

Annual Report

2025



Expanding the scale...

Scale refers to the proportional relationship between the actual size of an object and its representation, it also describes how interventions relate to larger spatial, social, and ecological systems. Projects do not exist as isolated objects; they are situated within a territory shaped by patterns of use, infrastructure, ecology, and culture. Design decisions operate across scales—from the materials and site-specific to the regional and policy level—where choices made at one scale influence conditions at another. Understanding this bidirectional relationship allows us to situate projects within broader processes of planning, economics, and governance, ensuring that interventions respond meaningfully to both place and people. For over ten years, La Maraña has worked with the conviction that the archipelago we aspire to build is created alongside its people at a communal level, co-designing the projects that communities need to thrive. Today and looking towards the future, we find ourselves intentionally working on two scales: fortifying grassroots projects while creating tools, stronger alliances, and approaches that help transform the conditions and livelihoods of communities in the archipelago. Thanks to the commitment of those who accompanied us in 2025, this year inspired us to think strategically and intentionally. Looking ahead to 2026, we extend the invitation to join us in co-designing and to continue working to achieve the archipelago we want.



Cynthia M. Burgos López
Co-Founder, Executive Director

Junta Directiva



Andrea Bauzá
President



Giomara La Quay
Secretary



Mayra Díaz Torres
Treasurer



Milvia Ramírez Rivera
Vocal



Camille Rivera de Jesus
Vocal

Mission

We dream of a Puerto Rico where communities lead the design processes of the spaces we (co) inhabit.

Vision

We promote imagination and participatory design as tools to develop sustainable development of our communities.



In 2014, La Maraña was founded as a non-profit organization dedicated to the sustainable development of communities by implementing participatory design processes. Our organization aims to work as a counter proposal to current and historical policies developed in Puerto Rico, which have often excluded communities in the decision-making process that affect their own territory. At La Maraña, we believe that communities have the inalienable right to imagine, plan, and build spaces that guarantee their future and well-being. The spaces generated through these community-centered processes not only strengthen the fabric of the community but also support and foster each person's capacity to participate actively in creating the future they envision. Participatory processes provide tools at both an individual and community level to support active integration into civic life and decision-making processes concerning their territory. Through applied research, participatory design, and unique audiovisual media strategies, we support communities in the planning and execution of specific projects to promote their own agendas for achieving sustainable development. Our approach prioritizes transferring local knowledge and capacities, ensuring communities are protagonists in transforming their environments and become key agents in creating a fairer, more inclusive and resilient Puerto Rico.



**Dashboard
2025**

**Co-Design +
Management**

**10
Co-design
projects**

**\$25k
Community
investment**

**2k+
Co-design
hours**



Co-Design + Management

The Co-Design + Management programmatic area at La Maraña seeks to support communities in the sustainable development of their spaces. Through this initiative, community projects are co-implemented in collaboration with local leaders using participatory methodologies developed by La Maraña, based on previous community partnerships. This process provides planning and management tools that facilitate knowledge exchange. In 2025—for the fourth consecutive year—we opened the 4th Call for Proposals for the Participatory Design Lab, aimed at community projects. The Lab supports communities in dreaming, designing, and implementing projects to strengthen their sustainable development and permanence in Puerto Rico. This year, we received a total of 20 applications; the Fortuna Playa Community Development Center project was selected for this cycle. During the year, we continued partnering with the Eugenio María de Hostos beachfront project in Yabucoa, and La Tiendita Soberana project was completed, marking an important milestone in its community consolidation process.



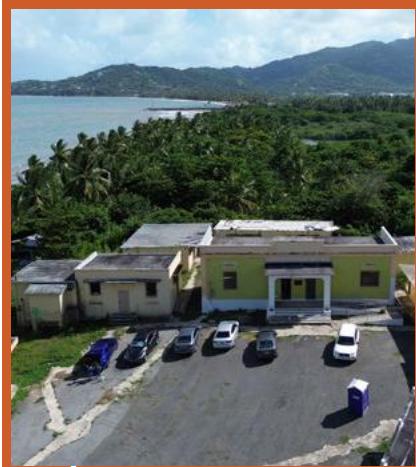
Playa
Guayanés

\$15k
Community
investment


1 month
installation period

1,400+
Square feet of
asphalt removed

10
Windows
installed



1 Guayanés to the rescue

We continue collaborating with the community of Guayanés in Yabucoa. The goal is to transform the historic Eugenio María de Hostos school, located on Playa Guayanés, into a community space to preserve historical identity, address community needs, and foster local participation.



