

## MAPPING OF HEALTH PROMOTING SITES IN THE DISTRICT OF SAN RAMON, COSTA RICA

*Mapeo de los lugares promotores de la salud en el distrito San Ramón, Costa Rica*

*Mapeamento de locais promotores de saúde no distrito de San Ramón, Costa Rica*



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### SUMMARY

This research is framed as a collaboration of the School of Geography of the University of Costa Rica with the Office of the Ministry of Health of the Western region. This geographic study was oriented in designing a spatial database of existing public, private and community spaces for health promotion, conducting field work to capture data, making spatial interpretation and contrasting it with reviews of the application of Google Reviews to identify the perceptions, expectations and degree of user satisfaction of these mapped spaces. 82 places oriented to the development of sports, culture, leisure and recreational activities were identified for different audiences (children, adolescents, adults, older adults) in a total population of 8.717 inhabitants in the San Ramón district, Alajuela. In addition, it was compared by means of the Google Reviews user comments where 15 places have a positive evaluation as health promoting spaces, among which the Alberto Manuel Brenes Park, CCM Cinemas, the Agricultural Center, Municipal Market, Plaza La Sabana, Guillermo Vargas Stadium stand out. Roldán, the Church of San Ramón, the Rafael Rodríguez Sports Complex, the José Figueres Cultural and Historical Center, the University of Costa Rica, the Center for Social Culture, among others.

**Keywords:** Health promotion; San Ramon District, Google Reviews.

### RESUMEN

La presente investigación se enmarca como una colaboración de la Escuela de Geografía de la Universidad de Costa Rica con la Oficina del Ministerio de Salud de la región de Occidente. El estudio geográfico se orientó en diseñar una base de datos espacial de espacios públicos, privados y comunitarios existentes para la promoción

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de la salud, realizar el trabajo de campo para la captura de datos, hacer la interpretación espacial y contrastarlo con reseñas de la aplicación de Google Reviews para identificar las percepciones, las expectativas y grado de satisfacción de usuarios de estos espacios mapeados. Se identificaron 82 lugares orientados al desarrollo de actividades deportivas, cultura, ocio y recreativo para diferentes públicos (niños, adolescentes, adultos, adultos mayores) en una población total de 8.717 habitantes en el distrito San Ramón, Alajuela y se comparó por medio de los comentarios de los usuarios de Google Reviews que 15 lugares tienen una valoración positiva como espacios promotores de la salud, entre los que destacan: el parque Alberto Manuel Brenes, CCM Cinemas, el Centro Agrícola, el Mercado Municipal, la Plaza La Sabana, el Estadio Guillermo Vargas Roldán, la Iglesia de San Ramón Nonato, el Complejo Deportivo Rafael Rodríguez, el Centro Cultural e Histórico José Figueres, la Universidad de Costa Rica, el Centro de Cultura Social, entre otros.

**Palabras-clave:** Promoción de la salud; Distrito San Ramón; Google Reviews.

## RESUMO

Esta pesquisa é enquadrada como uma colaboração entre a Escola de Geografia da Universidade da Costa Rica e o Escritório do Ministério da Saúde da região Oeste. O estudo geográfico teve como objetivo desenhar uma base de dados espaciais dos espaços públicos, privados e comunitários existentes para promoção da saúde. Foram realizados trabalhos de campo para captar dados, fazer interpretação espacial e contrastá-la com as avaliações da aplicação do Google Reviews com a finalidade de identificar as percepções, expectativas e grau de satisfação do usuário desses espaços mapeados. Após a identificação de 82 locais orientados para o desenvolvimento de atividades desportivas, culturais, de lazer e recreativas para diferentes públicos (crianças, adolescentes, adultos, idosos) numa população total de 8.717 habitantes no distrito de San Ramón - Alajuela, foi feita uma comparação com os comentários dos utilizadores do Google Reviews onde se avaliam positivamente 15 locais como espaços promotores da saúde, dentre os quais se destacam o Parque Alberto Manuel Brenes, os Cinemas CCM, o Centro Agrícola, o Mercado Municipal, a Plaza La Sabana, o Estádio Guillermo Vargas Roldán, a Igreja de San Ramón, o Complexo Desportivo Rafael Rodríguez, o Centro Cultural e Histórico José Figueres, a Universidade da Costa Rica, o Centro de Cultura Social, entre outros.

**Palavras-chave:** Promoção da saúde, distrito de San Ramón, Google Reviews.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of the work was to identify the places planned for the promotion of health in the district of San Ramón (Costa Rica), which is part of the policy of the Ministry of Health of the Office of Health Promotion (MINISTERIO DE SAÚDE, 2017). As part of the national and international strategy, a dynamic mapping and inventory of places, social actors and capacities that are part of a community is being developed, which includes public and private spaces that promote health (SÁNCHEZ et al, 2017; COFIÑO et al, 2016; PEÑA, 2017; MOLINA, 2021).

