

**Beijing
China**

Qu Lei



City Data

METROPOLITAN AREA (2005)

Area	16410 km ²
Permanent residents	15.38 million
Natural growth rate	1.09%
Density	937 persons/km ²
Average household size	2.76 persons

MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS

Number of municipal districts and counties	18
Core districts of capital function	92 km ² (Dongcheng, Xicheng, Chongwen, Xuanwu)
Urban function extended districts	1,276 km ² (Chaoyang, Fengtai, Shijingshan, Haidian)
New districts of urban development	6,296 km ² (Fangshan, Tongzhou, Shunyi, Changping, Daxing)
Ecological preservation development districts	8,747 km ² (Mentougo, Pinggu, Huairou, Miyun, Yanqing)

MUNICIPAL AREA (Central Urban Area)

Area	1,368.32 km ²
Population	9.532 million / Population density 6,966 persons/km ²
Fiscal revenue (2006)	Budget of local governments 11.17 billion Euro / Enterprise income tax 2.14 billion Euro / Personal income tax 1.02 billion Euro
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (2006)	77.2 billion Euro / Per capita US\$ 6,210 / Contribution Primary Sector 0.98 billion Euro / Secondary Sector 22.17 billion Euro / Tertiary Sector 54.05 billion Euro
Employment (2005)	Total 8.78 million / Employed in Primary Sector 0.62 million / Employed in Secondary Sector 2.31 million / Employed in Tertiary Sector 5.84 million / Urban unemployment rate 1.98% / Average wage of staff and workers 3419.1 Euro/year
Transportation (2006)	Volume passenger transportation 82.5 billion person km / Railway 8.91 billion person km / Highway 7.92 billion person km / Civil aviation 65.67 billion person km
Floor area per capita (urban residents)	26 m ²
Household goods (2005)	Shower heaters 97 / Colour TV's 153 / Refrigerators 104 / Washing Machines 105
Tourism (2006)	Foreign tourists 3.38 million / National tourists 184 million / Income from foreign tourists US\$ 4.03 billion / Income from national tourists 14.83 billion Euro
Education (2006)	Senior High Schools 335 (259,000 enrolled students) / Junior High Schools 372 (288,000 enrolled students) / Universities 82
Health (2006)	Health-care institutions 4,810 / Number of beds 81,000 / Health workers 123,000

City profile

Beijing is the capital city of China, and embraces the central economic and political functions of the nation at large. It has a long history and boasts great achievements in ancient culture. As the centre of Chinese art and culture, Beijing remains a masterpiece in itself in world history, despite the increasing western acculturation processes it is subjected to. Beijing has recently also become a global economic hub, a global-city of commerce and business. After China initiated market economy reforms, Beijing started to exploit its potential to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and has since been painstaking in planning and building commercial facilities as part of its endeavour to develop into a modern international metropolis. In 2000, Beijing's imports and exports totalled US\$ 49.62 billion, and US\$ 11.97 billion respectively. By the end of 2000, there were 15,882 foreign-funded enterprises which had won permission to operate in Beijing. Of the 500 largest multinationals in the World, 158 had invested in Beijing.

Beijing has 30 designated high-tech development zones and industrial parks. By the end of 2000 there had been 13,288 enterprises established, of which 1,281 had already started production. Many large shopping malls and supermarkets have entered the urban scene, heralding an up to now strange commercial culture, creating a customer-oriented atmosphere and environment in its wake. Large urban projects such as the construction of the Central Business District (CBD) and some IT-industrial parks, have contrasted, if not juxtaposed, the traditional urban form of the inner-city with the image of a modern economic metropolis.

