



# Québec Roadmap: toward a new urban project (2022-2024)

## Strategic axes adopted by the Mayors' Panel on April 30, 2024

Thinking and building the city with its inhabitants, their needs and aspirations in mind - this is the main motivation behind the OWHC's *New Urban Project*. The *Québec Roadmap*, implemented since 2022, is gradually revealing the potential of the Organization's member cities and their ability to learn together, from each other, to take action and improve the living conditions of their inhabitants.

Cities are affected at various levels by the pre-eminence of tourism, pressure on public spaces, the decline in the number of inhabitants and the loss of attractiveness of historic centers, or the deterioration of their heritage. The scale and acceleration of these phenomena, their interrelationships, and their consequences call for effective, bold and rapid responses.

In this context, and in the light of their collective work, the cities of the OWHC are mobilizing to adapt to climate change and reduce its impact. The world is changing, and the urgency of climate change requires us to make choices that will affect our cities and the daily lives of their inhabitants. And yet, thanks to their exceptional characteristics, World Heritage cities can help shape change and give it a positive direction: as living entities that have lived through history, historic districts by definition have the capacity to reinvent themselves, and their heritage (built, cultural, landscape, social) is an essential resource for their sustainable development.

The initial results of the *Québec Roadmap* confirm that **Habitability** is an essential orientation, if not the main one, that expresses the political vision of the mayors of the OWHC. It is based on the pre-eminence given to living in the city fully, ensuring quality housing, giving priority to the social role of public spaces, and ensuring that urban development is part of the city's historical continuity. The urban transformation strategy rooted in habitability and advocated in the *Québec Roadmap* revolves around the following four **Strategic Axes**, to which the cities have already attached courses of action:

### 1. REQUALIFY THE HABITAT

Prioritizing the residential function implies the implementation of operational and regulatory processes capable of preserving existing housing but also of developing a residential offer accessible to families or individuals with diverse profiles and economic resources. Public authorities must support the rehabilitation of vacant and dilapidated housing in the historic center, offering a complementary housing offer to that available in the city as a whole. This means convincing property owners of the benefits to them and to the community of putting their property back on a regulated market that limits tourist accommodation, maintains the existing population and attracts new residents. Action on the built environment must contribute directly



to preserving and enhancing the area's heritage, and even enriching it with new, quality construction. Structural action on housing must be part of an overall urban plan to improve amenities for the population in the areas to be redeveloped, and to manage a harmonious and dynamic relationship between the quality of life of residents and other uses and users (commercial, touristic, etc.), which will determine the town's level of attractiveness.

## 2. REFRESH THE CITY

If World Heritage cities are to make an effective contribution to the creation of healthy, peaceful urban environments, the reduction of carbon emissions and the preservation of biodiversity, a comprehensive approach to integrated development based on public spaces is essential. Raising public awareness of the importance of existing green spaces in listed sites, and of the challenges of public health, air pollution, comfort and embellishment, makes it possible to envisage new ways of occupying all public spaces and rights-of-way, and thus to modify the relationship between inhabitants and the city, to improve the experiences of different users and visitors, and to transform the face of cities. It's a paradigm shift for our times, leading to a different way of looking at the city and interpreting the place of nature in the city. The reclamation of spaces freed from excessive car use opens the way to strategies for reducing "heat islands" and multiplying "cool islands". This requalification of public rights-of-way involves safeguarding nature where it exists, and planting wherever opportunities for greening can reinforce or restore the social values that underpin the community, reconsidering the place of water, and accompanying a respectful evolution of the urban landscape and heritage built ensembles. The scope of the actions to be undertaken calls for concerted management and action to find effective solutions and ensure their implementation and monitoring, since it's all about relying on nature to reshape the urban, and nature needs time to reveal all its assets.

## 3. TRANSFORM MOBILITY

Historic city centers have been shaped by other technologies, other perceptions of speed, other densities of movement. Having been subjected for too long to the pressure of the "all-car" approach, they need a return to alternative forms of mobility that favor gentle, eco-responsible travel. Today, historic city centers can serve as large-scale laboratories for the changes underway. The marked reduction in automobile traffic, combined with the introduction of alternative modes of transport based on safe pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and an efficient, integrated public transport network, is freeing up public land, offering opportunities for urban development that will enhance neighborhood life and the dynamism of the local economy. Mobility needs to be rethought structurally, to complement housing development strategies and changing lifestyles. The decision to give priority to residents and their daily journeys to essential services and local shops has led to a rethinking of travel and uses in the city, in order to reduce dependence on the car. In historic city centers, not all journeys, especially motorized ones, are necessary; they can be shorter, safer and more pleasant, becoming sources of experience and enrichment for residents, workers, students and visitors. Prioritizing arteries according to mode of transport reinforces the relevance of including citizen participation in the definition of the urban project for the success of the interventions and the sustainability of the expected changes in behaviour.



#### 4. REGENERATE THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Revitalizing historic city centers in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable way is a structuring action that draws on the territorial intelligence accumulated over the centuries and on the intrinsic identity of each city. Heritage, in the broad sense of tangible and intangible assets determined by the specificity of a place, is seen as an irreplaceable resource that enables a city to reinvent itself while meeting today's challenges. The ultimate aim of regenerative development is to "restore" the functionality and integrity of damaged urban fabrics, "requalifying" them in a way that conventional urban interventions cannot, within a continuity and historical logic that guarantees the city's identity and potential. Local communities are very closely linked to the intangible and immaterial dimensions of heritage, which are the source of their identities. Working with these communities is invaluable in identifying these heritages and targeting their essence for safeguarding, with a view to reinterpreting them from a contemporary perspective and promoting their integration into rehabilitation projects. This contribution by communities to the definition of projects is a significant added value to the strategy of urban transformation and the implementation of structuring projects. It introduces a new role for these communities in safeguarding and enhancing heritage.