

It is important to note that physical amenities in both plazas are benches, water fountains, monuments which are the Obelisk in Plaza de la República and a Mother statue in Plaza de la Madre (see figure 14 and 15). Plaza de la República has an additional feature that is an Acoustic Shell in which many musical events take place including a daily TV program related to community issues in Maracaibo. The presence of these and other amenities will influence the use and the activities taken place in the plaza. The amenities and activities of both plazas and the influence over people's enjoyment and satisfaction in these public spaces will be further studied through observation and interviews in this research.

Typology according to PDUL

In order to understand the urban role that Plaza de la Madre and Plaza de la República have in Maracaibo, it will be necessary to know the classification in which they fall into according to plaza classification established by the Local Urban Development Plan of Maracaibo (PDUL) and based on the Ordinances of the Ministry of Urban Development (MINDUR). Plazas in Maracaibo are grouped into three groups: "general, intermediate and primary category". The following is the explanation of each category.

1. General category plazas are those that have historic, functional and socio-cultural significance, and which draw people from all over Maracaibo. These plazas are generally very active socially, offer cultural events, display a diversity of uses, have many amenities, are well maintained, offer other services and generally are bigger than a hectare.
2. Intermediate category plazas have a smaller area of influence than the previous one. Its influence is more communal and therefore more oriented toward neighborhoods and consolidated barrios. These public spaces are generally smaller than a hectare. The cultural events and community life is more communal and locally oriented.
3. Primary category plazas are small public spaces with a very small area of influence, more locally focused than the previous category, and approximately 2.500 m² in size. Generally these plazas are located in barrios or at very small neighborhoods.

According to this classification, Plaza de la República is a general category plaza and Plaza de la Madre an intermediate category plaza. Plaza de la República represents an important urban landmark, which is recognized and known by most inhabitants of Maracaibo, it represents a referential space in the city, which makes it meaningful space for people.

The fact that these two plazas are classified differently according to local ordinances might provide indications of the urban role these two plazas have. This classification provides indications of why Plaza de la República is highly visited and attracted by people from different parts of Maracaibo. It also demonstrates that Plaza de la Madre is a parochial public space, which has more influence over the

immediate neighborhood and Santa María sector. This supports the understanding of these two public spaces and the study that will be taken place in the following chapters.

Land uses and activities

Activities in Plaza de la Madre and Plaza de la República are mainly recreational and social. Plaza de la República is perceived as a more dynamic public space than Plaza de la Madre because of the presence of additional activities such as musical events roller-skating, for example.

Land-uses in the area of Plaza de la Madre and Plaza de la República are multifunctional. The surrounding uses of Plaza de la República are diverse and therefore draw more people to the sector. Land uses in Plaza de la República consist of retail stores, restaurants and fast food establishments, institutional such as a college and high density residential uses. In Plaza de la Madre land uses are mainly low-density residential and commercial establishments and services such as a funeral chapel and some isolated food vending activities. These uses and activities in Plaza de la Madre and Plaza de la República will be further studied in this research.

Plaza dimensions

Plaza de la Madre is 442.91 x 131 feet (135 x 40 meters) and is approximately 58.000 square feet. Plaza de la República is 337x 337 feet (103.65 x 103.65 meters) and is approximately 113.500 square feet. Dimensions of these two plazas reflect the capacity of the people they can shelter and obviously Plaza de la República is able to support more use and people presence than Plaza de la Madre. Plaza de la República's size may be supporting the amount of people found and the social interaction developing in this public space. Although these two plazas differ in size both present similar conditions that will be further addressed in the methodological chapter of this study.

Control over use and behavior

Plaza de la Madre and Plaza de la República are public spaces, which anybody can use: any public or private entity or individual can use it. Both plazas are managed by municipal institutions, which control the activities and events of the plazas and are in charge of their permanent maintenance. The Municipal Institute of Energy (FIME) manages Plaza de la Madre, and Environmental Municipal Institute (IMA) manages Plaza de la República. Any special event intended to take place in both plazas has to be approved by the presidents of these two institutions. Particularly in Plaza de la República, musical events attract large numbers of people that contributes to the plaza's deterioration. On the other hand; this phenomenon is not existent in Plaza de la Madre.