

The Porto Alegre Sustainable Innovation Zone (ZISPOA)

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July 2018

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 seven Porto Alegre communities: Bom Fim, Farroupilha, Floresta, Independência, Rio Branco, Santa Cecilia, and Santana. Located inside ZISPOA are Porto Alegre's largest public park (Parque Farroupilha/Redenção), two highly ranked federal universities (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul-UFRGS, and Federal University of Health Sciences of Porto Alegre-UFCSPA), six major hospitals, Brazil's oldest and largest weekly organic farmers market (Feira Ecológica da Redenção), an historic urban retail center (Shopping Total), four large private companies, numerous educational, cultural, and religious institutions, and several neighborhoods that have been at the heart of Porto Alegre's sustainable innovation 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, and community collaboration.

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 the city's updated 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 and bike-friendly, and later we will address other important objectives, including becoming more energy-efficient, more renewable technology-friendly (zero waste/recycling/circular economy), 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, 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 private sustainable business startups, such as Loop and Re-ciclo; helped build a charging station for electric car sharing at Shopping Total; helped build the Solar Poste for charging mobile devices in the courtyard of the UFRGS Administration School; and helped build the Espaço Floresta community gardening and composting center at a city-owned recycling facility.

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, including a UN-Habitat Urban Thinkers Campus during November 2017, two annual Sweden-Brazil Innovation Weeks in October 2016 and 2017, a ZISPOA World Environment Day Festival at Vila Flores in June 2016, a ZISPOA Bike-Friendly Festival in October 2017; a website (www.zispoa.info) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/zispoa); and 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 in ZISPOA; Bike-Friendly ZISPOA, promoting dedicated bike lanes, secure bike parking, bike sharing, bike "parklets" as outdoor gathering spaces, bike apps, and other actions; the ZISPOA Project at UFRGS; ZISmembers; ZURB; and several others, all collaborating together through the ZISPOA Coordinating Committee (ZISCO). ZISCO works closely with the Porto Alegre City Council and City Government, 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.

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.

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