

Historic Centre of Havana,
from 17th to 20th November 2026

22nd International Meeting on Management of Heritage Cities

"Let's talk about the Havana Plan III: Metropolitan challenges in a scenario of Economic and Social Transformations."

Former Convent of Saint Clare.

Calle Cuba 610 e/ Sol y Luz, La Habana Vieja.

Havana before a new scenario: economic transformations and metropolitan challenges

Havana, founded in 1519, is a melting pot of nature, history, and culture. Its historic centre and its fortification system, declared National Monument in 1978 and World Heritage in 1982, are a legacy of exceptional value that has been preserved thanks to a management model for comprehensive development with international recognition. However, the city where we live and manage today significantly transcends the boundaries of its original historic centre. Above all, Havana is a metropolitan area: a complex, diverse, and deeply interconnected territory where institutional, cultural, social, economic and environmental dynamics overflow the administrative borders of its fifteen municipalities.

During 2026, Cuba has begun an unprecedented process of economic and social transformations with the approval of 176 measures grouped in 23 thematic lines, which make the economic management model substantially more flexible, open spaces to national and foreign private investment, decentralise competences to municipalities and update the regulatory framework in key sectors such as finances, taxes, foreign investment, and tourism, amongst others. This new scenario, full of opportunities but also of risks, places Havana on a crossroads. The capital city, because of its population size, its geographical complexity, its economic weight, its rich heritage, and its character of seat of the main institutions in the country cannot be treated as just one more province. Capital cities and also megacities in the world receive a differentiated treatment with specific governability and governance frameworks that acknowledge their condition of neuralgic centres in national life. Havana is not the addition of fifteen municipalities making unconnected decisions; it is a city, the capital of the country and its vision as a metropolitan area demands a comprehensive approach and articulated governance to avoid chaos, speculation and loss of natural and cultural heritage values that have preserved until today.



Red de Oficinas del Historiador
y del Conservador de las Ciudades
Patrimoniales de Cuba



The decentralisation towards the municipalities, even if necessary and positive, must be accompanied by technical and administrative capacities which, in the case of Havana, require an unprecedented training effort and metropolitan coordination. Otherwise, we take the risk of having areas with high heritage values, such as Vedado, iconic zones of Centro Habana, the eastern beaches or even the Bay of Havana – with its rich industrial heritage and port facilities that fortunately have a Development Plan – to be the object of predatory interventions or gentrification processes that would strip the city from its identity and that of its inhabitants.

The experience accumulated in the previous twenty-one meetings, fed by the knowhow of local and foreign experts, has shown us that there are no definitive answers, but open processes where dialogue, mutual learning and innovation are the key to face the challenges. The city and its context evolve, necessities change and opportunities multiply.

Office of the Historian and Government of Havana City: strategic alliances for its development.

For decades, the Office of the Historian of Havana City (OHCH) has been a main backbone in the protection, rehabilitation, and comprehensive revitalisation of heritage in Havana. Led during decades under the vision and commitment of Dr Eusebio Leal Spengler, whose memory honours and guides our work, the endeavour of the institution has gone beyond architectural preservation to create an action model recognised in the whole world, which we call the Cuban school for the management of comprehensive development of the heritage city, supported by a methodology made from daily practice that has articulated institutionality, culture, society, economy and environment, all of that with a focus on sustainability. Within this structure, the Master Plan Office has consolidated its role as the coordinator of a tool system for management and urban planning for the zones prioritised for conservation by leading complex integrating processes.

Therefore, in the year 2024 the Government of Havana asked us to coordinate technically the preparation of the Provincial Development Strategy of Havana until 2030 and the Strategic Plan for the Comprehensive Development of Havana until 2045; at present, as members of the Coordination Group for the Implementation of the EDP, we are in the middle of a dynamic, multi-actor and multidimensional process in close collaboration with the entity of the government in charge of the general coordination for the drawing up and implementation of both tools, thus reaffirming a joint commitment that seeks to connect the experience in urban heritage management to public policies and socioeconomic development plans for the entire city.

Why keep talking about the Havana Plan??

