

The Nirvana of Bijingtang Garden

Project of Chengde Garden for the Fifth Garden Expo in Hebei Province (Tangshan)



Project Statement

Project Title: The Nirvana of Bijingtang Garden, Project of Chengde Garden for the Fifth Garden Expo in Hebei Province (Tangshan)

Project Address: Tangshan City, Hebei Province, China

Project Area: 8150 m²

Located in central China, Hebei is a province with rich history and culture. The project is a commission from the Chengde Municipal Government, located at the Fifth (Tangshan) Landscape Exposition of Hebei Province, to showcase the art of Chengde Summer Resort and to revive the disappeared garden cultural heritage through the exhibition garden.

Based on the topography of the site, the project has reproduced a classical garden that has disappeared for more than 300 years, Bijingtang Garden. Once in ruins, now the Bijingtang Garden stands as a testament to cultural preservation and innovation. With a focus on cultural heritage of classical gardens, ecological harmony and social engagement, the garden integrates ancient wisdom with contemporary relevance, inviting visitors to experience the timeless beauty of Chinese gardening. Through five strategies and a commitment to heritage protection, the new Bijingtang Garden has been reborn, reviving architectural heritage and ancient techniques and becoming a vibrant space for cultural exchange and education in the modern society.

The project's success in preserving heritage and embracing modernity has been widely recognized, as it not only resurrects the disappeared ancient garden sites and inherits the valuable cultural heritage, but also gives it a new social vitality.



Project Narrative

Background: Designing an Exhibition Garden in the 2021 Hebei Garden Expo

Hebei Province, central China, is known for its thriving garden industry and annual fairs to foster cultural exchanges and garden art development. City gardens represent local culture and landscapes, crucial for showcasing cultural and industrial achievements. The project team was invited to design a garden for Chengde city in the 2021 Hebei Garden Expo in Tangshan, highlighting the city's heritage and elegance.

Chengde, a historic Chinese city, is renowned for its Summer Resort, the world's largest existing royal garden, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1994. Built in 1703, it's a pinnacle of ancient Chinese gardening and architecture. The resort features 44 damaged ancient ruins yet to be restored. The government aims to display the resort's gardens and restore the ruins at the expo, revitalizing China's classical garden art.

Opportunity to Revive the Treasure of Chinese Classical Gardens

The project site, spanning 8150m² in the north-west of Tangshan Garden Expo, features a mountainous terrain. The team conducted a thorough investigation, finding the site's topography strikingly similar to an ancient mountain garden in the Summer Resort, and the team resolved to recreate it. The ancient mountain garden is named Bijingtang, a unique imperial garden with distinctive architectural features like rooms built on the mountain and an octagonal pavilion. The original Bijingtang Garden site is now damaged, but the urban exhibition garden provides an ideal opportunity to revive its elegance.

Reflections on Heritage Conservation and Five Challenges

The project team has thought deeply about the significance of whether the ancient garden should be restored off-site. The ancient Bijingtang Garden, which is now in a remote mountain area with damaged roads and only remnants of buildings, and is unsuitable for in-situ reinstatement. Despite restoration challenges, its loss as a classical garden is lamented. To preserve its history and cultural significance, the decision was made to revive Bijingtang Garden, preserving its history and originality, achieving heritage protection and cultural inheritance.

To authentically recreate the ancient courtyard landscape and convey the classical garden's artistic value and modern cultural impact, the construction of the project considered these five key challenges:

- 1) What kind of Bijingtang garden can be reproduced on the new site?
- 2) How to harmonize the new garden with the old?
- 3) How to showcase cultural heritage in garden design?
- 4) Can ancient gardening wisdom be merged with modern concepts for enhancement?
- 5) How to invigorate the garden's social relevance?

Project Narrative

Design Concept: The Nirvana of Bijingtang Garden

The project team, after extensive archaeological and documentary research, has built an exhibition garden with the concept of “The Nirvana of an Ancient Garden”. The project focuses on recreating the Bijingtang Garden landscape and preserving the classical garden's design principles and cultural legacy. By blending ancient ecological insights with contemporary ideas, the team aims to enhance the mountain garden system and use new societal dynamics to propagate the art of Bijingtang Garden, ensuring its renaissance and increased vitality in modern society.

Five Strategies to Five Challenges

1) Response to Challenge 1: Reconstruct the original ancient garden

The project faithfully reproduces the ancient mountain-based garden design, utilizing the site's natural terrain to recreate the three-ridge, two-stream layout of the original landscape of Bijingtang Garden.

2) Response to Challenge 2: Build a monumental landscape

A ruined structure, Jinglian Xilou, is reimagined as a monument, using design art of "blank-leaving" to honor the original ruins, harmonizing old and new garden elements.

3) Response to Challenge 3: Revive architectural heritage and traditional crafts

Traditional wood construction and craftsmanship are employed to rebuild Bijingtang's architectural heritage, including the octagonal eaves pavilion, while natural rocks and traditional techniques are used for the garden's external environment, preserving ancient construction methods.

4) Response to Challenge 4: Create a garden system integrating the ancient and modern wisdom

The project merges sustainable development with ancient ecological wisdom, using the site's topography for natural drainage, rainwater harvesting, and planting native, low-maintenance flora for a sustainable classical garden.

5) Response to Challenge 5: Empower the classical garden with new social forces

After the construction, the garden attracts thousands of visitors and gains social media attention. It's repurposed for educational and cultural functions, including art exhibitions and folklore experiences, to enhance Bijingtang's cultural impact in modern society.

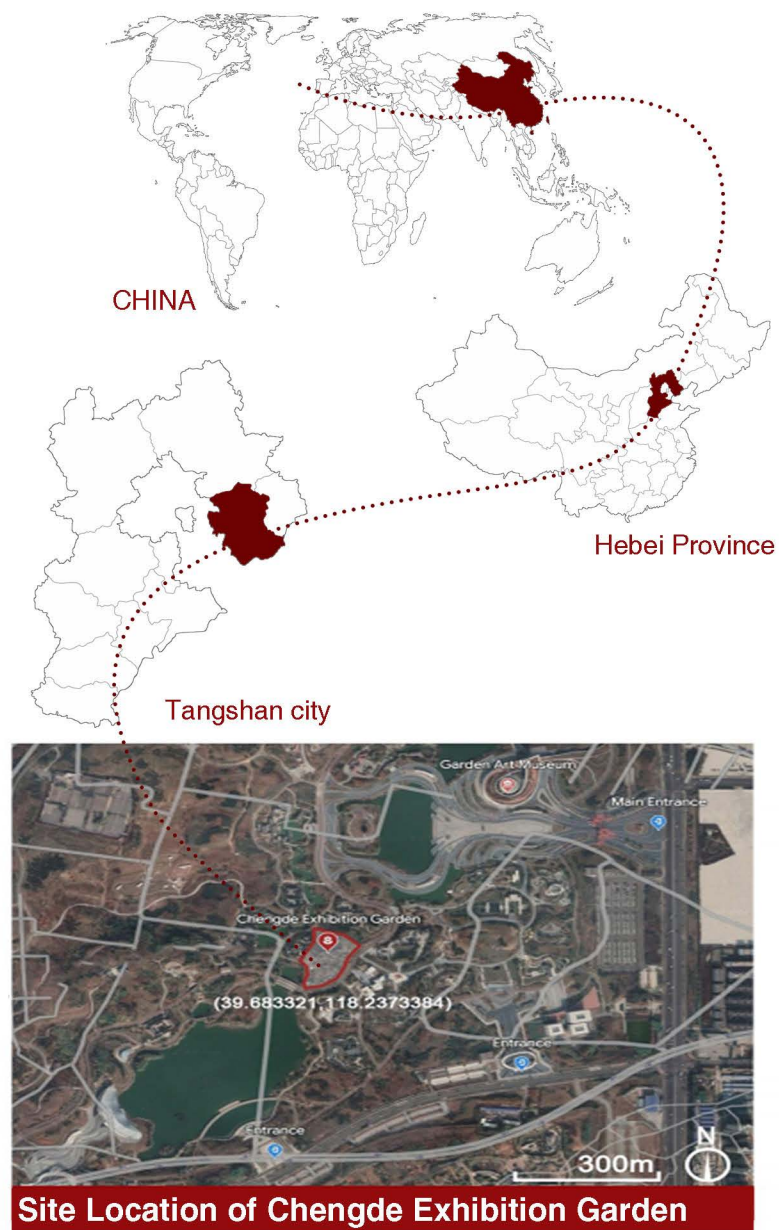
Bijingtang Garden Rejuvenated in Modern Life

