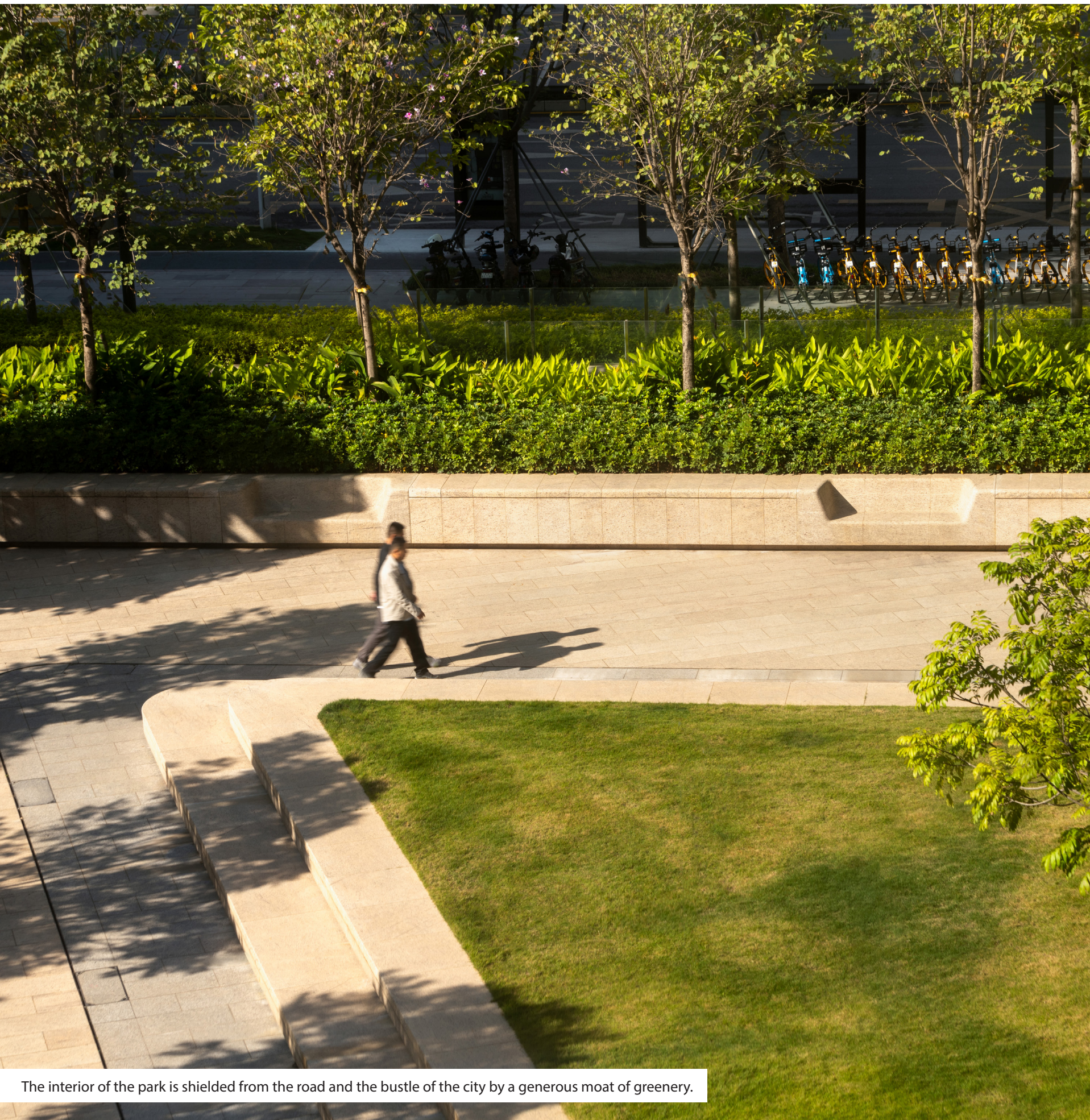




IFLA AWARDS
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HONY TOWER, URBAN RETREAT SHENZHEN, CHINA



The interior of the park is shielded from the road and the bustle of the city by a generous moat of greenery.