Like many other metropolitan regions in Asia, Beijing went through a process of urbanization in the latter half of the 20th century, followed by the phenomenon of sub-urbanization since the 1990s. Moreover, the phenomenon of de-industrialization affected the various industrial sectors, which in turn effected changes in the distribution of urban functions. All these changes impacted dramatically on the transformation of urban form and more specifically the change of land use. For instance, the primary industrial sector recorded a 60% decrease in the central urban districts, as well as an extensive decrease in the suburban areas. The secondary sector also decreased rapidly in the central-area at a rate of about 30-40%, while it increased in the suburban areas, pointing towards a relocation tendency. Tertiary industries on the other hand grew slowly in the urban districts, but increased very rapidly in the near suburban areas. This decentralization was caused partly by the urban regeneration of the old residential areas in the urban-centre, new housing projects in the suburban areas, and extensive improvement of the transportation system. The linkages between the urban-centre and the nearby suburban districts have been facilitated by the construction of five ring roads, together with a number of radial corridors.



Figure 1. **Location of Beijing.** Source: Qu Lei



Figure 2. **Beijing Municipal Area.** Source: Beijing Planning Committee



Figure 3. **Beijing's third ring.** Source: Google Earth 2008

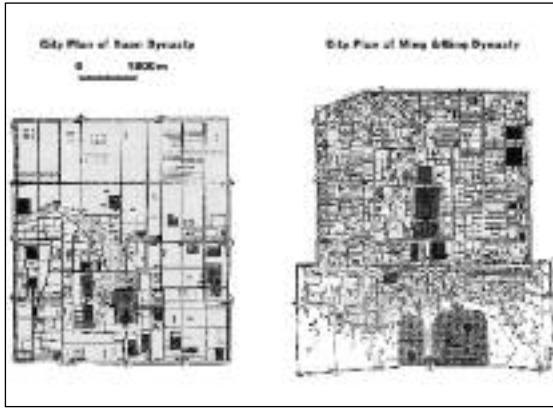


Figure 4. **Plan of Beijing in Yuan and Ming-Qing Dynasties.**
Source: Wang Guangtao, Preservation and development of Beijing historical city. P 13

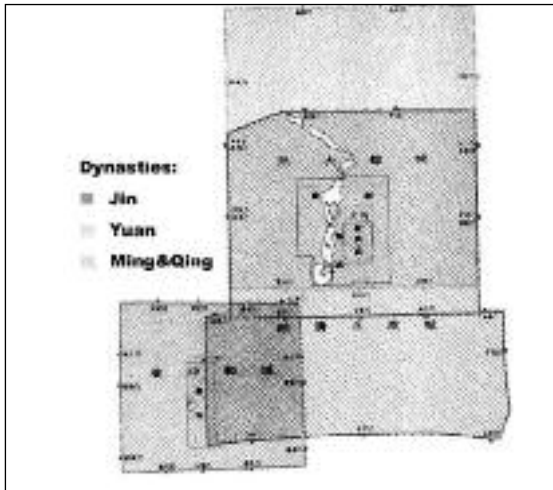


Figure 5. **Transformation of the city boundaries.**
Source: Wang Guangtao p.12



Figures 6 and 7. **Images of Beijing Inner City.** Source: the author

City history

Beijing has a city history dating back 3,000 years, and a capital city history of about 800 years. The city was originally built near the ferry on Yong Ding River, which was an essential node of river transportation. Because of the strategic location, the city developed very rapidly and became a main (urban) settlement in northern China. The mountains to the north contributed to the defence of the city, and Beijing became a main city for military affairs during the Qin Dynasty (221 BC - 206 BC) when the Great Wall began to be built. In the year 1153 AD of the Jin Dynasty, the Emperor moved the capital city to Beijing, and it was called “Zhongdu” at that time. Later on the city became the political center of the whole country. Zhongdu City had a grid-pattern urban structure with integrated infrastructure and an underground waterway system. The main streets ran in a north-south direction and the secondary roads and alleyways at a right angle in an east-west direction. The latter were later called hutong and remain partly preserved in today’s inner-city area. In 1264 AD the Emperor of Yuan Dynasty decided to build a new capital “Dadu” to the north-east of Zhongdu and the boundary of the city was extended in that direction. In 1403 AD, Beijing became the capital city of the Ming Dynasty and the city was re-planned. The basic urban structure of today’s inner-city was founded during this period.

