Revitalization and Modernization of Old Havana, Cuba

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family, who offered me unconditional love and support throughout the course of this thesis.

For my sister who has inspired me and is my best friend.

For my parents who have raised me to be the person I am today. You have been with me every step of the way, through good times and bad. Thank you for all the unconditional love, guidance, and support that you have always given me, helping me to succeed and instilling in me the confidence that I am capable of doing anything I put my mind to. Thank you for everything.

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Revitalization and Modernization of Old Havana, Cuba

Mileydis Hernandez

ABSTRACT

Architecture around the world has been very influential for determining the historical background of many cities. The architecture of the city of Havana in Cuba is etched with unique historical forces and signature buildings. This architecture embodies local reproductions of Western and European styles. The superimposing of Western and European styles led to the formation of a “strange baroquism” that defined the “lasting features of the overall idiosyncrasy of the city.”

Since Cuba’s change of government in the 1950s, architecture has progressed very little. From the day Castro took power, Havana's skyline has hardly altered. After the fall of the former Soviet Union, Cuba had to rely heavily on its own resources and many projects begun in the 1980s had to be halted and still remain unfinished today. Many new buildings in Havana suffer from under investment, lack of resources and little vision. Of the one third of architects who stayed in Cuba after the Revolution their work is mostly limited to tourist hotels or restaurants, catering for the 1 million visitors every year. Most of them do not reflect or adhere to Cuba's rich historical past.

Historical preservationists all over the world decided to inscribe La Habana Vieja into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1982. They launched a safeguarding campaign a year later to restore the authentic
character of the buildings. While it is important to keep Havana’s old charm, it is also imminently necessary to revitalize and meet the needs and functions of a modern society. The dilemma faced by architectural designers is best stated by Paul Ricoeur when he said that the challenge lies in “how to become modern and to return to sources (while) reviving an old, dormant civilization (in order for it to) take part in a universal civilization.”

My project will focus on the integration of current needs, functions and modern architecture with the city’s old architecture. The desirable site will be located on a public destination in Old Havana. It will focus on how the old and the new architecture will physically connect while meeting the characteristics of new uses and adaptive re-uses of existing buildings. This research will be conducted by analyzing the site’s existing conditions, by choosing contemporary uses that are missing within the city’s structure, by analyzing other projects with similar conditions, and by doing an overall research on existing architectural, economic, and social issues that are related to Old Havana’s development. This revitalization will create a new Havana that will preserve its value while meeting modern standards and architectural functionality.
As globalization dictates new trends, most localities strive to maintain competitive growth for their survival. Together with commerce and tourism, they have affected almost all sectors and lifestyles to include how historical places or existing environments must be treated, revived or re-constructed. This paper will go through the existing conditions of the old Havana in Cuba, present
contemporary uses and needs that might be missing within the city’s structure. It will also analyze other similar projects with close relationships to Havana’s condition and development. This revitalization analysis will lead to possible creation of a new Havana that will preserve its value while meeting modern standards and architectural functionality.

Key Objectives:
1. To analyse existing pedestrian and vehicular circulation.
2. To develop an understanding of features and characteristics which would be favourable and preferable for the locals and tourists.
3. To develop a proposal to enhance the living and working conditions.

Project Goals:
1. Turn the city into a living and active place for the people that live and work there as well as the tourists that visit every year.
2. Improve vehicular/pedestrian circulation.
3. Create a balance between locals and tourists on how the old city is used.
4. Enhance the living conditions of the locals.
5. Create public and green spaces.
6. Create places which work and that people use, value and feel good in.
7. Respect the history and special character of the city, make it environmentally sustainable and sensitive to the needs of the people.
8. Consider matters such as safety, accessibility, quality of life, and protecting heritage and the environment

Brief Historical Background

Cuba was first visited by Europeans during Sebastián de Ocampo’s circumnavigation of the island in 1509. The first Spanish colonists arrived from Hispaniola and began the conquest of Cuba the following year (IPIN, 2008). Conquistador Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar was said to have founded Havana on August 25, 1515. The original site was on the southern coast of the island near the present town of Surgidero de Batabanó and adjacent to the harbor at the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico. This site presented an easy access to the Gulf Stream. This stream was the main route that navigators followed from the Americas to Europe. Havana’s location led to its early development as the principal Port of Spain’s New World colonies. Its name is considered to be derived from Habaguanex, an Indian chief who controlled that area, as mentioned by Diego Velasquez in his report to the king of Spain (IPIN, 2008).

During the colonization era, many countries fought over the control of the city of Havana. As the control the city was transferred
among European colonists, fortifications were built to help protect the city during the wars. This transformed Havana into the most heavily fortified city in the Americas. The biggest and most renowned fortress built in Havana is called San Carlos de la Cabaña. This fortress was considered the biggest Spanish fortification in the New World. During the early 1900s, Havana flourished and became a fashionable city with theaters featuring many world renowned actors of the time. Cultural facilities were built such as the luxurious Teatro Tacón, the Liceo (Artistic and Literary Lyceum) and the Teatro Coliseo (Santana, 2000). Its prosperity became known all over the world. Havana became known as the Paris of the Antilles.

The revitalization of Old Havana will preserve the city’s historical values. Old Havana is in desperate need of attention and respect. This part of the city houses many buildings with bright and interesting history, great architecture and many sites of interest. Intents to revitalize the city have been made for a long time; however, none have been successful. One of the most important aspects of Havana is the strategic location of the city. For a long time, the city served as a springboard for the Spanish conquest of the continent. During that time its population had amounted to about 4,000 inhabitants. The number of inhabitants continued to grow. The city was reported to have a relatively small native population that was promptly eliminated, leaving few traces in the built environment, archaeological record or culture.

The original settlements were called San Cristóbal de la Habana. These settlements were founded in 1515 by the Spanish explorer Diego de Velázquez on Cuba’s southern coast. Later on in 1519, the settlements were relocated to the site of present-day Havana. Spanish treasure galleons that assembled in Havana’s harbor also
played an important role in the city development. From that time on, the city tempted many English, French, and Dutch buccaneers. Later on Havana became the capital of Cuba. The event took place in the late 16th century. The city had managed to strengthen its positions by the time of both the French and Indian Wars in 1762. During those times Havana fell to Anglo-American forces, but the following year it was returned to the Spanish in exchange for Florida. The most important events took place in the early 19th century. During those times the city was ranked as one of the wealthiest and busiest commercial centers in the Western Hemisphere.

