



Mayors' Panel, 30 April 2024 Report

**Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC)
Québec Roadmap: Together towards a “New Urban Project”**

INTRODUCTION

At the [16th OWHC World Congress](#) (Quebec City, Canada, September 2022), mayors voiced their concerns about the changes underway, and asserted that other ways of acting and new urban practices need to be considered. Since 2022, the member cities of the OWHC have been committed to the *Québec Roadmap*, with the aim to draw up a “New Urban Project”, which will contribute to the emergence of a new generation of urban development policies, strategies, and projects, nurtured by a heritage approach to sustainable development that reconciles the urban, the human, and the environmental.

The Mayors’ Panel gathers mayors from the 22 OWHC member cities which currently participate in the Québec Roadmap. It provides political oversight of the process.

The "Manifesto", adopted at the 2nd Mayors' Panel held in Brussels on October 13, 2023 (see Appendix 2), sets out political ambitions to commit to four major “Issues at stake” for OWHC member cities:

- Adapting cities to climate change and reducing its impact
- Capitalizing on the ability of historic districts to reinvent themselves
- Enhancing the features that make the livability of the heritage city
- Promoting heritage as an essential resource for sustainable development

The 3rd Mayors' Panel meeting (April 30, 2024, held virtually), attended by 10 Mayors of the Roadmap (see Appendix 1), marked a new political milestone.

REPORT

Referring to the Manifesto, and in light of the current results of the *Quebec Roadmap*, the Mayors' Panel affirms that **Habitability** integrates all aspects of their political vision, and that it constitutes the main orientation, carrying great potential for urban transformation and revitalization that can materialize the common ambitions of the OWHC cities.

Habitability is based primarily on the pre-eminence given to the fact of living in the city, ensuring quality housing, giving priority to the original social role of public spaces, and placing urban development in the city's historical continuity, with the human being at the heart of all action. The Habitability-based urban transformation and improvement strategy advocated by the Québec Roadmap revolves around the following four Strategic Axes, to which the cities have already associated courses of action:



1. Requalify the Habitat

This axis focuses on the residential function, which involves implementing operational and regulatory processes capable of improving the quality of existing buildings and developing a housing offer that complements what already exists throughout the city, while at the same time envisaging and managing other uses (commercial, tourist, etc.) in terms of keeping existing residents or attracting new ones.

2. Refresh the City

This axis aims to reduce "heat islands" and increase the number of "cool islands," in particular through the greening/renaturation of public spaces, associated with plants and the presence of water. This means preserving nature where it exists, and planting wherever possible, to help strengthen or restore the social values that underpin the community.

3. Transform Mobility

The aim of this axis is to replace the predominance of automobile traffic with other modes of transport, freeing up public spaces for other uses. Other modes of transport, supported by a high-performance public and active transport network, should offer credible alternatives for access to the historic center and for internal circulation, with the emphasis on environmentally-friendly and 'soft' travel wherever possible. These changes must go hand in hand with urban developments conducive to the social and economic life of local neighborhoods.

4. Regenerate the Urban Environment

This axis aims to transform and revitalize historic city centers in a way that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable, drawing on local intelligence, accumulated over the centuries, and on the intrinsic identity of each city. Heritage, in the broad sense of tangible and intangible assets and determined by the specificity of a place, is seen as an irreplaceable resource that enables cities to reinvent themselves by integrating today's challenges. The ultimate aim of regenerative development is to "restore" the functionality and integrity of damaged urban fabrics, "requalifying" them in a more effective way than is possible with conventional urban planning interventions, within a historical continuity and logic that guarantees their identity and potential.

NEXT STEPS

The decisions taken at the 3rd meeting of the Mayors' Panel set the definitive framework for the **Cordoba Symposium on the Habitability of Historic Centers** (17th World Congress of the OWHC, Spain, September 24-27, 2024).

The four Strategic Axes adopted constitute the mayors' "political mandate" and the starting point for the Symposium. The participants in Cordoba will have the task of proposing how these Axes can be implemented in concrete terms, and how to organize the continuation of the process after Cordoba.