The project has garnered acclaim from stakeholders and visitors for its preservation of ancient gardening heritage and innovative fusion of traditional and contemporary concepts. By off-site reviving the garden while safeguarding the original site, the project has been effectively promoted through social media and events, allowing modern audiences to embrace this classical art form, creating new emotional connections and breathing new life into Bijingtang within contemporary society.

Background

Designing an Exhibition Garden for Chengde City

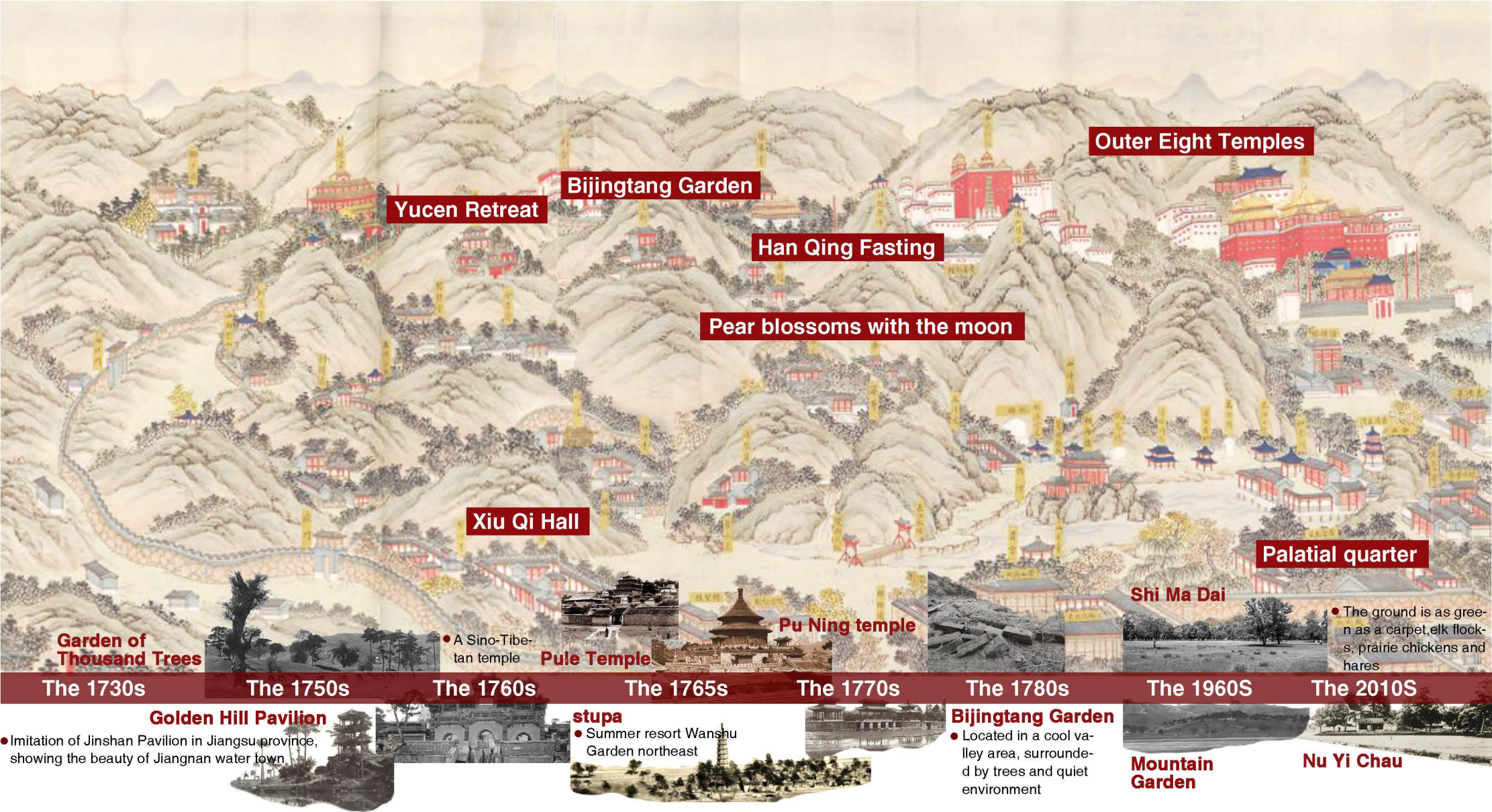
The project is located in the south of the main entrance of the 5th Garden Expo Park in Tangshan City, Hebei Province, China.



Site Location of Chengde Exhibition Garden

Ways of presenting city culture

The exhibition garden is an important way to display city culture. The project received a commission from the Chengde Municipal Government to showcase the local culture through the exhibition garden.



Chengde, A City Famous For Classical Gardens

Chengde has a long history of garden construction, among which the Summer Resort is the most famous. It contains 184 groups of gardens. At present, dozens of gardens in the Summer resort have been destroyed. And the restoration and inheritance of the original ruins are urgent. The Chengde government aims to display the resort's gardens and restore the ruins at the expo, revitalizing China's classical garden art. And the project team also want to inherit the precious ancient garden culture.