The justification for this work was to obtain basic information for the Rectorate of Health Promotion that allows promoting healthy living in the district of San Ramón in the province of Alajuela and to create the bases with a study of a territorial nature that can be

applied in other places of Deliciosa. Coast. Therefore, this research was carried out with the objective of creating a database of existing public, private and community spaces for health promotion, which included fieldwork for data collection, spatial interpretation and contrast of data with evaluations from the Google Reviews application.

Geography is a science that studies the relationship between human beings and the environment. In general terms, geographic space is the object of study of this science that can be scaled at different scales of analysis: local, regional or global. The diversity and versatility of this science to study any natural or social phenomenon distributed and located in the territory also involves health (ROJAS, 2005).

Health Geography is the result of the various fields of activity of public health, which include disease surveillance, health and health promotion (BARCELLOS et al, 2018). Health promotion constitutes a comprehensive, transformative, dynamic analysis and work approach, articulated with social actors to address the protective, determinant and conditioning factors that generate and strengthen, from a positive perspective, the health of the population (PICADO , 2017).

The health promotion model has international and national references. The 1986 Ottawa Charter formalized health promotion, especially in creating and protecting healthy environments in society (CORONEL; MARCH, 2017). At the same time, the World Health Organization promotes the importance of environments that support health, especially at home, in the local community, at work and in leisure spaces for recreation, culture or sports (CÍA; RUIZ, 2015). Therefore, it is very important to know the healthy environments of all cities and, as there is no study in this regard in the study area, it was decided to carry out this work to fill this knowledge gap.

Cities are also essential to promoting the good health of their citizens. In cities, the use and appropriation of urban space for this purpose is mediated by frequency and use through recreation, sports and free time (MAYORGA; GARCÍA, 2018).

Rodríguez (2019) reaffirms this idea, referring that healthy cities have an efficient design of the environments that make up the city to encourage healthy spaces for people, for those activities that are conditioned according to the places they find around them. around as outdoor spaces the human-nature connection can be strengthened.

The identification and design of planned sites for health promotion is part of the policy of many municipalities. In Spain, a dynamic mapping and inventory of places, social actors and capacities that are part of a community, including public and private spaces that promote health, is being developed (COFIÑO et al, 2016).

In the case of Valencia, a map of health and coexistence assets was developed by an intersectoral group of professionals in the city in the context of the MIHSalud program. The inventory of these assets and the interconnections between places allowed the development of asset maps that reveal the strengths of the entire community (SÁNCHEZ et al, 2017).

In Saltillo, Mexico, Peña (2017) carried out a study on the physical environment and the social aspects of public spaces with the aim of identifying opportunities to design social marketing strategies that promote the health and well-being of citizens, where the fact that the Route in Saltillo offers an attractive and safe place to walk and cycle in the city.

Finally, Molina (2021) identified through a mapping in a neighborhood of Medellín Colombia, the detection of assets that were intangible for the community and, in turn, this recognition was useful to strengthen the mechanisms of participation and the capacity of the agency for the development. This becomes an important factor for understanding their realities and an opportunity for self-management of their problems.

On the other hand, in a complementary way in Google Maps, there is the possibility for users to contribute voluntarily and express opinions about the mapped places they have visited. Through this technological resource called Google Reviews, it is possible to identify places with evaluations and opinion ratings. All ratings are arranged on a scale of 1 to 5 stars. The information source ensures that the calculation of the overall score best reflects the quality of the location evaluated by the user community (GOOGLE, 2021).

