

9.12 View across Havana bay.



of the Spanish State, the City Historian's Office and the City of Havana Assembly of People Power, have joined in an effort to rehabilitate the first part of the Malecón from Paseo del Prado to Belascoain Street in Maceo Park. These fourteen blocks are mostly residential with some hotel, office and warehouse structures. 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. The location of this stretch of the Malecón is ideal for commercial development; however, the condition of the existing fabric prohibits new uses and any such development must be in balance with the residential character of the area. Any new construction will be required to follow the general character of the existing fabric and maintain the rhythms of the traditional elements – ground floor, doorways, balconies, terraces, cornices, terraced roof, etc.

Until now, the cautious acceptance of Cuban–foreign tourist-related, real estate joint ventures, has concentrated on the best locations along the Malecón and in Miramar. This is despite attempts to redirect some of this development to the east, to large tracts of well-connected empty land. The problem is that even if these planning attempts may seem perfectly reasonable, they fly in the face of five centuries of development tradition.

Once the docks are gone from the southern part of the bay, some very interesting possibilities present themselves. It would allow, for example, 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, art galleries and shops. It would also allow the provision of boat tours around the bay or to nearby places such as Cojímar.

On the eastern part of the bay lies Casablanca, a small village that