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# Colonial City of Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) No 526bis

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## 1 Basic information

### State Party

Dominican Republic

### Name of property

Colonial City of Santo Domingo

### Location

National District  
Province of Puerto Plata  
Province of La Vega

### Inscription

1990

### Brief description

After Christopher Columbus's arrival on the island Hispaniola in 1492, Santo Domingo became the site of the first cathedral, hospital, customs house and university in the Americas. This colonial town, founded in 1498, was laid out on a grid pattern that became the model for almost all town planners in the New World.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

13 March 2024

## 2 Issues raised

### Background

The Colonial City of Santo Domingo was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1990 under criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi), based on its significance as one of the earliest colonial settlements in the Americas, founded soon after the arrival of Christopher Columbus to Hispaniola. The grid pattern of the urban layout of the historic district represents a model that was replicated and adapted throughout the region, and its historical buildings are a unique evidence of the architectural influence of the European Gothic style in the former colonies of the Kingdom of Spain. At the time of inscription, the boundaries and buffer zone of the property were not defined. In response to the Retrospective Inventory, the State Party submitted a map clarifying the boundaries the property which was approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2013 (Decision 37COM 8D). A Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2014 (Decision 38COM 8E).

The integrity of the historic centre of Santo Domingo has been persistently vulnerable to decay, development pressures, and natural hazards, prompting the examination of the state of conservation of the property by the World Heritage Committee since 1993.

Considering the existing development threats to the property, requests by the World Heritage Committee for the establishment of a buffer zone were initiated in 2006 (Decision 30COM 7B.94). Since then, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to formally establish a buffer zone and corresponding regulatory frameworks (Decisions 31COM 7B.125 and 34COM 7B.108). The City Hall of the National District (*Distrito Nacional*), where the property is located, issued an Ordinance in 2011 which established a buffer zone (Ordinance 03-2011) that includes the immediate setting of the historic district on the west bank of Ozama River, as well as a zoning and regulations for the property and buffer zone. In 2013, The World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to formally establish a buffer zone in Santo Domingo East (*Santo Domingo Este*), on the east bank of Ozama River, and submit a minor boundary modification request to establish the buffer zone according to the paragraphs 163-164 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Decision 37COM B.96). The municipality of Santo Domingo East issued an Ordinance in 2015 (Ordinance 02-2015) approving the creation of a buffer zone for the Colonial City. The request by the World Heritage Committee to submit a minor boundary modification request to officially establish the buffer zone has been reiterated in Decisions 38COM 7B.42 (2015); 40COM 7B.4 (2017); 42COM 7B.37 (2019); 44COM 7B.66 (2021); and 45COM 7B.114 (2023).

### Modification

The two proposed buffer zones have been defined as a transition area between the historic centre and the urban fabric of the modern city of Santo Domingo. The delineation of the proposed buffer zones involves two municipalities, with an area of 414.95 ha in the National District, where the property is entirely located, and 51 ha in Santo Domingo East, which is located on the east bank of Ozama River.

The buffer zone located in the National District covers land and marine areas, up to the central axis of the Ozama River and its mouth, and a marine area extending two kilometres south of the border in the Caribbean Sea. The buffer zone located in Santo Domingo East includes the neighbourhoods of Calero, Los Molinos and Villa Duarte, in Villa Duarte Sector.

The proposed buffer zones are conceived as intermediate control zones between the property and the rest of the city, which safeguard the historic landscape setting. Their delineation is based on the study of the surrounding area of the Colonial City, considering future potential developments, in order to provide restrictions in use and development.

The buffer zone in the National District is included in the Strategic Plan for the Colonial City (2006), and is supported by Ordinance No.3/2011 (2013) which defines zoning, use and intervention for the property and buffer zone. The buffer zone in Santo Domingo East is enforced with by Ordinance 02-2015 with the purpose to protect views from and to the property from the east bank of Ozama River.

An inter-institutional agreement is in place since 2005 that includes the Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Historic Centre (ADN), the City Hall of the National District and the National Directorate of Monumental Heritage (DNPM), and the Ministry of Culture (MINC) as managers of the property (resolution 154-05), as well as a Committee for the Conservation of the Colonial City of Santo Domingo (CCSD). Applications for new constructions, expansions or reconstruction within the boundaries of the property and buffer zones are reviewed and approved by the DNPM and the ADN as prescribed in Ordinance 03-11. ICOMOS notes that it is unclear whether the municipality of Santo Domingo East will take part in the management system for the property after the approval of the proposed buffer zones. ICOMOS considers that it will be necessary to include the municipality of Santo Domingo East in the management system of the property and buffer zones and corresponding coordination mechanisms.

In addition, ICOMOS notes that a formal mechanism for Heritage Impact Assessment is not proposed, and recommends to establish a formal system to further protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

### **3 Recommendations**

#### **Recommendations with respect to inscription**

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zones for the Colonial City of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, be **approved**.

#### **Additional recommendations**

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Including the Municipality of Santo Domingo East (*Santo Domingo Este*) in the management system of the property and buffer zones, and involving it in the relevant inter-institutional agreements,
- b) Establishing a Heritage Impact Assessment mechanism that would further support the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.



Map showing the boundaries of the proposed buffer zones (February 2024)