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How NYC's Failed 2012 Olympic Bid Shaped the City We Live in Today



The 2012 Olympics never came to New York, but they changed its course forever.

Almost 5,000 miles away from the site of the 2016 Rio Summer Olympic Games there lies a city forever changed by its own bid to host the games.

New York City was one of five finalists when the International Olympic Commission selected London as the host of the 2012 Summer Olympics in 2005.

The city's Olympic bid can be traced back to 1994, according to Mitchell Moss, a professor of urban planning and policy at NYU and author of the 2011 report "How New York City Won the Olympics."

That year, investment banker Daniel Doctoroff became interested in the idea of bringing the Games to Gotham and began an investigation into its feasibility. His extensive research earned the enthusiasm of then-Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who appointed a task force to refine the city's Olympic bid. NYC2012, as it came to be known, designed a plan that focused on existing and yet-to-be-constructed venues in seven relatively underdeveloped areas in the city, including the far west side of Manhattan, Long Island City in Queens, and Brooklyn's East River waterfront.

From the outset, that plan was designed to spur development in these neighborhoods no matter what decision the IOC made, according to Moss' report. Many of the projects on its agenda had been proposed before.

But NYC2012's efforts were unique in that they consolidated agendas across all five boroughs into one citywide plan, and they were operating under a strict deadline: the IOC decision in mid-2005. An externally imposed timeline, as well as support from the new Bloomberg administration, expedited the city's review and approval of Olympic-related projects.

"The Olympic bid was a catalyst for building the number 7 train extension to the West side, for creating thousands of new housing units on the West Side and for transforming the East River waterfront," Moss told DNAinfo New York, saying he believes his original thesis still stands.

When the IOC ultimately chose London for the 2012 Games, "New York got everything that's desirable out of the Olympics without any of the burdens," he said. Among the perks: tourists. During the two weeks in August 2012, New York beat London in tourists-per-day by a score of 538,000 to 429,000, a study by Moss and his NYU colleagues found.

"The 2012 plan is still shaping New York's physical infrastructure," he added.

Below you'll find four major examples of the ways in which NYC was forever changed by the Olympic bid, as Moss' report lays them out:

DREAM: The Olympic Stadium on the far West Side

REALITY: Hudson Yards and the extension of the 7 train

The NYC2012 team put Midtown Manhattan's far west side, an underused expanse of land close to transportation hubs and major event venues, at the heart of its plan to clinch the Olympics for the Big Apple. The blueprints called for a 26-acre platform over the LIRR rail storage yards, on which a new stadium for the Jets and the Games would be built; eight acres of public plazas and parks; and millions of square feet of other development. It was NYC2012 that began calling the area in 2000 "Hudson Yards," a name that has stuck since.

An extension of the 7 line west of Times Square would link Hudson Yards to the rest of the city, bringing spectators and athletes to games at an expanded Javits Convention Center, ceremonies at a new New York Sports and Convention Center, and basketball at Madison Square Garden.

In the end, the state shot down plans for the sports and convention center and downsized the Javits expansion.

But NYC2012 still successfully pushed for Hudson Yards's rezoning, thereby opening the door to the current development of retail and office space, private housing and hotels.

One resulting enterprise is a 28-acre development that may be the largest private real estate project in the nation, the brainchild of Related Companies' Stephen Ross. When it's complete in 2025, the development is expected to add \$19 billion to the city's gross domestic product every year.

The new 7 train terminus, which opened in fall 2015, will link the project to the rest of the city.

DREAM: The Olympic Stadium in Willets Point, Queens

REALITY: Citi Field

After the state's rejection of their proposed Olympic Stadium on Manhattan's Far West Side in June 2005, Doctoroff's team, anxious to stay in the running for Olympic Host City, came up with an alternative in a little over 72 hours.

New York would host the Olympic opening and closing ceremonies, track and field and soccer finals in Queens, in a new baseball stadium constructed next to the Mets' old one.

The team had been quietly lobbying for a new stadium with the city's financial backing since the 1990s, but under the revised plan it agreed to build and pay for its own new home. The stadium was expected to cost \$600 million, and the city would contribute \$180 million to infrastructure improvements on property it bequeathed to the Mets.

If the Big Apple had won the bid for the 2012 Games, the city and state would have financed the conversion of Citi Field into an 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium and its restoration to its original configuration.

After the Olympics went to London, construction of Citi Field continued as planned, finishing on schedule in 2009.

DREAM: An aquatic center and waterfront park for beach volleyball

REALITY: Gentrified Williamsburg

The final 2012 Olympic bid envisioned the transformation of land at the Bushwick Inlet in Williamsburg into the center of the Games' aquatic competitions and the creation of a waterfront, sand-covered beach volleyball arena.

Long before New York began preparing its Olympic bid, city officials and community groups had been debating plans to rezone the area, which had seen old manufacturing businesses vanish and new residents occupy illegally converted lofts.

The Olympic timetable accelerated the rezoning process that would permit the creation of new waterfront parks and residential buildings, completed weeks before the International Olympic Committee voted on a 2012 Host City. High-rises and condos quickly sprouted

throughout the neighborhood, drawing retail businesses, restaurants, and young professionals.

Real estate prices followed: The price per square foot of a home in the neighborhood more than tripled between 2004 and 2014.

Meanwhile, the city has yet to finish the 28-acre waterfront park the Bloomberg administration promised during the 2005 rezoning, hamstrung by a private property owner.