

Together towards the New Urban Project

Programs

From Cordoba to Marrakech: (2025-2026)



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INTRODUCTION

The collaborative approach developed as part of the *Quebec Roadmap* since 2022 has made it possible to create a dynamic for change, guided by political will expressed in the *Manifesto* in response to the four main *Issues* identified by the mayors of the participating cities:

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

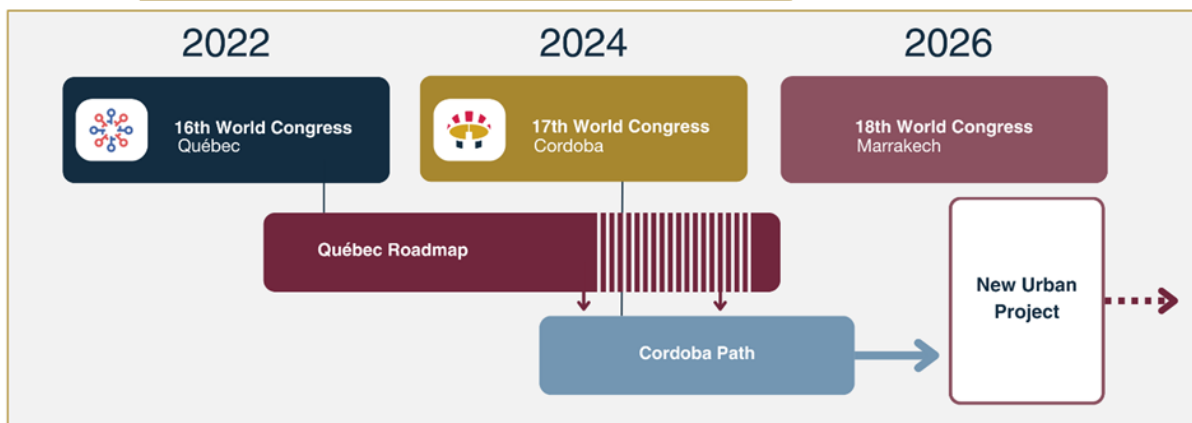
The results of this work open up new perspectives and reinforce the objective of designing, securing support for and implementing the OWHC's *New Urban Project*, which will be based on *Habitability*.

The *New Urban Project* is a set of proposals to member cities for designing and implementing local strategies to “Regenerate the habitability of historic city centers” that value built and intangible heritage as the resource to be prioritized for transforming the city. It will provide a method, tools and a set of resources from the OWHC network contributing in particular to:

- A cultural shift towards understanding heritage as a resource.
- A structural transformation, making the OWHC network more efficient and responsive in a context of profound urban change.
- Broadening the scope for action in the city and decompartmentalizing approaches in order to unleash potential.
- Creating synergies that offer cities greater guarantees of success in realizing their vision of the future.

The 2025-2026 Action Plan adopted at the 27th General Assembly of the OWHC (Cordoba, September 25-27, 2024) includes two programs specifically dedicated to the development of the *New Urban Project* and its adoption at the 18th World Congress (Marrakech, 2026): The *Quebec Roadmap* and the *Cordoba Path*. The results and perspectives detailed in the *Cordoba Symposium Report* define the 2025-2026 activity programs presented below.

