

THE GREEN HEART:

AN INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACE WITHIN A COMMERCIAL SITE

PROJECT STATEMENT

The Suzhou River Park project in Shanghai is a noteworthy achievement in balancing commercial development with the creation of inclusive public spaces. By relocating commercial activities underground, the project preserves valuable above-ground areas for public use. The design seamlessly blends the city's cultural heritage with modern architectural elements, integrating commercial areas with pedestrian walkways, green spaces, and recreational amenities. This creates a visually striking and cohesive park environment that serves as a hub for social and commercial activities. The park offers a welcome respite from the urban landscape, promoting social inclusion and reinforcing a sense of community ownership.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

THE “GREEN HEART” OF CITY

The site is situated in the heart of Shanghai where invisible walls of capital restrict access for certain groups. The prime location of Suzhou River Park makes it a core target of capital. Originally consisting of several discrete blocks, traditional intensive development would have inevitably led to its transformation into a commercial complex. However, in a departure from conventional development practices, the project prioritized the creation of a precious "green heart" within the city by ceding commercial activity to the underground, freeing up the ground floor for public use.

YIELD THE GROUND FLOOR

The Suzhou River Park allocates a valuable ground floor area to public space, even weakening the entrance to the sunken commercial area to enhance the perception of the site as a public space. This "concession" breaks down the invisible walls created by commercial development, allowing people to freely enter and exit the space without feeling any pressure as consumers. By prioritizing public space over commercial activities, the park transforms the site into a welcoming and inclusive space for all.

CONNECTION

The site of Suzhou River Park was originally comprised of several disjointed blocks separated by a busy road. To create a cohesive park experience, the landscape design utilized a unified design language to connect the different blocks with pedestrian bridges. This method will be applied to future blocks, creating a large central park that spans multiple city blocks when the entire site is completed.

NATURE FLOWS INTO COMMERCIAL SPACE

The landscape design integrates greenery throughout the site, both above and below ground, enriching the park experience with diverse textures and forms. Carefully selected and arranged, different types of plants are found above ground and below ground, promoting sustainability and vitality. Even within the underground commercial area, every available space is utilized to the fullest extent possible in order to enhance the greenery.

The memorial of historic buildings on the site is accomplished through the incorporation of green spaces, which retain the spot of original pillars, and other elements. Skylights left in the pavement serve as special paving and bring natural daylight into the underground commercial area.

RESERVE FOR THE POSSIBILITIES

In a city like Shanghai, where fresh ideas are constantly emerging, the open space of the landscape offers a vibrant stage for creativity and social engagement. Despite its young age, the park already showcases an impressive range of artistic and urban activities that enrich the experience for visitors and residents alike. The flexibility of the public space provides endless opportunities for artistic expression, turning the park into a vital hub within the urban fabric of Shanghai.

A LESSON LEARNED

The project in Shanghai is revolutionizing the relationship between public space and commerce. By prioritizing public use and strategically conceding above-ground commercial space, the project has created a vibrant, inclusive park environment that fosters community engagement and creativity. Its success challenges the notion that public space and commerce are incompatible and offers a new model for revitalizing cities that prioritizes community engagement and social well-being alongside commercial interests. This innovative approach has important implications for the future of urban design.



URBAN OASIS

The Suzhou Creek Central Park is an oasis in the gray urban landscape.