PROJECT STATEMENT

This vibrant, biophilic oasis in the heart of a densely populated new development district is a place for residents, office workers, young families and the wider public to escape the chaos of urban life in a quiet space, immersed in thriving greenery and seated on tree-shaded stone sofas.

The material palette was selected to perform long-term and mitigate the Urban Heat Island effect through lighter tones. The signature granite stone sofas create an active edge boundary which optimises the depth and loading constraints of the podium, while providing an internal resting space for people.

Specific trees were selected for their resilience and ability to thrive in the challenging subtropical monsoon climate. They have been developed to maximise shade and help create a cooler pleasant environment all year around. Plant species have been set in rows to outline distinctive paving to guide pedestrian flow.

Through manipulation of scale, material and planting, the landscape becomes a green oasis that creates an enjoyable and intimate spatial experience.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The Urban Retreat knits a skyscraper into the urban fabric of Shenzhen's Qianhai district by creating a lush park that emphasizes the qualities of both the tower and the city. Responding to the intensity of life in downtown Shenzhen, the design reconsiders the fundamental form of the park itself, creating something that offers both an intimate experience, and a riotous mass of biophilic planting of a scale unusual for a site of this size.

The project sets a new standard for office and residential environments in Shenzhen by emphasizing the experience of its users, rather than grandeur and spectacle. The Urban Retreat is a detailed, tactile space that stimulates the senses. Composed of a set of outdoor spaces that have a quiet, human-scale atmosphere, the Urban Retreat is a soothing environment that insulates visitors from the busy surroundings through an increased connection to nature.



The park is a physical and aesthetic extension of the tower along the horizontal plane.

THE INVERTED SPACE

Fundamental to the design of the project is the idea of an “inverted” park, where lush greenery is positioned at the periphery, isolating the internal spaces. While this in some ways contravenes conventional wisdom about what a park should be, the Urban Retreat constitutes an act of generosity to the street, while also creating a lush green setting within.

From the street, the project presents as a dense, tectonic mass of greenery bounded by a robust stone edge. On an urban scale, the greenery calms and interrupts the monotony of the local built environment. Passers-by are invited into the space not by what they can see within, but through small, shaded passageways that gesture toward the intimate qualities of the interior.

The stone planter boundary is more than a wall – set with “sofas,” it activates the exterior edge of the site throughout the day. The craftsmanship behind this element of the project is of particular note: care and time were taken to ensure that the stone edge presents as a single, unified form. The material also has pleasing thermal qualities and remains relatively cool to the touch during Shenzhen’s hot summer months.



The refined simplicity of the Urban Retreat belies the complex engineering solutions that underpin it.



Robust stone sofas activate the border of the park.

A TOWER THAT GROWS OUT OF A FOREST

Another important basis for the design is the idea that the landscape is the foundation of the tower. Where the tower meets the ground, it passes the baton to the landscape, converting the scale of the built experience into a more human one. At the boundary between the tower and the park, the masonry seamlessly flows from the wall onto the ground floor, creating a sense that the tower is sprouting out of the greenery of the park.

The park mediates both the monumental scale of the tower and the noise and bulk of the local urban environment. Occupants are protected from the hustle and bustle of the street while within the park, and at the same time the municipal roads and a new multi-functional community space are integrated with the new landscape, making the park a natural extension of the street.

COMPLEX SIMPLICITY

The elegance and ease of the project belies the complicated technical challenges that were resolved to complete it. Built entirely on podium and above several underground floors, the park is a meticulous engineering solution.

A refined, robust, and unified design expression of materiality was used consistently throughout the landscape, connecting the horizontal experience with the architectural expression of the tower. At the same time, these material choices work to address the environmental pressures faced in Shenzhen, where summers are hot and humid and beset by typhoons. The care taken in selecting materials ensures that the project has a positive impact on the Urban Heat Island effect.

The project responds to the local microclimate, the intensity of city life and a desire to foster a more fine-grain connection to the surrounding towers.