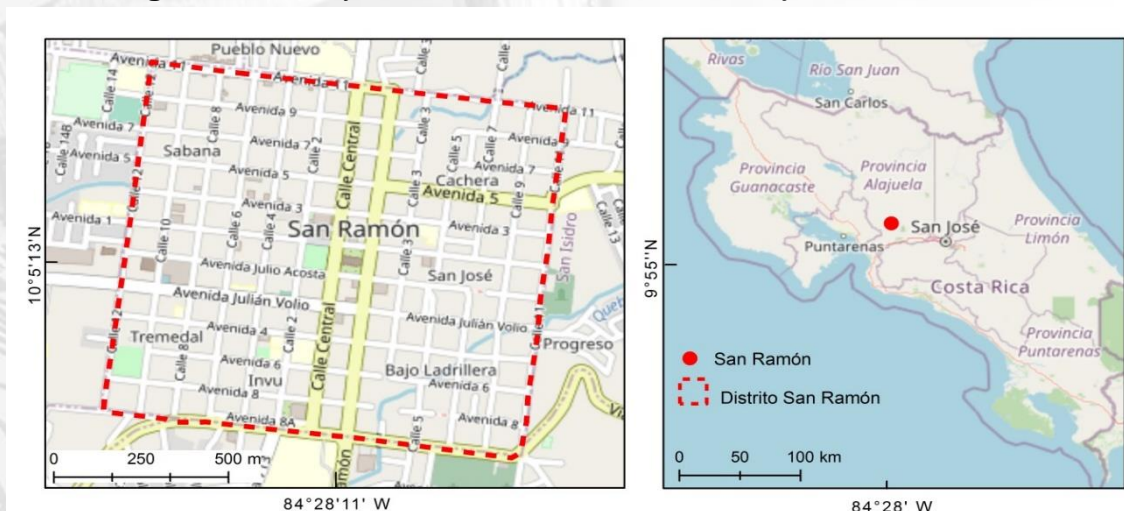
On a practical level, 10 theme parks in the city of Bandung used the strategy of exploiting Google Reviews technology to obtain the experiences and stories of their visitors, in order to obtain potentially positive information about the success of each location, plus monitoring the quality of services. they offer. Data analysis was used to determine the extent to which a park can be a benchmark for marking these places in Thailand (MUNAWIR et al, 2019).

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Characterization of the study area

This study was developed in Costa Rica in the district of San Ramón. The study area is the head of the canton of San Ramón and extends over 1.28 km<sup>2</sup> (figure 1). The city of San Ramón has a strategic position in the western region of the Central Valley in the province of Alajuela, comprising: San Ramón, Palmares, Naranjo, Valverde Vega and Zarcero. The city of San Ramón is characterized by being the regional headquarters of state institutions such as: the University of Costa Rica (UCR), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Environment, the Judiciary and the Hospital Carlos Luis Valverde Vega (MUNICIPALITY OF SAN RAMON, 2021).

**Figure 1** – Study area, San Ramón district, Alajuela, Costa Rica

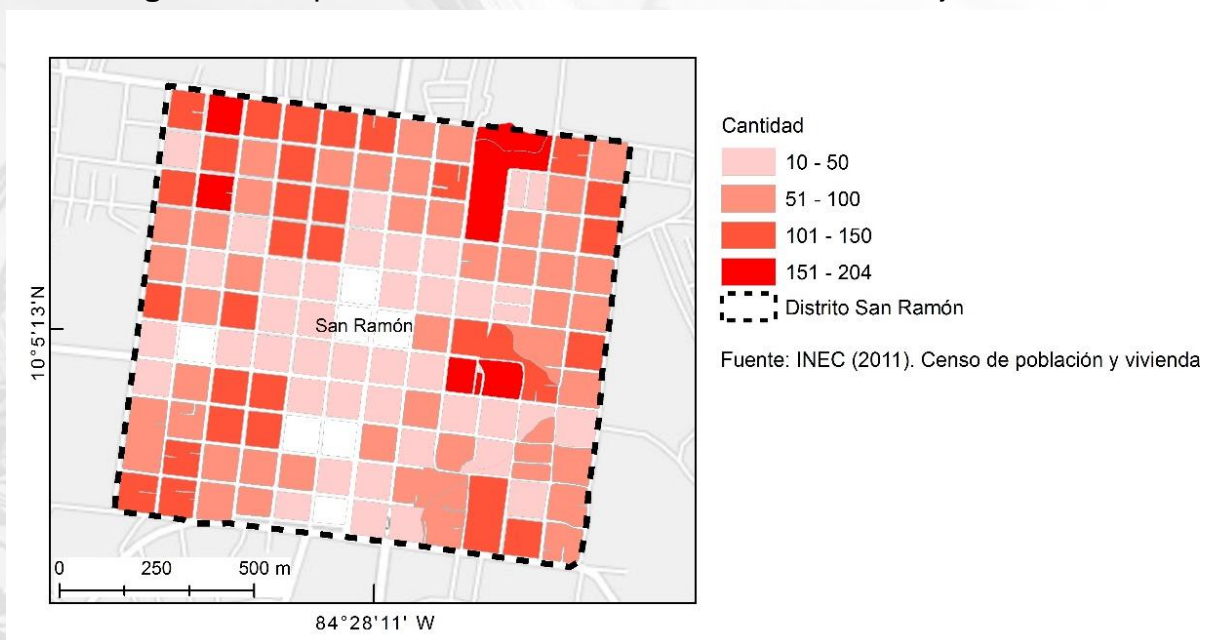


**Source:** Modified from OpenStreetMap (OSM)

According to the last national population census of 2011, the population of the district of San Ramón was 8,717 inhabitants, distributed in the sectors of Centro, Barrio San José, Los Parques, La Sabana, El Tremedal, El Progreso, Otto Calvo, among others neighborhoods (NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS AND CENSES, 2011).