Doors and windows

We worked on repairing the doors and windows of the main hall, which preserves the harmony within the coastal environment. This space will allow the offering of a variety of services to the community. We recognize that the transformation of the spaces we inhabit goes beyond the physical; and that the acts of painting, cleaning, and restoring foster a sense of optimism for the future.



Depaving

Impermeable surfaces generate heat islands in the built environment. We proposed a new green space for Guayanés by depaving an unused area to mitigate the warming effects. In March, the first phase, asphalt removal, was completed in collaboration with the Municipality of Yabucoa.



Ongoing plans

Looking ahead to 2026, will continue depaving while prioritizing soil recovery to improve land use with previous tree planting. Additionally, research on the heat island effect aims to process relevant information that will serve as a basis for future projects.



San Lorenzo

\$10k
Community investment

5
Custom furniture pieces

17
Solidarity brigades

19
Wooden panels



2 | La Tiendita Soberana

La Tiendita is a community initiative located in the east of the archipelago. The shop offers artisanal products, fresh fruits, and vegetables on a small scale, promoting healthy eating and local commerce in the area. In response to a need for stronger community spaces, we partnered with the local community to achieve practical and accessible solutions for organizing, displaying, and distributing food, thereby producing a close-knit and collaborative environment.



Solidarity brigades

During the implementation process, solidarity brigades were organized to paint, sand, and construct the space. These workdays allowed for the area to be prepared, custom furniture to be completed, and for the finishing touches. Working collectively was fundamental to bringing the project to fruition while ensuring an organized, functional, and accessible space.



Completed project

The culmination of the project included the construction and installation of five pieces of furniture made from plywood and pine. Each piece was designed to respond to the space's needs and support its daily operations. The pieces allowed for the efficient organization, display, and storage of products, creating a functional and adaptable environment. With this phase completed, the space was well-equipped for communal use.



Inauguration

For the first time, the space was filled with people offering fresh produce to the local community. The day included local artisans, food, and interactive calabash-carving workshops to entertain people of all ages. This event not only celebrated the opening of the space but also fortified community ties and proved the project's potential as a meeting and learning center.



Luquillo

15+
Total of
volunteers

1
Cleaning and
painting brigades

5k
Community
investment

4
Impacted
classroom



3 Community Development Center

This project aims to reclaim and occupy an abandoned school site on the coast by transforming it into a vibrant community space. The initiative promotes social justice, holistic wellness and resilience. It helps transform the space into an educational, recreational and convening center in support of the community, who are being increasingly impacted by rising sea levels and storms.



Volunteer brigades

We organized volunteer brigades focused on cleaning, debris removal, and painting. Volunteers, including a team from Stryker LATAM, restored four classrooms and cleared the surrounding area. Tools and materials were donated to ensure work continuity.



Donation

As part of our collaboration, we made a \$5,000 donation to support community efforts. The funds were used for materials, supplies, and resources needed to strengthen the school's recovery. This purchase of equipment and materials included a pressure washer to continue the school's maintenance efforts.



Ongoing plans

Looking ahead, we plan to expand community participation through future brigades and imagination workshops, as requested by the community. The project will aim to strengthen green infrastructure by building seed banks as a strategy to promote social well-being and develop resilient spaces in response to the new impacts produced by the climate crisis.

3
Fortuna Playa Community Development Center
Luquillo

6



17
Total participants

4
Days of training

10+
People surveyed

24
Elements mapped



4 The Certification - CRCD

The Caribbean Regenerative Community Development organization works to advance the regeneration of natural resources in communities located in the southwestern region of Puerto Rico. This organization requested La Maraña's support in being certified in community management to prepare for their U-Tree project, an initiative aimed at increasing local community engagement, particularly with sustainable regenerative practices.



Workshops

As part of the Certification, tools are adapted to the needs of each participating organization. During four days, community leaders, staff, scientific personnel, and religious leaders converged to tell their own stories, strengthen decision-making, and acquire tools to effectively co-imagine spaces in their community.