In this third edition of the “Let’s talk about the Havana Plan”, the focus is placed on the impact that the Economic and Social Transformations recently approved in Cuba will have on the capital city. The opening to national and foreign private investment, the decentralisation towards municipalities, the loosening of regulatory frameworks and the creation of new financial instruments offer a huge potential

to boost the development of the city, but also bring unprecedented challenges in terms of governance and the protection of heritage.

Strategic Line 1: “Metropolitan Urban Governance”, which is part of the Provincial Development Strategy, sets the framework to overcome the historical fragmentation of the comprehensive development management in Havana by creating a government structure with legitimate authority, clear competences, and formal joint work protocols between municipalities and sectors. In the new scenario of decentralisation and economic opening, this governance becomes more necessary than ever to avoid non-connected decision-making and the loss of heritage values.

Strategic Line 4: “Metropolitan Platform for Sustainable Endogenous Development” addresses the articulation between economic development and funding by creating a financial architecture combining public, private, international and community resources and designing innovative financial tools (green bonds, APP, mixed funds, capital gain capture) to make the transformation of the city viable. In the context of the new transformations, this strategic line is of particular relevance as it provides the framework for channelling private investment to comprehensive sustainable development projects.

The experience of other large Latin American and European cities shows us that if the arrival of private investment is not managed with intelligence and metropolitan vision, it may generate gentrification processes, speculation and identity loss, but it also shows us that when there is a solid governance framework and a system of proper financial and normative tools for the strategic planning of comprehensive development, private investment can be a booster for urban regeneration, the creation of jobs and the improvement of the quality of life.

That is why this meeting aims to analyse from a critical and propositional outlook how to take advantage of the new, more flexible scenario to boost the comprehensive development of Havana by protecting at the same time its cultural and natural heritage and ensuring territorial equality and the well-being of its inhabitants.

Dynamics of the event

The event will last four days. During the morning of the first day, the official opening will take place and will also pay homage to Dr Eusebio Leal Spengler, teacher of entire generations whose memory honours and guides our work. There will also be master lectures afterwards and a city tour will be organised for the guest experts, which will cover emblematic areas such as El Vedado, Centro Habana and the Bay, to show both the potential and the challenges that these areas face in the new scenario. From the second day on, there will be scientific sessions developed through panels, communications, and workshops, organised in three sections in the morning and technical visits in the afternoons related to the central subject of the event. The last day will be dedicated to a workshop to create a “Roadmap” for the use of the new scenario of national and foreign private investment associated with the implementation of the Provincial

Development Strategy, where the participants will work in thematic tables to prepare concrete proposals that will be presented and discussed in a plenary session.

The morning sessions will begin at 9 am and will continue until 2 pm. Lunch will take place from 2 pm to 4 pm and synergies with the scientific and/or cultural activities of the Havana Biennial will be established in the afternoons.

Venue

The event will be held in the former Convent of Saint Clare, which houses an International Centre for Training in Trades, specialised in the arts and crafts of restoration. This achievement is the outcome of the Transcultura project, supported by UNESCO with funding from the European Union, as well as from the collaboration with the International Italian – Latin American Organisation (IILA) with funding from the Italian Agency of Cooperation for Development and the contribution of the World Monuments Fund (WMF). The magnificent space of the former church, carefully restored, has a capacity for over two-hundred persons and has simultaneous interpretation services.

Participation modalities

Guest experts	Called by the Organising Committee.	They participate in all the sessions of the meeting, the tour and other supplementary activities. Right to coffee breaks and lunches. They do not pay a registration fee.
Panellists	Called by the Organising Committee.	They participate in all the sessions of the meeting, the tour, and other supplementary activities. Right to coffee breaks and lunches. They do not pay a registration fee.
Foreign participants (speakers)	Chosen by the Organising Committee.	They participate in all the sessions of the meeting, the tour, and other supplementary activities. Right to coffee breaks and lunches. They pay a 200 USD registration fee.
National participants (speakers)	Chosen by the Organising Committee.	They participate in all the sessions of the meeting, technical visits, and other supplementary activities. Right to coffee breaks and lunches. They pay a 3000 CUP registration fee
Foreign participants	Accepted by the Organising Committee according to capacities.	They participate in all the sessions of the meeting, technical visits, and other supplementary activities. Right to coffee breaks and lunches. They pay a 250 USD registration fee
National participants	Accepted by the Organising Committee according to capacities.	They participate in all the sessions of the meeting, technical visits, and other supplementary activities. Right to coffee breaks and lunches. They pay a 3500 CUP registration fee.
National guests	Invited by the Organising Committee.	They participate in all the sessions of the meeting, the tour, and other supplementary activities. Right to coffee breaks and lunches. They do not pay a registration fee.

