CONECTA

Burgos Today

ENGLISH EDITION

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Burgos Today

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CREATED BY STAFF AND STUDENTS AT LA ESCUELA OFICIAL DE IDIOMAS DE BURGOS

Mensualmente, gracias a la colaboración de la Escuela Oficial de Idiomas de Burgos, y a la coordinación del profesor Javier López, presentaremos a través de esta sección Conecta, informaciones sobre Burgos destinadas a todas aquellas personas que se adentran en la lengua inglesa. Esperamos también sus sugerencias a través de *conecta@diariodeburgos.es* para una sección que publicaremos periódicamente los primeros viernes de cada mes.

Refurbishing Carrero Blanco

LUIS LÓPEZ ARAICO

Burgos is an old medieval town which like many others in Castilla y León has experienced relentless urban decay in some areas with old, derelict buildings, sometimes unoccupied, and communities suffering from social stigma and exclusion and unable to function as one force.

Far from turning a blind eye to this, Burgos City Council designated two areas which it gave top priority for urban renewal projects. That meant, of course, proper allocation of funds and carefully thought-out redevelopment plan. The two areas were Carrero Blanco and the old quarters in the city centre.

The idea got an official high-sounding name: Comprehensive Urban Renewal Scheme, Rehabilitación Integral, and it would be phased in gradually, in two stages. The lucky one, Carrero Blanco, was given the go-ahead first. That was two years ago. Two days ago we went to see the finished product.

… almost finished I should say. We stood in front of a big sign that was put up when redevelopment work started here in Carrero Blanco. The sign reads renewal and redevelopment project co-financed by … well many people chipped in it seems… co-financed by the EU, the local authority and the regional and central departments of housing, and … the owners of the flats.

Carrero Blanco was a … probably not a zone of decline as such but definitely a gloomy and uninviting area, with tower blocks in a very bad state of repair, tenants not taking proper care of either flats or surrounding areas, and very importantly, local businesses, basically bars and small stores selling groceries, scraping by financially. Many vacant commercial premises which is a sure indicator of bleak economic prospects for the area.

That's all a thing of the past. Urban planners and community leaders rolled up their sleeves, set some common and agreed-upon goals and set about meeting them in as little time as possible. The end result is there for all to see and I can tell you it is worth seeing.

It is only logic that owners and tenants feel over the moon about this facelift to the area. This community has been re-invigorated and has become a vibrant modernised residential area. The 15 tower blocks that once looked like brick giants about to tumble down glitter white and bright in the beautiful sunshine. The ground floor commercial premises are now bustling with activity and a brighter future.

The parking bays have been upgraded, street furniture has been installed, trees and beautiful flower beds have been planted and decorative public lighting has been erected. All surfaces have been repaved and the ramps leading up to entrances to blocks have beautifully upgraded. No fear of rolling off into the ground below for wheel chair users or pushers.

Plenty of services, quality services in the area, among which the day centre for the elderly run by la Junta which includes a dining-room which serves well above-average lunches at extremely low prices.

Adjacent to the day centre is a council-owned nursery for kids, as if the very young and the very old should live side by side. And there our beloved Escuela Oficial de Idiomas and Comuneros Secondary School and a community centre 200 metres down the road.

Everywhere there is a strong sense of belonging. Carrero Blanco residents wouldn't move away for the world.

The success story behind the redeveloping of Carrero Blanco stems from clever planning and a desire to reach an unlikely agreement.

news bulletin

First-time buyers who are under 36 will not pay fee levied on a mortgage

The regional government will effectively abolish/put an end to the registration fee, el Impuesto de Actos Jurídicos Documentados, for those under 36 years of age who take out a mortgage in order to finance their first home regardless of their income, provided that it becomes their habitual residence.

This measure will be in effect from January 1, 2008 and is intended to remove obstacles when purchasing a first home for an age group who appears to be managing worst.

Under present state legislation no individual can be fully exempted from paying such fee and, therefore, the rate has been brought down to 0.01 % of the loan, of the sum of money lent, in contrast to current rates that range from 0.1 to 0.3.

Other tax credits. This bill on Tax Incentives for the coming fiscal year provides for other tax incentives aimed at retaining population in rural areas. Those under 36 who purchase a second-hand home in a rural area will only pay a 0.01 rate on its value as property sale tax.

Road resurfacing work in the dark

Burgos City Council has undertaken extensive resurfacing work in as many streets as 16, all of them in the city centre. It will be the first time that such work is carried out by night. This is meant to lessen the impact on traffic, claimed PP Sub-Councillor for Services and Traffic management, Santiago González Braceras. The road surface that will be tarmacked is over 53,000 square metres and is budgeted at 466,952.

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IN-DEPTH REPORT

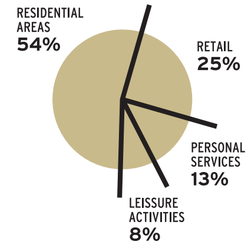
Land use on ground floor premises in Burgos City

We are conducting street surveys for the purpose of finding out which urban function (retail, residential, recreational,…) streets serve by looking at what use ground floor premises are put to.

This time the street chosen to survey is Molinillo Street, located in Burgos South. It runs from La Quinta up to San Pedro Cardeña Street, an area that can be characterised as a striking mix of rundown low-rise buildings and high-rise high quality accommodation. Unquestionably, the area needs some clever redeveloping, a telling example of which might be the playground and landscaped gardens at La Quinta, right below the dual-carriageway.

The value of land is cheaper but still high. Population densities have increased due to some high-rise accommodation being built in recent years. People do not go into the city centre every day to do their shopping. They shop locally. It doesn't contain major tourist attractions: the historic sites, landmark monuments, etc., or many listed buildings.

The data obtained from the fieldwork is shown in the sketch map below.