The district had a high population density with approximately 6,810 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTADÍSTICA E CENSO, 2011) variably distributed between 10 and 204 inhabitants per block (figure 2). Low densities are located in the center of the city, but medium and high population concentrations are gradually located on the periphery of the district.

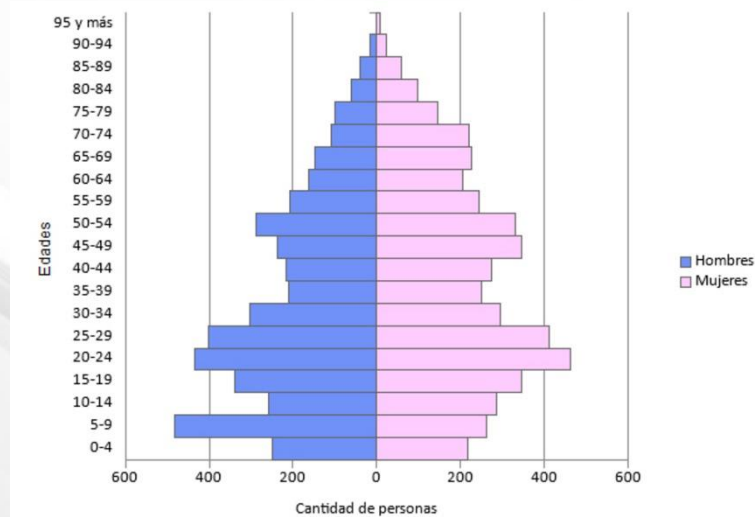
**Figure 2 – Population distribution, San Ramón district, Alajuela, Costa Rica**



**Source:** National Institute of Statistics and Census, 2011

The distribution by age groups reflected that the study area was composed of 1,384 children (16%), 502 adolescents (6%), 5,577 adults (64%) and 1,254 elderly people (14%). The population pyramid (figure 3) shows a demographic profile with a solid base among adults aged 18 to 64 and balanced among children, adolescents and the elderly, but with a tendency towards an aging population in the urban area. Of the 8,717 inhabitants of the study area: 4,012 are men (46%) and 4,705 are women (54%), consequently there is a male-female ratio close to 85%.

**Figure 3 – Population pyramid, San Ramón district, Alajuela, Costa Rica**



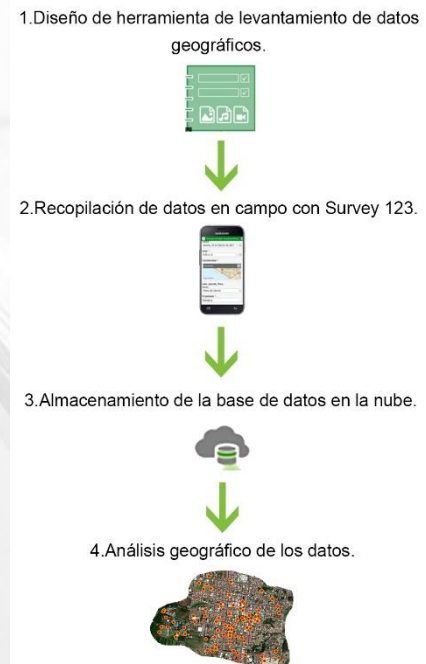
**Source:** National Institute of Statistics and Census, 2011

## 2.2 Methodological procedures

This research was descriptive, exploratory and had a qualitative approach, and also proposed a methodological framework that included the following tasks: the design of a geographic database aimed at identifying existing places for health promotion in the district of San Ramón, who collected information through field work, subsequently applied a data analysis and interpretation phase and concluded with the contrast of mapped locations based on the identification of user perceptions, expectations and degree of satisfaction from the Google Reviews source.

To identify the locations, a database was created as a tool for collecting data in the field. In the field, information was collected using the ArcGis Online Survey123 application for smart devices (figure 4). The database collected geolocation variables and attributes associated with the location: name, telephone, e-mail, website, contact, main activity, category (culture, sport, leisure, recreational, other), time, entry (free and open, membership, entrance fee), target population (all audiences, children, young people, adults, seniors), location photography.

