

PLANNING



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The Martin Pena channel connects San Jose lagoon with San Juan Bay. Below: Housing in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Can Do in San Juan's *Cano*

By JoAnn Greco



Photos this page by David Vasquez

A promised \$744 million in investment and the first land trust in Puerto Rico are two of the noteworthy developments expected from the Land Use and Comprehensive Development Plan for the Cano Martin Pena Special Planning District in San Juan, approved by the governor of Puerto Rico in 2007.

But it's the immense side effects of the project—which started out as an initiative to dredge the Martin Pena channel and morphed into a comprehensive plan that will bring new housing, education, and social improvements to the district's 27,000 poor inhabitants—that earns it the 2009 Paul Davidoff National Award for Social Change and Diversity. The late Paul Davidoff was a planning educator and practitioner who championed participatory planning and advocated for social change.

"We're very aware of the economic and social issues that have led to the degradation of the *cano*," says Lyvia N. Rodriguez, executive director of ENLACE, the redevelopment authority empowered with implementing the plan.

Located not far from San Juan's financial district, the area near the channel has become home to squatters. More than 3,000 structures lack basic sewerage—a priority in cleaning up the area—and frequent flooding poses public health problems.

As the plan unfolds over the next 15 years, it will tackle a variety of physical and social problems, bringing affordable housing, economic development, and new infrastructure along with environmental awareness, education improvements, drug use prevention, and recreational opportunities to residents.

"When everything is in place, we'll have a new threshold for the metropolitan area, with the San Juan Bay estuary system reconnected to the [channel]," says Rodriguez. "But we'll also have an entirely new community with decent infrastructure and housing solutions."

■ JoAnn Greco is a freelance writer in Philadelphia.

Paul Davidoff National Award for Social Change and Diversity

Land Use and Comprehensive Development Plan for the Cano Martin Pena Special Planning District

San Juan, Puerto Rico