Routing + Mapping

Through the tools provided by La Cartuchera, CRCD conducted a community mapping and census event that allowed participants to understand immediate spatial needs firsthand. Participants were also able to create timelines for projects and space uses while documenting experiences related to flooding and fire history—topics that advance their knowledge and contribute to achieving their long-term project goals.



In action

CRCD has facilitated workshops using La Cartuchera's tools to strengthen community relationships, foster youth leadership, and improve environmental management. These actions promote participation, collaborative learning, sustainable solutions, generate positive impact, and ensure project continuity. This continuity is achieved through partnerships, monitoring indicators, shared resources, open communication, and ongoing commitment.



La Cartuchera

15
Total
participants

2
Maps of Rio
Piedras

6
Impacted
municipalities

48
Hours of
training



5 The Certification

We offered two certification cohorts with the participation of 15 leaders and professionals from diverse backgrounds and towns like Cidra, Coamo, Isabela, Lajas, Ponce, San Juan, San Germán, Trujillo Alto, and Yauco. Participants applied the tools in workshops centering on the use of the imagination and presentations on participatory processes.



Workshops

The certification program took place over four days, offering workshops using La Cartuchera, an educational tool that provides resources for community leaders. Participants have applied the tools in imagination workshops and presentations about participatory processes.



Routing + Mapping

During both certification sessions, participants walked around the urban center of Río Piedras to identify various elements of the built and natural environments. This exercise allowed them to recognize the opportunities and limitations in the community, which stimulated reflections on how to improve it. In the end, participants were able to visualize how to apply the necessary tools of community leadership to generate positive change.



Preparation

We are currently updating and translating La Cartuchera to incorporate new tools and resources to strengthen the work of community leaders. We are also preparing new printings to expand our distribution and ensure more participants can access it as educational material and apply it in their communities to foster organizational skills and project development.

5

Certification in Community Project Management
Rio Piedras

8

Dashboard
2025

Landscape
+ Food

100k+
Project
Investment

8
Impacted
communities

215+
Design
hours



Landscape + Food

The program seeks to strengthen food sovereignty in Puerto Rico by supporting food producers, improving infrastructure, and restoring green spaces. This meant including initiatives such as road resurfacing, reforestation, community garden management, and urban land reclamation. The project was structured by three main principles: first, to offer support to local food production. Secondly, to provide financial support to emerging community agriculture initiatives by boosting environmental education and training participants in what it means to embody sustainable practices. And thirdly, to promote the restoration, conservation, and responsible management of forests in urban green spaces and vulnerable ecosystems. To date, approximately six individual projects have been developed, some completed and others underway. Each project was designed to generate a tangible impact on the community by promoting environmental, social, and economic resilience. These actions aim to strengthen community organizing efforts, boost local food production, and develop a participatory and sustainable model that comprehensively addresses Puerto Rico's ecological and food challenges. In doing so, these projects work to ensure positive and lasting impacts on the environment, community health, and future generations.

7
Community
workshops

182
People
impacted

13
Community
meetings

110
People
surveyed



1 **Community Forestal Service**

This initiative stems from a collaboration between La Maraña, the Autonomous Municipality of Caguas, and the grassroots organization Urbe Apie to mitigate the effects of urban heat islands in Caguas Barrio Pueblo. Through environmental awareness efforts and active community participation, a carefully designed, managed, and led urban reforestation project is promoted and driven by local community members.



Projects

Under this program, reforestation activities are being carried out with the goal of planting 400 trees throughout the Barrio Pueblo. Community participation is promoted through specific training in ecology and the rehabilitation of four community nurseries, which include composting areas. This promotes the care, management, and sustainable maintenance of the trees, as it is being done by the community members.



Community meetings

The program impacted 182 people through our educational workshops and community meetings. The program has been presented to 6 communities to explore potential collaborations. One of our community meetings was held in October, where all the communities of Barrio Pueblo were invited as we held the official program launch.



Workshops

At the beginning of the program, a curriculum of educational workshops was developed to raise awareness on the importance of preserving the environment in the community of Barrio Pueblo. Topics included correct identification of flora and fauna, soil quality, climate change, urban heat islands, plant care, composting, water harvesting, and other environmental topics.