**Figure 4 – Design of a tool for the collection and geographic analysis of health promoting sites in the district of San Ramón**



**Source:** Own elaboration

Fieldwork results were analyzed to understand availability, coverage, and accessibility to health-promoting sites through thematic maps and graphics. At the same time, fieldwork data were compared with Google Reviews from August 2021, to identify the perceptions, expectations and degree of satisfaction of users of these mapped spaces. Through the app, users voluntarily express positive and negative comments about their experience at the place they are reviewing. This made it possible to visualize the potential of the main health promoting sites in the district and city of San Ramón.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Mapping and analysis of places that promote health promotion in the district of San Ramón

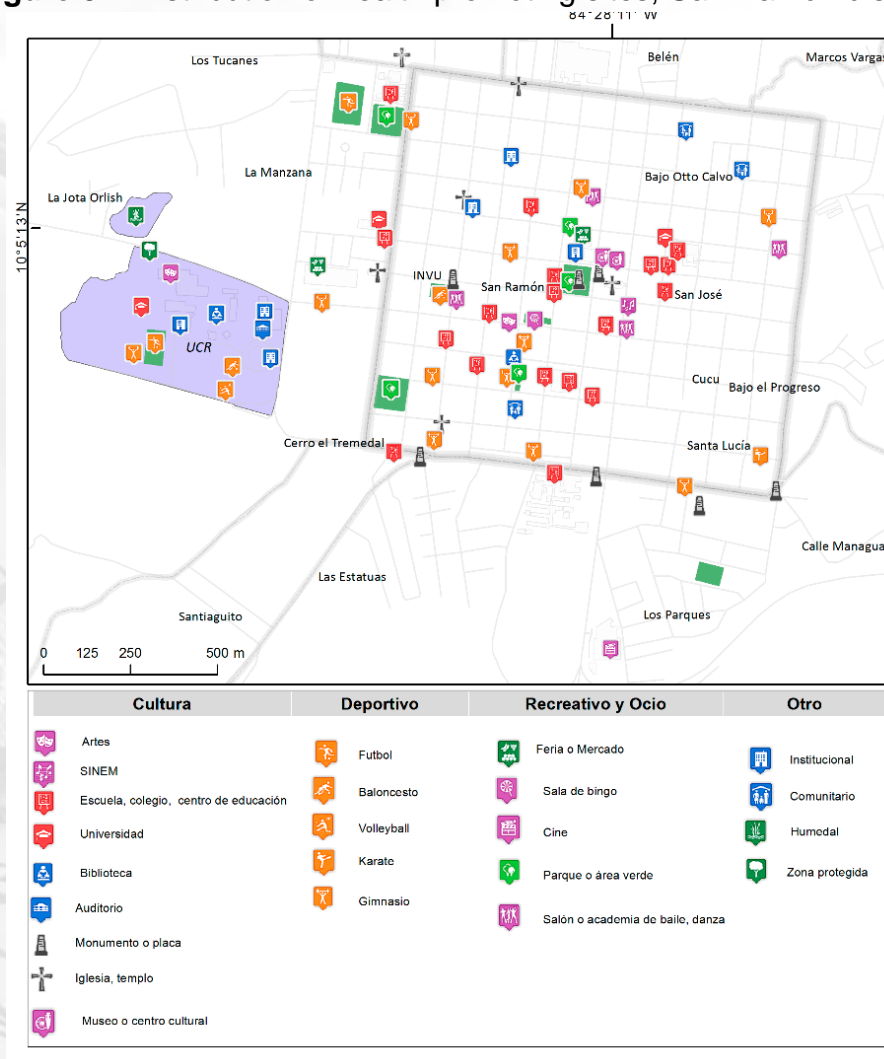
The entire district of San Ramón was covered. The city is made up of 126 blocks equivalent to 1.28 km<sup>2</sup>. Fieldwork was carried out during the second half of 2017, between August and December.

Through the mapping, 82 health-promoting places were identified (figure 5) of different natures: parks, educational centres, gyms, cinemas, museums, churches, sports



venues, among others.

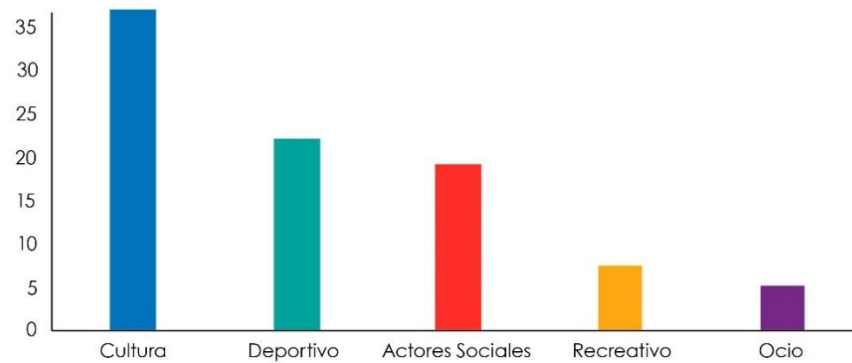
**Figure 5 – Distribution of health promoting sites, San Ramón district**



**Source:** Own elaboration

Of the 82 locations mapped, those in the cultural sector predominate (schools, colleges, universities, museums, libraries, technical, artistic, cultural training institutions) (Figure 6) over places for sports, recreation, leisure and social actors.

