



(left) The Olympic Rowing Course would displace recreational boaters.
(above) The proposed lakefront Olympic Village in silver.

Going for GOLD

How Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympics could affect local boaters.

BY ERIN BRERETON

As part of Chicago's efforts to lure the Games of the XXXI Olympiad, its downtown waterfront could go through some extensive renovations beginning next year. But with possible slip relocation and docking shortages, it remains to be seen whether local boaters will end up winners or losers.

In April, Chicago beat out Los Angeles and San Francisco to score America's bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympics. The International Olympic Committee will choose between the Windy City, Tokyo, Madrid and Doha, Qatar in October '09.

To entice the judges, Chicago is considering four new harbors, the *Sun-Times* reports. Chicago Gateway Harbor, south of Navy Pier, a major tourist draw, would contain 300 to 400 slips, some of which would be reserved for transients. DuSable East, at the end of Randolph Street, would hold 500 slips and possibly include a helipad. On the South Side of the city, 87th Street Harbor would feature 1,000 slips at the former U.S. Steel site, while 31st Street Harbor would boast 830 slips.

The Chicago Park District (CPD) confirmed that construction of the 31st Street Harbor is scheduled for next year, to be completed by 2010. It would house the Olympic Sailing Harbor, says Doug Arnot, director of venues and operations for the Chicago 2016 bid committee. Other than that, the corporation remains mum on concrete plans.

As for Monroe Harbor, a proposed expansion is still in the concept stage. *Crain's Chicago Business* reports that the city is considering a \$60-million breakwater for Olympic rowing events to be staged on a two-mile course from Navy Pier to Northerly Island and Burnham Harbor, which would displace all recreational craft.

"It's too soon to tell at this point how the lakefront will change," Arnot says. "We've had exciting discussions on possibilities, but nothing is final."

Securing a slip in Chicago is already a major concern without tens of thousands of additional people pouring into the city. However, the CPD says that although the games may displace area boaters, it won't leave them on dry land.

"It is possible that slip owners would need to relocate if Olympic games are held on existing harbor sites," says spokesperson Jessica Maxey-Faulkner. "Boaters who are impacted would simply move to slips where space exists."

"Chicago 2016 is working closely with the Chicago Park District and boat owners to ensure that disruptions, if any, will be minimized and appropriate alternate accommodation be available," Arnot says. "The boating community has been very positive and supportive through all of our discussions." ↴