Plans for Olympic Games, 2008 Beijing
by Professor Dr. Lifang Wang

The design and construction of the Olympic facilities for the 2008 summer games will be critical in creating an outstanding Olympic experience. The design principles must account for both the requirements of the Olympic events and the future use of the facilities. In general, the design philosophy favors adapting existing structures over building new ones and building less expensive temporary facilities over facilities built for longer term use.

Overview of Olympic facilities

The plans laid out by the Chinese government call for 35 sports stadiums, 30 of which will be in Beijing. The five remaining structures will be built at Qingdao, Shanghai, Tianjing, Shenyang, and Qinghuangdao. Of these 35 structures, 18 are new, 13 are modified existing structures, and 4 are temporary. 59 training facilities will also be required. Additional construction will include the Olympic Village, a convention center, and miscellaneous infrastructure.

The facilities at Beijing will consist of a core and three independent districts. The Olympic Park will form the core and will be composed of 10 sports stadiums. The western, university and northern districts will be composed of seven, five and three stadiums each. Of these 30 structures in Beijing, 15 are new, 11 are modified existing structures, and four are temporary.

The planning phase for the Olympic facilities began shortly after Beijing received the bid for the 2008 summer games. The process was structured to be an open competition. After an open submission stage, finalists are selected by a committee of experts. A vote is then taken from the general public from which the Chinese government draws a decision. Presently, the competition for the general layout of the Olympic Park has been completed. The architectural design competitions for the Wu Ke Song (Five Pine) Cultural and Athletic Center, the national swimming center, the tennis stadium, and the field hockey stadium have also been completed. Conceptual design for the national stadium, the largest stadium for the Olympic Games, has finished as well. Both prestigious architects and experts in the design of athletic facilities were involved in deciding these competitions.
Major Features

1. Olympic Park
The Olympic Park, located in north central Beijing, will form the core for the Olympic games. The Park will serve as a public space for sports, culture, fairs, and entertainment, providing an additional tourist attraction to the city of Beijing.

The Olympic Park occupies 1135 hectares, composed of a central district of 291 hectares, a forest park of 680 hectares, an existing stadium occupying 114 hectares and a miscellaneous area of 50 hectares. The park will host 11 events in 10 stadiums. The Olympic Park will consist of 2.5 million square meters of space composed of the national stadium, the national swimming center, the convention center, and the Olympic Village.

The Olympic park’s design competition took place from March of 2002 to July of 2002. A joint design by the American company Sasaki Associates and the Tianjing hua hui engineering and architecture institute took first place. The design places the Olympic Park in northern Beijing along the central axis. The design eases the Park into its local surroundings by placing shops and service structures around a central area for the stadiums. The design also took care not to disturb the history of the region.

After the design was selected, changes were added by experts, officials from the city of Beijing, the Beijing Olympic organizing committee, and the federal government. Presently, the design has been finalized.

2. National Stadium (main stadium)
Opening and closing ceremonies as well as the track and field competition will be hosted at the National Stadium. The stadium will have permanent seating for over 80,000 people as well as temporary and event-specific seating for an additional 20,000 people. The stadium also features a retractable roof.
After general planning of the Olympic Park, a conceptual competition was held for the national stadium. The joint work of the Swiss company Herzog & De Meuron and the Chinese Institute of Architecture were selected as a favorite and received critical praise.

3. National Swimming Center
The national swimming center occupies 80,000 square meters and will host events such as swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, and the water polo finals. After the Olympics, the national swimming center will be available for public use. The national swimming center has attracted donations from both domestic and foreign Chinese.

The design competition for the national swimming center began in January of 2003 and was completed in June. (-----) Currently, the design details have been finalized.

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