

rently occupied by softball fields, Washington Park fit the criteria. Plus, its proximity to the University of Chicago means that university facilities could be used for practice fields, eliminating the need to create new ones.

Additional connections between venues and academic institutions were recognized, creating the possibility of synergies with local colleges such as the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Illinois Institute of Technology, Northwestern University, Chicago State University, and downtown institutions such as Roosevelt University and DePaul University.

Because the proposed Olympic stadium would largely be intended as a temporary structure, \$316 million for construction would come from OCOG funds, and an additional \$50 million would be privately funded—from the sale of air rights over the McCormick Place Convention Center truck marshaling yards—to create the permanent, or “legacy,” portion of the stadium. The temporary 80,000-seat stadium would be disassembled after the Olympics, leaving behind a 5,000-seat venue that would be better suited for a wider range of cultural and sporting events and programs. Modular components, such as concessions stands, toilets, and seating, among others, could be adapted to other venues after the Olympics are gone. The footprint left by the stadium once it is broken down—including a soft running track and a sloped berm system to support seating—would make it more readily adaptable to regular use and acceptable as a lasting memory of the Olympics.

Phil Enquist, partner in charge of planning and urban design in the Chicago office of SOM, touts Chicago’s ability to celebrate a real “city Olympics.” From the outset, people involved in the city’s bid realized that Chicago’s infrastructure, especially the parks system, provided a strong framework to support an event like the Olympics, he notes. “We looked to the park system to support a lot of the Olympics venues,” explains Enquist. “Parks are connected very strongly to neighborhoods and many academic institutions. The framework of the parks allowed [Chicago 2016] to do venue planning without purchasing more land.”

The Olympic Village is planned for a 37-acre (15-ha) area along the lakefront south of

L.A. Goes for the Gold

ARGUABLY ONE OF THE BEST OLYMPICS GAMES ever staged was the 1984 event in Los Angeles, which was also host of the 1932 Olympics. Organizers of the more recent games discredited concerns about traffic woes as athletes and spectators flowed easily from venue to venue throughout an Olympics that were the first to turn a profit—an operating surplus of \$235 million in 1984 dollars. In many regards, the Los Angeles model is still emulated today by host-city hopefuls.

Hoping to build on that legacy and to become the second three-time host city—after London, site of the 2012 games—Los Angeles is competing with Chicago to be the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) candidate city for 2016. While relying on the city’s legendary climate and iconic imagery, the Los Angeles bid differs from that of Chicago in at least one major way—construction.

The 2004 Olympic Games in Athens were plagued by cost overruns and construction delays, resulting in many venues not being field-tested before the event. At one point, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) threatened to relocate the Olympics because of late construction. Realizing the IOC’s distaste for uncertainty, Los Angeles’s bid centers on existing venues. The centerpiece would be what organizers have promised will be a “renovated, transformed facility”—the Los Angeles Coliseum, historic for its role in both the 1932 and 1984 Olympics, and a permanent landmark. Organizers are touting the coming together of tradition, state-of-the-art venues, and legacy as the hub of the Los Angeles Olympics plan.

Most of the many competition venues needed for Olympic events have already been constructed, thereby minimizing potential pitfalls of new construction or costly renovations. These include venues such as Staples Center, home to several professional sports teams and one of the most successful sports arenas in the country, and Home Depot Center, home to professional soccer, tennis, and other sporting events. Likewise, the Olympic Village, a standard event component originating at the 1932 Olympic Games, would use existing student residence halls at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), complete with existing dining facilities and athletic training sites. The University of Southern California (USC), immediately adjacent to the Coliseum, would serve as the Media Village.

Barry Sanders, chairman of the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games, takes pride in the promise of the Los Angeles bid to return the Olympics to its roots. “Because we can stage the games with almost no construction of permanent facilities, we can turn our attention to building human spirit, human achievement, and joy—the fundamental Olympic values,” says Sanders.

Los Angeles’s role as one of the world’s great media centers and the centerpiece of the entertainment industry brings with it a unique capacity to stage events and make the Olympics a celebration. Sanders recognizes this, stating, “We will employ our star power to put a spotlight on [the athletes’] achievements.”

While the lack of new construction needed is a plus for Los Angeles’s bid, concerns about the transportation problems that plague the region will need to be overcome. In 1984, many residents stayed off the roads during the Olympics, and employers cooperated, resulting in a general ease of movement throughout the city and region. However, traffic undoubtedly is worse now. New now, though, are both existing and planned transit networks. Two new rail lines, expansion of bus service and addition of rapid bus lines, and expansion of carpool lanes have already alleviated some traffic pressures. With additional planned rail service, some of which is already under construction, Los Angeles can address these concerns. And, with little construction needed for new venues, the promise of an Olympics is likely to spur continued and fast-tracked infrastructure improvements.

The other potential pitfall for Los Angeles is its status as a three-time host city, whereas the IOC may prefer the notion of presenting a new host city—although the selection of London for 2012 minimizes that concern. And, given the problems faced by Athens in 2004, perhaps the IOC would prefer a tried-and-true host city to get the Olympic legacy back on track.—H.K.

LOS ANGELES MEMORIAL COLISEUM COMMISSION



Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.