**Figure 6 – Distribution: Types of places mapped in the district of San Ramón**



**Source:** Own elaboration

The University of Costa Rica was classified as a place of culture, as through Social Action it had 54 projects with a cultural, sports, training and community vocation in 2017 in the vicinity of San Ramón. The Municipality of San Ramón also has a regular agenda throughout the year for artistic and recreational activities for citizens, where artistic competitions, concerts, craft fairs, festivals are held, in recreational or sports spaces managed by the Mayor's Office, for example ,. Alberto Parque Manuel Brenes

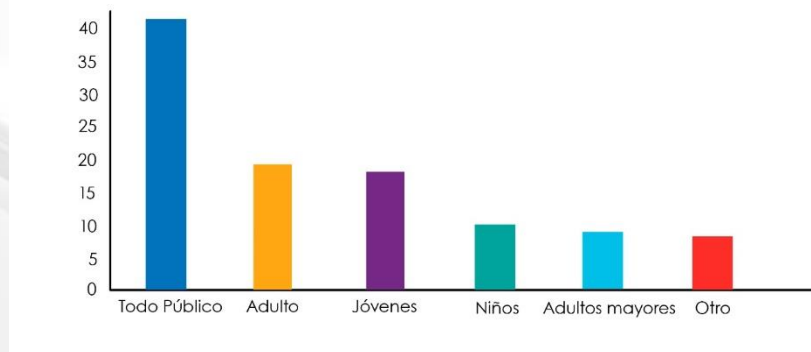
Other pillars of culture mapped are the educational libraries, the San Ramón Regional Museum, the José Figueres Ferrer Cultural and Historical Center and the SINEM School of Music in the rescue of cultural heritage, history, promotion of music and the arts in the population of Ramón.

On the other hand, sports, recreational and leisure sites of vital importance for health promotion were identified. There are 34 venues with a varied offer of infrastructure such as: basketball, soccer, volleyball courts, swimming pools, karate gyms, spinning classes, biohealthy circuits in public green areas, among other places. Due to its territorial dimensions, five places are occupied for the development of sports and recreational activities in the city: Alberto Manuel Brenes park, Guillermo Vargas Roldán stadium, Plaza La Sabana, Rafael Rodríguez Sports Complex, sports facilities and green areas from the University of Costa Rica.

Other relevant characteristics in this study were the classification of the place with a vocation for the age group and the level of accessibility. With regard to the age orientation of the 82 mapped places (figure 7), the largest number of places that promote health are aimed at the public in overall, almost double that reported for adults or youth supply. In the case of children and elderly age groups, they have an equivalent offer in the district of San

Ramón.

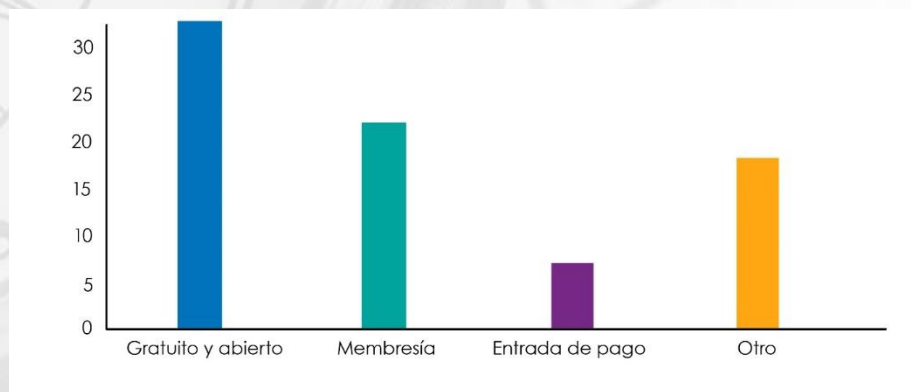
**Figure 7 – Distribution: Locations mapped by age group in the district of San Ramón**



**Source:** Own elaboration

The level of access of the population corresponds to the admissibility of the place (figure 8). About half are free and open entry. These are the cases of: public parks, squares, churches, libraries, institutional green areas, municipal market. However, they coexist with places in the city such as: gyms, dance or dance academies that have membership for their clientele. While other cultural spaces, such as museums or cinemas and sports facilities such as swimming pools, football stadiums, establish a payment system for entry and use of space, consequently some socioeconomic strata and age groups of the population would be excluded from the use of these spaces.