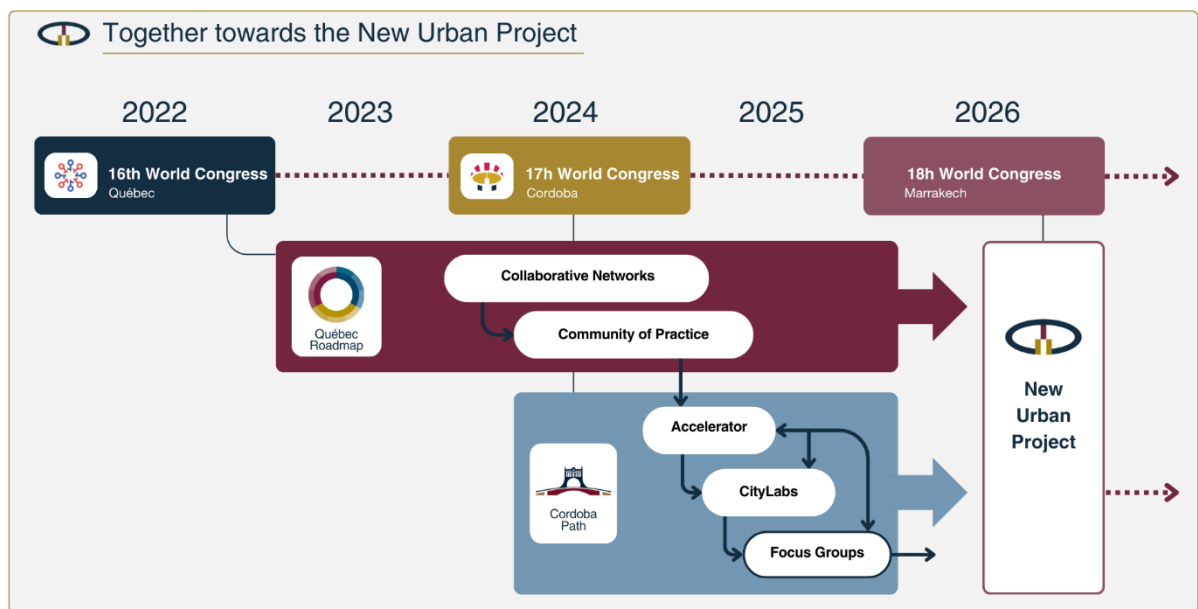
Together towards the New Urban Project



PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

The two programs (*Quebec Roadmap* and *Cordoba Path*) are based on the collaborative engineering approach implemented since 2022, which facilitates the mobilization of cities, elected officials and specialists, and the learning of new ways of working to co-produce and implement concrete proposals for action.

These programs exploit the results of the *Collaborative Networks* and organize the collective writing of the *New Urban Project*. The action-oriented system of reflection formed by the various activities ensures that content is processed through successive levels of city involvement. Although interrelated to make the process more efficient, the activities offer different opportunities for member cities to participate according to their interests and expertise.



The two programs dedicated to the *New Urban Project* in 2025 and 2026 will be monitored by two bodies in support of the General Secretariat, which will also call on international experts to prepare and lead the activities:

- The Mayors' Panel, open to all the mayors of the cities de facto involved in the activities, will monitor the political objectives of the approach until the Marrakech Congress.
- The Advisory Board¹, appointed by the General Secretariat, will oversee the production of the results and their synthesis with a view to proposing the *New Urban Project*.

1. QUEBEC ROADMAP

The main objectives of the *Quebec Roadmap* program are to:

¹ Mr. Yves Gendron, Deputy Director General of the Strasbourg and Upper Rhine Urban Planning Agency (ADEUS) and Mr. Luc Gagnon, Consulting and Strategy Services - Urban Planning and Mobility



- a. Bring as many member cities as possible into the collective thinking process.
- b. Provide a space for interdisciplinary dialogue, enabling member cities to discuss issues, share concerns and experiences, and develop a common knowledge and awareness of issues and opportunities.
- c. Produce content for the *Cordoba Path*.

The program includes two activities:

1.1 *Collaborative networks*

The *Collaborative Networks* develop thematic proposals by cities motivated to work together and meet regularly, with a view to producing *Statements* that collectively establish shared positions on the subjects addressed, and *Courses of action* that concretely guide the implementation of the *Strategic Axes*:

- Requalify the Habitat
- Refresh the city
- Transform Mobility
- Regenerate the Urban Environment

12 *Thematics* are currently being examined by the *Collaborative Networks*:

- Protecting and strengthening the residential function of the city's historic centers
- Irregular architectural interventions that diminish the heritage values
- Protected buildings in a state of abandonment
- Greening and space planning for urban refreshment
- Greening public spaces
- Regulation of traffic within the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site
- Rejuvenating the historic center through an active mobility model
- Pacified mobility: street planning and sharing between different users and mobility modes
- Intangible heritage as a resource for urban rehabilitation
- Raising awareness and disseminating heritage information to the local community
- Regeneration of the historic core through preservation, valorization and awareness of heritage
- Crafts and traditional know-how for heritage preservation

