

# WHAT IS A SUPERMANZANA?

## ORIGINS OF CANCUN'S URBAN LAYOUT

### A new type of Neighborhood



Cancun's blocks are irregularly shaped.

For those visiting the city for the first time, it can be difficult to find your way around.

But they are not that complicated. In fact they are very logical, with central cores for community activities, adequate circulation for pedestrians and cars, generous green areas and mixed-use perimeters.

Pedestrian walkways.

Green areas

Internal streets with lower flow and speed.

Residential areas.

Commercial and higher density housing.

Facilities for those living in these neighborhoods, such as schools and local businesses.

Perimeter Streets. They are wider and of higher speed.

A supermanzana is an organ cell that integrates different uses in an orderly manner.

Why is the layout of Cancun's foundational zone like this?

What is the history?

Cancun's master plan was designed in the late 1960s by architects Enrique and Agustín Landa Verdugo, commissioned by the Bank of Mexico.

By then they had designed many housing complexes, all of them organized in the neighborhood style of the supermanza.

Legaria and Tlatilco Units,  
1958. CDMX.

North-south  
orientation in most  
of the buildings.

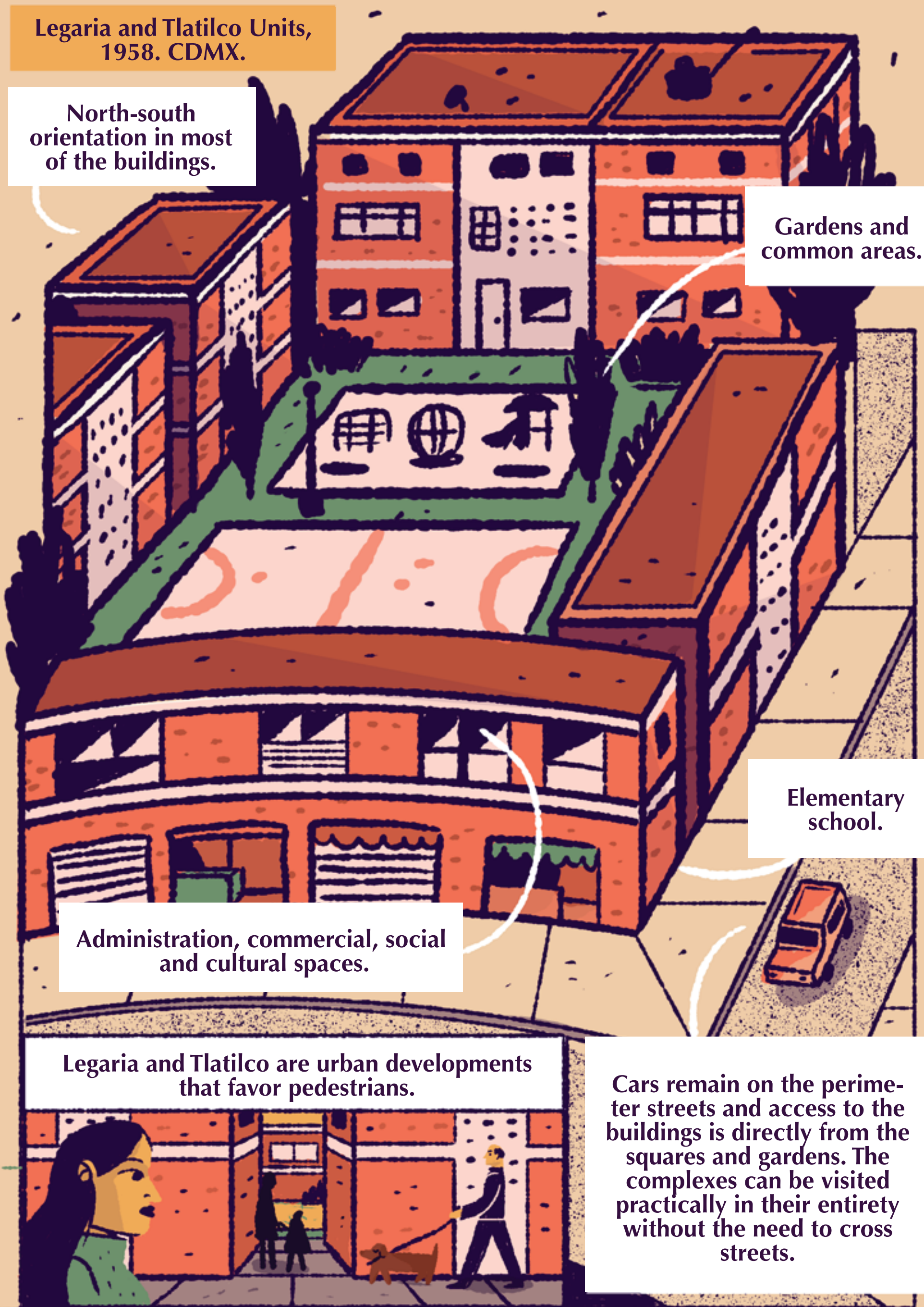
Gardens and  
common areas.

