



**SUSTAINABLE  
ENERGY WEEK**

An initiative  
of the  European  
Commission

Efficient Buildings and houses: partnering for  
the SDGs and the European Green Deal

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# Orcasitas

The participatory construction of the city



# Context

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- Orcasitas is a neighborhood of Madrid located in the south of the city.
- The population of Orcasitas is 7.314 people, 3.372 men and 3.762 women.
- The structure of the population of the Orcasitas plateau corresponds to a pyramid where the population predominates in active ages and up to 70 years, therefore aged.

# Context

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- The unemployment rate in this neighborhood of the Orcasitas Plateau is historically 5 points above the city average for both sexes.
- The population of Orcasitas has mostly primary studies or non-studies in about 80% of its population.

- Orcasitas is a neighborhood where in the 1970s the quality of life was similar to that of a third world country.
- The first demand arose was to supply water to the neighborhood





## THE VILLAGE IN THE CITY

The neighborhood was built between the 1950s and 1970s when thousands of people immigrated from the countryside to the city.

The houses were illegally built at night," to prevent authorities from tearing down the houses that were built by the population.





At the end of the 70s the inhabitants of the neighborhood were constituted in The Neighborhood Association giving rise to one of the most important participatory remodeling processes of the city of Madrid.





FROM THAT MOMENT ON, THE NEIGHBORHOOD WILL HOLD PROTESTS WITH THE SAME GOAL: TO BE PART OF THE CITY

Neighbors learn that some landowners and speculators intend to expel them from the lands they had been living on for decades. Until that time they had achieved some conquests (water, light, and living). The administration does not initially grant them any rights over the land they inhabit, and with the Association at the helm, a battle begins for years that will be historic for the neighborhood movement and a milestone in the development of Madrid.



The struggle for housing in Orcasitas ends with a crushing victory: the Supreme Court recognizes neighbors with their right to the land they have inhabited for decades. The judgment, known as the "binding memory", of the 73 years, lays out jurisprudence and requires that the neighbours of shanty towns and infrastructures be housed in their own neighbourhood, thus preventing speculation processes with the land.

## THE REMODELING OF ORCASITAS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DEMOCRATIC NEIGHBORHOOD

The momentum and inertia of the mobilizations means that a process of democratic and participatory redevelopment is opened. The neighbors decided, through an assembly process, how they wanted the urban design of the neighborhood to be, their houses. Says Félix López-Rey, historical leader of this neighborhood movement, who decided in assembly to "the tiles of the kitchen and the bathrooms". Then they built a life-size model of their future home to see how it looked because the plans had no one to understand them







## ORCASITAS YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Orcasitas continues to be one of the most active and participatory neighborhoods in Madrid. Celebrate Assemblies and Mobilizations when there are relevant issues and work for a city for all.

## THE ASSEMBLY; THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENGINE

The Assembly, the real engine of the neighborhood. The place where democracy and participation were made and come true. The Assembly yesterday and today is the constituted power of the neighbors of Orcasitas.



## World Good Practice in Citizen Participation by the United Nations. (Dubai Awards 2008)

More than 1.100 neighbors signed the First Civic Pact promoted by social entities expressing a commitment of citizens to sustainability



## A shared environmental project



Heating plant self-managed by the Commonwealth of Owners of Orcasitas. The Neighborhood Association "Meseta de Orcasitas" started this facility to the Ministry of Public Works in 1980 as part of the remodeling of neighborhoods. The plant supplies economy heating to more than 2,000 families in the neighborhood and with low CO2 emissions

# Orcasitas today: green neighborhood





# Orcassites: the power of ward identity



# Learning

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- Key foundational fact; Participatory remodeling of the neighborhood. Example of Social Public Cooperation
- Involvement of technicians (architects and urban planners, sociologists
- Citizen Participation.
- Barrial identity
- Social Public Cooperation
- In a cohesive neighborhood, with participatory tradition and identity it is possible to launch projects for environmental sustainability successfully because the projects started by the neighborhood are lived in a shared way by all the neighbors and neighbors.

# The future

- 40 years later, the City council of Madrid, with Manuela Carmena as Mayor, approved the Public-Social Cooperation Ordinance, where it is first recognized the different forms of collaboration between the City of Madrid and the social organizations.
- This ordinance assumes that citizens promote, invent, claim and, above all, provide new solutions to problems and deficiencies of the city: social, cultural, educational, sports, environmental, etc. The participation of the social organizations in the development of public policies and not only in their planning and evaluation. It gives visibility of subjects, to community work, to activities and provides transparency in processes and public management.
- Now, the city is governed by a coalition of right-wing political parties that voted against the approval of the ordinance because they do not believe in citizen initiative, social innovation and collaboration with social entities. The Municipal Government has already announced the repeal of this Ordinance.