Shortly after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Beijing was declared the capital city and instituted a new urban planning scheme. This plan would put Beijing on the road to modernization, playing a huge role in the city’s future development. Conflicting positions arose between Russian and Chinese experts who were involved in the planning of the city at the time. Messrs Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhanxiang, the key Chinese planners, stood for preserving the historical inner-city area and proposed to move the administrative centre out of the old city to the west where there was plenty of vacant land to meet the needs of the new urban development. The Russian experts’ position on the other hand, was that Beijing could not remain true to its cultural and historical character if the administrative centre was relocated to the city fringes. Despite recognizing the disadvantages of the mono-centric urban structure the Russian experts espoused, such as the congestion of population and traffic in the inner city which clearly posed a danger for the preservation of the historic centre as such, the Russian plan was nevertheless approved. The two planning parties were, however, unanimous in their opinions on the need for the industrialization of the city, which gave the proposal greater weight.



Figure 8. **Transformation of the city.** Source: Wang Guangtao p.12

In 1952 the Beijing government gave instructions to speed up urban renewal projects in the Old City-area, and develop all the urban functions in the limited historical centre. Inevitably the traditional urban structure became an obstacle to the new planning scheme. Almost all the Old City-walls around the inner-city were demolished in order to build new roads. Unfortunately the government was not in a position to finance such a huge and expensive renewal scheme, as a result of which traditional courtyard houses in the inner-city began to deteriorate. This process went on for almost 50 years. According to government statistics, houses in the traditional residential areas of Beijing measured some 17 million square metres in the 1950s. Of this total, about 800,000 m² (\pm 5%) were classified as “dangerous”. However, in 1990 there were 21.5 million m² of housing in the Old City-area, of which about 10 million m², i.e. almost one-half, were considered dangerous. Coping with this problem had been a priority for the Urban Planning Bureau since the 1990s and significant efforts were made to change the situation. To this end a large project called the “Reconstruction of Dilapidated Houses” was planned and implemented during the last decade.

The master plan of Beijing had been revised several times since the 1950s. Each successive version of the master plan reflected the changes in urban socio-economic and political background, as well as planning concept. For instance, between the 1950s and 1960s, the need to relocate industries to the suburban areas in order to meet urban-environmental objectives was generally accepted, hence the idea of “scattered groups” was proposed and more than 40 satellite towns were incorporated into the mother city. The following decade of the Cultural Revolution, from 1966 to 1976, was a period divested of urban planning. The use of space in general intensified greatly though, almost pushing the city into anarchy. In 1982 when Beijing was nominated the “political and cultural centre of the country”, a new master plan became requisite to meet the new demands. The population forthwith had to be limited to around 10 million people and heavy industries were to be restricted. The main aim was to reconstruct the Old City, to regulate infrastructure of near suburban areas and to consolidate the outer suburban areas. In 1993, facing the economic boom and new opportunities brought by globalization, the master plan was revised with the purpose of transforming the city into a modern international metropolis. Modernization of city infrastructure and environment could be seen as the result of this plan. As predicted by the Chinese planners mentioned above, urban problems generated by the mono-centric structure started to become serious, as the city developed rapidly during 1990s. The mono-centric urban structure set in motion a process of uncontrolled urban sprawl with significant consequences, e.g. extensive loss of farmland and severe traffic congestion in the central-area. Therefore in 2004, the latest version of master plan was drafted for the coming 20 years, in which a poly-centric urban structure was proposed for accommodating the rapid increasing population and new urban functions. Eleven new towns would release the heavy burden of the central urban area to form two development corridors which will contribute to regional development.