Prospect Restore the ruins & Inject new social vitality

Opportunities & Challenges

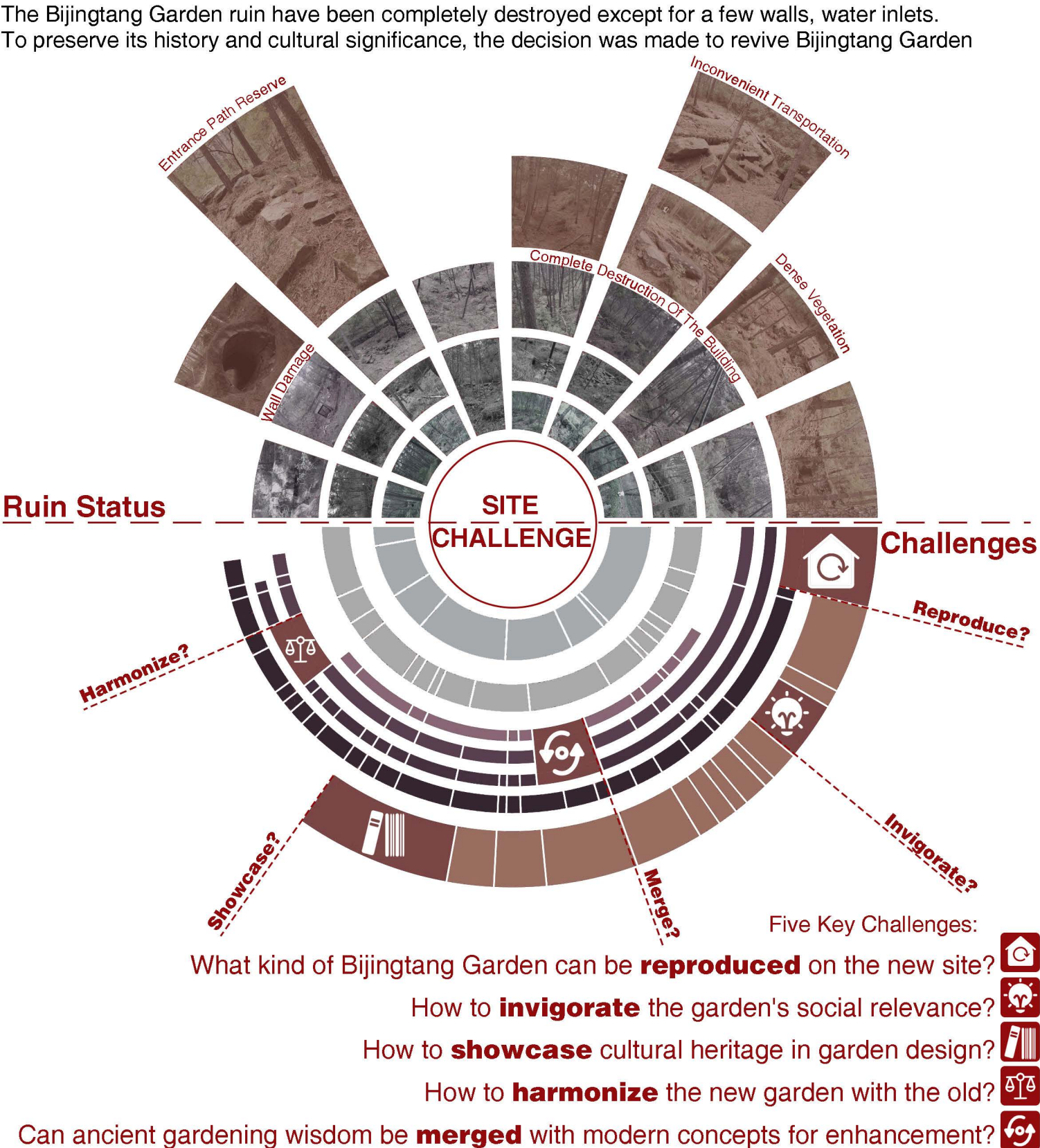
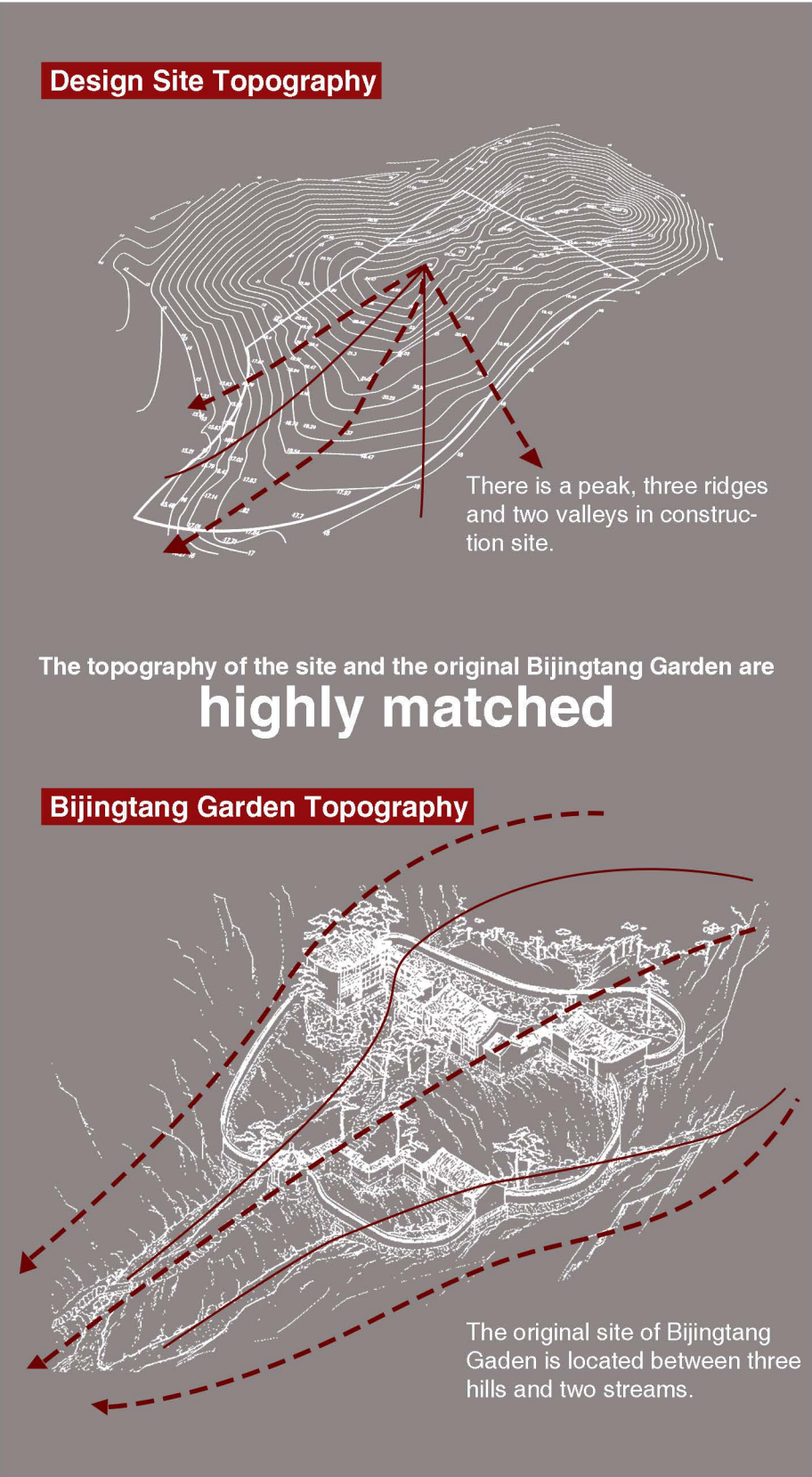
Opportunities and Challenges of Bijingtang Garden, a Garden Ruin over 300 Years Old

Off-site Reconstruction

Many of the original buildings and gardens of the Summer Resort have been seriously damaged. In order to protect the authenticity and historicity of the cultural relics and to take into account the inheritance and display of the cultural wisdom of the ancient gardens, "off-site reconstruction" is the best choice.

