



4.7 The edge of the river in Bilbao.

tures and railways, opens a new system of urban spaces and linear parks along the river. Historically the city has always treated the river as a back. The new condition of the river, however, transforms the Nervión Ría into a major feature for the city and in doing so repositions the image of the city.

The remaking of the image of the city is being propelled by a series of important projects. These include the development of transport infrastructures, the cleaning of the river, and urban development along the waterfront. The centerpiece of the city's Master Plan is the redevelopment of the Abandoibarra, a 70-acre site in the former industrial port and rail station extending along the Nervión River within a five-minute walk from downtown. This new cultural district is formed by the Museo de Bella Artes, the University de Duesto and the Old Town Hall. The site is bisected by the Puente de la Salve, a vehicular entry into Bilbao. A public-private initiative, called Bilbao Ría 2000, the scheme includes an office tower to house the County Government of Biscay, residential and retail facilities, a new Sheraton hotel, a university library, a new Congress Hall, a sea and river museum, and the new Bilbao Guggenheim Museum.

Located on the eastern edge of the Abandoibarra site, facing the river, the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum has placed the city in the mainstream of the international art world. The architects invited to participate in the international design competition were Frank O. Gehry, Coop Himmelbau and Arata Isozaki. Frank O. Gehry was awarded the commission and the notoriety of the completed building, opened in October of 1997, has focused international interest on Bilbao and served to reposition the city as a world-class metropolis. The museum comprises a series of interconnected