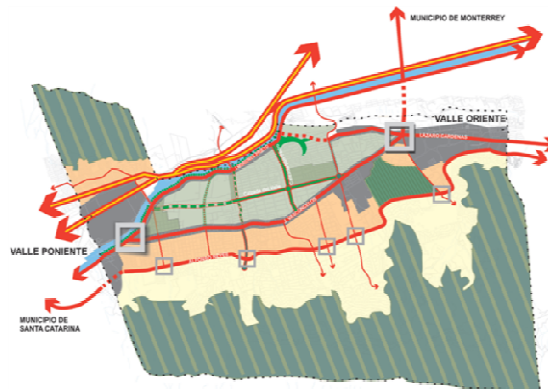


**Fig. 15** San Pedro´s Urban Conceptual Model

From these Eco-Form Power Ideas programs and project were derived mapping them on a diagram and evaluating them on a chart. For instance Eco-Form Power Ideas developed the following programs:

Power Idea 1. Reform the existing technical and legislative instruments for sustainable
norms and regulations.
Power Idea 2. Greenways and conservation of flora and fauna.
Power Idea 3. Develop legislative criteria for sustainable buildings and encourage
sustainable urban development.

From these Socio-Form Power Ideas programs and project were derived mapping them on a diagram and evaluating them on a chart. For instance, Socio-Form Power Ideas developed the following programs:

Power Idea 1. San Pedro multi-center city system created by economic urban attractions.
Power Idea 2. Strengthen public opinion towards a sustainable development and
community life.
Power Idea 3. Strengthen public transport and develop other means of mobility.
Power Idea 4. Promote the purchase of land destined to public interest investments.

These programs and projects were also organized into groups in a chart that designated the people responsible for their development and the time required for them being short, medium or long term. These programs and projects were also organized in chart that determined the organizations and institutions responsible for their sponsorship and for their legislative support. The end product of this agenda was a list of 70 sustainable actions or projects through which sustainability and community participation would be accomplished. Because of the difficulty in achieving this task, these 70 projects or actions are expected to be put in operation during the next 20 years, due to the magnitude of the solutions required and to their social and political concerns.

## CONCLUSION

Once the agenda was finished in December 2008, the difficult task was to give it continuity and to maintain the interest of the community and the local authorities. This continuity was given by involving the coauthors of this agenda in the 70 projects that were outlined. As a result, eight committees with action programs were pledged to coordinate different projects under the general supervision of the IMPLAN and with the Agenda as the generator of all of these projects. This consequently keeps the people as well as the local authorities, involved and interested. One of the most difficult tasks of the IMPLAN and the Agenda was to find acceptance and support from the municipal authorities. This was especially important during the elections for new major of San Pedro, this past 5th of July. For this reason, during the election campaign, the IMPLAN presented the Agenda to all of the different candidates explaining its benefits and the quality of the objectives, as well as presenting the people involved in it. Today, there is an excellent relationship with the newly elected major Mauricio Fernandez. He is very interested in the Agenda and would like to carry out projects inspired in it as well as to support the IMPLAN.

The IMPLAN, or more specifically its director Gabriel Eugenio Todd Alanis, is now creatively propagating and promoting the Agenda in San Pedro, as well as in other municipalities in Mexico. There is at present a "popular" or ordinary version of the agenda for the common citizen. The agenda is also being promoted in the web[11], Google Videos[12] and other publicity media in order to get the people in San Pedro informed and interested in participating. Todd is also giving conferences in Mexico and having personal talks with majors of other municipalities in Mexico endorsing the Agenda and its benefits with the hope that this experience will be replicated in other parts of the country. According the director of the IMPLAN, the Agenda has generated great interest and expectations from different political and action groups in Mexico. They are very surprised by the people's participation in the process and by the very precise objectives and targets that were reached. Its flexibility is very attractive to most politicians because even though objectives are quite specific it allows creativity in the design and development of the programs and projects to achieve these goals. The structure of the agenda is considered a live and open instrument with established aims and ideals, but with an open-ended configuration that allows unlimited new projects to be introduced in the future.

This strategic and sustainable agenda is nothing new; it joints concepts from New Urbanism and Sustainable Urbanism. Still, its main contribution consists of being an example of citizen participation and an honest attempt at introducing sustainable notions and design strategies for future urban transformations. The participants have generated a common enthusiasm that has provoked the integration of diverse committees heading projects that are currently being developed together with other activities like conferences and courses. In spite of all of its apparent success, the agenda also has its flaws and deficiencies. For instance, the participatory method has made the participants aware of sustainable issues, but this is mostly a superficial awareness much more is needed to really understand the complexity of these sustainable issues and problems faced by this municipality. The diagrams and maps are very schematic and oversimplify San Pedro´s difficulties. This requires further in depth analysis and proposals from experts in the field of urbanism, landscape, and planning. The participants enthusiasm does not compensate the fact that true knowledge and expertise is needed not just only a green philosophy.

The sponsorship of different public and private sectors has allowed the agenda to remain autonomous as a joint effort of the community. This is expressed in the agenda´s main objective, which is to reach collective and shared agreements in the joint endeavour of creating a sustainable city. Unfortunately, not all of San Pedro was thoroughly represented; many economically powerful groups were not involved. It is evident that

they are responsible for the investments and the growth of this community and therefore their participation and commitment is required for the benefit of the agenda and its objectives.

## REFERENCES

[ 1 ]  González Rodríguez, Carlos: *Desde el Valle de San Pedro : historia y crónica 1596-2003*, (San Pedro Garza García, N.L. : [s.n.], 2002)

[ 2 ]  http://www.nl.gob.mx/pics/pages/eco_leyes_base/RPPSP.pdf  and www.sanpedro.gob.mx/gobierno/PlanMunicipal/PMD0609.pdf

[ 3 ]  www.sanpedro.gob.mx/transparencia/implan/.../Acta_290108.pdf and http://www.implansanpedro.org.mx/atribuciones.html

[ 4 ]  http://www.revista-ambiente.com.ar/que/quienes.htm

[ 5 ]  Farr, Douglas: *Sustainable urbanism : urban design with nature*, (Hoboken, N.J. : Wiley, 2008)

[ 6 ]  Castilla Valle, Jesús: *Elementos Críticos en el Proceso de Planeación Estratégica de Tecnologías de Información*, ( Monterrey, ITESM-Campus, June 2007).

[ 7 ]  Leccese, Michael and Kathleen McCormick: essays by Randall Arendt ... [et al.]. *Charter of the new urbanism*, ( New York : McGraw Hill, 2000)

[ 8 ]  HBS Press, Harvard Business School Press: *SWOT Analysis I: Looking Outside for Threats and Opportunities*, (Boston, Mass, Press, Harvard ,2005)

[ 9 ]  Allen, Adriana: "Environmental planning and management of the peri-urban interface: perspectives on an emerging field"in *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 135-148 (2003) free download http://eau.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/15/1/135

[ 10 ]  Linstone, Harold A. and Murray Turoff: *Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications*, December 1975 free download http://is.njit.edu/pubs/delphibook/delphibook.pdf

[ 11 ]  http://www.agendaestrategica.org.mx/

[12] http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3235520044913691288&ei=XH1MSZbCJJXeqAPvz5WeCw &q=agenda+estrategica+sustentable#