2011 ASLA Design Awards

Loma Larga Residential Mixed-Use Development
Merit Award
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Planning & Urban Design
Loma Larga Residential Mixed-Use Development  
San Pedro Garza Garcia, Monterrey, Mexico

Quick Project Summary
As one of the last parcels of undeveloped land in Monterrey, Mexico’s dense business district of San Pedro Garza Garcia, Loma Larga will be a unique vision of urban living within a natural landscape – modeling the integration of natural systems, community amenities and cultural programs within a dense urban context. Located on a dramatic ridge that divides San Pedro from the rest of Monterrey, Loma Larga’s steep terrain—over 400 feet (122 meters) from its lowest to highest points—affords stunning views across the city to the mountains. The total development area of the 64-acre (26-hectare) parcel is 3.4 million square feet; the program proposes 1,724 residential units. A public mixed-use village and private residential area are connected by 15 acres of open space and trails. In a country of isolated developments, limited master-plan use and an indifference to combining urban living with nature, Loma Larga stands apart.

Purpose of Project
The design firm created a master plan that incorporated the client’s vision for a first-class, mixed-use destination of high-rise and high-density buildings, designed to the highest architectural and sustainability standards. When fully constructed, Loma Larga’s sustainable approach to development, integration of natural systems and community gathering places, sensitively located structures, and mixed-use choices will create a sense of place that drives the value of the project. The project provides the opportunity to live in a distinct high-rise tower set within a wealth of amenities, which is unusual in Monterrey. Balancing building mass and natural areas in order to retain the landscape as a dominant feature of the development was a key objective.

Role of Landscape Architect
The landscape architecture firm was the sole consultant on the project and iterated the development plan directly with the client over a six-month process. Without subconsultants, the landscape architect was required to have extensive multidisciplinary knowledge, including architectural massing, mixed-use development configurations and yields, parking design, civil engineering and stormwater reuse. The firm’s ability to translate all design products and documents into Spanish was essential for Loma Larga’s client and investors to endorse the plan.

Special Factors
Natural Site Features | The natural features of the site—distinctive topography, stunning views to the surrounding mountain ranges and natural drainages in the valleys called barrancas—are the foundation of the project’s identity. They also are the organizing elements of the development. The plan divides the site into two worlds—the upper private residential area where residential towers are located on ridgelines and the public mixed-use village at the base of the development. The barrancas stitch the two worlds together. At public plazas, water features and cascades of terraces conceptually extend the topography and water of the barrancas into the village. The entire site is linked by a road graded to minimize impact to the existing topography.

Location and Scale of Residential Towers | In the 52-acre (21-hectare) private residential area, 14 tall, slender buildings are situated delicately in order to minimize impacts to the undulating ridgelines and scaled to avoid overwhelming the defining landscape. Orientation of each tower considers near and distant views, maximizing solar and wind while minimizing grading impacts. Small, medium and large units provide a spectrum of price points, with higher-end residences located according to the higher-value attributes of the site and containing fewer units per building. All residential buildings are accessed via the loop road that connects the private residential area to the village. In most cases, the driveway approach is from above the building to minimize cuts into the
existing slopes. Pool amenity decks are green roofs with parking levels below and are organized to maximize views either to the *barrancas*, the village or the distant mountain ranges.

**Public Mixed-Use Village** At the southern end of the site, the public mixed-use village features a wealth of choices and convenience. The total development area of the village is 290,059 square feet (88,410 square meters). The master plan proposes that all buildings in the village have green roofs to support the greater principles of sustainability and garden environments that guided the planning process. Ground-floor space is dominated by retail, activating the village with diverse offerings ranging from small local shops and galleries to larger anchor retail and a grocery store. Restaurants and cafes occupy ground-floor areas as well as upper levels. Café seating activates the streets and sidewalks; at the upper levels, generous terraces afford views to diners. Village buildings front both the internal village streets and the sides facing the main access road and mountain ranges. Office space occupies the levels above the ground-floor retail. The village program includes 210 residential units occupying the upper floors of the village buildings. A hotel on the western end of the village overlooks the entry plaza, offering views and vitality conveyed by proximity to the central public space. A fitness club, whose location at the seam between the village and the residential area unifies the community, is on the east side of the entry plaza at the base of the western (main) *barranca*.

**Water Reuse** Loma Larga’s reuse of water is central to the development’s sustainability strategies. Surface water is unusual in this semi-arid climate; therefore, the presence of surface drainage in the *barrancas* provides an opportunity to capture water for reuse and as a landscape amenity. In each *barranca*, storm water will be captured in a series of reservoirs contained by the natural topography on the uphill side and low walls on the downhill side. Planting will be augmented with drought-tolerant species to provide shade and a variety of colors and textures so that the water-filled pools become a habitat and an attractive natural feature for residents—both residents passing by on trails and those viewing from the towers above. These functional wetlands will cleanse water as it passes through the system. The pools in each *barranca* will be connected by underground pipes so that overflow water can travel down the chain. In addition the reservoirs will capture rainwater and store it for reuse for site irrigation and for building cooling.

**Generous Open Space and Trails** An important community-building and placemaking principle of the Loma Larga development is the importance of connecting people to people and people to nature. The plan allows for easy access to community destinations, 15 acres (6 hectares) of open space and 1.7 miles (2.7 kilometers) of pedestrian trails within the residential area. The western *barranca* boasts the highest level of activity and community destinations, featuring many trails, an 80-person capacity amphitheater and overlooks. The *barrancas* become progressively less programmed and less domesticated further east and the landscape becomes more passive. In the village, public plazas and streetscapes are civic spaces for community interaction and shared experiences centered around art and cultures. At the intersections of these two worlds, residents and visitors are presented with plazas that combine experiences of nature and village life.

**Significance** In a country of isolated developments, limited master-plan use and an indifference to combining urban living with nature, this 64-acre development stands apart, modeling the integration of natural systems and community amenities within a dense urban context. Located on a dramatic ridge with stunning mountain views, it connects a mixed-use village and private residential area with 15 acres of open space and trails. The reuse of surface water present in the *barrancas* is central to the development’s sustainable strategies. The development incorporates its assets to create value centered on sustainable practices.

**Construction Budget Amount** NA