

(Europe) and Frank Gehry (America). Gehry's design was chosen because it featured an iconic building that might help the Basque people 'communicate an independent identity to the world'. It is a much-admired sculpture of curved volumes made of stone and glass and covered in titanium. On one side is the river and on the other side a large forecourt that sets the building as a sculpture in space.

What impact has the development had? It has surpassed all expectations not only as a work of Art but also as a catalyst for development. The museum drew 4.5 million visitors between 1997 and 2001. They have spent money on accommodation and restaurants that, in turn, has had an impact on the commercial sector of the economy. It is estimated that the museum has added an additional 660 million Euros to the Gross Domestic Product and 117 million to the annual tax base of the city. Over 4000 new jobs have been directly attributed to the development of the museum (Vidarte, 2002). It has spawned new centres of contemporary art in the city – Artium and BilbaoArte (which provides work space for young artists) – and other galleries exhibiting current art. More than anything it has changed the image of the city in the world's eyes. Although it is the jewel in the crown, it is not only the Guggenheim Museum that has resulted in this change. The 'Euskalduna' Conference and Music Centre, the two bridges across the Nervión (the Zubizuri footbridge designed by Santiago Calatrava and the Euskalduna Bridge by Javier Manterola), the new airport terminal designed by Calatrava and the ongoing construction of the Abandoibarra precinct have all had a positive impact on the city's image.

The Abandoibarra plan designed by César Pelli links the Guggenheim Museum, the Fine Arts Museum and 'Euskalduna'. The scheme acts as an extension of the nineteenth century Ensanche, and the public park located on the river. Pelli was elected to do the master plan because of his experience at Battery Park City (see Chapter 8) although he was not the master planner for that scheme and his Abandoibarra master plan depicts a more fragmented Modernist design in which streets are dividers rather than seams of life (see Figure 6.5). The exception is in Pelli's design for the Plaza Euskadi in which the proposed buildings frame the plaza. At the head of the plaza on the axis of Elcano Street to San José Square in the existing central business district will be a 33-storey, 150-metre tower for the provincial Government of Vizcaya designed by Pelli himself. The plaza is to be designed by Diana Belmori.

The Abandoibarra area also contains a Sheraton Hotel (completed in 2004) designed by Ricardo Legorreta, and buildings that will 'emerge like giant doorjambes without a threshold' designed by Arata Isozaki. In addition, Bilbao Ría 2000 (an institution created in 1992 for managing the land of Metropolitan Bilbao) has a public art program to create sculptures in the zone by artists such as Eduardo Chillida and Ulrich Rüchheim.

The investment by the Basque government has reversed the economic decline of Bilbao. The city has been transformed from a decaying industrial and port city into a prestigious centre for the arts. It has, however, focused on buildings and not on the quality of the public spaces amongst them despite the new buildings, including the