Opportunity for Rebuilding

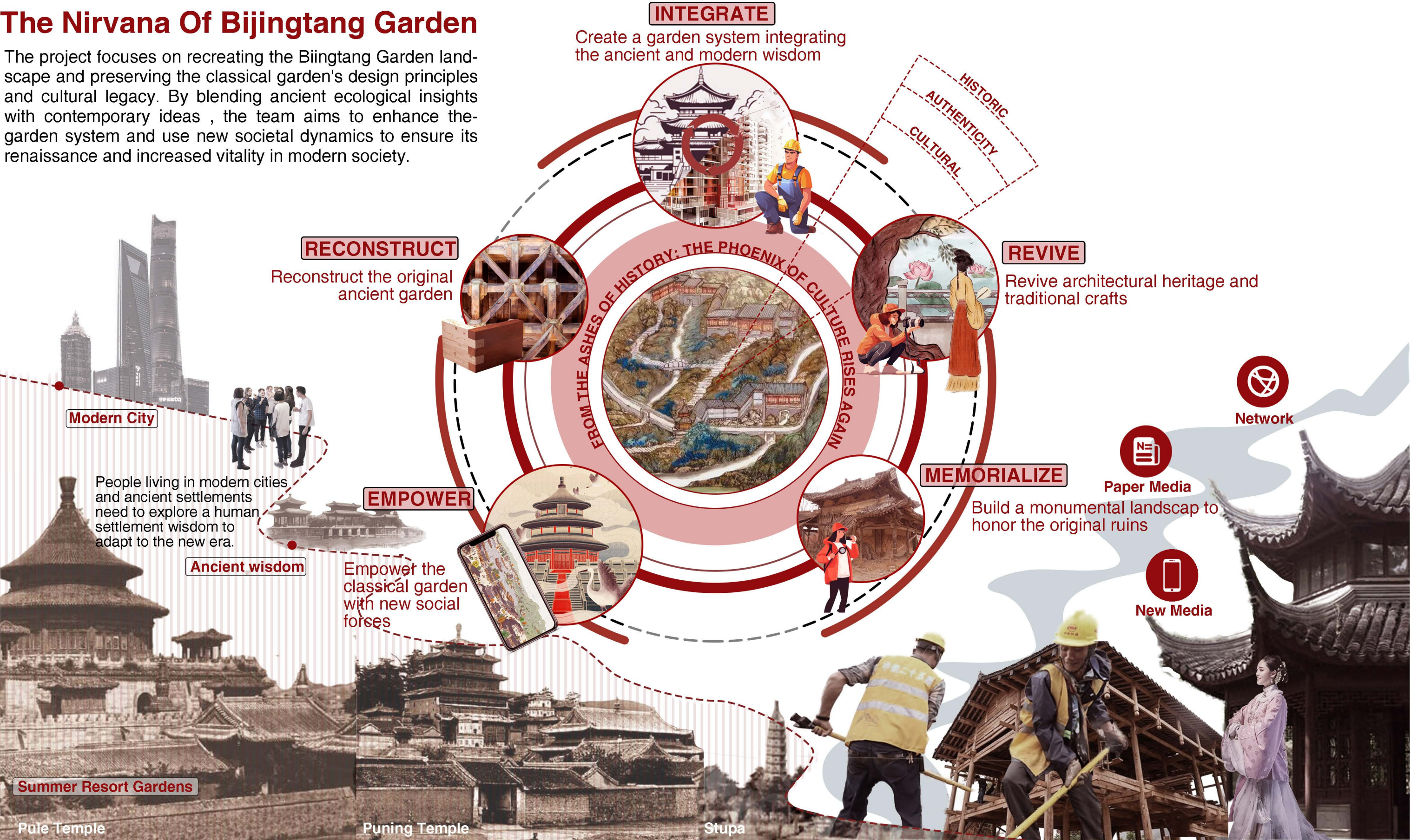
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Design Concept

The Nirvana Of Bijingtang Garden

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Master Plan

The Rebirth of the Bijingtang Garden

- 1 Main Entrance
- 2 Lotus Bush
- 3 Moon Pavilion
- 4 Stream Valley
- 5 Scent Waterfall
- 6 Mountain and Brook Traveling
- 7 Flowers and Grassland
- 8 Deep In the Pines
- 9 Octagonal Gate Pavilion
- 10 Pines and Cloud Canyon
- 11 Jing Lian Xi House
- 12 Song He Jian House
- 13 Bi Jing Hall
- 14 Jing Shang Hall
- 15 Resonating Stream
- 16 Side Spring



Reconstruct Historic Sites and Scenes

Inheriting the ancient techniques of landscape architecture at the Chengde Summer Resort, the Bijingtang Garden was resurrected from its ruin at a different location, taking into account the topographical features of "two streams intervening three ridges". The team involved in the restoration of the Mountain Resorts such as Chengde Institute of Ancient Architectural Conservation have been invited into the process of design this mountain landscape architecture.

Perpetuate the Ancient Gardening Art

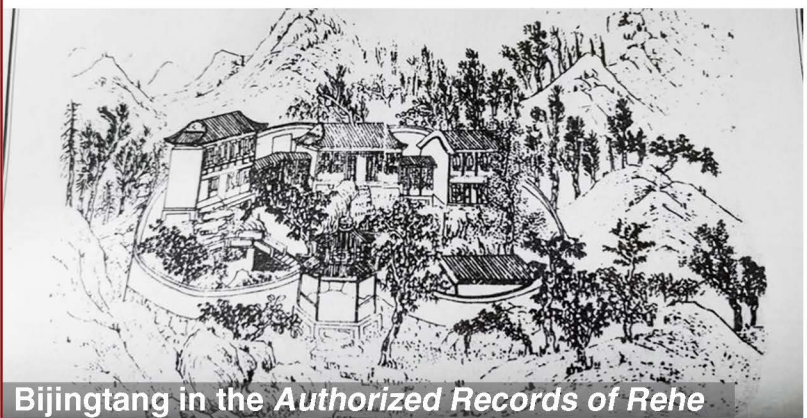
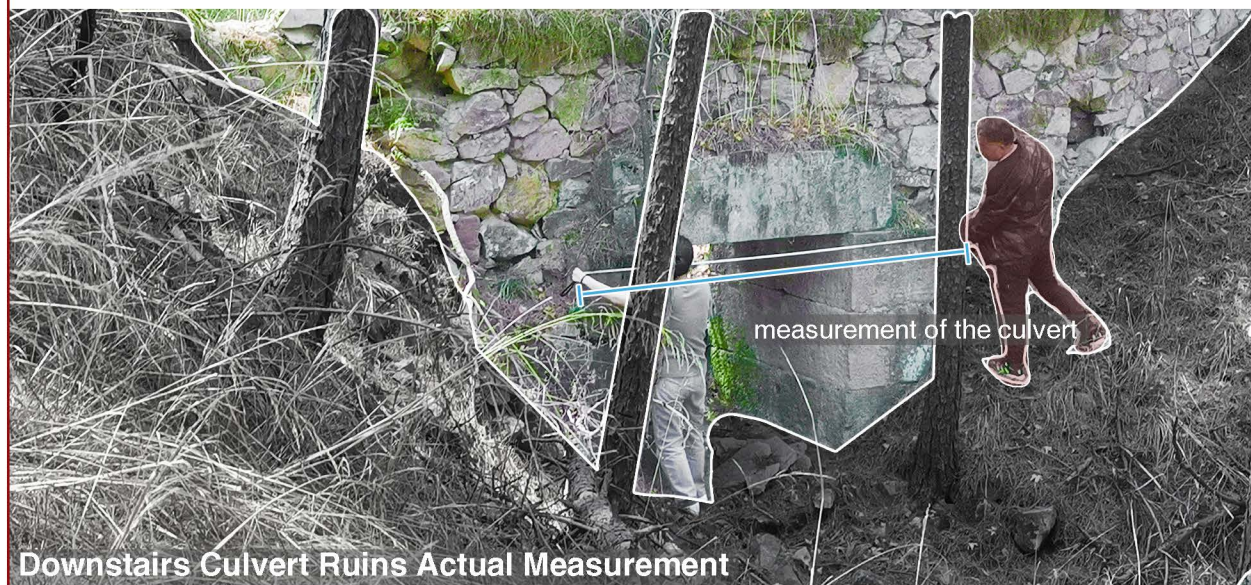
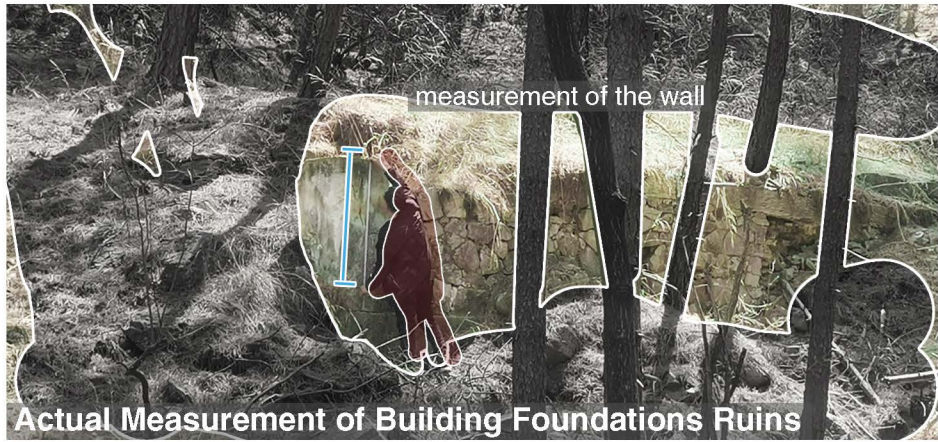
With a replica of the ancient courtyard as the main body, the landscape structure of the past is inherited to form a landscape structure of lake - gorge - courtyard, combined with valley and gully to form a natural sponge system and inherit ecological wisdom. The ancient courtyard is transformed into a curated innovative and inclusive public exhibition space.

