

## Panama Viejo (Panama)

No 790bis

### 1. BASIC DATA

*State Party:* Panama

*Name of property:* Archaeological site of Panama Viejo

*Location:* Panama' Province, Panama' District

*Date received:* 1 February 2002

*Category of property:*

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a site or a group of buildings.

*Brief description:*

This nomination is an extension of the existing nomination of the old part of Panama' city, to cover the location and ruins of the first European settlement and the pre-hispanic remains.

### 2. THE PROPERTY

*Description*

The archaeological site of Panama' Viejo is the site of the oldest European town on the American mainland, founded in 1519. When the town was moved to a new location in 1673, the place has been abandoned and never rebuilt. The area retained its original streets and open spaces pattern and is a public park nowadays. In the 'park' the impressive ruins of the cathedral, churches, water installations, Town Hall, and private houses are preserved and well presented to the public.

Some of the older remains, dating to up to thousand years before the arrival of the Europeans, were excavated and the finds presented in the local museum.

*History*

The old town was founded in 1519 by Pedrarias D'Avila. It soon became an important commercial and administrative center as well as important port and seat of Royal Tribunal. Only the climate, being considered unhealthy, prevented the development of the town to the size and importance of Guatemala or Bogota. The town was destroyed by fire in 1672 and the new town, 8 kms to the southwest replaced it a year later. Since then and until 1949 only time, environment and for a certain period re use of materials, effected the state of conservation and integrity of the site.

The site remained state property and only in 1949 a new neighborhood was established at its northern fringes, not effecting any visible or known remains.

*Management regime*

*Legal provision:*

Several laws, some specific to Panama' Viejo, protect the site.

*Management structure:*

A mixed state-private entity has been established in 1995 with the objective of protection and management of the site. It took over the role from the National Heritage Office. The latter is on the board of the new PPV (Patronato Panama' Viejo) and must approve all conservation measures.

*Resources:*

Financial resources are provided yearly by the national institutes for tourism and culture.

*Justification by the State Party (summary)*

Being the earliest and very well preserved European settlement on American mainland and having also at least thousand years of earlier history is the main justification.

*Criterion i:* the oldest grid plan on mainland America, which influenced town planning in the whole continent.

*Criterion ii:* the layout of the town represents important interchange of human values.

*Criterion iii:* the remains offer invaluable testimony of daily life, culture, economy and technology in the specific period.

*Criterion iv:* buildings represent significant stage in the development of colonial Spanish society.

*Criterion v:* example of how conservation of immovable historic property is effected by modern life, needs and pressures.

*Criterion vi:* closely linked to the discovery of Pacific Ocean, Spanish expansion, history of Piracy, bullion lifeline to Europe.

### 3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

*Actions by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS mission has visited the site in February 1996 at the time of the inscription of The Historic District of Panama, with the Salon Bolivar.

*Conservation*

*Conservation history:*

Documentation and conservation are the subject of action of state and recently the PPV organizations. Conservation plans exist and are implemented.

*State of conservation:*

Some of the remains are decaying as result of humidity, but in general the remains are in good state of conservation.

*Management:*

The site has a good management plan and management organization to implement it.

*Risk analysis:*

The risks of housing, roads and other development is being controlled. There is a slight risk due to possible flooding and preventive measures are being considered.

*Authenticity and integrity*

The site keeps its full authenticity and integrity.

*Comparative evaluation*

None of the comparable sites are as well preserved and as old as Panama' Vieja.

*Outstanding universal value*

*General statement:*

The high significance of this extension derives from its contribution to the knowledge of town planning, building technologies and spread of cultures into new areas. It is significant as well as complementing the previous nomination, which represents later periods in the life of the town.

*Evaluation of criteria:*

ICOMOS sees that *criteria ii, iii, iv* and *vi* were met:

- Abandoned after relatively short period of existence, without being completely demolished or altered makes the site an exceptional testimony of town planning of its period and culture;
- For the same reasons the site is an exceptional example of the period's building technology and architecture;
- Being the earliest new town on the Pacific coast. This was the point for Spanish colonization of Western parts of Latin America and the spread of European culture in the region.

#### **4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Recommendation for the future*

That general context be respected as well as special attention paid to possible visual risks, mainly in possible developments in the buffer zone.

*Recommendation with respect to inscription*

ICOMOS recommends that the extension of the nomination of Panama' Viejo be approved to include the archaeological site.

ICOMOS, March 2003