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New York City competes for 2012 summer olympic games

NEW YORK (AP) — This is a city of shrugs, a place where millions of people brush off suffocating subway crowds, strict security and the glare of the world spotlight with a wry smile and shared expression: "Only in New York."

This is a place that takes pride in its ability to absorb nearly any sort of special event — and organizers hope to convince the U.S. Olympic Committee that staging the 2012 Summer Games here will be no different.

"It absolutely plays to our strength," said Daniel Doctoroff, founder of NYC2012, the city's Olympic lobbying group. "The real test is what city has the capability of managing it, and no city has the experience New York does."

The USOC will choose between New York and San Francisco on Saturday as the U.S. candidate for the Olympics, and the winner will compete against a strong field of worldwide candidates. The International Olympic Committee will choose the host city in 2005.

In their competition with San Francisco, New York organizers say they hold a clear advantage: efficiency.

Their hopes center on the "Olympic X," a design that would align venues into a rough cross-shaped pattern, with a high-speed ferry running north-south and commuter rail lines running east-west.

The idea is to get athletes and spectators from place to place — baseball at Yankee Stadium, soccer at the Meadowlands in New Jersey, equestrian on Staten Island, gymnastics at Madison Square Garden — without tying up traffic.

The New York organizing team also is quick to point out that in August, when the Games probably would be staged, nearly 1 million fewer people use city transit because school is out and many New Yorkers are vacationing.

When the Summer Games were last held in the United States, in Atlanta in 1996, traffic snarled, confusion reigned and global Olympic officials made their displeasure clear. The lesson was not lost on New York planners.

"I've been to three Olympics, and just to get to the games can be frustrating," said Cristyne L. Nicholas, who heads the city's tourism agency, NYC & Company. "When you have to spend an hour or two to get there, you just prefer not to go. That's not going to happen in New York."

Still, as they try to woo the USOC — and, they hope, the International Olympic Committee — New York organizers have had to fight loud opposition.

At the heart of the dispute is a \$1 billion proposal to convert a rail yard in Manhattan along the Hudson River into an

Two cities compete for Olympic gold

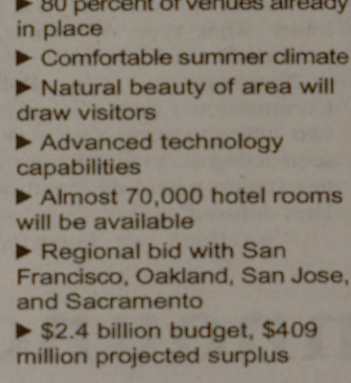
New York City and the San Francisco Bay area are the two finalists for the potential U.S. site for the 2012 Olympic Games. On Saturday, the U.S. Olympic Committee will decide which of the two culturally diverse tourist meccas will be chosen as the American candidate.

San Francisco Bay area

- ▶ 92 percent of venues within a 32-mile radius
- ▶ 80 percent of venues already in place
- ▶ Comfortable summer climate
- ▶ Natural beauty of area will draw visitors
- ▶ Advanced technology capabilities
- ▶ Almost 70,000 hotel rooms will be available
- ▶ Regional bid with San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, and Sacramento
- ▶ \$2.4 billion budget, \$409 million projected surplus

New York City

- ▶ 100 percent of venues within a 20-mile radius
- ▶ Tight infrastructure includes mass transit by rail and ferry for athletes and visitors
- ▶ Reflects Olympic ideals like the nobility of competition and strength from adversity
- ▶ Established international media resources
- ▶ More than 66,000 hotel rooms in New York City, with 122,000 in metropolitan area
- ▶ Events in New York City boroughs, New Jersey and Long Island
- ▶ \$2.7 billion budget



SOURCES: NYC2012; BASOC; Associated Press

Olympic stadium and an adjoining 8-acre plaza.

Some New Yorkers, particularly in the Hell's Kitchen section near where the stadium would be built, claim the project would destroy neighborhoods, displace poor and middle-income residents and saddle taxpayers with a huge bill.

"The city can probably handle it. The question is, do the cit-

izens want to handle it?"

Bob Trumbour, a Southern Illinois University professor who studies stadium projects, said that might hurt the city's bid.

Trumbour believes sports teams looking for homes might jump in to help with the financial load on the city but not enough to take the burden off taxpayers.

Gov. Jeb Bush pressured to ask President for release of Haitians

MIAMI (AP) — A congresswoman pressed Gov. Jeb Bush on Wednesday to ask his brother, the president, to order the release of 200 Haitian immigrants detained in Florida after they jumped off a freighter and waded ashore.

The Republican governor was confronted during a campaign stop by Rep. Carrie Meek, D-Fla., who said the Haitians should be treated like Cuban immigrants.

"All you have to do is call — the wet foot-dry foot policy would take effect," Meek said. Normally, Cuban immigrants are allowed to remain in the United States if they reach land, while those intercepted at sea are returned.

The governor said he agrees Haitian immigrants should be released until their asylum request is heard, like immigrants from other countries.

"Haitians should be treated in the same fashion that Jamaicans, people from the Bahamas, people from any country in the world," Bush said.

A day earlier, the governor said he had called White House officials regarding the immigrants, but he did not elaborate Wednesday or say whether he had spoken with his brother.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the Haitians were being treated fairly and humanely and that the president would not intervene.

"The Immigration and Naturalization Service will apply the law and make the

proper judgments," Fleischer said.

The 50-foot wooden freighter carrying 211 Haitians and three Dominicans ran aground Tuesday on a stretch of beach near a road south of downtown Miami. Six Haitian nationals were charged with illegal smuggling in the case.

The Haitian immigrants included 150 men, 35 women and 26 juveniles. INS spokeswoman Barbara Gonzalez said. One of the minors was hospitalized for dehydration.

"If Bush could champion the issue, he could shift the balance in the election. The time for lip service is over."

—Ari Fleischer
white house spokesman

Gonzalez declined to say whether any of the immigrants had asked for asylum.

The immigrants' detention sparked protests by Haitian-Americans who said U.S. laws discriminate by favoring other immigrants — particularly Cubans.

Jean Robert LaFontaine, president of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition, said the detention poses a leadership test for

Gov. Bush.

"If Bush could champion the issue, he could shift the balance in the election," LaFontaine said. "The time for lip service is over."

Bill McBride, the Democratic nominee for governor, released a letter to President Bush asking him to order the Haitian-American release. He also took to Haitian-American airwaves.

"We should not have one set of rules to apply to one set of people and one set of rules to apply to Haitians," McBride said during a call Wednesday to WSRF-TV in Fort Lauderdale.

Thousands of Haitians each year make dangerous voyages aboard rickety, crowded boats to flee their impoverished country. Unlike Cubans, Haitian immigrants are denied asylum and sent back.

About 4,000 immigrants have been accepted at sea this year, including 1,500 Haitians, the Coast Guard said.

The Bush administration changed its detention policy on Haitian refugees in December to discourage feared mass exodus. Before the change, Haitian immigrants applying for asylum were released into the community while their petitions were processed. Since the change, Haitians have been kept in immigration custody.

Immigration attorneys sued the government in March, saying the new policy was biased.

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