Existing Conditions

Figure 5 Old Havana Corner Building

Figure 6 Building in despair, dilapidated.
The Ciudad de La Habana or Havana is the capital city of Cuba serving as the country’s major port and leading commercial center with about 2.6 million inhabitants. Due to its high population density, it is considered the largest city of the Caribbean region (Butler, 2003). At present, Havana is known for being one of the largest and oldest cities in the Americas. The city plays a very important role in the region. First of all, Havana is the political, economic, and cultural center of Cuba. Since the city obtained the reputation of being an important hub of air and maritime transportation. Havana became the focal point of Cuban commerce, exporting sugar, tobacco, and fruits and importing mainly foodstuffs, cotton, and machinery and technical equipment. The city has tried to sustained the development of many industries including shipbuilding, assembly plants, rum distilleries, sugar refineries, and factories making the famous Cuban cigars. Now a day’s tourism plays a very important role to the survival of the city. During the 1990s, Cuba redirected its economic model from central planning toward a mixed economy. It is also widely known that the city’s hot, humid climate is moderated by sea winds. Currently, Havana possesses one of the best natural harbors in the Caribbean region. The city has both commercial and strategic importance.
A renowned historian called Eusebio Leal headed a restoration project that started in 1979. He was awarded a five-year budget of $11 million. While he was the head of the Office of the Historian of the City, he was able to recruit a team of four architects. The first restoration plan identified a 1.3-square-mile area consisting of 242 city blocks, with some 4,000 buildings, inhabited by 74,000 residents and in dire need of repair. The area has about 90 percent structures deemed to have historical or architectural value (Adams, 2001). This restoration project aimed to attract foreign investment and revenue as well as harmonize tourist development of which Leal was quoted saying, “This is a unique effort. We are creating a system that deals not only with bricks and mortar, but also with social and educational programs” (Adams, 2001). The restoration and reconstruction took place in the crumbling colonial heart of the city known as “La Habana Vieja” (Adams 2001).

In 1982, the United Nations declared Old Havana as a World Heritage site. The city had won full political recognition in 1993 by the Cuban government. Leal was handed extraordinary power to use the land and rescue the Old City. The rescue plan consisted of creating hotels and real estate joint ventures with foreign investors. His office became responsible for the zoning, planning, housing, and parks commissioning, and he was the controller and final arbiter of nearly every public investment decision. Within a few years, a web of companies operated a network of hotels, restaurants, bars, shops and museums in the city of Old Havana. Nearly 4,000 architects, construction workers, hotel and restaurant employees with salaries of about $10 a month made up the work force. Its top architects made some 400 pesos, or $20 a month. The office also ran its own school that trained carpenters, masons, painters and metalworkers needed to
carry out the work. The restoration project had profits returned
directly to local investment with a small percentage going to the state.
Businesses boomed and generated 10,000 jobs and earnings of $60-
million in 2000. While it was considered a capitalistic venture, a third
of the profits were directed to social education projects and
restorations that helped local residents. These local restorations
included the renovation of public schools, a new public library with
100,000 books, an infant-maternity clinic and a children’s park
(Adams, 2001). Another renovation was the conversion of the
Convent of Belen, built in 1718, into a day care center for the elderly.

Even after the restoration, it was found that Old Havana’s urban
environment still has vast areas of crumbling buildings which could not
be restored due to lack of funds. At the time, the Cuban National
Heritage, based in Miami, Florida was set up to help stop the
disintegration of Havana’s environment. Many quoted this task as “a
long way to go to help preserve a city of so many diverse styles and
influences” (Marshall 2001).

The character of Old Havana is created in large part by the
historic baroque and neo-classical architecture. These types of
structures are evident throughout the city. Many of them are truly
historic in nature but have become tourist destinations, and have lost
the use of the local population. For instance, most of the historic
buildings surrounding the Plaza Vieja have been restored to their
original condition but are today only used as museums and restaurants
solely by tourists.

While many people rightfully point to the historic structures in
their cities, few of these existing structures can match the antiquity
that characterizes the buildings in Havana. In this regard, Marshall
emphasizes that, “The architecture of old Havana represents five
centuries of development, from the sixteenth to the twentieth
centuries. Of the 900 historic buildings, 101 date from this century,
460 from last century, 200 from the eighteenth century and an
astonishing 144 date from the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries”
(Marshall 150)

Old Havana is today defined by both the harbor and what
remains of the old city wall. This region contains dozens of
monuments, statues and significant historic buildings. The old city
wall is “two kilometers long and took 164 years to construct, lasting
only sixty six years. In the area defined by its circumference are more
than fifty monuments and historic buildings of national and
international importance” (Marshall, 150). Not surprisingly, many of
the historic buildings are situated near the harbor, given its
importance in the city’s commerce and defense over the years.

While these regions of the city remain important today, there
were some developmental initiatives that took place following the end
of World War II. These developments introduced some constraints in
the architecture of Old Havana. Further exacerbating the deterioration
of the quality of the ambience of the city were some pragmatic
developmental efforts that were intended to encourage
industrialization with little regard to their impact on the city’s historic
fabric. After the war, several industrial complexes were constructed
around the bay, including oil refineries, dockyards, a gas plant, two
oil-burning power stations, grain towers, cargo railways, a fertilizer
plant, the piers along the southern half of old Havana, and a very large
garbage dump called Cayo Cruz. The trade winds that once brought
air to the city now brought smoke and foul odors from these assorted
facilities” (150).
In 1971 a Master Plan was created. It was composed by a number of so-called “Autonomous Communities of the Spanish State,” the office of the City Historian, and the City of Havana Assembly of People Power. Its intention was to renovate the first portion of the Malecón from Paseo del Prado to Belascoain Street in Maceo Park. This area consists of 14 blocks of primarily residential property with a smattering of hotels, offices, and warehouse buildings (Marshall 151).

This Master Plan highlighted the need for transportation and the construction of shipping terminals in the area adjacent to Havana’s bay area. The Master Plan also envisioned an improved deep-water port facility (Marshall 150). These projects were intended to improve the ability of the harbor and bay areas of Havana to be developed later in an effort to reestablish the city’s connection with the sea (Marshall 150). According to Marshall, “Because of the plan, several large port installations were built, including a fishing port. However, the old docks remained and continued to block the southern half of old Havana, in addition, the proposed Traffic Center, which would have removed the old railway terminal and reduced heavy traffic in the inner city, was never constructed” (150).

Notwithstanding its promise for future developmental initiatives, some significant problems remain firmly in place today. In this regard, Marshall reports that, “The potential of this stretch of waterfront is tremendous; however, there are significant obstacles that need addressing. These problems include the state of the fabric, the role of the Malecón as a major transport artery, the lack of infrastructure, the deterioration wrought by salt water, and the quality of the water in the bay” (151).

