

EVERYBODY  
TALKS ABOUT  
ENHANCING,  
REFINING,  
EVOLVING  
THE SHOPPING  
CENTER.

WE CREATED  
A DIFFERENT  
KIND OF  
ANIMAL.



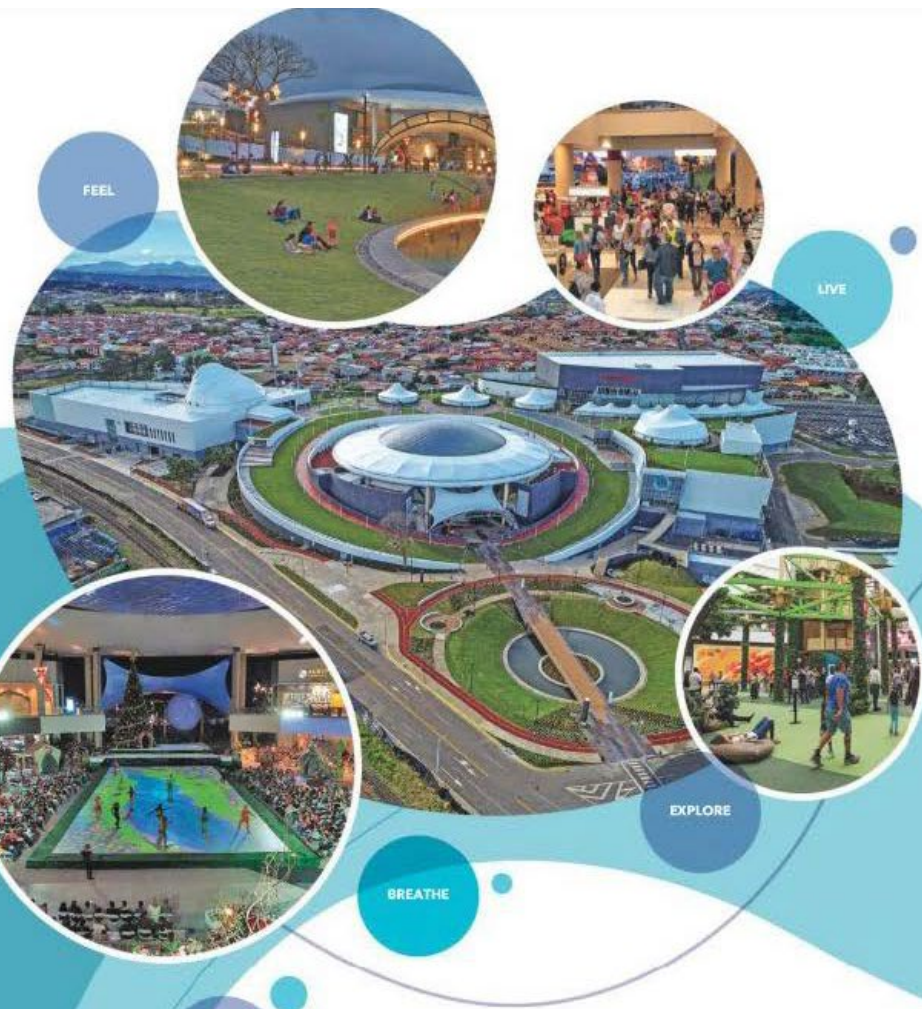
OXÍGENO

THE FIRST  
HUMAN PLAYGROUND.



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**Oxígeno**, the first human playground, is a unique and interactive space that integrates the community, entertainment, sports, gastronomy, shopping and green areas.

Its four worlds are designed to surprise, entertain and transform experiences, according to the interests and affinities of our visitors.

## Project features:

- Location: San Francisco de Heredia, Costa Rica
- Opening: November 20, 2018
- 130,000m<sup>2</sup> (±32 acres) of construction and more than 15,000m<sup>2</sup> (± 3.7 acres) of public access areas for the enjoyment of its visitors
- 2,500m<sup>2</sup> (±26,910 SF) event square with capacity for 3,000 people
- 1.2km (±3,937 FT) long running track
- Donation of 15,000m<sup>2</sup> (± 3.7 acres) of land, as well as the infrastructure for the expansion of roads and creation of a new connection road
- Design and construction of a platform for the metropolitan train station (currently operating)
- 15,000m<sup>2</sup> (± 3.7 acres) of rooftop generating a new public access space for the community, overlooking the Barva and Poás volcanoes and the Escazú mountains

**LINK:** <http://www.cuestamoras.com/negocios/oxigeno/>

**VIDEO LINK:** <https://www.dropbox.com/s/xgrv16wfiq3vfz8/AE-OCT%202018.mp4?dl=0>



**OXÍGENO**  
HUMAN PLAYGROUND



# A Retail Breath of Fresh Air

La Estación Oxígeno in Costa Rica plans to refine and perhaps redefine experiential real estate.

Brian A. Lee



Oxígeno will be a complex featuring entertainment, sports, shopping, dining and green space north of San Jose, Costa Rica.

Only a place with very rich natural resources and a strong reputation for adventure tourism could be called a human playground. That place is Costa Rica and its commercial real estate inspiration will soon be manifested on the north side of San Jose.

Cuestamoras Urbanismo has started development of Oxígeno (Oxygen), a 2 million-square-foot project that will offer ample entertainment, sports, shopping, cuisine and green space. Designed by JERDE, the mixed-use complex will be divided into four plazas or “worlds,” each featuring distinct design themes, activities and offerings that are connected by undulating pathways and courtyards.

“We don’t call it a shopping center, we call it a human playground,” says Hernan

Martinez, CEO of Cuestamoras Urbanismo, who adds that community attitudes, values and interests led the developer and designer to create a place based on unique experiences while adhering to strict sustainability principles.