Key dates

- Reception of abstracts of papers: 21th October 2026.
- Acceptance answer: 26th October 2026.

Official incoming agency for the event

San Cristóbal Travel Agency. It is the Professional Organiser of the Event. It offers accommodation packages, transfer in/out, gastronomic options, optional tours, logistic support, and assistance before, during and after the event.

Collaborations

NGO ACPP – NGO MPDL, with funding from the AECID; Comuna de Prato and the NGO ARCS, with funding from the AICS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy and the Hans Seidel Stiftung Foundation. Our thanks to all of them.

We will be sharing more details on participation modalities, registrations, programmes and confirmed speakers very soon.

Other events of interest matching on dates

This 22nd meeting also coincides with the Havana Architecture Biennial, organised by the Office of the Historian of the City as well, and we intend to generate synergies between both events to address wisely the impact of the economic transformations on the capital city.

Just like in previous years, linked to the celebration of the event, the General Assembly of the Network of Offices of the Historian and Conservator of the Cuban Heritage Cities will take place on 16th November.

Open call

We encourage you to participate actively in this 22nd meeting, which will be once again an open and plural forum calling authorities, researchers, technicians, professionals, social organisations and international actors committed to a sustainable urban future of equity and prosperity. We will gather experiences, case studies, innovative policies and proposals that may contribute, in accordance with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, to strengthen the capacities to face the structural challenges of our cities.



Dr Architect Patricia Rodríguez Alomá.

President of the Organising Committee of the Meetings on Management of Heritage Cities.

Director of the Master Plan / Office of the Historian of Havana City.

Contacts of interest: Organising Committee: gcp@ohc.cu / San Cristóbal Travel Agency: eventos@viajessancristobal.cu
For further information, visit the website of the Master Plan <http://www.planmaestro.ohc.cu>

Scientific programme

17
TUE

DAY 1

Official opening.

Homage to Leal.

Master lectures (thematic).

Master lecture 1: "Impact of the implementation of the economic and social transformations on Havana".

Master lecture 2: "The Havana Development Strategy".

Master lecture 3: "Metropolitan governance: multi-level and multisectoral coordination".

Master lecture 4: "Transparency, social supervision and decisions based on data".

Master lecture 5: "The soil as an economic asset of state ownership: gains capture tools for territorial equity".

Master lecture 6: "Large urban projects and the regeneration of infrastructures: the challenge of articulating investment, sustainability and social safeguards".

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WED

DAY 2

Subject: Metropolitan governability and governance in the new context of private investment.

Panel 1: Challenges for supramunicipal coordination.

- **Leading concept:** To analyse how the opening to national and foreign private investment in the context of municipal decentralisation demands a strengthening of metropolitan governability and governance to avoid fragmentation, speculation and the loss of heritage values, and to guarantee the articulation between the municipalities of Havana.
- **Specific subjects to develop:**
 - **The necessity of a metropolitan vision:** Havana is not just one more province; it is a complex territory whose efficient management transcends the municipal boundaries.
 - **The authority of metropolitan governance** as a tool for the protection of urban and architectural heritage and territorial equity in the new scenario.
 - **Municipal decentralisation and metropolitan governance:** how to combine local autonomy with supramunicipal coordination.
 - **Clear processes and procedures to channel national and foreign private investments:** towards a unique metropolitan window.

Panel 2: Mitigation of the risks of private investment.

- **Leading concept:** To identify and analyse the risks related to the massive arrival of private investment in zones with high cultural and natural heritage values and, in general, in a city needing urgent investments of all kinds. Present mechanisms to avoid or mitigate gentrification, speculation, and the loss of identity, and promote transparency and citizen's participation as essential tools of a responsible metropolitan governance ensuring that funds are managed with equity, integrity, and accountability.