In the mid 1990s, tourism emerged as the most important source of revenue for the country. Recognizing the potential for generating
hard currency, the city planners renovated one of the three main piers at the Custom Building, transforming this facility into a terminal for cruise ships (Marshall 150). Encouraged by the success of this initial tourism-related project, a new master plan was developed by the City Historian's Office to restore many landmark buildings and plazas in old Havana (Marshall, 150). “The Master Plan for the Comprehensive Revitalization of Old Havana was set up at the end of 1994, at the request of the City Historian's Office. The intention of the plan was to study the problems of the historic center and propose the best alternatives for its renovation. The Spanish Agency for International Cooperation was a consultant and partial financial supporter of these initiatives” (Marshall 150).

Cuba is facing the dilemma of how it can accept new economic investment and growth in ways that are compatible with its cultural heritage and identity without losing its magic as a unique, culturally rich country. All of Cuba's cities will face these pressures, but old Havana will be especially affected. Leal’s master plan has informed my project on how it can not only be tourist oriented but also about the inhabitants of the city. My proposal would include the restoration and revitalization of Old Havana and the integration of modern architecture and uses to the existing fabric. This would enhance the living conditions of the locals. It would benefit both the people that live and work there and the thousands of tourists that visit the city for a glimpse of the Cuban way of life.
The Architecture of Old Havana

The exquisite architecture of Old Havana is very reminiscent of Seville, Spain. The city can be characterized by narrow, cobbled streets, shady plazas, and windows with wrought iron grillwork. Tantalizing glimpses of cool courtyards and wrought iron balconies can give people the idea of the old past. Havana is also known for offering
the unusual sights of brightly painted and somewhat restored buildings. One of the most important aspects of Havana’s architecture is the recognition of the significance of Old Havana to world heritage. At present, the city is regarded as a treasure that cannot be lost. Due to the assistance of UNESCO the city has received a chance to restore some of its crumbling buildings to their former glory.

There are many features to see in the historic buildings. The majority of the colonial houses in the city had to conform to a basic style: large wooden doors leading into a one-story house. The feature that was always present was an open central courtyard that allowed for natural ventilation and social gathering. Over time, the number of stories within these buildings increased. Next, the buildings acquired the features that were typical of the baroque style. Some of these features included large scale ceilings, ornate detailing on architectural features and dramatic use of lighting.

A clear example of how some of the most beautiful old architecture has been restored is the residence of the former Marquis de Aguas Claras. El Patio, the Marquis’ residence, is placed in the Cathedral Square. This location is very convenient since it means the heart of Old Havana. Today the beautiful 18th century mansion is used as a restaurant.

Figure 11 Residence of the Marquis of Aguas Claras
Just as other cities that were built under the governance of Spain, Havana roughly conforms to legislation that required cities to be laid out in a grid around a single central square. The main institutions located in the area include the church, governor’s palace and so on.

In the 17th century, the development of the grid pattern for Havana was based on the Spanish urban guidelines stipulated by the Law of the Indies (Marshall 149). The Law of the Indies required that “Streets were arranged at right angles to one another, plazas created, and sites determined for major buildings” (Crain 29). Prior to this time, different considerations were influential in how the neighborhoods were developed and used in Havana (Marshall 149). In this regard, Marshall states that, “The gridded plans of the New World represent a transition in European thinking from medieval to Renaissance planning. Typically, Hispano-American plans focus on a square with barracks, a cabildo, and a church. Havana, in contrast, made a square, Plaza Vieja, without the presence of church or barracks and instead made a square for people and markets. A square based on commerce was rare for the time” (150).

The city of Old Havana has a number of buildings including the Plaza des Armas, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza de San Francisco and
Plaza Vieja. The city was reported to grow rapidly during the nineteenth century. This fact eventually forced the local government to introduce planning laws in 1818 and in 1862. The laws were posted to regulate land use and building for new suburban districts.

Old Havana has a total surface of about 500 acres, covering 242 city blocks. This area was surrounded by the Old City Walls and the open area called Reparto de las Murallas. Resulting from the demolition of the Walls in the XIX Century, the urban fabric dramatically changed. Today Old Havana exhibits 3500 buildings (22,500 dwellings) in very different states of preservation or deterioration. The dwelling units make up for one third of the city’s apartments and approximately 49% tenement houses. According to the census done by the Plan Maestro de Rehabilitation Integral del Centro Historico de la Habana (which is the planning authority of the Office of the City Historian), the total population of Old Havana is about 70,000 inhabitants, thus giving an average density of 250 inhabitants per acre.
Chapter 2 Case Studies

Ciutat Vella, Barcelona, Spain

Venice, Italy

Paris, France
One of the most useful and commendable examples of modernization and revitalization of any area in the world took place from the late 20th to 21st century in Barcelona, Spain. This city could serve as good example for the revitalization of Old Havana. While Barcelona was considered as the intellectual and commercial center of northern Spain and its surrounding regions, Havana was at the center
of the New Spanish government at the time of the conquest. While
certainly older than Havana, Barcelona is similarly important in both,
culturally and politically.

In Spain, at the end of the 20th century, there was a change of
government which led to a new city structure. This could be
illuminating to the case of Cuba in terms of how democracy and the
forces of capitalism impact area development. It can provide a path of
reconstruction and revitalization that Cuba can follow under a
democratic government. “In the last quarter of the twentieth century,
Barcelona has undergone a radical transformation: its economic base,
its social structure, the population's habits, its physical structure and
even its image have experienced accelerated changes that have been
decisive and, in general terms, positive.” (Marshall, p 27-28)

The urban, economic and social regeneration of Ciutat Vella (City
Center/Old Barcelona) is an unprecedented process in the city’s
modern history. This process responds to the duty of attending to the
basic rights of people while remedying structural shortcomings in the
district. The results reveal a strong commitment to a model of a city
center fully integrated and offering quality of life. It guarantees the
maintenance of residential activity. This area has been a centre of
population for 2000 years. It includes El Raval, Santa Caterina, La
Ribera, La Barceloneta, La Mercè, and over the centuries witnessed the
passing of different cultures, styles and movements. In the last
century over-industrialization led to the area being more ignored than
destroyed, much like areas of Havana.

"The degradation of housing (state of conservation and level of
domestic services) is, however, at the core of the problems of this
district. Its degraded, but not demolished architectural heritage, led to
the creation of a "surgical model" (in contrast to the plans drawn up

18
from the turn of the century until 1976, in which the common denominator was the proposal for large thoroughfares to clean up the district) which opts for the removal of elements which cannot be recovered, centering its action on rehabilitating dwellings which have been able to withstand the years of degradation.” (Cuitat, Narrative)

Based on the degradation of housing, a plan resulted for intensive rehabilitation that focused on life quality and a priority on taking into account the large underprivileged population and their corresponding poorer residential areas. Other objectives included:

- Consolidating the municipal decentralizing process;
- Achieving an administration which was more agile, efficient and useful for the citizen of the district;
- Improving the living conditions in the district, confronting as a priority the underprivileged islands, and fighting social inequality;
- Fighting against the degradation of housing and promoting rehabilitation, opening new urban spaces and increasing the number of available public facilities for social use in the district; and
- Promoting the participation and city solidarity in the fight for the improvement of living conditions in the district.