5
Solidarity work
brigades

474
Trees
inventoried

342
Identified species
iNaturalist

13k+
Investment in
tools



1 Plant nursery design

The installation of the community garden nurseries involved a participatory design process where the nursery space was imagined along with the community. Over the past few months, the first design for the urban garden, Huerto Feliz, has begun. Currently, we are planning with other communities installing two to three additional nurseries with rainwater harvesting and composting areas.



Work brigades

The development of plant nurseries is meant to actively involve communities in the construction process. Through communal work brigades, Urbe Apie has rehabilitated its community garden and plaza, where the nursery will be located. Each community participates in the process of creating its own nursery and fortifying their connection to the space.



Collaborations

Reforestation is an issue being addressed from different fronts in Puerto Rico and is currently led by several environmental organizations. To further strengthen these efforts, it's imperative to have collaboration at the forefront, which is why we have met with organizations such as CRCD, Arte-Suelo-Ser, the Committee for the Conservation of Endangered Species, and the Puerto Rico Ornithological Society, among others.



Surveys

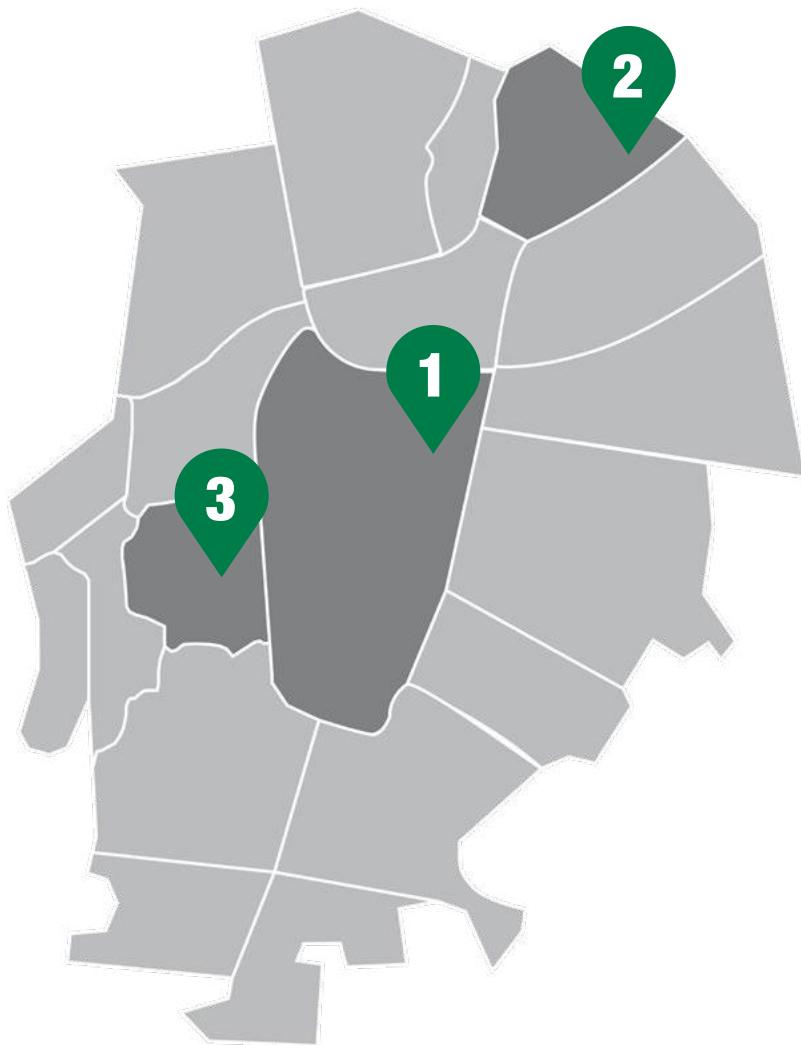
A community survey was conducted to evaluate the community's perception of extreme temperatures in Barrio Pueblo and their opinions on urban reforestation. Thus far, 110 people have been surveyed, and their responses have helped us understand people's needs and their most urgent concerns about reforestation.

