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ICOMOS: 8th General Assembly  
submitted for  
Sub-theme 1

### STEPS TAKEN IN PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONAL IDENTITY OF BEIJING

Beijing, called City Ji in ancient times, has a history of three thousand years. Since 1151, all of four dynasties, i.e. Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing had built their capitals here. With the rise and the fall of the dynasties, the city had been reconstructed and expanded continuously in more than eight hundred years. From its grandiosity still preserved today we can see the complete ensemble of historical identity of Ming and Qing Dynasties.

The old city of Beijing has its unique feature. It is a crystallization of the experiences of Chinese urban development over thousands of years, and is a masterpiece in the world urban planning history. It is prominent for its magnificent atmosphere, strict pattern, numerous cultural relics and beautiful imperial gardens.

### INTEGRATED CITY PATTERN

The city has a shape resembling an inverted letter "T". The northern part is called the Inner City and the southern part, the Outer City. An 8-kilometer long grand central axis lies north and south of the city. The formal and symmetrical layout of city pattern is an expression of typical Chinese feudal capital with an atmosphere unequalled to the other cities. The grand central axis starts from Yongdingmen, the south gate of the city, and ends at the Bell Tower and the Drum Tower. Along this axis there are many existing architectural monuments among which the climax is the Forbidden City. When you go through Zhengyangmen, Tiananmen, Meridian Gate, then arrive at the Hall of Supreme Harmony, you can distinctively feel the dignity of emperors by change of spaces of procession. The Forbidden City, covering 72 hectares with a total floor area of 160 thousand square meters, is the biggest and most perfect palace cluster in the world.

The plan of the old city shows clearly the fabric of Chinese capital. It has imperial court in the front and commercial market behind. Besides, it has the Ancestral Temple in the left and the Altar of State in the right of the central axis. Also there is chess-board pattern of road system with wide streets and narrow lanes ( called Hutong ) which completely reflects the typical Chinese city layout. However, one could hardly imagine the wonderful disposition by introducing lively rivers and lakes into the strict and symmetrical city pattern, so that the built area perfectly harmonizes with the natural environment. In the old city palaces, temples and gate towers stand high above courtyard houses, and golden glazed-tile roofs and red ochre walls contrast sharply with sprawling grey-tone low houses. The general effect is astonishing.

### MARVELOUS HISTORICAL MONUMENTS AND SITES

Numerous historical monuments and sites are distributed all over the old city and its suburban areas. There are Tanzha Temple of Jin Dynasty, Yunzu Temple of Sui Dynasty, the Sleeping Buddha Temple, Jietai Temple, Fayuan Temple and Baiyun

Taois Temple of Tang Dynasty, etc., which spaced over the scenic spots. Besides that, Beijing is also a treasure-house full of Chinese traditional architecture. Many high official mansions, residences, private gardens, guild houses, warehouses and beautiful pagodas and bridges also have their own unique features. Just taking the private gardens for instance, there were 190 gardens built in Qing Dynasty and many of them are still preserved.

Among those historical relics I would like to introduce two outstanding pagodas towering in the old city: The smaller one is the Baihai White Pagoda, which echoes with another bigger White Pagoda in Miaoying Temple, some three kilometers apart. They present an example of excellent combination of Chinese architecture with foreign style which was introduced to China together with buddhism. It makes the old city more colourful.

### BEAUTIFUL GARDENS

Beijing possesses largest imperial garden complexes in the world. In the outskirt of the city, the Qing Dynasty had built imperial gardens in foot of the Western Mountain during its prosperous period, and within the old city numerous royal and private gardens were established around various lakes and other spots. The concentration of so many Chinese classical gardens of different layout in one city makes Beijing a city of treasure.

The three Inner Lakes and three Outer Lakes situated right in the heart of the city occupy an area of 120 hectares, have a shore line of 15 kilometers with lots of historical relics scattered around them. The landscaped sceneries are so amazing that viewing westward, the Shisha Lake mirrors the silhouette of the Western Mountain, and viewing southward from the Drum Tower, the lakes look like a string of pearl beads. Futhermore, since 1950 another two new parks with large lakes have been developed in the Outer City to add elegance to to the pattern of the city.

### DISTINCTIVE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

Courtyard-type house is the prototype of dwelling houses of northern China. It represents the structure and the life style of past feudal families. The courtyard house has an introversive layout with blank wall closed from outside to ensure the quietness and security of the residents. All dwelling rooms are facing inner courts which are being used as outdoor living spaces. The courtyard house is highly standardized but variations could be made by changing the combinations of courts, which could be composed of one-court, two-court, three-court and four-court type according to the sizes and the social status of the residents. Meanwhile, houses are classified as main rooms, wing-rooms and ear-rooms, and the height of these rooms are specified according to their positions. It is an example of highly integration of standardizatin and diversification of Chinese architecture.