All of the objectives would be achieved by analyzing the historical preservation of buildings either intact, or with modifications suitable to their original designs. Tourists and residents live side by side. Walking through the area one is immediately struck by the intense desire to preserve the medieval “look” of the area so attractive to visitors, while providing comfortable, modern interiors, most retaining ancient features where possible such as banisters, marble staircases and wood trim (Cuitat, Rehabilitation: Objectives).
In Ciutat Vella, Spain, there was a promotion for private rehabilitation. The purpose of the rehabilitation was the restoration and preservation of the buildings in the historic area of Barcelona. It was aimed at sites and areas of architectural, historic and artistic, cultural, environmental and social interest. To facilitate the fulfillment of this task, the Ciutat Vella Rehabilitation Office (ORCV) was set up in cooperation, through a specific agreement, with the Ministry of Fomento and Generalitat of Catalonia. This project includes the collaboration of multidisciplinary teams, coordinated by Office for the Rehabilitation of the Ciutat Vella District. (Ciutat, ARI)

The project “has respected the character of the area” (Ciutat, ARI). Its proponents say, “This model is clearly transferable to other cities with similar problems of degradation and density in the historical centre. On a Spanish level, the project Ciutat Vella, as a pioneer, has been used as an example to be followed in many cities. The project has also been widely publicized on a European level. Urgent Plan for social action. Intense action has been developed by the Division of Personal Services of the District of Ciutat Vella with emphasis on the population, giving special attention to the prevention and fight against social exclusion. It is important to detail here the programmes of social action developed. We point out some significant actions: underprivileged children, school truancy, assistance and labour rehabilitacion of unfavoured collectives, prostitution, addiction, health programmes, adolescents with delinquency risks, visits to all the elderly in the District” (Ciutat, ARI). According to the article above, this plan could prove to be an important aspect in the redevelopment of Havana. Given the country’s long standing socialist government and governmental pact with its people, any moves to introduce redevelopment in the city without the complete advice and consent of
the government will be viewed as intrusive. Any attempt by outsiders (capitalist investors) could reveal the exclusion of the lower classes, which has not been acknowledged by the government.

El Raval

El Raval is a neighborhood within the wider Ciutat Vella district. The neighborhood is also known as Barri Xino, or "Chinatown," and is one of two historical neighborhoods bordering the Rambla (the main commercial thoroughfare; the other being the Barri Gotic). This suburb is home to 200,000 people. It has been historically noted and infamous for its nightlife and cabarets, as well as prostitution and crime. With the overall rejuvenation of Cuitat Vella, El Raval has changed significantly in recent years. Due its central location, it has become an attraction in itself for visitors to Barcelona.

The suburb of Raval is currently the home to a diverse immigrant community. This community includes Pakistanis,
Indonesians, and more recently, people from eastern European communities among others. It is home to many artists, and is becoming one of the hippest up-and-coming neighborhoods of Barcelona.

On the west side of Les Rambles, el Raval district has become a vibrant mix of museums and art galleries. It has maintained somewhat of a notorious red-light area, perhaps a testimony to historical traditions deeply entrenched. This neighborhood presents plenty of cultural variety beginning with performers on Las Ramblas, shops and strings of street artists. Once considered unsafe, the Raval has been undergoing urban regeneration and continues to improve. It has become more visitor-friendly throughout time. Local government, in an attempt to clean up the neighborhood, has demolished many old buildings, widened streets and opened new squares in which people can congregate. The result is an area where old and new architecture are pleasantly mixed.

Architect Antoní Gaudi has had a tremendous influence on the rejuvenation of Barcelona as a commercial tourist and arts center. His famous ongoing project, la Sagrada Familia cathedral, is one of the most dramatic buildings in today’s Barcelona. This project was begun in the early 1900s and continues its rise to the sky. This project is now guided by modern architects following Antoní Gaudi’s great design, artistic, and mathematical talents.
Since World War II the plight of Venice has become a cause for international concern. The increasing severity of the flooding, known as *acqua alta*, which afflicts the city, has begun to make daily life more and more difficult. The floods occur whenever the equinoctial high tides coincide with south winds, which prevent the outgoing tide from flowing out of the lagoon. The chief cause of the worsening situation
has been the steady draining of artesian water from the bedrock underneath the lagoon to satisfy the heavy demands of local industry, which has led to the progressive sinking of the terrain of Venice. (Howard, p 231)

The working class housing in the city is well below modern standards. Parks and other amenities of modern cities are conspicuously missing. Attempts to modernize old housing, as in Barcelona, have resulted in rents far beyond the means of ordinary citizens. “At the same time there is a strong sense of the need to preserve the fabric of the city. In recent decades, fund-raising campaigns on an international scale have financed the restoration of a number of notable architectural monuments. Rigid planning controls now forbid visible alterations to historic buildings, and the authorities can even force owners to remove extra stories added without permission.” (Howard, p 233)

Politics and culture play a huge part in modernization. In one famous incident, planning restrictions prevented the erection of what might have been the finest architecture example of the twentieth century in the city. Frank Lloyd Wright proposed to build a Memorial House to replace an existing building. This reconstruction would be called Masieri and it was intended to be a centre for foreign architectural students. It would be located on the Grand Canal between the Palazzo Balbi and the mouth of the Rio di Ca'Foscari. The designed was created by Wright with imaginative traditional Venetian elements blending perfectly with the Palazzo Balbi. Wealthy owners, speaking on behalf of similarly wealthy neighbors, convinced authorities to reject the project and insist on preserving the existing
façade of the original building on the site. The project was never approved and the building collapsed shortly after.

Another good example in Venice, set back from the Grand Canal on a broad flight of raised steps, is the new railway station. This station’s design is challenged by the buildings that surround it. Most professionals agreed that the station design is not offensive and is both functional and pleasing to the eye. In the same year, a new office block for the electrical company, the Società Adriatica di Elettricità, began construction on the banks of the Rio Nuovo. The architects of this building, Angelo Scattolin and Luigi Vetti, took over the approximate scale and rhythm of the bays from Venetian architectural convention. The design does not try to address the surrounding buildings. Admittedly, the surroundings on the Rio Nuovo were neither historic nor architecturally distinguished. However, what is called the international post-War office block style fits uneasily into the context of Venice as a whole. (Howard, p 234)
The fate of contemporary architecture in Venice as elsewhere seems to indicate that public bodies, and those with wealth and influence, are less seriously restricted by planning controls than ordinary private individuals. (The exception is, of course, the Biennale, where architectural innovation has always been welcomed, even expected.)