Archaeology

Detailed Site Archaeology and Documentary Research to Support Project Designs

Field Measurements and Antiquarian Research of Bijingtang Garden

Bi Jing Hall is located in the bottom of a three-stage valley within Pines and Coud Canyon in the Chengde Mountain Resort and has only ruins remains ruins now. In order to accurately reproduce the landscape of Bijingtang Garden, the team conducted archaeological measurements of the site and obtained a series of original data. In addition, the archaeological records and studies such as *Authorized Records of Rehe*, *the Chengde Mountain Reort Atlas* and *the Imperial Summer Resort Poem* of the site in the Qing Dynasty also provide the basis for the heritage and reproduction of Chengde Mountain Resort.



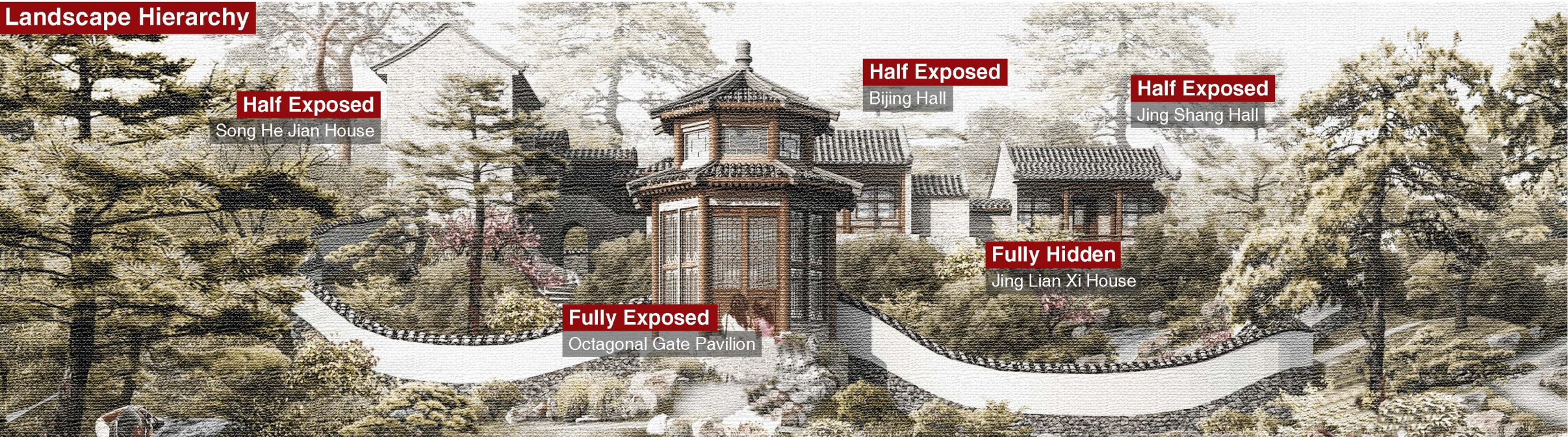
Rebuilding the Original Ancient Garden

Inheriting Classical Chinese Garden Design Methods

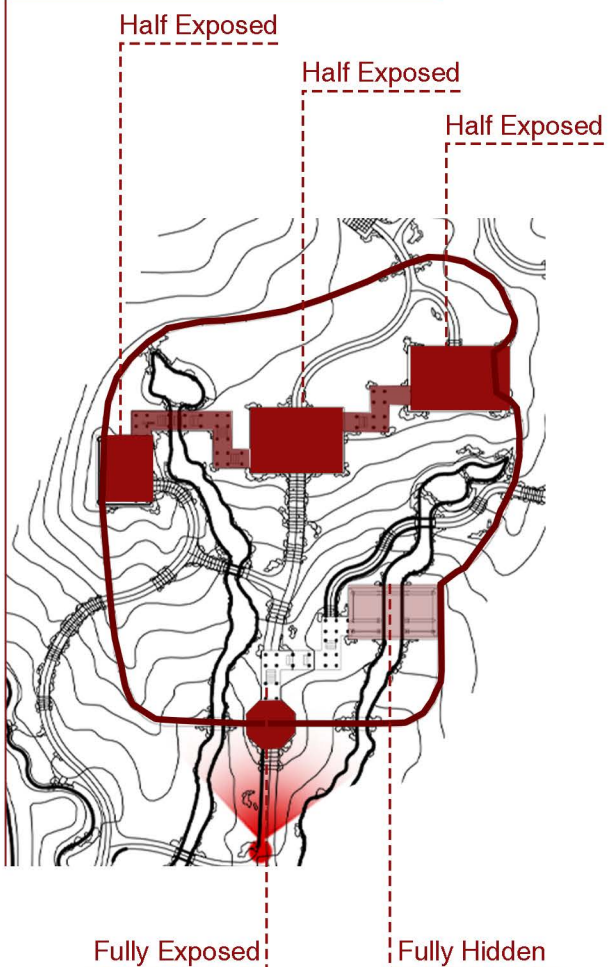
Inheriting the Design Method of the Original Bijingtang Garden

The project leverages the natural landscape to recreate the traditional courtyard system, featuring three ridges and two winding streams, reflecting the classical Bijingtang design with a unique layout and pattern, offering insights for today's garden planning.