**Figure 8 – Distribution: Locations mapped for admissibility in the district of San Ramón**



**Source:** Own elaboration

### 3.2 Contrast between the mapping and the rating of Google Review users

Realizing the identification, appropriation and belonging of the population in relation to the locations mapped in this study, it was possible by exploring Google Review. Figure 9

shows the locations of health promoters with the highest ratings from the public through the app. Of the 82 spaces identified in the field, 15 locations stand out in the application, as they have a total of evaluations between 50 and 3,462, with evaluations ranging from 4 to 4.8 stars, which represents 18.3% of the total locations mapped.

**Figure 9 – Health promoting places in the San Ramón district with the most ratings on Google Review**

3462 Comentarios	Parque Alberto Manuel Brenes ★★★★★ 4,6	1269 Comentarios	CCM cinemas ★★★★★ 4,2	1055 Comentarios	Centro Agrícola San Ramón ★★★★★ 4,6	730 Comentarios	Mercado Municipal ★★★★★ 4,2	398 Comentarios	Plaza La Sabana ★★★★★ 4,8
363 Comentarios	Estadio Guillermo Vargas Roldán ★★★★★ 4	343 Comentarios	Iglesia San Ramón ★★★★★ 4,3	234 Comentarios	Complejo Deportivo Rafael Rodríguez ★★★★★ 4,3	103 Comentarios	Centro Cultural e Histórico José Figueres ★★★★★ 4,7	94 Comentarios	Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede Occidente ★★★★★ 4,8
87 Comentarios	Centro de Cultura Social ★★★★★ 4,3	70 Comentarios	Gimnasio Aquiles ★★★★★ 4,5	59 Comentarios	Gym Alvarado ★★★★★ 4,6	52 Comentarios	Salón Comunal barrio San José ★★★★★ 4	51 Comentarios	JS military fitness ★★★★★ 4,6

**Source:** Own elaboration based on Google Reviews, 2021

Specifically, it can be noted that the Alberto Manuel Brenes park is the most referenced place. As can be seen in figure 10, most evaluations expose the place as a destination to visit with the family, mainly to do activities with children throughout the year. Also noteworthy is the scenic and natural beauty and the capacity of the park to host activities for all audiences such as: fairs, exhibitions and similar activities in a space perceived as pleasant and peaceful.

**Figura 10 – Comments from some Google Reviews users about parque Alberto Manuel Brenes, San Ramón**

 Deivid Obando  
Local Guide · 27 reseñas

★★★★★ hace un mes

Es un excelente parque, tiene zona para los niños, zona para estar y disfrutar de algun alimento o simplemente para compartir, una excelente vista hacia la Parroquia de San Ramón; sin embargo, le falta iluminación durante la noche

 Jairo Carranza Elizondo  
21 reseñas

★★★★★ hace un mes

Cuna de cultura, grandes espacios para la familia y amigos, zonas con internet gratis, lugares de carga celular, estación de carga para vehículos eléctricos, accesibilidad para discapacitados, muy limpio

 Mauro :3  
Local Guide · 18 reseñas

★★★★★ 2 años atrás

Es un lugar con un ambiente maravilloso, es un lugar donde se puede sentir la tranquilidad de la naturaleza cuenta con suficientes basureros para mantener el ambiente limpio, el lugar tiene una zona para niños que cuenta con un gran playground para que los niños vayan a jugar, también aveces se hacen ventas de artesanías donde se pueden encontrar muchas cosas lindas

 Figarito  
Local Guide · 20 reseñas

★★★★★ hace 5 meses

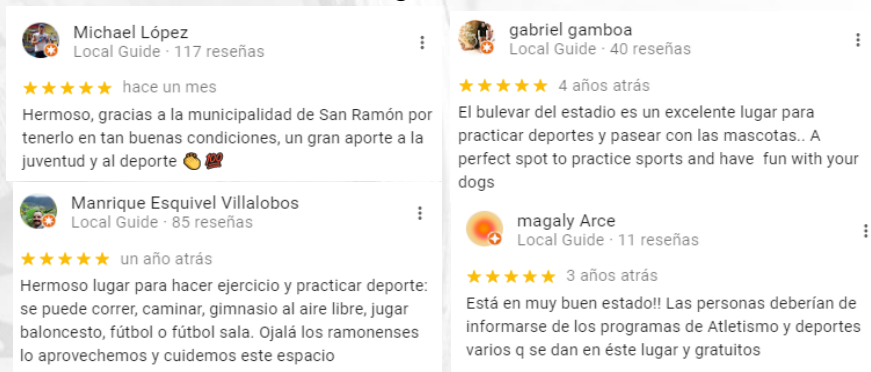
Lugar perfecto para llevar a los niños a jugar o ir a charlar con los amigos un lugar fresco y tranquilo