No conversation regarding preserving historic places in Venice is complete without the discussion of its flooding issues that threaten to destroy both old and modern structures. Associated Press reports that a $5.2 billion project to build flood barriers to save Venice is going forward. The project “Moses” has been opposed by environmentalists who say the project will turn Venice into a nightmare of stagnant ponds. The project's most prominent critic, Colgate University archaeologist Albert Ammerman, insists “...the gates will have to be closed far more often than their planners say. Since most of Venice's sewers empty into the city's canals and lagoon with little or no treatment, frequent lagoon closures could trigger serious environmental consequences.” (Woodard, Monitor)

Any discussion of restoring and preserving buildings in Venice must also include materials either constantly underwater or exposed to high levels of humidity. “The science behind water’s impact on these
building materials is essential to providing Venice with the extra precautions necessary for its preservation.” (Building Materials) Many people question how conservators can repair damage done by water while halting or slowing further damage. This is a question that will surely be relevant to any restoration in Havana in its highly humid, hurricane-experienced environment. Another important question is whether Venice has done enough to protect its buildings from water damage, and whether organizations such as UNESCO have provided sufficient aid to ensure its success (Building Materials).

The history of Venice and the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona is ongoing. Its architectural history coincides with politics of the times, social aspirations of its people, and the cities’ will to protect their importance to world history. “The fate of contemporary architecture in Venice, as elsewhere, seems to indicate that public bodies, and those with wealth and influence, are less seriously restricted by planning controls than ordinary private individuals. (The exception is, of course, the Biennale, where architectural innovation has always been welcomed, even expected.)”(Howard, p 234)

Despite its transitions under various regimes and rulers, and the technical obstacles presented by the ever-threatening waters that surround and often inundate, “the Venetian environment remains an exciting challenge to architects. The conservation of the city's architectural heritage should be a long term aim, but this should not be allowed to stifle the creative energies of the architects of the future.”(Howard, p 237)

“...dramatic as the problems in Venice are, they are by no means unique. Few of the world’s cities have historic cores as valuable...But in varying degrees they share Venice’s problems....Thus the next stage of central city regeneration will be one in which the
massive “slum clearance” of recent decades will be replaced by the discriminating insertion of new buildings and facilities to reinforce desirable neighborhood patterns and lifestyles.” (Fitch, p 50) The article above also includes careful historic renovation, consideration of new uses, and the modernization of services and utilities as core to the overall plan of any city anywhere, including Havana.

Figure 22 Venice Map
In 1966 the concept of 'insulae' to control flooding was born. This concept was utilized in the Tolentini project designed to protect some of the separate 'islands' within the city of Venice. The “islands” are formed by buildings and open spaces surrounded by canals. These islands are designed by raising the levels of the pavements at their edges to a fixed design height: first at 0.80 meters AMSL (1973) and later 1.00 meter AMSL (1984). This design height is the tide/surge level at which the mobile gates would be closed, thereby preventing
higher flood levels throughout the Lagoon and city, and keeping the insulae dry. The Tolentini project in the sestiere of Santa Croce, located on one of the city’s main thoroughfares, is the first insulae scheme to be approved by the Venetian city. It proposes raising the pavements and parts of the Campo San Nicolo to 1.00 meter AMSL. The current levels of the canal edge of the fundament vary from 1.02 meters AMSL to 0.71 meter AMSL (mean 0.92 meter), and at the building edge from 1.04 meters AMSL to 0.94 meter AMSL (mean 1.00 meter) (Rowsell, p 1).

Santa Croce sits in the North West part of the main islands of Venice and is divided into two areas. The district is home to Venice’s bus station and car parks. Eight historic churches and main tourist attractions reside in the area. This area was one of the first to receive the controversial “cement injections“ to beef up its sagging underpinnings over the years in order to save centuries old historic buildings and the newer buildings built as a result of the opening of the lagoon road.
Three excellent examples of revitalization and modernization of a city are the ongoing renovations to the famous Paris Metro; Le Grand Continental Hotel in the historic center of the city; and the gentrification of the Jewish Quarter.
The Metro

Sacrificing form for function, renovations under way in the Metro would make such stark changes as the installation of white tiles in the Opera station, replacing current design aspects that make the station unique and identify it as the area it services. “The vast Opéra station’s groovy blue tiles and retro typography, for example, were replaced this past winter with humdrum white (tile) walls. The seventies-swimming-pool sensibility of the original design created a funky design time capsule, now lost.” (Global Moxie, May 24, 2008) The blogger on Global Moxie hopes other stations will survive the sterile look of the Opera and be graced with designs as timely and appropriate as the Concorde station’s tribute to the Revolution with letters spelling out the text of the *La Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen*. The Metro is a city noted for its artistic innovation. It is never reluctant to express its modern self, amid its rich historical past as evidenced by the many modern buildings peppered throughout the city-- the Centre Pompidou being a prime example.

Figure 29 Metro Renovation
Le Grand Continental Hotel

Le Grand Hotel, built by Napoleon III in 1862, became officially listed as a national heritage site. The historic renovation of this hotel exemplifies the city’s attention to historic renovation and modern use. Today it is called the InterContinental Le Grand Hotel. The Hotel Online site reports that it includes every aspect of historic renovation. From small details such as re-silvering of original mirrors to a major addition of the new Club Intercontinental wing (which blends perfectly with the original outer building design). The hotel’s famous Café de la Paix—haunt of notables including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde—along with the storied Le Grand Salon Opera, the city’s most famous ballroom, were restored under the French government’s Department des Beaux Arts. They ensured that the project retained its Second Empire Style along with open space.
The Jewish Quarter

In stark contrast to the hotel renovations, a New York Times article details complaints by residents of the rue des Rosiers, the Jewish Quarter of the city. The residents complained about the guise of renovation, saying that the city is trying to turn the area into a “Jewish Disneyland” for commercial purposes." For the city, “the plan to renovate the historic rue des Rosiers and close it to traffic every Sunday afternoon is nothing more than a small but necessary step in a grand vision to modernize the French capital.” (New York Times, July 2009) The residents however, the article says, “want to keep the area as a Jewish enclave but instead are confronted with an influx of high real estate prices and ‘bourgeois bohemians,’ whose upscale shops, motorbikes and nightclubs have invaded theirs space and will eventually drive them out.” (New York Times, July 2009)
Summary of Three Projects

The three case studies discussed above provide a wealth of information pertinent and useful to other projects, including the Revitalization and Modernization of Old Havana. These case studies discussed how renovations and addition of modern uses and architecture ongoing in the three European cities were introduced and currently work. Each study presents problems that while different, are at times the same, based on social attitudes, cultural biases, financing and a myriad of other considerations that make decisions on how projects move forward.

