



## **The Planning of Imperial Madrid in 16th century: From the Americas to the Capital of the Empire**

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The designation of Madrid as the permanent capital and residence of Philip II's court in 1561 was a major advancement for the Hispanic Empire. Most of Early Modern European realms had their capitals settled by that time. The academic community has largely discussed the selection of Madrid among other candidates. Madrid was undeveloped in comparison with Toledo, Valladolid or the ever-growing Seville. Nevertheless, Valladolid had recently suffered a devastating fire that destroyed most of the city centre. Toledo had a medieval urban pattern not compatible with the new architectural order that the king was introducing in the realm. And Seville was also unsuitable for its southern location and the immense growth because of incoming habitants attracted by the wealth from the Americas. Philip II aimed to impose a newly urban order that reflected his vision of the Hispanic Universal Monarchy. He was introducing a classical language in architecture and abandoning the flourished plateresque that dominated the kingdom in former periods. The development of the city was greatly focused on the surroundings of the regal premises, and included planned urban expansion, transformation of the plaza mayor, another extension of the city wall etc. The acquisition of properties by the king's household was in continuous increment, and at the same time tried to control the urban expansion. The growth of the city increased in an unprecedented way, impossible to prevent, Philip II tried unsuccessfully to control the development with norms and legislation. In this context, how was the capital that Philip II desired to create? In 1565, the king received a detailed memorandum concerning the needs of a capital city; Rivera Blanco (1985) identified the regal architect Juan Bautista de Toledo as the voice behind the missive. The report describes a capital of incredibly 'modern' for the period in terms of hygiene, classical urban order, embellishment etc. The academic community has paid very little attention to this report and the importance in understanding the imperial city pictured by the king, but also the urban vision of the largest empire in Early Modern Western Europe. This paper explores the urban vision of the Hispanic empire through the analysis of the capital city; the reconstruction of Valladolid after the fire and the extensive reform of Toledo's plaza mayor. Furthermore, this study seeks to demonstrate how the city that Philip II and his architect aimed to create was influenced by the classical urban order but most importantly by the recent experience in the American new towns.

**KEY WORDS:** Madrid, Renaissance, Classical Urban Order.