MASTER PLAN

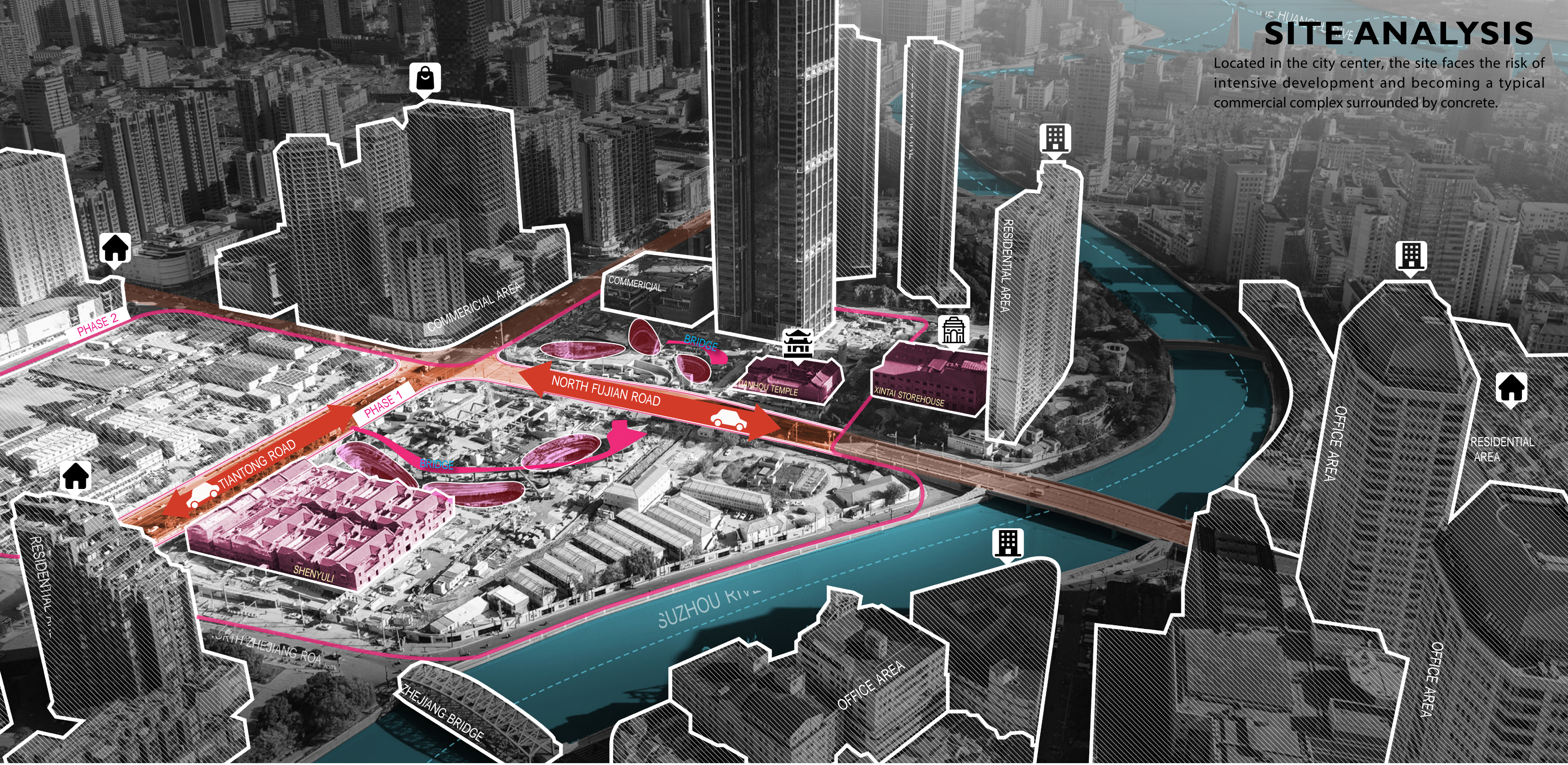
The site was originally composed of discrete plots. Commercial caves and ribbon-like connecting bridges formed the framework of the landscape.



- 1 SHENYULI HISTORICAL BUILDING GROUP
- 2 COMMERCE ENTRANCE
- 3 STAIRS WITH PLANTS
- 4 SPIRAL STAIRS
- 5 ACTIVITY PLAZA
- 6 FESTIVAL LAWN
- 7 SKYWALK
- 8 DIGITAL WATERFALL
- 9 BRIDGE STAND
- 10 HALL OF THE TEMPLE PLAZA
- 11 TIANHOU PALACE
- 12 WALL THEATER
- 13 PATTERNED LAWN
- 14 SKYLIGHT ALLEY
- 15 SUNLIGHT LAWN
- 16 OFFICE ENTRY
- 17 OFFICE BUILDING
- 18 WATERFRONT STAIRS
- 19 WHARF

SITE ANALYSIS

Located in the city center, the site faces the risk of intensive development and becoming a typical commercial complex surrounded by concrete.



DESIGN STRATEGY

The design hides commercial activities underground and leaves the valuable ground level for public spaces, creating an inclusive park.

ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY

The design of skywalk connects several blocks so that people can easily walk across street without the experiences being interrupted

GREEN HEART OF THE CITY

Unlike the conventional intense development, the park minimize the hardscape and extend the area of planting

HIDDEN COMMERCIAL

The commercial areas are hidden underground to yield the above-ground to public spaces

REVIVAL OF HISTORICAL BUILDING

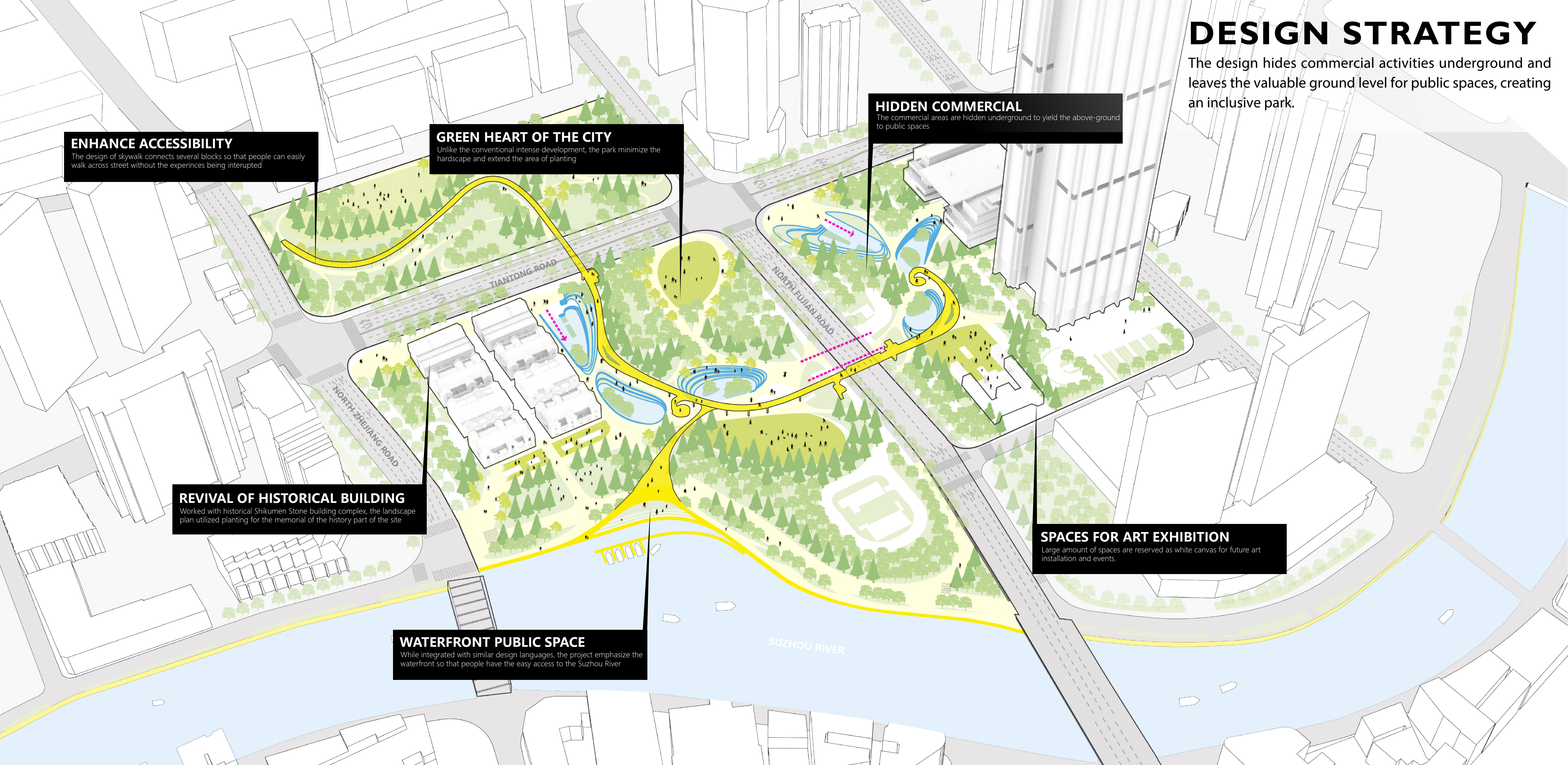
Worked with historical Shikumen Stone building complex, the landscape plan utilized planting for the memorial of the history part of the site

SPACES FOR ART EXHIBITION

Large amount of spaces are reserved as white canvas for future art installation and events.

WATERFRONT PUBLIC SPACE

While integrated with similar design languages, the project emphasize the waterfront so that people have the easy access to the Suzhou River





GROUND FLOOR FOR PUBLIC

The ground floor, except for preserved old buildings, has been maximally surrendered to green spaces, while hardscape have been minimized. The commercial entrances are de-emphasized to ensure the park experience takes precedence from a human perspective.



SKYWALK

The elevated bridges not only connect different parts of the site, but also provide an additional layer of experience to the park.



DEDICATED DESIGNED PLANTING

The park's plant design has been carefully considered and reviewed to ensure that each space is filled with the most suitable vegetation.



