

Perhaps because Plaza de la República is a more popular place in the city and has become an important urban setting, rules have been instituted to control people's behavior in this public space. These rules are part of the urban ordinances that control the use and activities developed in the plaza. Although not researched for this study, the notions of some of those rules were provided by one of the neighbors of this plaza. This neighbor, whose identity was asked to remain anonymous in this study, has lived across the plaza for more than 40 years and even lived in the sector before the plaza was built. He and his family have been a witness to the plaza's historical evolution and have been actively involved in the plaza's renovation processes. These rules can be summarized as follows:

- No alcoholic beverages or smoking.
- No promotion or vending of any product, including food.
- No sleeping or begging; undesirables found disturbing others will be removed.
- No event in the plaza should disturb the peace of the surrounding neighborhood.
- No promotion of political ideas or public scandals.
- No commercial advertisements' or signs in the plazas.
- No sitting or stepping on the green areas and planters and no climbing over trees as well.
- No bathing or throwing litter in the fountain.
- No high-speed sport or recreational activities; skaters and bikers should not speed in the plaza.
- No children's car rental activities. Although this amenity has attracted a lot of children and their parents, it will be soon regulated by municipal ordinances.

Figure 44 **Municipal police controlling people sitting over planters**



The graphic shows a police agent asking a girl not to sit over planters. The presence of Municipal Police contributes to the maintenance and care of Plaza de la República, also becomes a major controller of people's behavior in this plaza. Municipal police, Environmental police, State Police and private security guards are the different agents in charge of the surveillance of the plaza.

This neighbor believes that the presence of police has been highly beneficial for the maintenance and care of the plaza. He reported that people need to be more conscientious about trees, vegetation, and existing urban fauna in the plaza and considers police control a positive way to educate and encourage people to act more civilized in a public space.

Plaza de la Madre on the other hand, seems to have no rules governing people's behavior, nor was police surveillance observed during the interviews or observation. Lack of control can also negatively influence over people's visit to the plaza.

The description of Plaza de la Madre and Plaza de la República provides a better scope of the physical and functional qualities of the plazas to be addressed in this study. It has also provided an understanding of how these public spaces are structured in Maracaibo and the different activities and land uses that occur in the area. This sets a starting point to understand how the physical and functional qualities are influencing the social life and enjoyment of these two public spaces. Further issues related to the physical and functional characteristics of Plaza de la Made and Plaza de la República will be addressed in this study in more depth and in relationship to social factors that are affecting the vitality of these public spaces.