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**Negocios  
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# Negocios

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**TEXTILE  
INDUSTRY:**  
Spinning Creativity



ISSN 2007-179-5



XI - 2013

# Nine Mexican Ideas

## IN TUNE WITH NATURE

All across the country, Mexicans are coming up with sustainable development projects, from heat-combatting techniques for residential complexes to large-scale solar parks.

BY ANTONIO VÁZQUEZ

A factory that produces practically no waste, schools that collect rainwater to meet the ever-increasing demand for water in large cities, Lego-inspired bricks, straw houses, smart buildings,

one of the world's largest parks and the largest green roof in Latin America. These are just a few of the green projects that are either in the works or already up and running in Mexico.

Negocios has narrowed the short-list down to nine sustainable ideas that have received international recognition and are the fruit of great Mexican minds concerned about our planet.



PHOTO COURTESY OF INFONAVIT

### THE LARGEST GREEN ROOF IN LATIN AMERICA

In 2008, authorities at the National Workers' Housing Fund Institute (Infonavit) –a government body that extends soft housing loans to payroll employees– created a small vegetable patch on the roof of their main administrative building in Mexico City. Two years later, the vegetable patch bore fruit and in 2010,

it was transformed into a 5,000-square-meter green roof –the largest in all of Latin America–, where Infonavit employees can work, run, practice yoga or take a break.

The vegetable patch still exists and employees continue to grow their own herbs and vegetables, and make compost that

is used to fertilize the 80 species of desert and ornamental plants that grow there.

In June 2011, the project was granted Sustainable Building and Grade of Excellence certification by the Mexico City government.

[www.infonavit.org.mx](http://www.infonavit.org.mx)



PHOTOS COURTESY OF IÑAKI ECHEVERRÍA



### TEXCOCO LAKE ECO-PARK, A GREEN MONSTER

Occupying 143.3 million square meters in the Valley of Mexico, the Texcoco Lake Eco-Park will be nearly 49 times larger than London's Hyde Park, 43 times bigger than Central Park in New York, 80 times the size of Sausset Park in Paris and 16 times the Amsterdamse Bos Park in Amsterdam.

This particular site was chosen because it has 11 rivers, six lakes and waste-water treatment facilities, while some 300,000 species of birds migrate here every year to escape the harsh winters of Canada and the US.

Iñaki Echeverría is in charge of the project, which will require a major urban intervention with a view to creating an ecological buffer zone in a city whose population has grown almost seven-fold in the last half century.

A unique mix of nature, culture and infrastructure, the park will be a symbol of the rebirth of a society, and will feature over 400 courts for a variety of sports, lakes reserved for water sports and 4,500 hectares of reforested land for eco-tourism activities. There will also be a museum and a research center that run on renewable energies like wind and solar power.

[www.parquetexcoco.com](http://www.parquetexcoco.com)

### A MEXICAN LEGOLAND

Made of caliche, eco-cement and water, these sustainable Mexican-made bricks are free of pollutants and can be assembled like Lego blocks.

Aldo Castillo came up with the idea for EcoLadrillos a couple of years ago when he was still at university studying architecture.

The bricks have a modular design and two holes to facilitate wiring –electricity, Internet and telephone– and plumbing.

One of the main advantages of EcoLadrillos is that they reduce waste and cut construction times and costs by as much as 30%, as well as providing greater structural support.

Among other industry accolades, this sustainable company won first place at the Global James McGuire Business Plan Competition in Orlando, Florida.

[www.facebook.com/ecoladrillosmexico](http://www.facebook.com/ecoladrillosmexico)



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALDO CASTILLO



**DIGITAL CREATIVE CITY,  
A SUSTAINABLE HUB FOR THE  
DIGITAL MEDIA INDUSTRY**

Spread over more than 250 hectares in the city of Guadalajara, the Digital Creative City (DCC) is an exciting new project for the creation of a digital media hub that will serve as a model to be replicated not just in Mexico but throughout Latin America.

The goal is to attract creative minds, both Mexican and foreign, and establish Mexico as a global leader in the development of digital media contents.

A paragon of sustainable development, the DCC master plan was developed by a multidisciplinary team of experts in coordination with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and is designed to integrate home, work and play in a human-scale urban environment.

The project will be completed in three phases: first, the renovation of existing buildings, the construction of new ones and the refurbishment of the area near the former Morelos park; second, the search for investors; and third, consolidation.

[www.carloratti.it](http://www.carloratti.it)

PHOTO COURTESY OF CARLO RATTI

**THE MILENIO PLANT,  
RAZING WASTE**

An environmentally-friendly product and zero waste in its manufacturing processes was the goal Procter & Gamble's Milenio plant set itself when it began operating in 2010.

And in 2013, it met its goal. Of the 8,000 tons of waste –plastic, metal, cardboard and organic residues– that used to be sent to landfills every year, almost 100% is now recycled on site and just five kilograms of infectious biological waste were incinerated in compliance with the law, earning Milenio the 2013 Good Design is Good Business award presented by Architectural Record magazine.

Located in Irapuato in the state of Guanajuato, Milenio manufactures Gillette razors for men and is Procter & Gamble's first sustainable plant in Latin America.

[www.pg.com](http://www.pg.com)



PHOTO COURTESY OF P&G

**AURA SOLAR I,  
ENDLESS ENERGY**

In the future, a large portion of the electricity Mexicans consume could come from the sun, thanks to Aura Solar I, a 100-hectare solar plant in La Paz, in the state of Baja California Sur.

Built by Gauss Energía, the plant will generate up to 82 gigawatt-hours a year, enough to meet the electricity needs of 164,000 inhabitants or 60% of the population of La Paz.

The 100-million-usd plant will have 132,000 photovoltaic modules with a lifespan of up to 30 years and is part of Gauss Energía's Aura Solar initiative for the development of large-scale sustainable solar energy projects. The goal is to cover, in conjunction with similar plants, up to 35% of Mexico's electricity needs using renewable sources of energy in the not-too-distant future.

Innovative and sustainable, the Aura Solar I project was one of 10 Latin American finalists at the first edition of the Infrastructure 360° Awards organized by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and Harvard University.

[www.aurasolar.com.mx](http://www.aurasolar.com.mx)



PHOTO COURTESY OF GAUSS ENERGIA

**UAM, HARVESTING  
RAINWATER**

How to meet ever-increasing demand for water in a metropolis as populous as Mexico City? Easy! By harvesting rainwater.

Pumping water to Mexico City from other parts of the country costs Mexico City dwellers in the region about 10 billion pesos a year, but the Rainwater Harvest project aims to solve this problem by collecting up to 23,000 liters of rainwater a year using sustainable technology developed by Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM) professors Juan José Santibañez and Eugenio Gómez.

During the initial phase, the system will be implemented at 10 schools in the Iztapalapa district, with a view to extending it to another 3,338 schools and government buildings in all 16 districts of Mexico City in the long term.

[www.uamero.uam.mx](http://www.uamero.uam.mx)



PHOTO ALEJANDRO MEJÍA GREENE