3
Impacted
neighborhoods

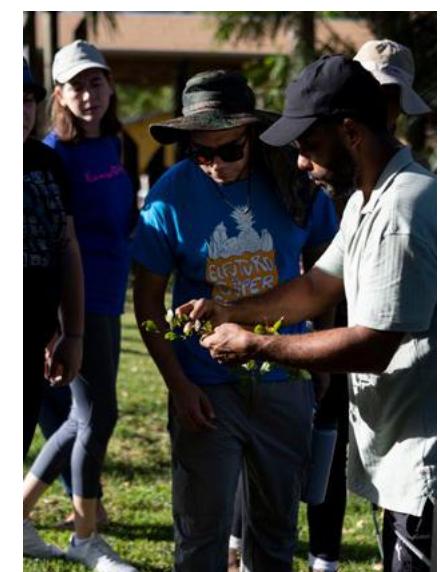
1
Centro Urbano Tradicional

2
Caguas Norte

3
Barriada Morales



Map of Caguas - Barrio Pueblo



1/85
Participating
countries**25+**
Assisted
events**1**
Urban heat island
workshops**3**
Community
collaborations

Climate week

In September La Maraña participated in NYC Climate Week for the first time. As part of our official activities, we collaborated with the Loisaida Center to lead a workshop titled El Calentón Coffee Hour. During the event, Ecolibrium and La Maraña co-led a conversation focused on the causes and manifestations of urban heat islands in Latin communities in New York and Puerto Rico. Together, we explored their impact on daily life and discussed possible collective solutions for mitigating and adapting to this reality at a communal and individual level. In this context, our executive director was selected as one of the 50 Grist Fixers. The Grist is a non-profit independent journalism organization dedicated to covering the climate crisis and the transitions toward fairer and more sustainable futures. This distinction celebrates and highlights emerging leaders who combine local action, technical knowledge, and social innovation to generate practical solutions with community impact. This distinction recognizes emerging leaders who push for innovative solutions, connecting local action, technical expertise, and systemic transformation with communities.



10m³
Composting capacity

2
Imagination workshops

140+
Design hours

5k+
Community investment



2 Fondo Semilla



Huerto Semilla



Design



Donation

We recognize urban agriculture as a strategy in response to climate change and work to promote a fund to create urban green infrastructure. This fund supports projects to improve the management of land, reduce gas emissions, flooding, and heat by increasing local food production. Through community co-design efforts, the project promotes local educational, ecological, and food initiatives by investing in resilience landscapes and equitable access to healthy food.

The design project, La Compostera Huerto Semilla, involved the participatory design of a multifunctional composter within the University of Puerto Rico campus. Thanks to imagination workshops, the needs of the garden were integrated into a design that included spaces for composting, storage, and a water harvesting system to strengthen regenerative agriculture practices and promote food sovereignty.

The composter was designed based on the criteria to promote functionality, durability, and integration into the garden environment. A modular structure that integrates six composting compartments, a storage area, and a water collection system with a cistern was developed. The design ensured workflow, adequate ventilation, and direct connection to the existing vegetation in the space to ensure its shared use.

To mark the end of the project, La Maraña donated \$5,000 to Huerto Semilla for the implementation of the composting system. The financial support was accompanied by the complete design, including plans, technical specifications, and construction recommendations. This contribution served to ensure the community had the necessary tools to carry out the project independently and sustainably.

Dashboard
2025

PRSESSTENIBLE

4
Pillars

1^{ra}
Sustainable
Development Guide

1k+
Viewers of the
transportation guide



Institute for Sustainable Puerto Rico

The Institute for Sustainable Puerto Rico is characterized as a community of practice: a collaborative space that brings together volunteers, experts, communities, and municipalities to co-create and address the structural gaps in sustainable development in the archipelago. It allows for a collective construction of practice-based knowledge to take place through an exchange of expertise and invites ongoing collaboration. This initiative stems from over a decade of experience in the field, during which we have identified recurring gaps in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of sustainable development projects, specifically in the local community context. By means of an integrated approach that recognizes territory, social relations, and knowledge management as central components of resilience, the proposal is structured around four interrelated pillars. These pillars are (1) producing research and development for green infrastructure and sustainable materials for these developments, (2) having a Community Intelligence Hub focused on the strategic use of local data, (3) training and certification programs, and (4) finding innovative community financing mechanisms.