Beside courtyard houses there are many traditional architecture in Beijing coming from the people. And from these architectural spots you can see cultural context clearly. Such spots as bustling Dazhalan Shopping Street, elegant Liulichang Culture Street, Dongan Bazaar and Changdian Holiday Market composed of precious national heritage.

In the past thirty years the city has been developed rapidly. The population has increased from two million in 1949 to almost ten million today, and jurisdictional

area has been enlarged more than three times. As the capital of the Peoples Republic of China Beijing's expansion is based on original city pattern. Therefore, its center is still in Tiananmen. According to the masterplan the existing grand central axis has been extended southward and northward, and new east-west axis, outer ring roads and radiative roads have been added to the traffic network.

However, large scale of construction with numerous modern buildings especially highrises jutting out of the old city's skyline changed historical identity of Beijing and injured its traditional appearance. It is exceedingly regretful that some valuable historical sites and monuments were demolished. The most typical example is the well preserved old city wall, which had been pulled down and turned into a ring road. Thus many beautiful gate towers disappeared together with the wall.

In order to prevent Beijing's traditional features from the further damages, and to preserve its urban fabric on an integrant conception, measures have been taken according to our masterplan as follows:

1. Formulating of preserving city's traditional features and organizing them into the city's life.

Nevertheless, numerous historical relics have been left undamaged up to now. That is very precious to all of us. After our survey and analysis, the relics were classified into three grades for key protection. There are 24 items on national level, 165 items on municipal level and 503 on county and district level. The items of preservation will be added later on.

As historical relics in a modern city, not only they should be conserved just as what they were, but also they could be renewed according to their characters, sizes and locations to suit new functions. Hence they will take active parts in city's life. One of the prominent example is the Forbidden City which is located at the heart of the city, and has been opened to public as a Palace Museum for a long time. In the left of the Forbidden City, the Ancestral Temple has been used as Labourers' Culture Centre and in the right the Altar of State as a park. Other ancient monuments such as Guozijian, an ancient institution of higher learning, had been changed into a library. Many temples, mosques and churches have been restored for religious activities. Former forbidden sites like the Temple of Heaven, the Altar of Sun, the Altar of Moon, the Altar of Earth, Beihai Lake, the Coal Hill, the Fragrant Hill and the Summer Palace are all opened to the public as recreation and tourist parks. Neighborhood of courtyard houses of good quality are being preserved as a whole, and will be renovated step by step to meet the improvement of living conditions of the residents.

Moreover, efforts have been taken to weave these historical sites and monuments still existing into city fabric to reflect the continuation of history. The relic of clay wall of Dadu built in Yuan Dynasty in 1271 are well preserved with plantings to form a green belt of the city. The gate towers, named Qinmen, Zhengyangmen, Deshengmen, South-east Corner Tower and Ancient Observatory, which were built in Ming Dynasty, are precious existing land marks. Implementations have been carried out by connecting them with second ring road and rivers run around its south and north to mark the outline of the old city.

2. Defining the area of preservation and emphasizing the general landscaping effect of the old city

Simple conservation of the relics can not achieve the aim of preserving the identity of an ancient capital. It is of prime importance to preserve its integral environment. Special attention should be paid to avoid massive new buildings neighboring and overwhelming historical ones. Hereby the protection areas have been designated around the relics. The areas are decided by their character, location and significance. Detailed vista studies were taken on the sites to avoid visual interference by looking out from the relics and vice versa.

In consequence protection areas of different grades were defined: Thus in areas of first grade new buildings are strictly prohibited and in the areas of other grades new construction can be allowed with limit of character, mass, height and color, in order to be in harmony with the preserved relics. Taking the Imperial City for instance: This is the key protection area of Beijing where three zones are being set up. The first zone covers an area of within hundred meters from the outer walls of the Forbidden City, where new buildings and facilities are prohibited except planting. The second zone concerns an area from hundred to two hundred fifty meters away from the walls of the Forbidden City, where new buildings should be built not higher than nine meters. And the third zone includes an area of two hundred fifty meters from the walls of the Forbidden City to the boundary of the Imperial City, where the height limit of new buildings is eighteen meters. Nevertheless, within the second zone, the area between the Coal Hill and Beihai Lake has special height limit of single storeyed small houses. After all, the design of new buildings within the protection areas should be submitted to the planning authority for careful examination and approval.

Other important historical sites and monuments such as the grand central axis from the Coal Hill through Dianmen, the Drum Tower, the Bell Tower up to the north river, the shore line along the Shisha Lake and many traditional official mansions temples and gardens had been defined the areas of protection.