Beijing was of course put in an extremely favourable position to achieve the goal of becoming a global city when it won the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games. At the same time, it enhanced the city's eligibility to attract foreign investment. Currently the CBD and the Olympic Sports Centre are the two main large projects in Beijing in the planning stage encompassing new global planning concepts. The coming five years will hence be a very busy construction/building period for Beijing's urban transformation under the impact of globalization.



Figures 9 and 10. **Preservation of Historical District Liulichang. Gentrification of the historical centre.**
Source: Qu Lei and Francisco Blanc



Figure 11. **Aerial photo of Beijing Jianguomen-area.**
Source: Beijing Planning Committee



Figure 12. **Easter Plaza.** Source: <http://www.picbj.com>



Figure 13. **Creation of commercial centrality in central-area.**
Source: Dialogue-Beijing 2002I, 140

Impact of globalization

In a time of globalization, the huge Chinese market became the strategic target of developed countries, since investing in China and exploiting the Chinese market were looked upon as an important means for stimulating their own economies on the one hand, while on the other, China is taking the opportunity to absorb Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and high technologies for its development as well. Therefore, improving the urban physical environment and constructing economic-technological centres to attract FDI have been accepted as the main strategies of stimulating urban development by many Chinese big cities. To this end, several Large Urban Projects (LUPs) have been carried out in Beijing since the 1990's: Zhongguancun Science and Technology Park was planned in Haidian District where many universities and research institutions are located as the basis for high-tech research and development; the Financial Avenue in Xicheng District and CBD in Chaoyang District are the two main financial centres built or being consolidated that are expected to play a pivotal role in Beijing's international business dealings; Yizhuang economic-technological park was planned as the generator of Yizhuang new town, located to the south-east of the central urban area which will contribute to rural urbanization.

Besides FDI, international cultural/sports events could be seen as another opportunity to generate urban development for the host-city. Such kind of opportunity for Beijing is the 2008 Olympic Games, which will speed up the process of infrastructure modernization and transforming the city into an international metropolis. For instance, the total investment for transport infrastructural adjustment, environmental improvement and gymnasium construction, is estimated at US\$ 21.77 billion, which is a great opportunity to benefit the whole city. Economists forecast that the successful bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games will improve China's GDP by about 0.3-0.4% on an annual basis. The impact of this on the Chinese economy is embodied in the massive economic expansion that is expected to follow in the wake of winning the bid. This include an estimated increase of 20% in tourism, which in turn is projected to generate about US\$ 2 billion in income, a million square meters of housing construction and 1.5 million employment opportunities per year. The fact that economic development is Beijing's top priority, coupled with the municipality's exploiting opportunities emanating from globalization as such, brings to Beijing a host of unintended consequences. For example, although FDI provides new momentum to China's ongoing reform and openness, the gap between rich and poor, and between urban and rural areas, has widened, and undoubtedly will pose severe challenges to China's inefficient economic sectors. In the past decades, unemployment went up sharply due to the central government's steering the economic system with a view to adapting to the rules of globalization. In the process people with poor educational backgrounds were more negatively affected, very often losing their jobs.

These socio-economic changes have influenced socio-spatial conditions in the city. For instance, due to the industrial structural adjustments mentioned above, low-income people (factory workers, unemployed people and so on) mostly live in the inner-city, which became an abandoned area for real estate developers because of the non-profitability of dealings in the area. Moreover, the local people lack the financial capacity to repair their houses, with the result that housing quality and living conditions in the traditional residential areas are deteriorating. However, the majority of the new housing developments are of the luxury types, at a time when the majority of the potential buyers demand more moderate housing prices. In 2005, 107.5 million m² of buildings were under construction of which 72.83 million m² were housing and 37.71 million m² of buildings were completed, of which 28.41 million m² were housing. In the same year, the volume of buildings sold amounted to 28.03 million m², of which 25.66 million m² were housing, while 13.74 million m² of buildings were standing empty.

Moreover, from the point of view of urban identity, although Beijing's cultural foundation