Of the 92 *Courses of action* listed in the *Collaborative Networks Progress Reports* (2024), 38 were discussed at the *Cordoba Symposium* (September 24-27, 2024) and prioritized according to their ability to make *Habitability* a reality and help strengthen the operational dimension of the approach. These results will be used in early 2025 by the *Community of Practice* (see activity below). At the same time, the *Collaborative Networks* active before the Cordoba Congress will continue their work, and new cities will be able to propose other *Thematics* and coordinate new *Collaborative Networks*. The activity of the *Collaborative Networks* will remain open until the Marrakech Congress (autumn 2026), giving as many member cities as possible the opportunity to get involved in the process, understand it and make it their own.

1.2 *The Community of Practice*

The *Community of Practice* activity creates a specific working framework enabling the players in the *Quebec Roadmap* (elected officials and coordinators from the cities piloting the *Collaborative Networks*) to put the results (*Statements* and *Courses of action*) into perspective, and in particular to:



- Reveal the transversal aspects to be established between the four *Strategic Axes*
- Formulate *Objectives* and *Indicators* that will push these transversal logics towards the proposal of *Global Strategy* and *Structuring Projects* that will make up the *New Urban Project*
- Identify “best practices” that can be used to experiment with and demonstrate the relevance of the *New Urban Project’s* heritage approach, in particular to facilitate greater ownership by local communities.

2. CORDOBA PATH

The *Cordoba Path* program covers all activities leading up to the proposal of the *New Urban Project*, and in particular the achievement of the following two objectives:

- a. Define a “common frame of reference” to help cities improve the way they manage historic city centers and act in response to current pressures. The urgency to act and the need to proceed differently are elements of the *Narrative* acquired since Quebec, and reinforced in Cordoba, which will have to be enriched by the awareness of a common heritage, indispensable to the affirmation of communities capable of choosing the path of their development, and of achieving it, as well as the recognition of the evolving nature of heritage, which makes it a precious and irreplaceable resource to serve innovative urban political visions.
- b. Organize a “common operational framework” that will provide cities with the tools they need to meet a series of challenges: the need for additional financial and human resources, the affirmation of strong political will over the medium and long term, coordination between elected officials and municipal services, ways of involving citizens from the earliest stages of reflection and in project management, regular re-evaluation of actions and the establishment of precise monitoring indicators, a stable legal framework, etc.

The program includes three activities:

2.1 “Urban Heritage Regeneration Accelerator”

Member cities selected following a call for applications will take part in this activity, implemented in partnership with the *Cultural Heritage Finance Alliance* (CHiFA). The *Accelerator* is designed as an intensive 270-day program of training, coaching and apprenticeship, culminating in the implementation of a pilot project development tool accompanied by a capital/investment strategy.

2.2 CityLabs

The aim of this activity is to develop specific topics, raised by the *Collaborative Networks*, the *Community of Practice* or the *Accelerator*, and necessary to feed the process. The contribution of *CityLabs* will provide original answers that will enrich the consensus.

2.3 Focus Groups

The activity will bring together, in the form of a workshop, the essential expertise needed to clarify the terms of the “reference framework” and the “operational framework” of the *New Urban Project*. Organized in close collaboration with the *Accelerator*, the *Focus Groups* will focus primarily on the following elements:



- The *Success Factors* that cities need to adopt, such as interdisciplinary governance, “permanent democracy” and political leadership with a long-term vision, make up the System of reference to be put in place to ensure the implementation of the *New Urban Project*.
- The implementation of *Success Factors*, necessary to guarantee the expected progress, will create the conditions for the emergence of a global strategic approach within which interconnected projects can be conceived. The impact of this “new generation” of *structuring projects*, which will set in motion the dynamics of urban transformation, will be fully demonstrated insofar as the OWHC is able to contribute to the emergence of innovative public-private financing models adapted to the holistic approach of the *New Urban Project*.