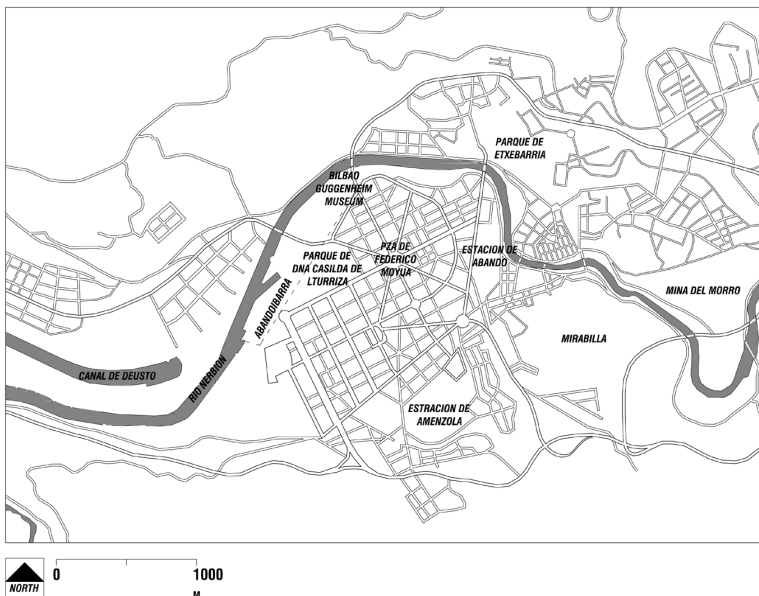


Shanghai. Bilbao was an economic engine based on industrial output, which like many other cities around the world began to lose its economic vitality, and the city fell into decline. Sensing a bleak future, the Basque Country government decided to shift its economy from an industrial foundation to a service base in an effort to make the region, and the city of Bilbao, a central site within Europe's Atlantic façade. It initiated a revitalization plan, which included a series of strategic initiatives to improve investment in human resources, to create a service-oriented metropolis, and to engage in environmental and urban regeneration. Bilbao's is a remarkable story of renewal and its waterfront redevelopment efforts are at the core of its success.

The Bilbao context

The city of Bilbao, the capital of the Biscay province of the Basque Country on the Atlantic coast of northern Spain, is situated in the Euskadi, or Autonomous Community, of the Basque Country, on the northern edge of the Iberian Peninsula. It sits in the valley and estuary of the Nervión River, and this linear fold determines the stretched-out form of the city. Its population of nearly a million people spreads over thirty municipalities of unequal size. Six of these municipalities exceed 50,000 inhabitants: Bilbao, Barakaldo, Getxo, Portugalete, Santurtzi, and Basauri. Bilbao is the fifth most populated metropolitan area in Spain, behind Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Seville, and is comparable in size to cities such as Dublin, Liverpool or Florence.

The Villa of Bilbao was founded on June 15, 1300, when Don Diego López de Haro bestowed the Carta Magna to it. Little is known of the ancient history of the city; however, some historians speculate that it may have been the site of Roman Flaviogruga. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, before the foundation of the Villa, Bilbao was the main distribu-



4.2 Map of Bilbao waterfront.