

TCHA establishes group to coordinate national houses at the Tokyo Olympics

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Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance (TCHA)

The Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance (TCHA, chairperson: Shigeru Ito, Professor Emeritus at Waseda University) has established an organization to coordinate the creation of national houses at the Tokyo Olympics that will showcase various countries' cultures and remain as a legacy after the games.

This coordinating group will provide information and assistance to national governments and National Olympic Committees (NOCs) searching for land or facilities, and make proposals about sustainable post-Olympic uses of national houses.

Members of the Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance (TCHA) will handle coordination for national houses. TCHA brings together various local activists and professionals in "Old Tokyo," a district in the northeast central city that stretches from Yanesen and Negishi in the north through Ueno, Hongo, Akihabara, Kanda, Jimbocho, and Yushima.

■Contact

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■What are National Houses?

"National Houses" (also known as hospitality houses) are established in host cities during the duration of the Olympic Games by national governments or National Olympic Committees (NOCs), which make use of local cultural centers, sports clubs, or historic buildings to offer local citizens and international tourists the chance to experience their country's culture. National houses have become a customary feature of recent Olympics, and more than 30 countries opened hospitality houses during the 2016 Rio Games. Although some nations' hospitality houses were restricted to players or invited guests only, most were open to the public.

The Tokyo 2020 Japan House was hosted inside the Cidade das Artes cultural facility in Rio's Barra district. The first floor contained an exhibition corner promoting the 2020 Games and Tokyo, while the second floor allowed visitors to experience Japanese culture such as tea ceremony, *yukata*, calligraphy, and yo-yos that are popular at Japanese festivals. The first-floor stage also hosted numerous events, including many for the general public to enjoy.

■Proposal: Create a national house that will remain a legacy after the Olympics

National houses have become a popular way to learn about various countries' cultures during the Olympics, but are almost always shut down after the games are over. We believe this is a missed opportunity. The Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance seeks to work together with NOCs and cultural institutions from various countries to develop a model for national houses that will continue to operate as cultural or tourist information facilities after the Olympics.

After the Olympics, cultural institutions may continue to run national houses as galleries or information centers, or convert them to other cultural or restaurant uses.

The Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance is looking for partners from around the world to create national houses that will remain as legacies after the Olympics.

■"Old Tokyo" and the Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance's activities

"Old Tokyo" refers to a compact district of neighborhoods in the northeast central city, stretching from Yanese and Negishi in the north through Ueno, Hongo, Akihabara, Kanda, Jimbocho, and Yushima. This area is home to much of Tokyo's cultural heritage from feudal times until the present. Old Tokyo was spared from large-scale redevelopment during the high-growth era and today remains a treasure trove of cultural heritage, ripe with potential for a new urban renaissance focused on culture, the environment, and tourism. Moreover, Old Tokyo is home to numerous historical buildings, private homes, and office buildings ideal for renovation, including many spaces appropriate for use as national houses.

The Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance has brought together local activists and professionals to address urban challenges in Old Tokyo. We believe that Old Tokyo's unique combination of cultural and intellectual resources can be leveraged to create national houses that emphasize both creativity and legacy, thus creating a model not only for the rest of Japan, but also cities around the world working to preserve and reuse their cultural heritage.