

CASE STUDY

Urban Júcar

"We want to transform neglected green areas into healthy urban ecosystems"

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PROFILE SNAPSHOT

Website	ayuntamiento.cuenca.es
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Country	Spain
Main sector	Public
Uforest thematic discipline	Urban landscape planning
Stage of development	Implementation



By creating healthy and accessible green-and-blue areas for local residents.



By salvaging derelict areas through environmental and socially-profitable transformations, and by using sustainable, energy-efficient materials.



By improving air and temperature quality, and by managing hydro-meteo risks.



By fostering native plant and animal biodiversity, and by sustainably managing natural resources.





START-UP

In 2018, the **Cuenca City Council** (Spain) started the transformation of the urban section of the Júcar river. The "Proyecto de adecuación ambiental en tramo urbano del río Júcar a su paso por Cuenca" (Project for the environmental transformation of the urban section of the Júcar river in Cuenca city) aims at integrating the riverside into the urban plan (Urban Júcar). Stemming from a private initiative designed by **Agresta** and **Cauler**, two Spanish forest engineering and consultancy firms, the riparian landscape is turned into a new green infrastructure for the city.

URBAN JÚCAR'S GOALS:

Transform the 20-hectares urban grounds along the Júcar riverbank incorporating the following aspects:

- Safety.
- Attractiveness.
- Functional accessibility.
- Economy of execution and maintenance.
- Use of flood-resistant materials.
- Use of natural materials.
- Low natural and visual negative impact.



INITIATIVE MODEL

MAIN ACTIVITIES:

What does Urban Júcar do?

- Apply hydro-forestry measures to prevent erosion and flooding.
- Clean up and remove construction debris.
- Remove foreign plant species and prune or fell hazardous trees.
- Afforest and protect riparian native vegetation.
- Build 2 km of accessible walking trails.
- Install street furniture and leisure facilities (benches, energy-efficient lighting, drinking-water fountains, playgrounds, etc.).

BENEFICIARIES:

Who benefits from Urban Júcar's activities?

1. **Cuenca's local residents**, especially those with reduced mobility, have access to green, attractive green natural areas for leisure and sport.
2. **Greenskeepers and tree workers** that take care of the area's natural resources.
3. **Cuenca's public timber mill** that supplies wood to build infrastructure.
4. **Entrepreneurial ventures** coming out of the European Programme Urban Forest Innovation Lab (UFIL). For example, 'Most' is a private company that designs sustainable traditional furniture and information boards for Urban Júcar.

PROMOTION:

What is Urban Júcar's promotion strategy?

Urban Júcar's communication strategy and channels:

- Press conferences and interviews offered by the Cuenca City Council.
- Social media and websites.
- Information boards in public areas.
- Apps for environmental/forestry education and information about sustainable walking trails.

GOVERNANCE:

How does Urban Júcar implement its activities?

- The **Cuenca City Council** leads and promotes the project.



- **Agresta, Cauler** and **Cota Cero** implement the works.
- The **Confederación Hidrográfica del Júcar** (Júcar Hydrographic Confederation) manages the permits for the construction work.

FINANCES:

What are Urban Júcar's main resources?

The project's estimated costs are €2 million, which are covered through **public funding**:

- The EC 'Europe 2020' strategy for an integrated and sustainable urban development (80%).
- The Cuenca City Council (20%).

POLICY AND STANDARDS LEADING THE INITIATIVE:

- Spanish Government guidelines for road building and drainage works:
 - "Guía metodológica para la elaboración de Proyectos de Caminos Naturales" (2021, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación).
 - "Manual de Aspectos Constructivos de Caminos Naturales" (2020, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación).
- Spanish regulation for universal accessibility (Orden VIV/561/2010, de 1 de febrero).
- Forest Stewardship Council - FSC® certification for responsible forest management.
- Framework: Europe 2020 and European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.



UNIQUENESS

What makes Urban Júcar a one-of-a-kind project?

- It helps exploit one of the most extensive forest areas in Europe through forest bioeconomy to obtain economic, energy, environmental and social benefits.
- It applies a multidisciplinary approach that integrates architecture, engineering and ecology.
- It uses low-maintenance, economic and simple solutions.



EXPECTATION

By **2025**, Urban Júcar aims to further connect the river with the city and recreational areas (ex., picnic sites, bathing and fishing spots, etc.), to digitalise information, and foster the rewilding of fish and bird species. It will also integrate this renewed urban section of the river into green and blue corridors.

What does Urban Júcar need to be successful?

- Citizen respect for public property and nature.
- Communication activities to attract the community.

What are today's main challenges?

- Adequate maintenance (e.g. facilities, waste, etc.).
- Limited budget.

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