El Sancocho

150+
Sancocho plates
served

100+
Recomendations
transport + mobility

15+
Informative tables

25+
Collaborators



1 | Guide for Sustainable Mobility and Transportation

As part of this initiative, the first Guide for Sustainable Mobility and Transportation was developed. The brainstorming and creation process lasted nearly a year. It involved hosting participatory events like conversations, questionnaires, talks, and workshops. This publication inaugurates a series of guides to expand the conceptual and practical framework of what sustainable development looks like in Puerto Rico.



El Sancocho

The Sancocho event hosted over 150 people through talks, panels, information tables, and tours. We gathered and reviewed valuable recommendations on transportation and sustainable mobility in the archipelago. The event combined collective dialogue and learning, culminating in the tasting of a delicious sancocho (stew) prepared and shared by the community.



Happy Hour

During a happy hour hosted at our offices in Río Piedras, approximately 30 people gathered and represented different organizations to begin developing a shared agenda for the Sancocho convening. The meeting facilitated an exchange of ideas, themes, and opportunities for collaboration in an informal and participatory environment.



Panels

With the participation of experts, enthusiasts, and those knowledgeable about the topic, a total of 15 participants shared their expertise in three panels. The panels focused on cycling infrastructure, public transportation, and alternative mobility. Each panelist's perspective fostered an enriching exchange of ideas, experiences, and proposals toward creating a fairer, more accessible, and more sustainable transportation system.

Dashboard
2025

PRAKSIS
Bali

7
Projects
visited

1
Floral
inventory

13
International
collaborations



Praksis

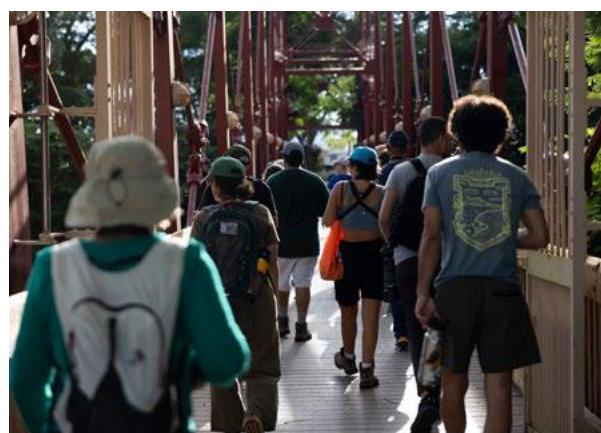
As part of the Rethinking Tourism Network residency, coordinated by PRAKSIS Oslo, we participated in a two-year international collaboration that brought together 13 artists, designers, and researchers from around the world. The residency provided a space that inspired creative and critical thinking. Together, we questioned current tourism models and explored fairer, more sustainable alternatives that are sensitive to social, cultural, and environmental contexts. Within this framework, we traveled to Bali to participate in an interdisciplinary conference on sustainable tourism, which brought together academics, design professionals, and environmental activists. During this event, our executive director presented a critical analysis of water as a source of power in large-scale tourism developments, highlighting how its control and distribution impact local communities.



This year...

reaffirmed the need to sustain long-term planning and implementation processes, rooted in the territory. The processes must be based on the integration of community knowledge, technical capacity, and institutional management. With each project developed, we have advanced the systematization of participatory methodologies that are oriented toward sustainable development. In return, it amplifies the replicability and the potential for projects' impact at the municipal and regional levels. The year 2025 allowed us to consolidate key lessons and highlighted the importance of intersectoral approaches to address complex challenges. Likewise, we worked to expand our strategic alliances with communities, municipalities, academic institutions, and international networks—alliances that generate a pathway for meaningful exchange and co-production of applied knowledge. Looking ahead to 2026, La Maraña reaffirms its commitment to sustainable development through participatory design. We recognize the value that collective work brings as the foundation for building the archipelago we want to achieve—we thank the people and organizations who believe in this becoming a reality. Our work is made possible thanks to the support and collaboration of people and institutions who believe in and work towards achieving this goal. To learn how to support these initiatives and how to collaborate with us, we invite you to visit our website.

Visite us 





11 years of participatory design for the right to remain.





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www.lamarana.org

