

**OLYMPIC HOUSE**  
Architect's Statement

June 2019



The Olympic Movement seeks to build a better world through sport. It is the essence of the Olympic Movement and its values of excellence, respect, and friendship that serve as the basis of inspiration for the new International Olympic Committee (IOC) Headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland. The new building, called Olympic House, aims to bring the IOC administration under one roof. It is designed around five key objectives that translate the Olympic Movement's principles into built form: movement, transparency, flexibility, sustainability, and collaboration. In 2014, following a multi-stage, international architecture competition with 114 participants, the IOC Executive Board selected 3XN as the designer of the IOC Headquarters. Following the competition, local architecture office IttenBrechtbühl worked in consortium with 3XN to oversee the project.

Coinciding with the 125th anniversary of the creation of the IOC in 1894, the inauguration of Olympic House represents the commitment of the organization to the city of Lausanne, the Olympic Capital. Olympic House will take full advantage of its beautiful location in Louis Bourget Park, on the border of Lake Geneva. The new building will include a conference center, meeting rooms, a restaurant, fitness facilities and 3 floors of offices, as well as a roof terrace and underground parking.

**Respectful integration**

Incorporating the historic setting of the park, home to the eighteenth-century castle Le Château de Vidy, was a crucial aspect of the project. Located inside a public space that welcomes a diverse group of visitors, Olympic House becomes an emblematic architectural landmark for the local community, exemplifying accessibility and transparency. The shores of Lake Geneva are a protected area, and therefore 3XN, working with the IOC, approached the project with the intent to achieve the highest level of integration within the surrounding environment. The neighboring Château de Vidy, a building included in the Canton de Vaud's

architectural census, has been renovated, with the original facades restored to their original condition.

The resultant design respects both the Château's legacy and the park setting, establishing seamless transitions between the green public space and Olympic House. The positioning of the Headquarters on the east side, combined with the dense grove of trees to the west, results in a reinterpretation of classical symmetry using the Château as the central axis. By consolidating the functions of the current Olympic House and Pavilion, the new headquarters and surrounding landscape provide the same amount of green space on the campus, while more than doubling the square meters of the building. The design incorporates nature and landscape to maximize the beauty of the location, using plant elements of different scales to create paths and view points, while ensuring the preservation of the local biodiversity. A vegetated plinth discreetly blends in with the landscape, minimizing the impact of the building's footprint.

### **Transparency**

The building's transparency symbolizes the openness of the IOC as an organization and provides stunning views of the lake beyond. This floor-to-ceiling, fully glazed façade brings daylight deep into the building, while optimizing thermal insulation with a double-skin system. This indentation of the façade allows the park to flow deeper into the office space. The glass construction becomes a metaphor for the IOC's desire for organizational transparency, reflecting the overall structural changes initiated by the Olympic Agenda 2020. The design allows the daily work and movements of the IOC staff to be visible through the façade.

### **Flexibility and agility**

A hallmark of 3XN's design, the façade pays tribute to the Olympic spirit by emulating the graceful movements of an athlete. The dynamic, undulating flow of the façade appears differently from all angles, conveying the energy of an athlete in motion. In sports, movement leads to optimized performance; likewise, the formal manipulations of the building envelope have a direct effect on the building's functioning. Olympic House is a global icon and a symbol of the IOC, but it must also function as a busy workplace.

3XN's central belief that architecture shapes behavior was a primary consideration while conceiving of the new IOC Headquarters. The transparency and flow of the design is intended to facilitate and encourage interaction, communication and knowledge sharing among the staff. Enhanced circulation will serve as a catalyst for collaboration and solidarity among the workforce. The interior is designed with as few structural constraints as possible: 4 service cores and 14 pillars support the structure of the building. The systematic arrangement of the technical and electrical elements enables an agile working environment, dedicated to a highly mobile workforce that adapts to strategic and organizational changes. With offices that can be easily moved through the open spaces, workspaces can be easily modified according to the ever-changing needs of the IOC staff, encouraging internal collaboration.

### **Unity and collaboration**

The Unity Staircase, which references Baron Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic Rings, soars the full height of the building and connects all floors through a central atrium. Following the principles of active design, the oak staircase and its periphery define the central area for social activity and movement. The staircase is a visual expression of the unity and collaboration between the IOC staff and stakeholders. Exhibition spaces, a cafeteria and meeting rooms are also arranged around the central staircase, promoting a sense of community for the 500 regular users. Olympic House is also a unique example of innovative collaboration between many different stakeholders, including some of the IOC's commercial partners (Dow, Toyota

and Panasonic), sustainability certification bodies, local authorities, suppliers and academics, as well as the IOC staff.

### **Commitment to sustainability**

The IOC's commitment to sustainability has been integrated by 3XN not only into the design and the construction, but also through the development of operational concepts for Olympic House. Through innovative features, the building's environmental footprint is minimized without compromising the quality of the working environment. The building's envelope allows for excellent insulation through airtightness and the triple glazing on the internal skin facade. The inner layer of the façade provides thermal insulation while the outer layer enhances the design, protecting the building through an integrated sunscreen system and reducing noise from the nearby highway. The envelope of the building is designed specifically to push and flow inward and outward, gaining additional façade surface area for day lighting and views.

Olympic House was awarded three high level sustainability certifications that are well recognized both internationally (the LEED standard) and nationally (the Minergie and SNBS standards). Olympic House is LEED Platinum certified, the highest certification level from LEED. The building also earned a Platinum level certification from the Swiss Sustainable Construction Standard (SNBS), and earned the Swiss standard for energy-efficient buildings, Minergie P. The building will be mainly supplied with renewable energy, while smart building features, heat recovery systems and its envelope ensure a high energy efficiency. Water-efficient sanitary equipment and rainwater capture significantly reduce the building's water consumption. Solar panels placed to underline the roof design contribute to the building's electricity supply. Another important sustainability feature is the use of lake water through heat exchangers and heat pumps for heating and cooling the building. The materials were carefully chosen with the intention of limiting pollutant emissions and ensuring the best indoor air quality for the user's comfort. The respectful deconstruction of the former IOC administration buildings was a significant element of the project, contributing to a circular economy through the reuse, selective demolition and recycling of construction materials. Over 95 percent of the former administrative building's materials were reused or recycled, furthering the building's sustainability imprint. Olympic House serves as a bridge between the roots of the IOC in Lausanne and the vision of the organization for a sustainable future. The new IOC Headquarters is an innovative example of a 21st century agile and sustainable workspace that reflects the values and defines the identity of the IOC.