

Reserva Santa Fe

Canada de Alferes, Mexico



Ecology and culture define a regenerative community in a remote, forested region of Mexico.

SERVICES

Conservation Planning
Ecological Restoration

Situated within the last remaining stretch of relatively preserved forest between Mexico City and Toluca, the remote, 536-acre site of Reserva Santa Fe is an important ecological corridor, but it has suffered from poor management and overharvesting. The temperate mixed forest has also been weakened by drought and pests that have migrated in response to climate change. The property, which was previously owned by small-scale farmers, also contains a sacred sanctuary used by the indigenous Masahua and Hñähñú, ñacaltura otomiñhó, ñathño ñ'yühü ("Otomí") people.

Rather than pursue an exploitative model of development, the developer chose to pursue the Living Community Challenge (LCC) and create a regenerative community that protects and restores the region's ecology and culture.

Before drawing up a single plan, the developer sought to better understand the property's ecological and cultural significance. This involved spending over two years building a trusting relationship with the Otomi and Masahua communities and collaborating with them to enhance and guarantee them perpetual access to the sanctuary. It also involved working with Biohabitats to perform a baseline assessment of the health and vulnerability of the forest, coordinated studies and inventories on vegetation, fungi, pests, and parasites, and measured populations of birds, reptiles, and amphibians. The study, which identified the parasitic mistletoe plant as key threat to the forest and revealed the presence of an endemic salamander species, led the developer to meet with the state forestry agency to encourage more sustainable harvesting practices and to work with federal authorities to declare the forests at Reserva Santa Fe a "private preserve area."

The developer also worked with a local landowner to create a nursery to propagate and supply native plants for the development's landscaping. Biohabitats helped provide job training to community members, who began removing mistletoe and other parasites from the forest. That vision for Reserva Santa Fe, which includes housing, low-impact infrastructure, recreational facilities, greenhouses, and an organic farm, is one of few LCC projects deemed Vision Plan Compliant.