HISTORICAL SITE

The columns spots of palace and the floor plan of the old buildings have been transformed and commemorated through lawns. The pavement is designed as a skylight, allowing natural light to penetrate into the indoor spaces.



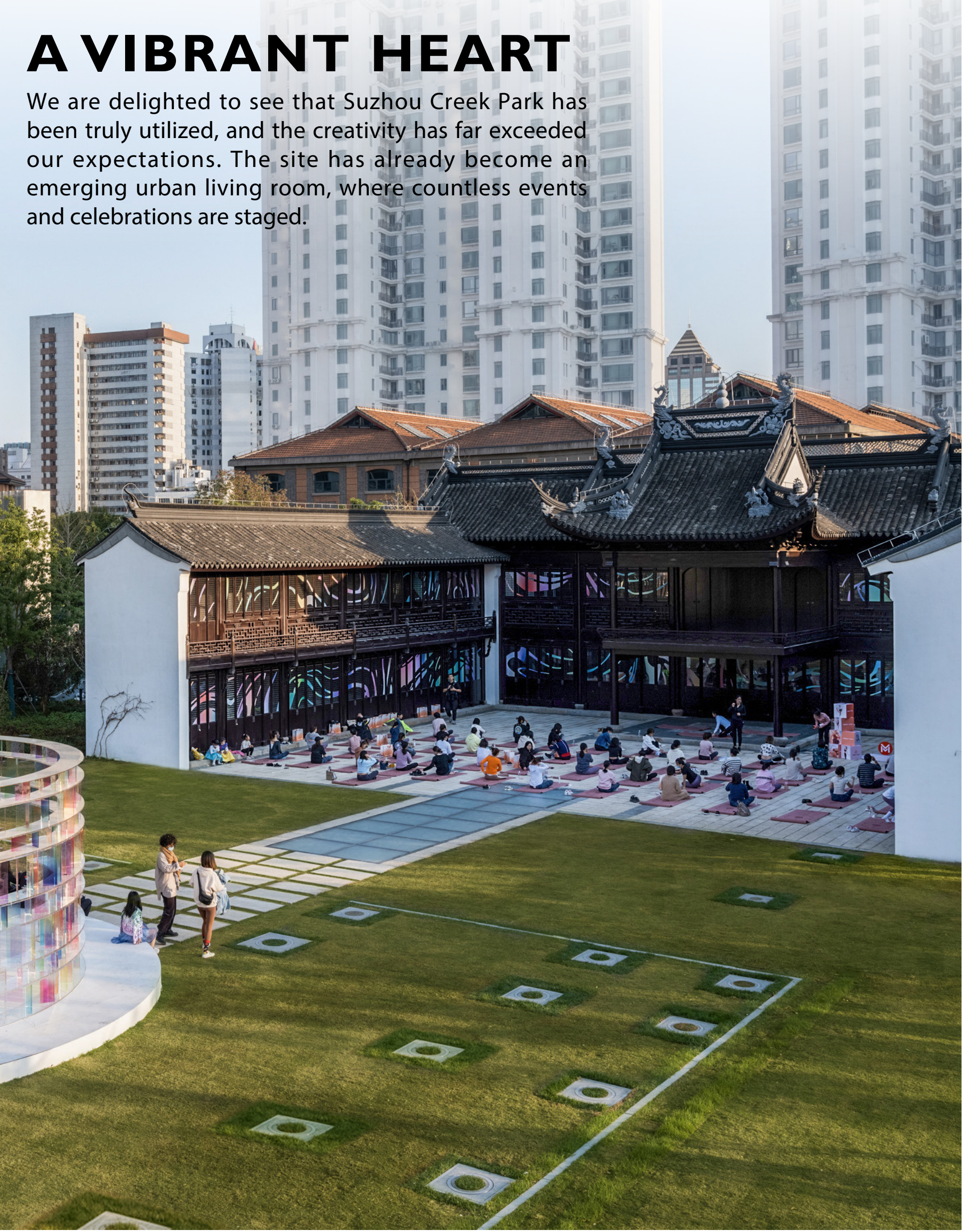


CONVERSATION WITH ART

The landscape provides a perfect backdrop for art installation. The sculptures had transformed park into an outdoor art museum.

A VIBRANT HEART

We are delighted to see that Suzhou Creek Park has been truly utilized, and the creativity has far exceeded our expectations. The site has already become an emerging urban living room, where countless events and celebrations are staged.





A LESSON LEARNED

This project ultimately proved that public space positively benefited commercial space. It urges us to rethink the relationship between park and commercial space.