Landscape Hierarchy



Original Design Method

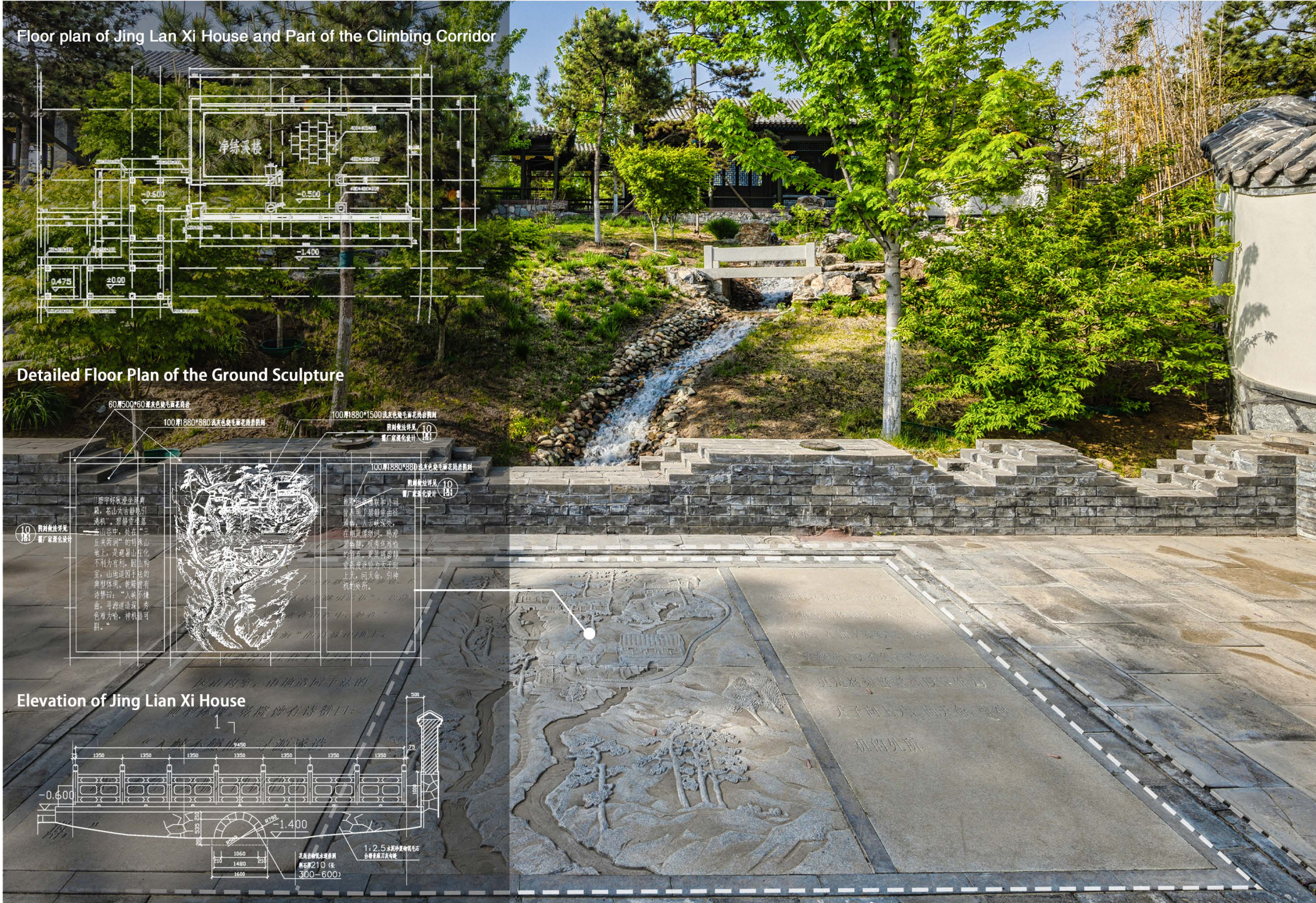


Creating Monumental Landscapes

Landscapes Expressing Remembrance

Creating monumental landscapes with blank-leaving

The project at Bijingtang's ruins features a building, Jinglian Xilou, transformed into a memorial landscape with the design art called blank-leaving. It uses partial brick walls and elevated column bases to honor the site's history, harmonizing old and new aesthetics.



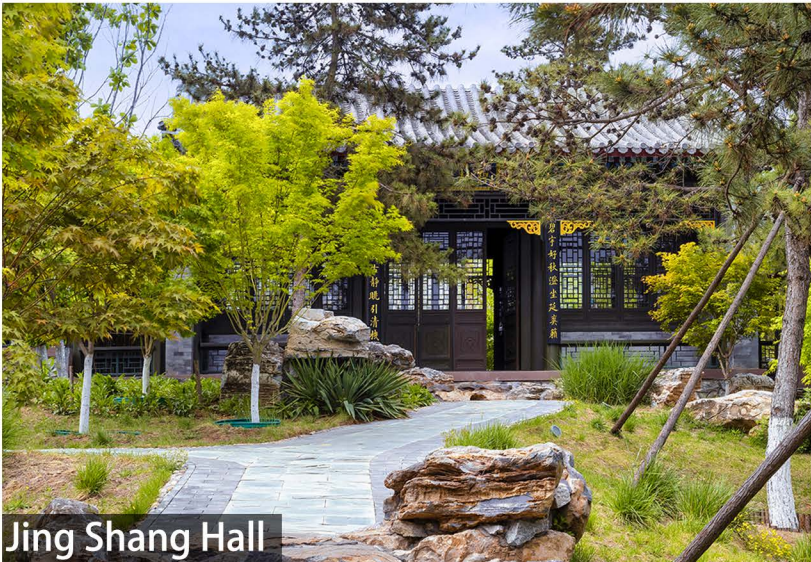
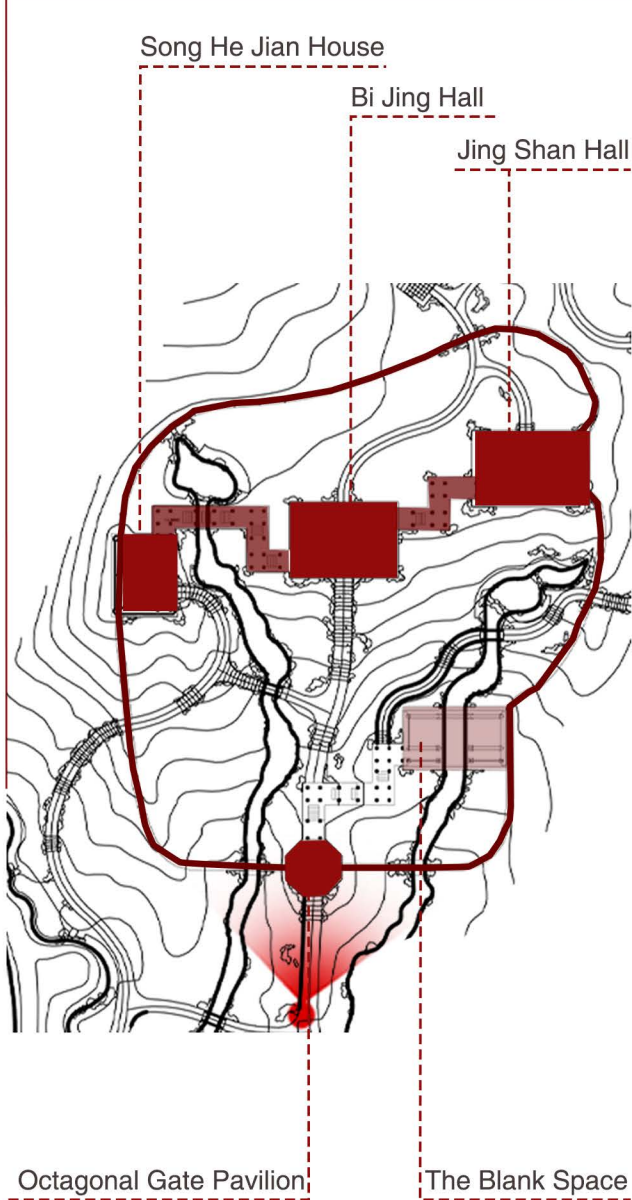
Revival of Architectural Heritage

Reconstruction of Lost Classical Architecture

Restore of the lost ancient buildings

Using timber as the main material, the project reproduces the traditional timber structure of Bijingtang in the traditional Chinese architectural construction method, and also reproduces the unique octagonal eaves pavilion and other architectural cultural heritages.

Defined and Implicit relationship



Revival of Intangible Cultural Heritage

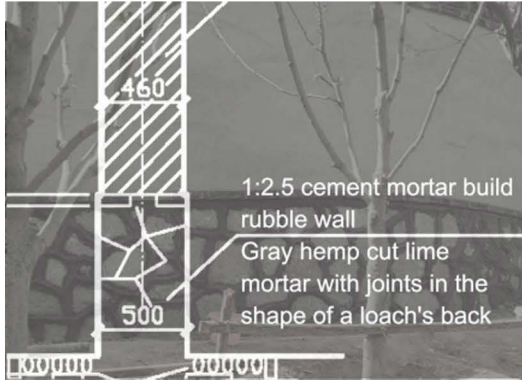
Using Classical Gardening Materials and Craftsmanship Inherited for Thousands of Years

Inheritance of ancient construction methods

The project employs natural stones and traditional crafts in the external landscape construction, preserving the legacy of ancient construction techniques in both process and detail.