For Barcelona, the evolution of its history has played a central role. Its status as an intellectual and cultural center of northern Spain together with a surging democracy prompted interest in the revitalization of the center city. Politics, nationalism, and a pragmatically-minded populace enabled city planners to promote the project and see it through to its successful conclusion. The death of the dictator Franco enabled it to free itself from dominance by larger Spanish interests. In the 1980s a second renaixença occurred, which in essence was a political and social evolution that lead to the historic renovation of Ciutat Vella.

The Cuitat Vella, or Old Town Project, addresses the rights of people while addressing structural shortcomings and the addition of amenities in an area which over time had been ignored. Its goal: "improving the living conditions in the district, confronting as a priority the underprivileged islands, and fighting the social inequality; fighting against the housing degradation and promoting rehabilitation; opening new urban spaces and increasing the number of available public facilities for social use in the district; promoting the participation and
city solidarity in the fight for the improvement of living conditions in the district.” (Cuitat, Rehabilitation: Objectives)

On the contrary, in Venice, the concept of revitalization and preservation for the public good has little meaning. Wealth and influence have a great bearing on projects, leaving the concept of improving quality of life for all citizens in the background when it comes to decision-making. Since the end of World War II Venice and its deterioration has become a world concern in contrast to Barcelona’s self-examination and determination to make the city a better, more livable place. Granted, Barcelona has not included modern architecture into its Cuitat Vella plan as has Venice, although not always appropriate in terms of design. Many authors discuss that the working class housing in the city of Venice is well below modern standards. Parks and other amenities of modern cities are conspicuously missing. Attempts to modernize old housing, as in Barcelona, have resulted in rents far beyond the means of ordinary citizens. In short, renovation has little if anything to do with social responsibility and more to do with self preservation from flooding and amenities for those who can afford to use them. There, as stated, politics and culture play a huge part in modernization. In one famous incident, planning restrictions prevented the erection of what might well have been the finest example of twentieth century architecture in the city--Frank Lloyd Wright’s 'Masieri Memorial House'...” In short, modernization was prohibited by those with influence, just for the sake of power. (you have already discussed this project earlier)

While a 5.2 billion project moves forward to save Venice from flood plains, the fact remains that self-preservation over historic concern prominent in Venice and missing in Barcelona. Doubts have been raised as to whether UNESCO has provided sufficient funds to see
the flood project through. Although “…dramatic as the problems in Venice are, they are by no means unique. Few of the world’s cities have historic cores as valuable…But in varying degrees they share Venice’s problems…” Thus the next stage of central city regeneration hopefully will be one in which the massive slum clearance of recent decades will be replaced by modern buildings and facilities meant to support decent to reinforce desirable neighborhood patterns and lifestyles (Fitch). Whether the project has the unanimous public support of Cuitat Vella remains a dubious question.

The third historic case study focuses on Paris, where attitudes toward renovation depend largely on commercial interests. This is combined with a hyper-cultural view of its historical treasures as targets of exacting preservation, and its neighborhoods as somewhat expendable. Parisians like modernity, and have applied it throughout their city with liberal élan. Unlike Barcelona, they are comfortable combining modern innovation buildings with historical treasures. Evidence of this can be found on any street in Paris, where perfectly preserved historic buildings sit side by side with modern structures often incongruent with its neighborhood and surrounding buildings.

The mentality of Parisians toward historic preservation and renovation is unique. At times they are willing to renovate, upgrade as it were, aspects of its historic infrastructure, while fiercely prohibiting even minor tinkering with other structures; and at other times more focused on modernizing and commercially oriented.

These attitudes are very divergent from those of either Barcelona or Venice. Evidence of this is that Paris is less focused on preserving ethnic neighborhoods than Barcelona, less interested in the preservation of cultural cliques, and more than willing to change and upgrade things as iconoclastic as the world renowned Metro stations.
On one hand they pay excruciating attention to detail when renovating Napoleonic era hotels such as Le Grand Continental, relegating its historic renovation to the auspices of the government department Beaux Arts. On the other hand, the famous Jewish Quarter is allowed to fall victim to modern commercialism. Residents of the area say it will turn it into a Jewish Disneyland. Criticism of the city’s unwillingness to renovate buildings in many neighborhoods into affordable housing has been an issue since the 1970s. Criticism of the city being too willing to construct modern buildings at the expense of rehabilitating old buildings that should be preserved is ongoing. Yet, the city has always been known for its innovative bent, its willingness to promote the new and the avant-garde. Therefore its attitude toward rehabilitation and renovation of the old should not be surprising.
Analysis

Figure 33 Ciutat Vella Plan Diagram

Figure 34 Venice Plan Diagram

Figure 35 Paris Plan Diagram
These diagrams show how the modern interventions to the city have merged with the fabric at plan and elevation levels.
Figure 39 Operative Diagrams/Concept
Chapter 3 Possible Sites

Figure 40 Old Havana Aerial
Site 1 Paseo de Marti Prado.

Figure 41 Site Aerial-El Prado

The Prado also has a number of features that makes it ripe for renovation and development.

- Beautiful Tree–lined promenade with wide sidewalks [see Figure 48 below];
- Stone benches that divide its outer edges from the streets;
- Historical architectural variety;
- Continuous arcades at street level, under all the buildings; and
- Deteriorated building conditions found within the area adjacent to the boulevard (mostly residential).

The Prado neighborhood begins at the north waterfront near La Punta Fortress and remains a major thoroughfare until it links with Máximo Gómez (Crain, 35).
Figure 42 Buildings facing El Prado

Figure 43 El Prado Blvd
“Plaza de la Catedral is a remarkable colonial entity in old Havana... It houses many historic buildings” (Marshall, 151).

- Numerous historic buildings;
- Ambience that makes it a desirable locale for commercial development;
- Regarded by many observers to be Havana's most architecturally harmonious square;
- Some buildings have been restored in this area; and
- It is already established as a tourist destination.

Some of the more historic and interesting buildings include:

1. The baroque cathedral of San Cristobal de la Habana, originally commissioned by the Jesuits and built from 1748 to 1777;
2. El Palacio de los Condes Bayona, the oldest Spanish building on the square, built in 1720;
3. The Marqueses de Arcos residence of 1741;
4. The Palace of Conde Lombillo of 1587; and,
5. The palace of the Marqueses de Aguas Claras, descendants of Ponce de León who went to Florida looking for the Fountain of Youth (Marshall 151).