**Source:** Google Reviews

Dentro de las particularidades de CCM Cinemas se reseña que el lugar es apto para el entrenamiento, pero se crítica la falta de mantenimiento de las rooms. The Agricultural Center and the Municipal Market are places with 1,055 and 730 reviews respectively. These places are points of sale recognized by the population of Ramón to acquire healthy and quality food such as: fruits, vegetables, local and national grains.

Between Plaza La Sabana and Estadio Guillermo Vargas Roldán, they have 761 comments (Figure 11). There are two sites adjacent to the northwest of the city and form a sports-recreational complex. Google Reviews users emphasize that they are places to practice sports, stroll or have fun and highlight the municipal investment in public spaces.

**Figure 11** – Comments from some Google Reviews users about Plaza La Sabana and Guillermo Vargas Roldán Stadium.

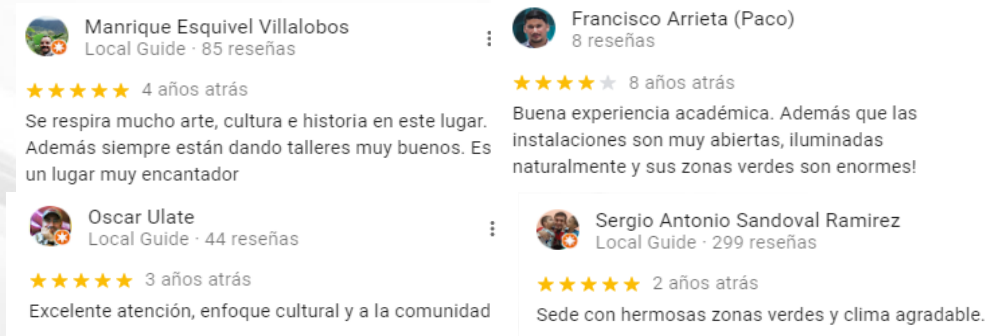


**Source:** Google Reviews, 2021

The Church of San Ramón Nonato, located east of Parque Alberto Manuel Brenes, is the seventh place with the most reviews (343) in the district of San Ramón. Users emphasize the architectural beauty of the property and its articulating role as a social actor in the city. Users perceive the Rafael Rodríguez Sports Complex as a place where different sports can be practiced at low cost, with trainers for swimming, volleyball, basketball, physical conditioning and others.

The José Figueres Cultural and Historical Center and the University of Costa Rica (Figure 12) have 197 reviews with a score of 4.75 and are places that mainly promote cultural health. In the set of reviews it is detected that, in the case of the former, people value the community approach in history and art. for sports or recreation. In addition, it is an organization that runs dozens of projects with a community vocation.

**Figure 12 – Comments from some Google Reviews users of José Figueres Cultural and Historical Center and the University of Costa Rica**



**Source:** Google Reviews, 2021

From position 10 to 15 are Centro de Cultura Social, which is a traditional Ramonense ballroom, El O Ginásio Aquiles, Ginásio Alvarado, Community Hall of Barrio San José and JS Military Fitness, three of which are fitness centers upon payment of a monthly fee, while the community hall located in the northeast area of the city is a place dedicated to the development of family and community activities.

#### 4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The mapping carried out in the district of San Ramón was part of a pilot test in the western region, which provided the basis for a future study of a territorial nature that can be applied in other locations in Costa Rica, giving rise to decision makers in the area of governance so that they can identify and implement place-based policies that promote health in different communities.

In addition, the population deserves this type of space to stay healthy and active (physically, socially and emotionally) for all age groups (children, adolescents, adults and seniors). Especially in a neighborhood with high urban density like San Ramón, especially in the periphery neighborhoods.

The offer of health promoting places in the study area is varied and well distributed. However, the city demands to integrate and interact these places in a daily urban dynamic. Chavarría (2018) proposes that through an active mobility system (bike paths, pedestrian paths, green areas) it would encourage the population to travel around the city of San Ramón to experience and enjoy it.

The use of Google Reviews as a source of information makes it possible to access, in an accessible way, the perceptions and evaluations of people who use spaces and places

in a city. As long as they voluntarily express the quality, frequency of use and their assessments of the case.

This methodology was complementary between the identification and mapping of places aimed at health promotion and their comparison in Google Reviews facilitated the visibility of these places in the city.

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