Tiger-skin-patterned wall

The base of the wall is in the form of tiger-skin-patterned wall, which made of volcanic rock. The method of masonry can be summarized as "laying flat, laying staggered, filling backwards and flush with the line".



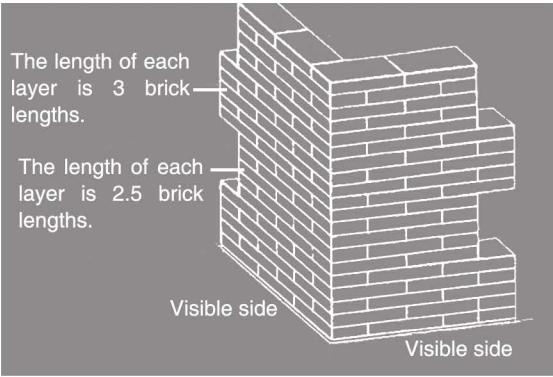
Dry masonry wall

The dry masonry is equal to "rubbed brickwork technology", and the dry masonry wall must be built with dry masonry bricks, and there should be a person to make every brick flat.



End cover types of walls

The entrance wall of Bi Jing Hall has a "five-out, five-in" end cover, and the main entrance wall of Chengde Garden has a "three-out,three-in"end cover.



Silk seam wall

Silk seam wall are usually built with "five skinned" bricks or "arm" bricks. The brick-making workload is extremely heavy. The masonry of silk seams is even more difficult than dry masonry. Silk seam walls are generally not used for lower bases, but as a combination of upper body with dry masonry walls.



One linen and five plastering Traditional Chinese civil engineering techniques for painting buildings

Chopping	Laying Bamboo Nails	Catching Seams	Passing Plaster	Making Linen	Rubbing Linen	Pressing Plaster	Medium Plaster	Fine Plaster	Grinding and Coating Tung Oil
Chopping	Brushing Wood treatment.	Filling gaps and voidson woods with plaster.	Wrap the components with plaster then smooth it.	Press the linen firmly onto the plaster surface.	When the linen is dry, rub the linen with a stone tile until it is hairy, but not worn it off.	Pressing linen with plaster to combine them.	Scraping the plaster with a iron plate, the plaster should not be too thick.	Then apply a fine layer of plaster.	Finely ground plaster and applied raw tung oil.
砍活 撕缝	下竹钉 支浆	捉缝灰	通灰	使麻	磨麻	压麻灰	中灰	细灰	磨细钻生
									Painting 上漆

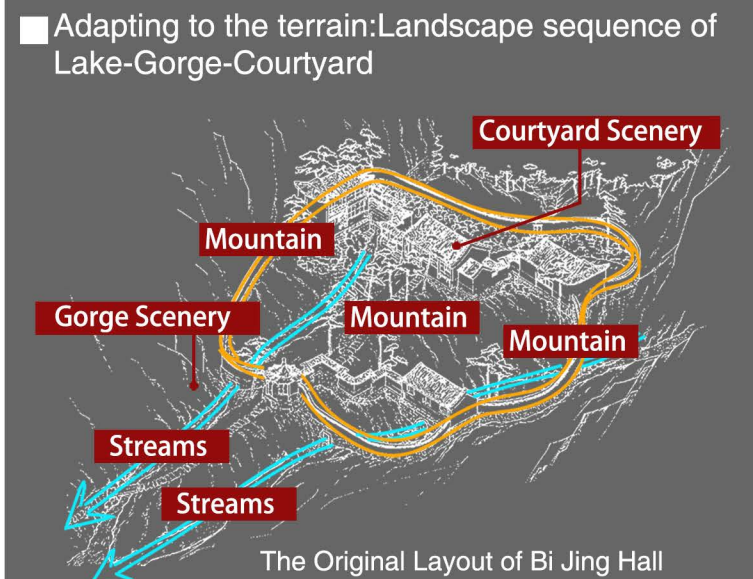
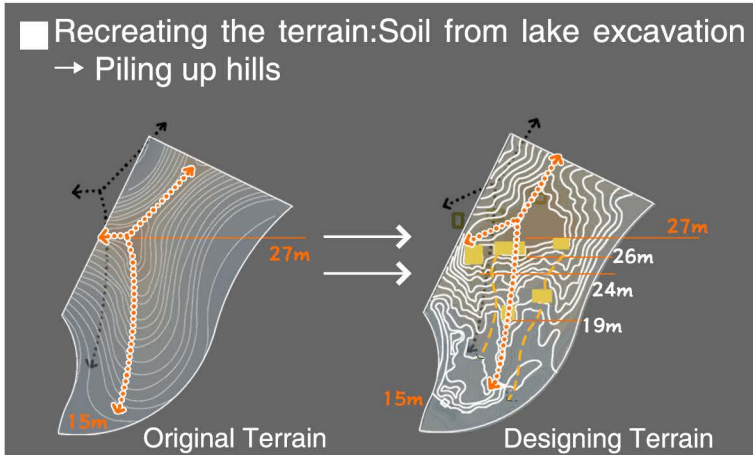


Fusion of Ancient & Modern Wisdom

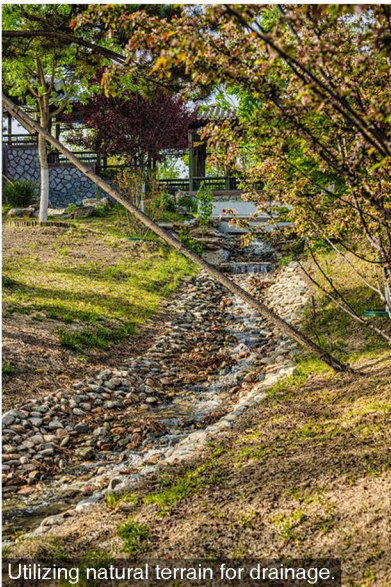
Inherit and Develop the Ecological Wisdom of Habitat in Chinese Gardens

Integration of sustainable development

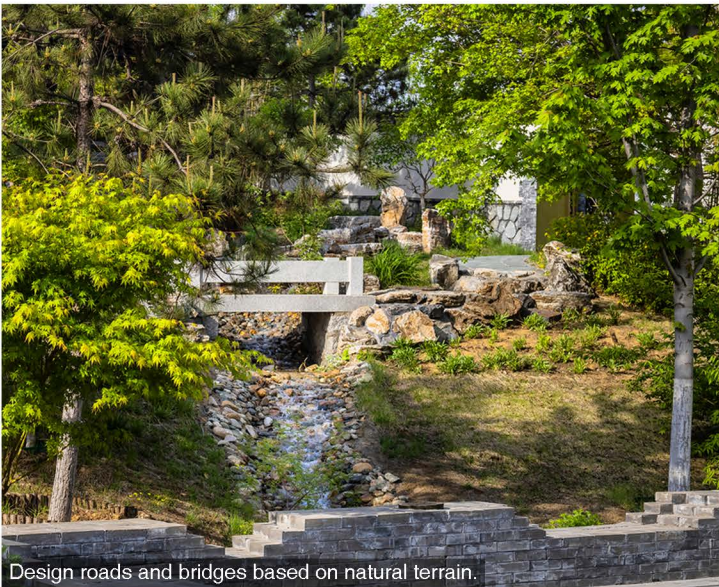
This project combines sustainable development with traditional ecological concepts, maximizing the use of existing terrain to shape natural drainage systems, and utilizes local plants.