CONCLUSIONS. Judging by the data collected from the survey, which shows a higher density of entrances to buildings at the expense of retail or personal service or leisure-related businesses, we can classify Molinillo Street under the category of residential area. In addition, we have spotted a high number of buildings in very poor repair, together with derelict sites squeezed between old buildings with boarded-up windows. This should encourage speedier redeveloping and urban renewal schemes.

Valladolid v. Burgos: the dark side of the moon

We all live are in Castilla y León, a lovely, golden-wheatish, interior region of Spain. Valladolid is the seat of the regional government and still as you travel up and down Burgos County you are bound to spot the motto "Burgos cabeza de Castilla" in many places. Are there any grounds on which to base this claim? Let's see if we can provide some telling figures.

First of all, we will talk about population trends. At a national level, population has increased by 8%, foreign immigrants being the driving force. In the same period Burgos increased by 4%, 14.064 new residents. The P. I. R. (population increase rate) for Valladolid is 4,3%, so we can say that both populations are expanding at roughly the same pace, the difference being the reasons behind each phenomenon. In Burgos, more nationals are moving out of than into the county, whereas an increasingly high number of immigrants are being registered. The percentages of foreign population in the year 2006 are 5,74 for Burgos and down to 4 for Valladolid. So Burgos population surplus is due to a positive balance in migrating patterns as well as its natural growth.

On the other hand, Valladolid, as a county, is smaller than Burgos (8.110 km² for the former, next to 14.022 km² for the latter), but its population is bigger (519.249 inhabitants -Valladolid- close to 363.874 ones -Burgos-), so there is a marked difference in population density: 64% in the county of Valladolid versus 25,5% in the county of Burgos.

To get a better picture of the overall situation, we'll turn to some economic facts. Retail and commercial are leading sectors in Valladolid, but Burgos industrial fabric is larger, mainly due to three most important sectors: food industry, auto parts suppliers and construction, the flagship of Burgos economy being construction. This is best seen through a most telling indicator: planning permissions. In fact, in 2006, 485.935 planning permissions were granted in Burgos, in comparison with 358.904 in Valladolid.

Building may have well peaked its performance. Its workforce is made up of an increasing number of foreign unskilled workers, some of them undocumented. As to auto parts suppliers, many are the households which heavily depend on this hi-tech sector. Unfortunately, its future is quite uncertain. These are multinational companies which will relocate wherever profit is higher and nowadays labour cost in Spain is offputting. Food industry is a healthy sector but our neighbour France overshadows its development.

The picture for Burgos retail sector is very bleak. 3 out of 5 businesses closed down within 3 years. Castellanos may not be able to boast an entrepreneurial drive and do not make the most of our resources. On the other hand, civil service jobs and office employment have not been successfully decentralised to cities other than Valladolid. With regard to employment, the unemployment rate for Burgos is 3,2%, and 4,3% for Valladolid. This lower figure might be attributable to the well-performing tourist sector in Burgos.

To sum up, the old-time rivalry between these two neighbours does not seem to come to an end any time soon as there is a good but not justifiable reason for it to linger on and on. Confrontation is so close to love, specially in a country like Spain, so keen on competitive… games!

noticeboard of cultural events

Visual artist go pro

Spurred by the lead taken by other regions some artists have managed to convince many other fellow visual artists into establishing a Castilla y León-based body for professional visual artists. The red carpet was rolled out at the Teatro Principal for the launch of this organization.

What do they seek? A code of good practice. They also want the organization to provide services, facilities and resources for artists. These could take the form of training programmes and workshops for Professional Development of visual artists. It will also seek to collaborate on projects.

First because it can assist in the delivery of a project, which might otherwise not be feasible. Secondly it also provides the opportunity for Visual Artists Castilla y León to actively engage with artists and other organisations. This engagement helps us to build new relationships and networks and understand the changing interests and concerns of artists.

Finally it wants to act as an advocate on behalf of individual artists, representing them and lobbying cultural regional agencies.

A new emblem for a new approach in Caja Burgos

We witnessed to the unveiling of the new logo for la Casa del Cordón, a change not for the sake of change, as someone may have concluded, but one that hopes to revitalize and consolidate the great momentum in the promotion of the arts and culture on the part of Caja Burgos. This move has coincided with the refurbishing of the conference room at Casa del Cordón. The upgrade work has included stage lighting and a maximum quality sound system. This facility has been greatly modified into a performance venue so that it can showcase theatre, musical and dance performances, concerts, films, etc, many of which have been already scheduled.

City Centre Retailers give away parking vouchers

Burgos City Centre retailers' association have relaunched the free parking campaign. It is aimed at making it possible for shoppers to do their shopping in the inner city at no extra cost from parking fees. 150 small businesses located in the city centre have joined forces in the giving out of free 30-minute parking vouchers. The procedure remains the same. The shopper parks his/her car in one of the three underground car parks in the city centre and heads off to shops displaying the logo Centro Burgos and the shop owner gives them a parking voucher for a duration that will vary according to the size, or rather, the amount spent on their shopping. Business owners have some discretion as to the number of 30-minute vouchers to give away.

Burgos boasts 5,400 places in regional government-owned nursing homes

Public nursing homes in Burgos County have 5,400 places available for elderly people, both able-bodied and disabled, which means that residential places make up 6.7 % as stated by César Antón, regional Secretary for Family Affairs and Equal Opportunities, at the opening of the newly-refurbished nursing home in Fuentes Blancas, October 15.

Castilla y León ranks one of the top countries in the aging population league, with 22% of its population over 65. This "propels la Junta to keep up at it and to embark on anursing home improvement scheme", announced Secretary Antón. Two new nursing homes in Oña will be available within a year and half. These two new facilities will add 200 places to the existing 5,400.