

Decree 17: Panama's new rules, and why they favour new property

Executive Decree No. 17 of 8 September 2026 replaces the 2020 rules. Here is what is new, and what it means for investors in Mercan's projects.

NOW · NEW PROPERTY, FIRST SALE US\$300,000 Maintained for new property, including all three Mercan projects	NOW · RESALE PROPERTY US\$500,000 Up from US\$300,000: US\$200,000 more for the same residence permit
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Other routes: Panamanian securities US\$500,000 · deposit at a state bank US\$500,000 · deposit at a private bank US\$750,000. New property is the lowest entry point.

What the decree does now	BENEFIT TO THE INVESTOR
01 First sale is defined, and all three Mercan projects qualify The decree sets US\$300,000 for a first sale by the developer. Santa María Residences is a new development cited by MICI itself, and MICI has confirmed in writing that both Pullman products are first sales. Before: No definition of a first sale	VALUE A choice of new residential or branded hotel assets at the lowest entry price.
02 Investors can buy through their company A Panamanian or foreign company, or a private interest foundation, that the investor owns and controls. Before: Not expressly provided	FLEXIBILITY Residence fits the structure the investor already uses for wealth and succession.
03 Off-plan purchases are protected A promise of sale qualifies at US\$300,000 when the funds are held by a licensed trust until title is registered, as in every Mercan project. Before: No specific protection	SAFETY Funds are held by a licensed Panamanian trust until title is registered.
04 Decisions have deadlines MICI: up to 15 business days once a complete file is admitted. Immigration: up to 30 business days. Before: No deadlines	CERTAINTY Plan your move around legal maximums, not open-ended waits.
05 The family can grow after approval A spouse married, or children born or adopted, after approval join directly as permanent residents. Already have a family? Include them from the start. Before: Two years of provisional residence first	PEACE OF MIND Marry or have children later without starting again.
06 Dependants can now invest alongside the investor An investment held with a spouse or with dependants on the same application, such as children or parents, counts as one qualifying investment. Before: Spouses only	FLEXIBILITY Family members can pool their own funds to reach the threshold.

A PROGRAMME WITH MOMENTUM · MICI, JULY 2025 TO JUNE 2026		
268 investment certificates, up from 193 the year before	US\$113.6M invested, up from US\$90.1M	87.3% of certificates were for real estate

Three first-sale projects at the US\$300,000 threshold

Each is sold by the developer through a promise of sale, with the investment held by a licensed Panamanian trust until title is transferred, which is the structure the decree recognises.

SANTA MARÍA, PANAMA CITY Santa María Residences	PULLMAN PANAMA CITY Hotel co-ownership	PULLMAN PANAMA CITY Executive Suites
From US\$347,000 New 2- and 3-bedroom apartments, 81 to 160 m², near Costa del Este, with an individual title deed. The only 2-bedroom apartments in Santa María, where other developments offer 3 bedrooms only. FIRST SALE · NEW DEVELOPMENT	Investment US\$300,000 A co-ownership share in a 5-star Pullman (Accor) hotel and casino on Ricardo Arias Avenue, fully renovated under a new horizontal property regime. FIRST SALE · CONFIRMED BY MICI	From US\$306,652.50 One of 126 branded suites, 50 to 85 m², in the same building, with an individual title deed in the investor's name. FIRST SALE · CONFIRMED BY MICI

From signature to residence card

01	02	03	04	05	06
Onboarding	Licensed trust	MICI admission	Investment certificate	Permanent residence	In Panama
KYC and the legal package, signed remotely	Compliance review and receipt of funds	Complete file submitted online by local counsel	Up to 15 business days	Up to 30 business days, investor and family	Biometrics and residence cards

Steps in gold: maximum times set by the decree, counted from a complete file and paused by any request for documents.

Why investors file with us

Named by the Ministry. MICI's announcement of Decree 17 cites Mercan's Santa María tower as an investment that creates jobs in Panama.

Official partner of the programme. Mercan has a signed partnership agreement with the Government of Panama to promote the programme worldwide, with over US\$200 million invested in Panama.

Ahead of the decree. Our files are prepared with leading Panamanian counsel and the lessons of MICI's first reviews under the new rules.

One team, start to finish. The Mercan Group's legal team, IAS, coordinates the investor, the trust, counsel, MICI and Immigration, and the annual confirmation after approval.

37 years in investment migration. 4,100+ Golden Visa investors in Portugal and Greece.

Good to know before you invest

Funds: the investor's own, traceable from abroad.

Value: what counts is the lower of the price paid and the market value, less any liens.

Financing: only for the part above the minimum investment.

Holding: 5 years, confirmed to MICI each year.

Signed before 16 September 2026? The previous rules can still apply if the application is filed by 16 March 2027.

Six situations, six answers

How the new rules work for real investor profiles. The situations are illustrative examples.

01 Two lifestyles, one entry price

One family wants a home near Costa del Este while the children study. Another investor wants a share in a branded hotel in the city centre.

The rule: both buy new from the developer and qualify at US\$300,000. A resale would need US\$500,000.

The benefit: a home at Santa María Residences, or a share in the Pullman hotel, at the same threshold.

Good to know: the value that counts is the lower of the price paid and the market value.

02 Residence and inheritance together

An entrepreneur, aged 60, wants a residence permit and wants the apartment to pass to his two children without court proceedings.

The rule: the property can be held by a company or a Panamanian private interest foundation that he owns and controls.

The benefit: Panama has no inheritance, estate or gift tax and no forced heirship. A foundation's property passes under its own rules, without Panamanian probate.

Good to know: residence is personal and is not inherited. Heirs may be taxed in their own country.

03 Buy off-plan, with funds protected

An investor commits to a Santa María apartment before the tower is finished.

The rule: a promise of sale qualifies at US\$300,000 when the funds are held by a licensed trust.

The benefit: residence does not wait for the building, and the funds stay with the trust until title is registered.

Good to know: residence based on a promise of sale alone is limited to three years in total.

04 Plan the move

A family wants the children in a Panamanian school by January.

The rule: MICI decides within 15 business days of admitting a complete file; Immigration within 30.

The benefit: a timeline to plan around. Our files reflect the lessons of MICI's first reviews, so they are complete from the start.

Good to know: these are legal maximums; any request for documents pauses the clock.

05 Life after approval

An investor, aged 35, obtains residence, marries two years later and has a child.

The rule: a spouse married, or a child born or adopted, after approval joins directly as a permanent resident.

The benefit: no two-year provisional stage. Fees: US\$1,000 to the Treasury and US\$1,000 to Immigration per person.

Good to know: existing family members should be included in the first application.

06 Reach the threshold together

A couple and their student son combine their savings for one apartment.

The rule: an investment held with a spouse or dependants on the same application counts as one investment.

The benefit: the family qualifies together, with one property.

Good to know: each contribution must come from the person's own funds, traceable from abroad.