ANNEX 1: PARTICIPANTS' LIST

Represented cities

Angra do Heroísmo, Portugal	Mr. José Gabriel do Álamo de Meneses	Mayor
Bordeaux, France	Mr. Pierre Hurmic	Mayor
Brussels, Belgium	Mr. Philippe Close	Burgomaster
Cidade Velha, Cabo Verde	Mr. Nelson Moreira	Mayor
Cordoue, Spain	Mr. José María Bellido Roche	Mayor
Cuenca, Ecuador	Mr. Cristian Zamora	Mayor
Dubrovnik, Croatia	Mr. Mato Frankovic	Mayor
Évora, Portugal	Mr. Carlos Pinto de Sá	Mayor
Quebec, Canada	Mr. Bruno Marchand Ms. Mélissa Coulombe-Leduc	Mayor Elected official
Puebla, Mexico	Mr. Adán Domínguez Sánchez	Mayor

Mayors sending apologies of absence

Bruges, Belgium	Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay	Krakow, Poland
Marrakech, Morocco	Morelia, Mexico	Querétaro, Mexico
Regensburg, Germany	Split, Croatia	Strasbourg, France
Warsaw, Poland	Vilnius, Lithuania	Xochimilco, Mexico

General Secretariat

OWHC	Mr. Mikhaël De Thyse	Secretary General
OWHC	Ms. Andréanne Charest	Deputy Secretary General



ANNEX 2: Manifesto (adopted by the Mayors' Panel on 13 October 2023)

1. At the 16th World Congress of the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC), held in Quebec City in September 2022, we Mayors emphasized the extent to which the combined effects of climate, economic, and social crises are exerting considerable pressure on urban environments, which are particularly vulnerable due to their historical and heritage dimensions.
2. Faced with the scale of the changes underway, but also with the consequences of the increasingly frequent natural disasters and armed conflicts to which our cities are also subjected, compromising the integrity of their heritage and leaving deep scars within communities, we need to consider other ways of acting and new urban practices.
3. We are convinced that the city is first and foremost a place to live, work, socialize, cultivate, build community, and open up to others. The city, as a living entity in constant transformation, is the bearer of a future that must guarantee a quality living environment as well as the sustainability of the cohesive and inclusive societies to which we aspire.
4. We have therefore committed the OWHC to an innovative process, known as the "Roadmap," which will enable us to collectively build a strategy for joint action. In the long term, it will consolidate the leading role that our cities can and must play in the search for solutions that we are determined to implement concretely, rapidly, and effectively.
5. Our aim is to take action to create more sustainable, resilient, and liveable cities. Ultimately, we want World Heritage Cities to help reduce carbon emissions, preserve biodiversity, and create healthy, peaceful urban environments by promoting a new generation of holistic, integrated projects. These projects should focus on the efficient use of local resources, the renovation of existing infrastructures, the retention of existing populations, the reduction of car use in cities, the creation of attractive public spaces, the promotion of social diversity, the stimulation of economic activity, and the revitalization of existing urban areas.
6. We are therefore calling for our cities to make a bold, original contribution to reconciling the human, the urban, and the environmental. From this perspective, heritage, in the broad sense of the tangible and intangible assets accumulated over the course of history, is an irreplaceable resource. It enables the city to reinvent itself within a framework of "regenerative development," in a historical continuity and logic that guarantees its identity and potential.
7. Convinced that the preservation of heritage, its integrity and authenticity, is inseparable from our vision of modernity, we are determined to move forward, together, and apply an original heritage approach to the urban developments to come. The elected representatives of OWHC member cities are committed to preserving and safeguarding their heritage, and are attentive to the application of heritage regulations, which must evolve in line with the need to adapt to climate change. The "Roadmap" will enable us to learn from each other, share our experiences, and support each other within the unique political network that is the OWHC. The future implementation of innovative urban projects will have to take place within the framework of renewed partnerships with key international players, which will enable our projects to achieve their goals and reach their full magnitude.