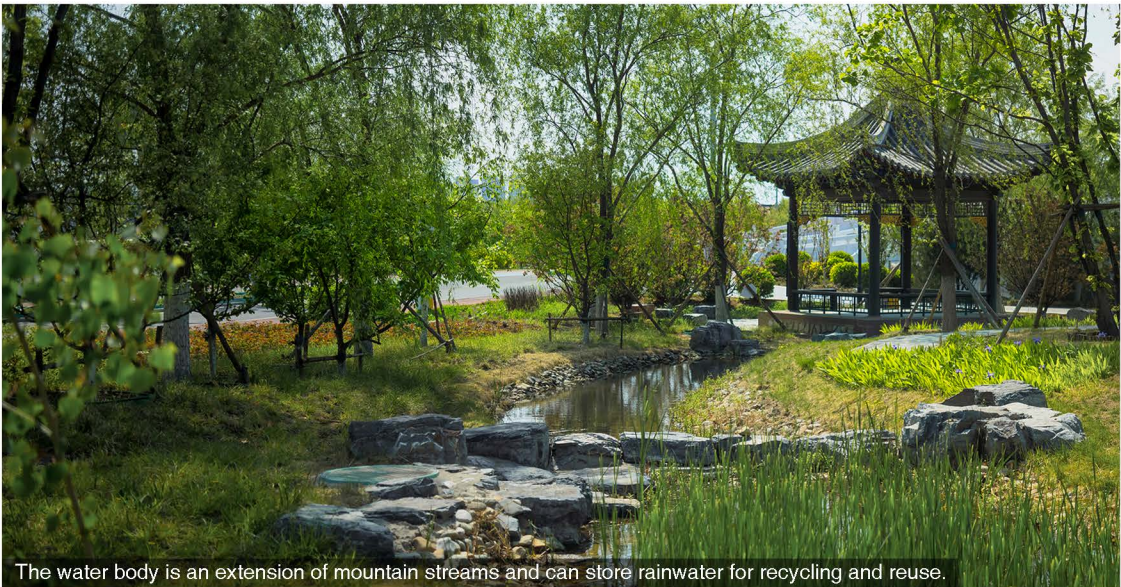
In order to fully reproduce the layout of the mountain architecture Bi Jing Tang Garden the terrain is shaped to fully restore the original terrain and build "three mountains and two streams". In addition, the drainage from the topography is considered to create a reasonable sponge drainage system to increase the visual effect of the garden.



Utilizing natural terrain for drainage.



Design roads and bridges based on natural terrain.



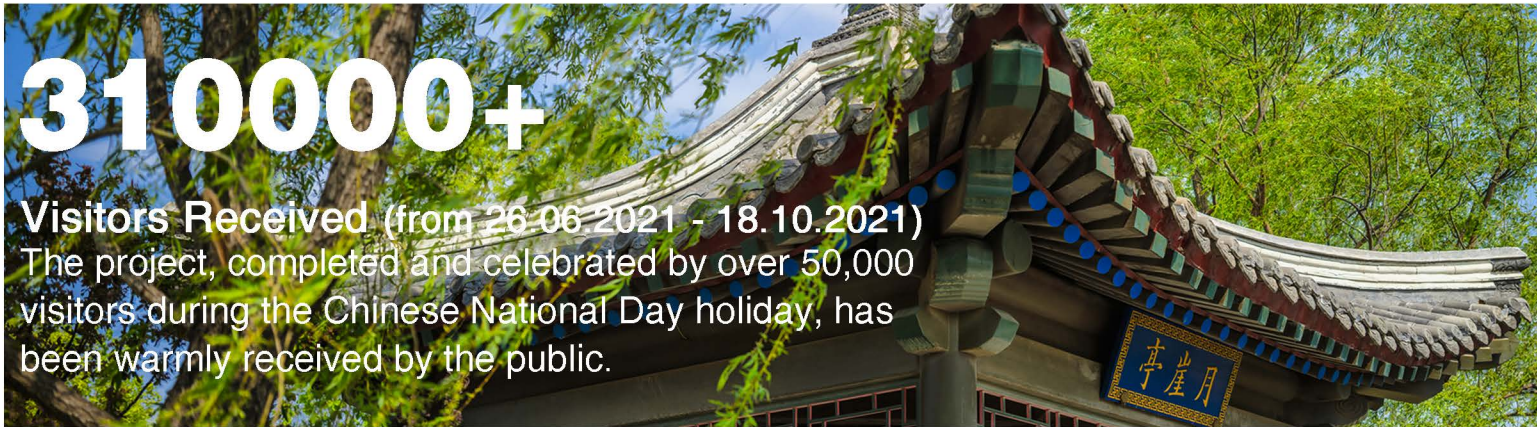
The water body is an extension of mountain streams and can store rainwater for recycling and reuse.

New Society, New Vitality

Activating the Social Impact of thr Classical Chinese Garden Art

310000+

Visitors Received (from 26.06.2021 - 18.10.2021)
The project, completed and celebrated by over 50,000 visitors during the Chinese National Day holiday, has been warmly received by the public.



1310000+

Internet Platform Exposures
The exhibition was spread on 6+ mainstream social media platforms, and the readership of related articles reached up to 909,000.



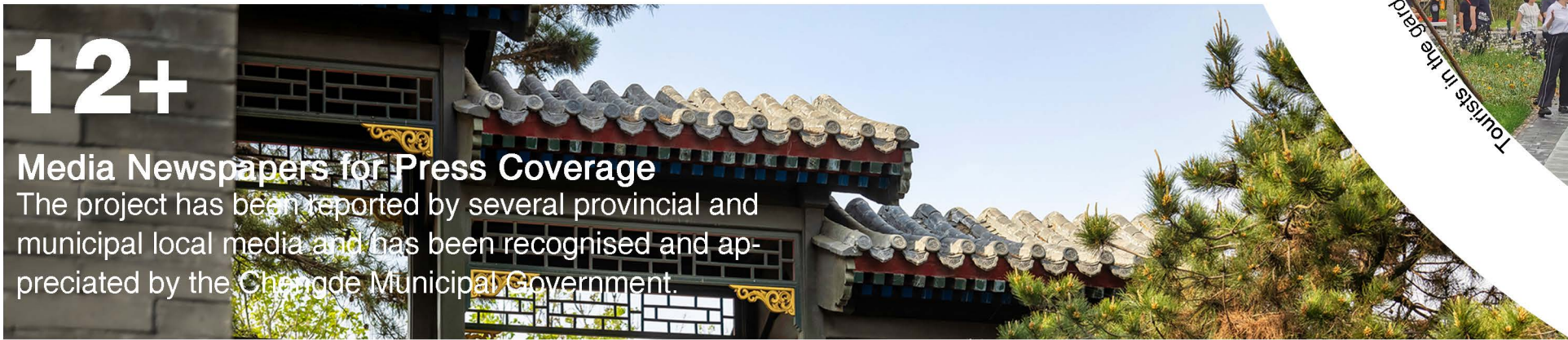
22+

Cultural Activities Organised
After the completion of the project, many cultural performances related to the Chengde Summer Resort were held to promote the classical garden culture.



12+

Media Newspapers for Press Coverage
The project has been reported by several provincial and municipal local media and has been recognised and appreciated by the Chengde Municipal Government.



NEW SOCIAL POWER

After the completion, the garden, received more than 2,000 visitors per day and was disseminated through several mainstream social media platforms. The project also considered the vitality of the Bijingtang compound after the fair: redefining the space to meet the needs of functions such as history education and garden art exhibitions, as well as new functions such as art galleries and folklore experiences, activating and strengthening the vitality and cultural impact of Bijingtang's garden art in the life of the new society.