

The Porto Alegre Sustainable Innovation Zone (ZISPOA)

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The Porto Alegre Sustainable Innovation Zone (ZISPOA--Zona de Inovação Sustentável de Porto Alegre) is the first major implementation step of Global Urban Development's World Bank-funded 2015 Leapfrog Economic Strategy for the City of Porto Alegre and the State of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) to become the most Sustainable and Innovative places in Latin America by 2030.

Sustainable Innovation Zones near urban universities, tech parks, and business incubators are designed to become international magnets for talent and concentrated experiments in developing advanced technologies and globally scalable products and services that conserve, reuse, and renew resources much more efficiently. Through this approach, people, places, and organizations can experience greater prosperity and quality of life, earning and saving more money with thriving businesses, better jobs, and higher incomes, at the same time that they are helping to accomplish the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Climate Agreement, and New Urban Agenda by 2030.

The ZISPOA area includes all or part of ten Porto Alegre communities: Azenha, Bom Fim, Centro Histórico, Cidade Baixa, Farroupilha, Floresta, Independência, Rio Branco, Santa Cecilia, and Santana. Located inside ZISPOA are Porto Alegre's largest public park, two federal universities and three other higher education institutions, six major hospitals, Brazil's oldest and largest weekly organic farmers market, an historic urban retail center, four large private companies, numerous educational, cultural, and religious institutions, and several neighborhoods that have been at the heart of Porto Alegre's sustainability movement for the past half century.

GUD began organizing ZISPOA in September 2015 through the Entrepreneurship Challenge at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), together with various courses and activities at the Paralelo Vivo Sustainable Innovation Hub, and numerous civic and university events. In March 2017 we launched the ZISPOA Project at UFRGS in the Engineering School's Centenario Building. ZISPOA is working with senior administrators, faculty, and students at UFRGS to develop a plan for the university to become a global leader in Sustainable Innovation by 2030, in teaching, research, resource utilization, facilities management, community collaboration, entrepreneurial development, public service, and internationalization.

In December 2017 the Porto Alegre City Council voted unanimously to officially recognize ZISPOA and its boundaries, and Mayor Nelson Marchezan Júnior

signed this legislation into law in March 2018. Currently ZISPOA is working with the Porto Alegre City Government to include the Sustainable Innovation Zone as part of updating the city's master urban development plan.

ZISPOA is based on six key elements: ***Innovation and Technology, Entrepreneurship and Startups, Sustainability and Resource Efficiency, Creativity and Collaboration, Participatory Community Management, and Business-Friendly Environment.*** Thus far ZISPOA is focused on becoming more solar-powered, more bike-friendly, more renewable technology-friendly (zero waste/recycling/circular economy), more energy-efficient, and more digitally connected.

The ZISPOA network includes university professors and students, young entrepreneurs and professionals, collaborative houses and sustainability organizations. Operating as a citizen-led, community-oriented, university and private sector movement, in active collaboration with UFRGS, the Porto Alegre City Government, and the Swedish and US governments, to date ZISPOA has helped launch numerous sustainable startup businesses, including Loop, Re-ciclo, and Volta; built a solar charging station for electric car sharing at Shopping Total with MVM, Orkestra, and YES; built the Solar Poste with Elysia for charging mobile devices in the courtyard of the UFRGS Administration School; promoted solar "trees" with OZ Engenharia; developed the Espaço Floresta community gardening and composting center at a city-owned recycling facility; and built the ZISPOA Sustainable Parklet with Tetra Pak, Josephyna's, Sim Sala Bim, Elysia, Solidarieadade, and Urban Ode.

In addition, ZISPOA has helped organize many other initiatives including a wide range of weekly seminars (ZIStalks), workshops, lectures, festivals, and networking events such as monthly Green Drinks. Events have ranged from two UN-Habitat Urban Thinkers Campuses during November 2017 and December 2019; Sweden-Brazil Innovation Week activities during October 2016, October 2017, and September 2019; a ZISPOA World Environment Day Festival at Vila Flores in June 2016; a ZISPOA Bike-Friendly Festival in October 2017; and much more.

ZISPOA involves many projects and working groups, including: Professores Conselheiros da ZISPOA (ZISProf), a network of more than 150 professors from 15 universities in metropolitan Porto Alegre supporting ZISPOA's activities through teaching and research; ZISPOA nas Universidades (ZUNI), involving hundreds of students engaging in ZISPOA research and action through university courses and programs; POA Solar, promoting solar energy throughout ZISPOA and Porto Alegre; Bike-Friendly ZISPOA, promoting dedicated bike lanes (ciclovias), secure bike parking (paraciclos), bike sharing, parklets as outdoor gathering spaces, and bike apps; and many other projects.

ZISPOA works very closely with Porto Alegre's Mayor, City Government, City Council, businesses and associations, collaborative houses and startup hubs,

coworking and maker spaces, sustainability and social advocacy and service groups, and many other key stakeholder organizations, including Pacto Alegre, Aliança de Inovação, Virada Sustentável, Porto Alegre Inquieta, TodaVida, UFO, GRID, Pulsar, PROPUR-GPIT, Point, Casa Guandu, Vila Flores, Aeromovel, Minha Porto Alegre, Josephyna's, Global Shapers, Casa das Cidades, INSPE, Órbita Coworking, CRA-RS, IAB-RS, CAU-RS, Engineers Without Borders, Misturai, Solidarieadade, Singularity University, Porto Alegre Resiliente, Marquise 51 Hub Criativo, TransLab, WOW, Nós Coworking, POA Hub, Distrito Criativo, Distrito Empreendedor, Fábrica do Futuro, UFRGS Parque Zenit, WRI Brasil, and numerous others.

Through GUD, Sustainable Innovation Zones are now beginning to spread to other cities. Currently two more have recently been launched: 1) ZISSAN in Santo Angelo, a smaller Brazilian city in Rio Grande do Sul; and 2) ACTA in Panama City, Panama. GUD also is working to help organize Sustainable Innovation Zones in other cities, including London (UK), Toronto (Canada), and New York City (US).

ZISPOA's strategy incorporates many aspects of a successful "technology innovation ecosystem" (as identified by the World Bank) -- college and university education and research, technology transfer, business incubators and accelerators, startup hubs, coworking and maker spaces, fab labs, hackathons, meetups, boot camps, angel investors, venture capital, financial and regulatory incentives, etc. -- and adds four more vital components: 1) place-based community emphasis; 2) primary purpose promoting Sustainable Innovation technologies, businesses, and talent; 3) active participation and support by sustainability, social, and creative design experts and activists (in addition to entrepreneurs and technologists) and, 4) empowered by a grassroots citizen movement.

In addition, ZISPOA's commitment to generating Inclusive Prosperity in urban neighborhoods represents a "community development ecosystem" as defined by Robert Zdenek and Dee Walsh in their recent book about Community Development Corporations (CDCs), producer and consumer cooperatives, and other community-based and affordable housing development organizations in the US. The key distinction about ZISPOA as a community development ecosystem is its primary focus on Sustainable Innovation. Indeed, ZISPOA's Sustainable Communities approach is comparable to EcoDistricts, Transition Towns, and similar local sustainability movements.

ZISPOA also promotes the main activities of the "creative economy" and works with many organizations in Porto Alegre to encourage this approach, including INSPE, Vila Flores, Porto Alegre Inquieta, RS Criativo, and many other organizations.

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