



# Olympics Just the Beginning for Beijing

Atlanta suggests Beijing's best days are still ahead

By Lindsay Liu

**W**e are at an interesting crossroads in China. Beijing—indeed, the whole country—has been building toward the 29th Olympic Games for years. China's “coming out

party” has been a key driver economically and politically and has been a great source of pride as we have waited in anxious expectation. Since winning the Olympic Games bid, China has been focused on preparing its cities, athletes and even taxi drivers for the events.

By the time you read this, the Games will be in full swing, or already in the rearview mirror. The next stage will be a new chapter in modern Chinese history.

The end of the Olympic preparations are not the end of the road, but merely a new beginning. Following the 1996 Olympic Games, Atlanta flourished, and there is every reason to believe that Beijing can do the same.

## FOCUSING ON TOMORROW

While China's leadership has been heavily engaged in the Olympic Games, it has never lost focus on the future. At the most recent Strategic Economic Dialogue, Chinese delegates and US delegates signed dozens of deals on resource conservation, renewable energy and adapting to climate change. This shows China's commitment to balancing strong economic growth with a wide range of policies that promote sustainability. It is a policy agenda that looks



Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park

beyond the immediacy of the Games.

Furthermore, the response to the earthquake in Wenchuan revealed that China is ready to open up even further to the outside world. Out of the incredible tragedy emerged an encouraging sign, as the country continues to internationalize, shedding its old image as an inward-looking society. Sustainability and openness are excellent catalysts for bringing about steady positive change in China.

## PARALLELS: BEIJING AND ATLANTA

The key to a successful post-Olympics period is looking ahead rather than back. As the managing director of the Beijing Georgia Business Advisory Center, Ltd., I know all about how to avoid any negative “hangover effects” following an Olympics. The US State of Georgia, whose governor (pictured right) has visited China twice this year, is an excellent model for post-Olympic

economic success. Atlanta hosted the 1996 Olympic Games and has turned that international attention into positive economic and societal gains over the last 12 years.

In many ways, Atlanta is a hub to the southern United States. Recent Census Bureau data reveals that Atlanta has two of the top ten fastest-growing US counties. The city also has the world's busiest airport, Hartsfield-Jackson, and is the most popular city in the US for highly educated people aged 25 to 34.

Beijing has some uncanny similarities to Atlanta, aside from the Olympic Games. It has the world's largest airport, considered by many to be the hub of China—and indeed Asia. Meanwhile, it is also attracting a dynamic group of young professionals from around the world. They are both magnets for investment and professional talent. Given these similarities, Atlanta is certainly a case study worth considering for Beijing as the city looks ahead.

## ATLANTA'S 1996 OLYMPICS LEGACY

Georgia's capital city held the Centennial Games in 1996 both to attract attention to its investment potential, and also to catapult Atlanta onto the international stage as one of the world's great cities. Hosting the Olympic Games had several strategic implications for the city's development. When preparing for the 1996 Games, Georgia's leadership set out to establish a long-lasting legacy that would transcend sports. It sought to establish a cultural, physical and economic legacy for decades.

There are many considerations that go into choosing an Olympic host city relating to economics, infrastructure and culture. One of the things that set Georgia apart culturally is its unique Southern, historical heritage. It is the birthplace of modern rhythm and blues music and is the home of many major companies, including The Coca Cola Company, Delta Air Lines and CNN. Furthermore, it is the birthplace of American hero Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Games offered an opportunity to shine a spotlight upon the city and state's existing cultural strengths and build upon this already robust foundation. Clearly, Beijing has a similarly strong cultural and business base, and the Olympics will present an opportunity for the city to present its history to the world.

The Olympic Games also gave Atlanta a lasting physical legacy. Centennial Olympic Park (pictured left) and other structures and sites were specifically designed to host the over two million visitors to the Games. Years later, Atlanta continues to use these valuable “fixed assets,” which provide constant returns.

Most notably, the Olympic Games helped Atlanta create a powerful economic legacy, putting the city and state on the world map to offer jobs, draw investment and attract millions more to become residents. By 2006, metro Atlanta was home to nearly 1,700 international companies that employed about 80,000 people, representing a 50 percent increase in international companies since the 1996 Games. Fur-



Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue, delivering a lecture to Tsinghua University students in April

thermore, Georgia has hosted the G8 summit, two Super Bowls and several other high-profile events since the Olympics. The 1996 Games served as a springboard, not endpoint for Atlanta.

## CITY-CORPORATE COLLABORATION


The Atlanta Olympics experience proved the role of collaboration critical in capitalizing on the opportunities the events bring. There are two key examples of how collaboration can guarantee a lasting legacy long after the crowds have left.

First, "Operation Legacy" was a project launched by Georgia Power, one of the nation's largest generators of electricity and the official power source of the 1996 Olympic Games. This project used the international exposure to target strategic, high potential industries and bring top executives to Georgia during the Games. This project helped expose 400 companies to the great opportunities Georgia has to offer. And within three years, 42 participating companies had brought 6,700 new jobs and US \$373 million in investment to the state.

Second, an alliance was formed between the state government and a group of private corporations in 1997 following the Games to ensure continued momentum called "The Georgia Allies." This group, with members including SunTrust Bank, AT&T, Bank of America and Delta Air Lines, enabled members to target resources that are both profitable and build up Georgia's state economy.

These two projects, created in the spirit of collaboration, were critical to establishing the Georgia Olympics legacy.

## BEIJING'S ROAD AHEAD

The Georgian experience shows that the Olympics can serve as a leaping off point, not the end of the line. There is every reason to move forward and embrace all opportunity to ensure this great city of Beijing continues on its path to reaching its full potential. Indeed, I look forward to what the future has in store for this great city of lasting heritage and incredible change. 

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barackobama.com



johnmccain.com

# Absentee Voting Information

## How to make sure every vote counts

By *China Brief* with the US Embassy

**A**fter an unusually long primary process, particularly on the Democratic side, the general election is well under way, with senators John McCain and Barack Obama carrying the flags for the two major parties. Many AmCham-China members are US citizens who live in Beijing and other cities around the country, but this should not stop them from voting. The US Embassy has a number of guidelines for making sure your vote counts, even if you cannot cast your ballot in person.

Vote absentee from overseas in the 2008 general election in four easy steps:

**1** Complete the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), obtainable from the American Citizen Services department of any US Embassy or Consulate, or online at the Federal Voting Assistance Program's website: [www.fvap.gov/pubs/fvca.html](http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/fvca.html)

**2** Mail the FPCA to your local election official in the state where you last

resided immediately prior to departing the United States. Addresses for local officials can be found at the FVAP's website: [www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag.html#ch3](http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag.html#ch3)

**3** Upon determining your eligibility to vote, the local election official will mail the absentee ballot to you. It is imperative that the election officials be informed well in advance of the election date of any address changes.

**4** Complete the absentee ballot and mail it to the local election official. Please note that the deadlines for receiving absentee ballots vary from state to state, so be sure to mail your ballot in with enough time to comply with local rules.

For more information, look on the FVAP website, [www.fvap.gov/pubs/fvca.html](http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/fvca.html), or e-mail [votebeijiing@state.gov](mailto:votebeijiing@state.gov)

*Special thanks to the US Embassy for this information.* 