

El Puente

El Puente is an icon of cultural connection. Composed of metal cylinders wrapped in photovoltaic fabric and LED lights, the bridge will be a luminous presence that will take its place on San Jose's skyline, its strong form refining and dissolving the best elements of downtown's buildings and transforming them into an emblem of what brings past and future, the different cultures of the Bay Area, and the human-made and the natural together.

Designed to be an inhabitable work of art, El Puente derives its power from an elusive array of lights that will shimmer through a mesh screen covering. This immense work of art will give coherence to the array of public spaces and structures that make up this monument and are contained within its bridging form. The use of advanced display and energy harvesting technology will also allow the structure to be a net contributor to the area's energy production without itself using fossil fuels.

El Puente will rise on either side of the Guadalupe River from two platforms that will contain public functions such as exhibition and performance spaces. Meant as attractive destinations that will draw users and visitors both from the downtown and the wider area, these institutions will be open and inviting and continue the Park's civic functions.

As visitors move through these spaces, they will rise up on a series of platforms, ramps, and elevators to terraces that look out over both the natural setting and the City. Along the way, El Puente's occupants will encounter bars, restaurants, and coffee shops, as well as as places of gathering shaded by trees and shrubs. When they reach the top platform, they will be able to bridge over the river on an open plaza that elevates the act of civic gathering to a new level. They will also be able to look back at downtown, the Airport, the neighborhoods beyond, and the mountains and Bay that contain all these human-made forms.

Seen from afar, El Puente will act as a beacon, its fabric programmable both for artist's installations and for the celebration of public events. This continually changing civic work of art will be of a scale and complexity unrivalled in the United States. It will also be an exemplar of the technology that provides the City with much of its identity, while providing proof that such civic gestures that be positive contributors to sustainability.