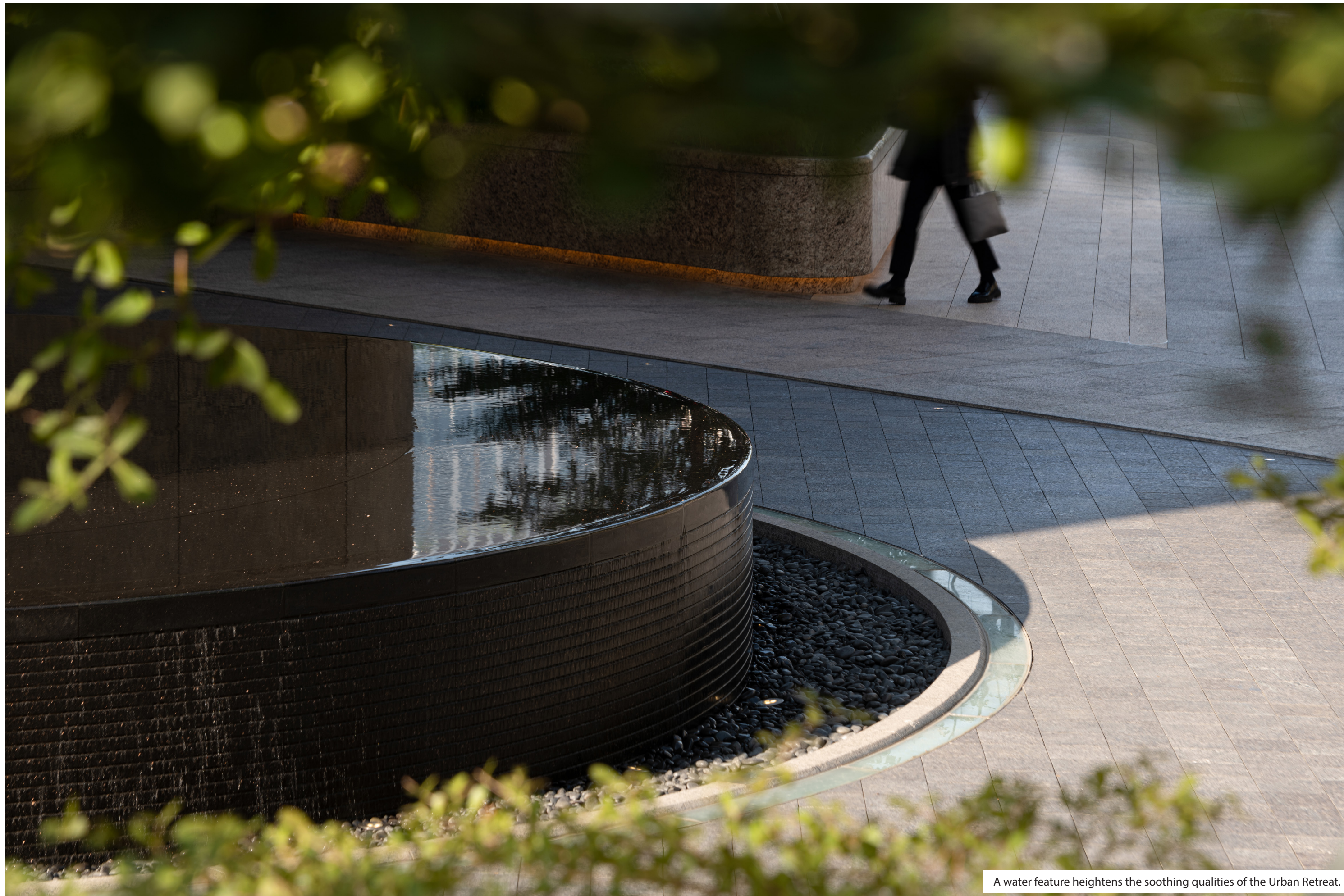
By creating a defined and sheltered interior space, the Urban Retreat is able to create an intimate experience for the user.



The Urban Retreat invites people to linger and relax – a rare gesture in downtown Shenzhen.



The masonry edges were painstakingly crafted to remain cool to the touch in the hot summer months.



A water feature heightens the soothing qualities of the Urban Retreat.