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WED

- **Specific subjects to develop:**
 - **The Transparency Portal of Metropolitan Funds** as a tool for citizen's control and accountability.
 - **Integrated Territorial Information Systems (SIIT) and open data:** to strengthen governance and urban planning.
 - Citizen's supervision and social control mechanisms in the management of investment processes.
 - **Gentrification and tourism maximisation in historic centres and heritage contexts:** causes, consequences, and prevention mechanisms.

Study cases:

Practical experiences showing the main subjects of the event will be presented.

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THU

DAY 3

Subject: Funding through soil management in the new context of private investment.

Panel 3: Urban soil as a strategic asset for metropolitan development.

- **Leading concept:** To explore the planning, regulation and soil management mechanisms allowing to optimise its use, capture gains, and ensure that private investment contributes to territorial equity and to the sustainable development of the city.
- **Specific subjects to develop:**
 - Capture of urban gains: fiscal instruments (property tax, contribution for improvements, etc.) and non-tax instruments (urban planning obligations, solidarity contributions, etc.) to reinvest in territorial equity.
 - Public soil management: generation of resources through public-public agreements and remunerated concessions.
 - Negotiation of co-developments and transfers of potential.
 - Public-private alliances (APP) for urban regeneration. Development agencies.

Panel 4: Large urban projects and safeguards.

- **Leading concept:** To explore the opportunities offered by the new regulatory framework to foreign investment in large urban projects, infrastructure, regeneration of neighbourhoods and strategic sectors, always following criteria of sustainability, inclusion, and respect for urban and architectural heritage.
- **Specific subjects to develop:**
 - Large transforming urban projects: opportunities and challenges in the new investment scenario.
 - Social and urban safeguards to protect the residents in contexts of soil revalorisation
 - Public advantages in residential property investments: protected housing quotas, rent control, capped prices, and relocation plans.

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THU

- Modernisation of urban infrastructures (power networks, water supply, sewerage, telecommunications, public transport) as a habilitating condition for development. Private participation in the regeneration of critical infrastructures.

Subject: International cooperation in the new scenario of socioeconomic changes.

Panel 5: Strengthening capacities, funding, and safeguards in the context of the new metropolitan challenges.

- **Leading concept:** To analyse how multilateral agencies, bilateral cooperation, NGOs, city networks and development banks can provide technical assistance, funding, training, and transfer of knowledge to strengthen four main axes: metropolitan governance, mitigation of the risks of private investment, soil management and innovative funding, and large urban projects with social safeguards to ensure the protection of heritage and territorial equity.
- **Specific subjects to develop:**
 - Strengthening of capacities to design a metropolitan authority, supramunicipal protocols, and territorial information systems.
 - Observatories to prevent gentrification and maximisation of tourism from happening, transparency portals, citizens' supervision, and regulatory frameworks to avoid speculation.
 - Fiscal and non-tax instruments, green bonds, APP, mixed funds, and development agencies; training in public soil management and co-developments.
 - Modernisation of critical infrastructures and protected housing mechanisms; social safeguards linked to property development processes and urban regeneration.

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FRI

DAY 4

Subject: Workshops for the creation of a "roadmap"

Workshop 1: Metropolitan governability and governance in the new context of private investment.

- **Goal:** To prepare concrete proposals to strengthen metropolitan governability and governance in order to avoid fragmentation, as well as to identify transparency mechanisms, open data systems, citizens' supervisions and processes to channel national and foreign private investments in the context of the implementation of the Provincial Development Strategy.

Workshop 2: Funding through soil management in the new context of private investment.

- **Goal:** To prepare concrete proposals for the implementation of soil management instruments (capture of gains, modernisation of infrastructures, promotion of regenerative uses) and innovative funding mechanisms that channel private into strategic comprehensive development projects, as well as to identify urban pieces for the possible development of large urban projects to dynamise the city.

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FRI

Both workshops will take place simultaneously during the morning and will present their conclusions in a plenary session, generating input for a “roadmap” that will be delivered to the competent authorities as part of the actions for the implementation of the EDP.