Elementary  
school.

Administration, commercial, social  
and cultural spaces.

Legaria and Tlatilco are urban developments  
that favor pedestrians.

Cars remain on the perime-  
ter streets and access to the  
buildings is directly from the  
squares and gardens. The  
complexes can be visited  
practically in their entirety  
without the need to cross  
streets.



A few years later, Landa Architects designed Loma Hermosa, a housing complex with about eighty apartment buildings in northwest Mexico City. It was commissioned by FOVI and inaugurated by President López Mateos and Robert F. Kennedy in 1964.

On this occasion, the architects concentrated the facilities, which are the uses shared by all the inhabitants, at the center of the complex.

The complex has four entrances for cars. They are closed streets that serve as parking lots.

Residential buildings

Primary schools

Kindergarden

Commercial areas

Gardens and pedestrian walkways between buildings

Sports fields

Parking

Many aspects of Cancun's neighborhoods are already present in Loma Hermosa.



These and other projects were designed based on urban principles systematized by Mario Pani, Domingo García Ramos and José Luis Cuevas in their urban planning workshop.

First, the neighborhoods have a perimeter of approximately 1,600 meters that can be covered by car in two minutes at a speed of 59 kilometers per hour.



Architect Domingo García Ramos

Second, the distance from the center to the ends does not exceed 300 meters, which facilitates the access of the population to the schools and of the elderly to the commercial centers.



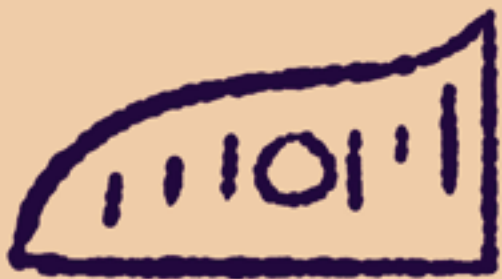
Mario Pani - Architect

Third, an area of between 12 and 15 hectares, with a density of slightly more than 200 inhabitants per hectare. Accordingly, services are provided: elementary school for 600 students, commercial premises, water, gas, parking, etc.



José Luis Cuevas - Architect

These principles were the basis for various works of Mario Pani's urban planning workshop.



Modelo unity (1948)



Santa Fe unity (1957)



Ciudad Satélite unity (1958)

Superblocks are cells, with a perimeter-membrane containing different uses. Just as a set of cells make up an organism, a set of neighborhoods make up a city.

# CANCUN

Main streets

Market 28



Parks and green areas



Pedestrians streets

The Foundational Zone is the historic center of Cancun. Its urban values encourage the formation of ties between neighbors and support the identity of the city.

Palapas Park (Parque de Las Palapas)



Hospital



The city could have grown through the construction of new neighborhoods.

That was the intention of Landa Architects.

City Hall



Abundance of gardens and parks.

Pedestrian walkways.

Public spaces without fences.

Some urban values of the Foundational Zone:

Local stores close to housing.

Spaces for community life.

Cycling lanes.



After Cancun, the city of IXTAPA-ZIHUATANEJO was built, also designed by the Landa brothers.

Its first neighborhoods are organized in the Supermanzana style.



Agustín Landa Verdugo  
(1923 - 2009)

The architects also designed other housing units in which they tested variations of the Supermanzana neighborhood, such as the Villa Panamericana, built in 1976.



Enrique Landa Verdugo  
(1921 - 2004)



These projects are the result of a comprehensive planning process in which housing is conceived not as an isolated reality, but as part of an urban fabric with public space, transportation infrastructure and equipment.

To a large extent, integrated planning in Mexico was abandoned in the 1990s, when social interest neighborhoods began to be built in the urban peripheries.



Today, subdivisions are being built with controlled access and huge extensions of houses with no other uses nearby. This generates major urban and social problems.

In recent years, architects and citizen groups have begun to revalue Cancun's Foundational Zone:

Cancun is the most Mexican city in all of Mexico, because it was not founded by Spaniards in the 16th century, but by Mexicans in the 20th century.



Tiziana Roma-Independent storyteller and defender of Cancun's heritage.

The goal is to make a better city. That is the goal of the buildings we have built in the Foundational Zone. We want an integrated city, with quality architecture and public spaces.



Juan Carral - Architect.

The rehabilitation of "Supermanzana 3" is a model project to be replicated throughout the Foundational Zone. The project focuses on the community, by inviting residents to participate and we can democratize decision making regarding our city.



Carlos del Castillo -Architect and city activist

They and many, many other Cancún residents are following this great urban experiment and cultivating the urban and civic principles that underpin its design.

En 2020 Cancún cumple 50 años. ¡Medio siglo de vida!  
Felicidades a quienes que han participado en su construcción  
y a todos sus habitantes.



This comic book is part of a series of publications  
on architecture. by the firms Landa + Martinez  
and Landa Suberville.

You can find them on the  
following pages  
[www.landamartinez.com](http://www.landamartinez.com)  
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