Eduardo Lopez, JERDE senior vice president and senior design principal, describes it as “a first-of-its-kind approach to retail in the Americas.”

Located in the Heredia province of San Jose, Oxígeno will draw from a metro population of nearly 3 million people. Martinez calls the opportunity to purchase the approximately 31 acres a rare one, adding that the north side of San Jose is “clearly” underserved for retail and entertainment.

Oxígeno’s uncommon design and location in the hillside community of San

Francisco mean great views in and out. The approximately 31-acre Cuestamoras Urbanismo project is scheduled to open in time for the 2018 holiday season. The first phase of Oxígeno will be the “human playground,” the second will maintain the concept but with office space added and the third phase will be a residential component.

### PURA PLACE

Martinez emphasizes the huge effort that Cuestamoras Urbanismo and JERDE made to blend the property in with the urban grid so it was not an isolated commercial island. The goal was interaction through integration. He also wanted the mixed-use property to be more than the next destination attraction. With flexibility, the



Oxígeno’s design is inspired by the area’s history, art and culture, with a focus on the natural environment.

A climbing wall, zip line, nature course and extreme sports park are just a few of the features at Oxígeno.

development can not only spice things up with day-to-day variety, but also effectively evolve in the long term.

“The whole idea is to have total flexibility to surprise the consumer all of the time,” says Martinez.

Oxígeno’s design derived from the history, art and culture of the area, ac-

ording to Lopez, and placed great emphasis on incorporation of the natural environment. “Inspired by the cloud surrounding the volcano, this metaphor helped inform the overall concept and forms, including the physical architecture armature, development brand identity, and program and activity of spa-

tial organization,” he adds.

At Oxígeno, “worlds” don’t collide, they complement. O1 will be the place to go for live entertainment: the event plaza is the “Live. Out Loud” locus for musical performances, special events and activities, community gatherings and programmable media. The goal for O1 is



Aerial view of Oxígeno. The center will have four separate themed areas.

a constantly changing space that brings about permanent connections — to people, the culture and the place.

O2 couldn't be more true to the Oxígeno Station name with its focus on breathing, sports and health, attracting thrill seekers and those committed to an active lifestyle with a climbing wall, zip-line, nature course and extreme sports park. The amenities and activities of this "world" will support mind and body, and the retail stores will supply the information and tools to achieve a healthy balance.

Speaking of balance, after such physical exertion, it's only natural to cool down and cozy up to a well-deserved indulgence. Focused on feeling and fashion, O3 at Oxígeno encourages patrons to shop, dine and relax.

Children are the future, and O4 is the future of kids' entertainment. The colorful, dynamic play zone encourages visitors to "be a kid again" or, better yet, be the best mom or dad by indulging your children in the fun, interactive play area, which offers a theme park, exploratory learning opportunities, youth workshops, retail shops and daycare facilities.

Although not ready to disclose tenant commitments, Martínez says interest is very high. Target tenant types include high-end fashion, cinemas and interactive role-playing offerings in the children areas. The mixed-use developer focused strongly on local retailers. Also, interna-

tional brands offering more traditional clothing are in final negotiations, while sports-oriented companies are very interested in the retail area's world of adventure. The Cuestamoras Urbanismo CEO categorizes negotiations with entertainment anchors as "a total success."

Tipping his cap to JERDE, Martínez says that event production companies have been drawn to the development plan, as the big spaces in each of the worlds are fully flexible and can be refreshed in a matter of hours.

#### NATURAL & DIGITAL

Doing experiential real estate right means thinking bigger than just a space or brand. Cuestamoras Urbanismo seeks to appeal to lifestyle with Oxígeno. Increasingly, that means deftly delivering a combination of the real and imaginative: natural landscapes and high-tech innovations. The result is engagement, education and experiential elevation.

"In Costa Rica, 70 to 80 percent of people who visit traditional shopping centers go not to purchase [goods], but for entertainment and activities," Martínez says. "That was a very strong indication to force us to look into disruptors. The one everyone talks about is technology."

Successful developers are leveraging the tech of experience versus that of convenience, which has spurred the growth of e-commerce. The days of the boxy, util-

itarian structure where one buys a pair of shoes and then leaves are gone, Martínez maintains. The goal is to create a platform, not just a product.

"If you want to play this game, you better become a very good, hands-on operator," he says. "This has become a holistic industry. We looked into the community and thought of the experiences that people were going to have — not just the physical, but also the interactive with the digital media. It's a different type of animal."

If there was any doubt about the project's "total synchronization with the digital media," as Martínez puts it, know that Oxígeno will have a TV station on site. Also, for the main event plaza in O1, Baltimore-based Sensory Interactive has designed "a highly-flexible system of stages, lighting, audio, cameras, digital media, and fly space [to] allow for rapid reconfiguration in response to changing daily uses, which will range from sporting events and concerts to classes or demonstrations."

Old-fashioned connectivity still works, too, as Cuestamoras Urbanismo built and donated a train station adjacent to the property.

JERDE reports that a large green roof will connect the project with its natural surroundings, and access points at every level will encourage natural flow between its various zones, as well as discovery of tranquil corners and colorful displays.

"At the center of the site, the sloping park provides unique architectural forms that frame the central Oxígeno plaza," López says. "At its centerpiece, the floating cloud canopy provides the strong brand identity and a multimedia environment that will entertain and offer enhanced visibility for tenants."

Pura vida is much more than a Costa Rican tourism slogan, and natives will tell you that it goes well beyond the literal English translation of "pure life." The essence of connecting with people and nature and the technology-enhanced perspective that comes with that bond will be found at Oxígeno, which uniquely mixes excitement, leisure and learning. And retail. **SCB**