### 3. Controlling the height of new buildings and maintaining the traditional feature of horizontal capital's skyline.

We believe that controlling the height of new buildings to match the general environment of the city is the key point of preserving capital's traditional features. Since old Beijing is a typical city which has a horizontal skyline, it is so beautiful that only imperial palace, gate towers, temples and pagodas as land marks standing high above the ocean of low houses sketch out the unique skyline of the city. It is of prime importance to keep this horizontal skyline in city's development. New highrise buildings should be located away from the city center as well as certain scenic spots such as the Western Mountain. Therefore the skyline of new Beijing is destined to be of " cauldron " type with buildings getting higher from inside out. We suppose it is an effective way to maintain the unique characteristic of Beijing.

Meanwhile new buildings should be under strict control according to the zoning regulation of building height limits forced by the Municipal Government of Beijing. The regulation stipulates that in the area around the Imperial City, the Inner three Lakes, the Outer three Lakes, the Drum tower, the Bell Tower and the Temple of Heaven the height limit is thirty meters. The remaining area has a height limit of forty five meters in the old city and sixty meters outside the old city. Since the implementation of this regulation the further casual invasion of highrises has been stopped.

At the same time, no individual buildings will be allowed to construct in the old city without detailed planning of the district concerned. All these steps taken had forced by municipal ordinance to curb the tendency of increasing damage to Beijing's traditional feature. Concerning the height limit, attention should be paid to a tendency that new buildings will be of same height, since developers want to acquire maximum floor area from their limited plots. To avoid such occurrence it is necessary to reinforce the work of detailed planning and urban design to guide contemporary building construction.

The problem of preserving Beijing's historical identity has already attracted the attention of the citizens of Beijing, as well as the concern from domestic and foreign people. Discussions have been held through various channels - newspapers, journals and academic seminars sponsored by architectural and other societies concerned. Different opinions and various suggestions are being collected and studied, in order to find effective ways to tackle with the problem. We sincerely believe that same results may be achieved in other ancient cultural cities benefitting from Beijing's experiences.

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ICOMOS: 8th General Assembly  
Abstract submitted for  
Sub-theme 1

### Steps taken in preservation of traditional identity of Beijing

Beijing, a world famous cultural city, had been built as capitals for many dynasties since 1151. With outstanding central axis franked by grid patterned residential quarters, this old city has its unique feature. It is a masterpiece in the world urban planning history and is a crystallization of the experiences of Chinese urban development over thousands of years.

Since 1949, Beijing has been developing rapidly. Modern buildings invaded this old city and changed its historical identity. This paper reviews the measures taken to preserve Beijing's existing urban fabric and the contradiction between the old city and new buildings.

This study focuses on three primary steps taken, which include formulating of preserving city's traditional features as an important part of its masterplan, drafting of areas of protection around prominent historical relics where buildings should be under strict control, and zoning of building height limits for different areas according to the general effect of maintaining city's identity. All these steps had been forced by municipal ordinance.

In the meantime, discussions have been held through various channels - newspapers, journals, and academic seminars sponsored by architectural and other societies concerned. These steps seem to be effective that further damages to Beijing's traditional feature have been curbed, and same results may be achieved in other historical cities in China with Beijing's experiences.

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ICOMOS: Extrait de la dissertation au sujet du 1<sup>er</sup> thème de huitième assemblée générale

Mesures visant à préserver l'aspect  
traditionnel de Beijing

Beijing, une ville culturelle bien célèbre dans le monde, était la capitale pour plusieurs dynasties depuis 1151. Ayant un axe central distingué, et des zones d'habitation disposées suivant la forme de quadrillage sur les deux côtés de cet axe, cette Ville a un aspect particulier. Elle est le chef-d'oeuvre dans l'histoire de l'urbanisme du monde, et en même temps la cristallisation de l'expérience de construction urbaine des milles années en Chine.

Depuis 1949, Beijing a connu un développement bien rapide. Le fait que des bâtiments modernes sont intervenus dans l'ancienne ville, modifie son aspect historique. La présente texte a disserté des mesures adoptées pour préserver la structure originale de la Ville et des contradictions entre l'ancienne ville et les bâtiments nouveaux.

Cette dissertation a pris l'accent sur la présentation des trois premières mesures: déclarer clairement que la préservation de l'aspect traditionnel de la Ville prend part à l'urbanisme général; définir pour les monuments historiques importants, les cadres de préservation dans lesquels la construction des bâtiments doit être strictement contrôlée; limiter selon les zones définies la hauteur des bâtiments dans le but de maintenir l'aspect général urbain de la Ville. Les mesures exposées sont exécutées d'après l'ordre du Gouvernement.