The Plaza de la Catedral has a number of developmental initiatives which have already taken place in this neighborhood. For example, besides the baroque cathedral of San Cristobal de la Habana, Crain reports that, “Magnificent mansions that provided the spatial definition for the square have been restored and adapted as a gallery, restaurants, museums, and so on” (34).
A portion of Old Havana exists adjacent to the pier area near the Alameda de Paula that forms a triangle bordered by Calle de Santa Clara, Avenida Cuba and Avenida de Paula San Pedro. This area also presents an interesting location for renovation and modernization.

- It is isolated and somewhat disconnected from the mainly more visited parts of the city, due to its deterioration.
- It is in need of restoration: due to natural disasters there are three piers destroyed and left to dilapidate. They sit unattractively on the waterfront, the type of urban blight that has kept the area from becoming a viable tourist attraction.
- Alameda de Paula is the oldest promenade in the Cuban capital.
- It presents the opportunity of waterfront property, with great views and accessibility that give way to great living conditions and/or tourist destinations.
• Since this area sits within one of the main avenues in Old Havana, it presents the opportunity for commercial development as well as residential and tourist developments.

The Harbor may be considered the lower end of Old Havana in terms of location. The Office of History’s strategy was to begin restoration of the area with the five main plazas of Old Havana and the streets that connect them, creating an attractive atmosphere for pedestrians. With the Plaza Vieja as its centerpiece, this has somewhat but not completely accomplished. The triangle, as of now, remains.

The development of the formerly called Inner Havana led to the design of huge construction projects, one of which was the Alameda de Paula. Considered the first boulevard in the city, it was built by Antonio Fernández Trebejo in 1776. In the glory days of old Havana as center of the Spanish colonial government, it became a true social and cultural mecca, the vein of commerce between a thriving waterfront and the inner city.

In the beginning, the street consisted of a dirt road lined with poplars and stone benches—a pleasant meeting place for the inhabitants of the Village of San Cristóbal, which lacked recreational sites at the time. However, as with many sections of many cities, its attraction for tourists diminished over time with the city’s spread.

The Alameda de Paula takes its name from the former Hospital of Saint Francis of Paula, whose construction began in 1664 beside a church. In 1730, a hurricane hit the capital and destroyed both buildings, which were reconstructed in the current baroque style. Both the hospital and part of the church were demolished in 1946, reducing its attraction for tourists. Most choose to stay above the triangle and visit more interesting and advertised sites. Some relatively recent
renovations have readied the church and it is for used for baroque concerts.
Chapter 4 Site Selection and Analysis

Figure 49 Old Havana Figure Ground/Pedestrian Path
The Harbor/Alameda de Paula

The geographic location of this part of the Harbor is highly suitable for commercial development. Although it is becoming increasingly apparent that such efforts will be required to balance the residential aspects of the neighborhood. Such renovations will identify ways to improve the existing condition of the structures that are in place without destroying the essence of what makes the area attractive for development in the first place.

Approximately one seventh of the above mentioned figure of 35,500 existing buildings in the Historic Center are considered to
exhibit a great value with a protection category ranking one or two. In terms of these criteria the indexes, based upon international classification, takes into consideration the importance of the architectural, historic or social character, or even the uniqueness as a sample of a certain typology.

The Historic Center is overwhelmed by inadequate housing conditions, the qualitative and quantitative lack of services, and the inappropriate use of buildings with illegal sub-divisions and consequent overpopulation. When all of these conditions are added it results in excessive structural loads that accelerate the deterioration of these buildings, and, by extension the overall environment of the neighborhood.

The built environment has been disregarded for a very long time. Meanwhile, the introduction of non-compatible and aggressive uses further impacted the character of the original historic structures.

Macro Analysis: Site within Old Havana

The diagram above shows the result of the present restorations efforts by the Office of the City Historian. Most of the restored buildings have been turned into museums, restaurants and hotels for tourists, which are the number one source of income. This restoration process has left the locals out, many of them having to move out of the city into new developments. The major restorations have taken place around the Plaza Vieja and the Plaza de Armas, which have become very important tourist destinations.
Figure 51 Old Havana Existing Renovation efforts
Figure 52 Green Spaces/Squares
Figure 53 Pedestrian Streets

Figure 54 Tourist Circulation
Micro Site Analysis

Figure 55 Major Roads/Pedestrian Circulation

Figure 56 Sun Pattern/Flood Plain
Discussion

Hunt (2008) suggested that there is also much need to integrate global and even individual tourist prospects’ expectations as well as the ongoing progress within the Old Havana.

- As Segre, Coyula and Scarpaci (1997) suggested, “Time and neglect are etched onto both faces. The utopian ideal of restoring Havana will not only depend on life-saving foreign investment, real-estate developers, multinational corporations, or joint ventures. It will take more than skyscrapers, shiny hotels, and luxurious condominiums to revive a lackluster Havana and to restore its original radiance,” (p 390) commenting on the “Antillean Pearl” goal of the socialist government.
According to Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000), there are three dimensions along which heritage and geography intersect:

1. Heritage is inherently a spatial phenomenon, characterized by location, distribution and scale;
2. It is a fundamental part of cultural geography’s concern with signification, representation and identity; and,
3. Heritage is an economic instrument in policies of regional and urban development and regeneration (256).

Taken together, the foregoing considerations suggest that economic development initiatives must be thoughtful and careful. They focus on how best to utilize existing structures including their facades in order to maintain those qualities that comprise the desirable features of a neighborhood while balancing the needs of the residents and visitors to the area.
Chapter 5 Programming

The goal of my project is to create a program that will create a mix of different activities and spaces to active the life of the city.
- Entertainment areas
- Esplanades/Promenades
- Parks/Open Spaces destinations
- Commercial Node
- Plaza Intersections
- The promotion of cheaper accommodation alternatives such as hostels and pensions is a good practice to achieve the planned goal to involve the inhabitants in the system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Total SF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office/Institutional</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining and Entertainment</td>
<td>65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>540,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Program
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Day/Night</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bookstore</td>
<td>Day and Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Clubs</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry Stores</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antique Shops</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Shops</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stores</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Stores</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museums</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Galleries</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Stores</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Offices</td>
<td>Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Cream Shops</td>
<td>Day and Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>Day and Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Shops</td>
<td>Day and Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Day and Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nightclubs</td>
<td>Day and Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Day and Night</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Program Uses/Day/Night
Chapter 6 Conceptual Schematic Design

Figure 58 Conceptual Design
A number of potential projects exist for this region. Although the dock facilities will have to be removed to allow, for example, for the opening of the old walled precinct of the city to the water, and the recycling of the piers for commercial and leisure uses. This will allow for the public green spaces, related to the revitalization of the Alameda de Paula, to include things such as seafood restaurants (thereby promoting local fishing), art galleries and shops. It would also allow the provision of boat tours around the bay or to nearby places.

Any successful resurgence will depend on the area’s connection to the Old Havana tourist center, through the narrow byways of the triangle. One positive starting place to affect this connectivity is Calle de Cuba, Cuba Street.

Cuba Street, connected diagonally to the two other streets mentioned in the triangle, traverses the entire perimeter of Old Havana. It is called the Street of Churches, its crosses form a straight line all of the way, from one end to the other. Three of the oldest religious buildings in Havana are located on this street—La Merced, The Sacred Spirit Churches and the old Santa Clara’s Convent, which sits on the narrow Santa Clara Street vein. Transportation connections from Cuba Street through the warren of interconnecting streets would surely rejuvenate the Alameda de Paula area and promote further development. Historic renovation and upgrading of old buildings on the connecting streets mentioned would go a long way in improving the area and its attraction as a viable section of the city worth a visit from tourist and for residents a neighborhood worth living in. Successful connections from the Plaza Vieja, center of Old Havana, to Cuba Street and on through the other streets of the triangle to Alameda de Paula would ensure development interest, the historical renovation of buildings in the area and addition
of amenities favorable to residence, commercial enterprise and tourism, culminating in a rebirth of the Alameda de Paula.

Figure 59 Site Sketch Model

Figure 60 Schematic Design Model
Figure 62 shows the proposed major routes for the area. The red dots represent the major public nodes for the master plan.
Conditions to Address on the Site

Figure 64 New Building to visually turn corner

Figure 65 Make entry space between new and old

Figure 66 Relate to Existing Fenestration Pattern
Figure 67 Steps Corner Condition

Figure 68 Create Views from paths

Figure 69 Terminate existing visual axes
Figure 70 shows a possible intervention on a corner street where a historic building has been replaced by a modern building with some open space in the front.
Figure 71 shows how a historic building’s first two floors have been removed to create an open space and widen the sidewalk.
Figure 72 shows a possible terminus for a street that terminates on the waterfront.
Figure 73 shows an idea for converting one of the piers into a public space.
Figure 74 shows a sketch of the look of a possible street closed to car circulation. It has a public space with green areas for the residents.

Urban Design Strategies

My Urban Design Plan establishes the following priorities:
1. Improve the design and appearance of historic buildings;
2. Preserve important parts of the City's heritage;
3. Enhance the vibrancy and diversity of Old Havana’s character and setting;
4. Transform the quality of place through public realm improvements;
5. Integrate public and private spaces and enhance peoples’ use and enjoyment of the City; and 6. Create a strategy to reconnect the city.
Chapter 7 Final Design Solution

This thesis has arrived at a design proposal that addresses existing problems in the site and creates a framework for future revitalization and modernization of Old Havana.

Figure 75 Schematic Design
Table 3 Existing Conditions/Proposed Interventions
Table 4 Existing Conditions/Proposed Interventions
Table 5 Existing Conditions/Proposed Interventions
Table 6 Existing Conditions/Proposed Interventions
Table 7 Existing Conditions/Proposed Interventions
Table 8 Existing Conditions/Proposed Interventions
The Master Plan shows the proposed intervention. New pedestrian street and waterfront development become the modern element of the proposal.
Naked Plan shows the public realm. to the circle shows the two mile radius that is considered walking distance, to reinforce the concept of a pedestrian district.
Figure 78 Site Program

Proposed Program Uses. The mixture of different uses promotes diversity and change.
Block Structure showing the diversity of proposed uses.
Figure 86 Street Section
Figure 87 Street Section-New Library

Section cutting through proposed outdoor café. The goal is to create pedestrian friendly spaces in the middle of a narrow street and open up the space.

Figure 88 Street Section-Park

Section cutting through proposed outdoor café across from the Neighborhood Park. The goal is to widen sidewalks and create a safe and friendly environment.
View down Luz Street. Existing residential street with a diversity of uses added to the ground floors to enhance the pedestrian traffic out to the waterfront edge.
Figure 90 View of the Park

Figure 91 View of the Central Space
Figure 92 Modern Shopping Center

Figure 93 New Aquatic Museum
Figure 94 New Marina
Figure 95 Massing Model
Figure 96 Design Proposal Model
Figure 97 Design Proposal Model
New Park/Outdoor Exhibition space and Shopping Center View

New Marina and Park View
Figure 100 Model

View of Revitalized Neighborhood Park.

Figure 101 Model

View of Luz Street
Central Space/Activity Node to generation movement on Cuba and Luz Street.
Chapter 8 Conclusion

For Cuba to step into the 21st century, it must first confront the many challenges of its past and the implications for its future that presently exist within its societal value system. Many respect the need for revitalization and preservation of Havana’s oldest and most prestigious buildings. What will happen to those buildings? Will they continue to fall down and prove a hazard to Cuba’s people? Will preservation mean further deterioration of public services and lack of housing? Still the question remains: what will be the impact of further foreign investment for the tourism industry? It is clear that in order for there to be change the outside world must come to Cuba, nourish Cuba and support it in its infancy toward reform but at what detriment to its past? The Cuban society cannot evolve in a vacuum, that is clear; but there must be a way to serve all the interests of her people.

Results will show in a unique urban fabric that recovers its image step by step, developing a new life for veritable treasures of old architecture and – most important of all – really improving the quality of life of a population that shares and exchanges its new experiences with all welcomed visitors to the Historic Center.

The goal of my project was to create a place that will attract not only tourists by also locals, particularly from Old Havana, and allow them to experience their city in different ways: not just as a tourist destination, but also a place to work and recreate, and subsequently a desirable place to live. The long term goal is for Old Havana to become a safe environment with an urban resident population reflective of
Cuban society, a place that is socially and economically diverse. People’s apprehension about living there due to the state and conditions of the buildings must be the first need to be addressed, if there is to be any chance of a successful residential revitalization.

In the short run, however, there need to be places that will attract a diverse public, places which will serve to reacquaint people, through the process of discovery, to the old city. The harbor shopping and entertainment district with its diverse uses and activities is a good vehicle to achieve this, and locating it at the waterfront increases the dynamism of both the residential district and the waterfront edge.

In conclusion, this thesis has taken a deeper look into at modern urban design and existing site specific qualities to determine the most appropriate approach to urban revitalization and modernization of a section of Old Havana. It addresses the pedestrian by building facades and wider sidewalks. It also activates the waterfront edge by creating a diversity of uses and activities for both the residents and visitors. The final result proposes an urban design that has an urban presence in both the neighborhood and the city. It has turned an underappreciated and underdeveloped part of the city into a livable and desirable place to live, work and visit.
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