

Study on the Countermeasures to Improve the Public Outdoor Leisure and Fitness Function on the Two Rivers and Four Banks in the Main Urban Area of Chongqing

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Abstract: The main urban area of Chongqing is surrounded by two rivers and set against each other. With its unique waterfront landscape, it has the resource conditions to become a leisure tourism destination. Intending to enhance people's happiness, improve city quality, and promote Chongqing's main urban area to become a tourist destination, this paper finds out the existing problems in the construction of public outdoor leisure and fitness facilities on the two rivers and four banks of Chongqing's main urban area through investigation and analysis based on relevant experiences at home and abroad, takes the value chain theory as the guidance, and to find solutions to the problem. On this basis, combined with the law of economic operation, this paper puts forward the guiding ideology, principles, development goals, functional orientation, and development path for the improvement of public outdoor leisure and fitness on two rivers and four banks in the main city of Chongqing, and accordingly puts forward the policy system and guarantee measures for its improvement.

Keywords: Two rivers and four banks in the main city of Chongqing; Public outdoor recreation and fitness; Policy measure

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1. Introduction

The "Two Rivers and Four Banks" in Chongqing's main urban area refers to the waterfront zones where the Yangtze River and Jialing River flow through the city. The Yangtze River section extends from Tongguanyi in Jiulongpo District and Yu Cave in Banan District, down to Wubao and Mudong in Banan District, covering 120 km. The Jialing River section runs from Wentang Gorge in Beibei, down to Chaotianmen in Yuzhong District and Jiangbeizui in Jiangbei District.

The improvement of leisure and fitness functions of urban waterfront in other countries began in the 1960s. Some authors classified and compared waterfront development types, development functions, waterfront

space landscape construction, and development modes, and obtained the elements and principles of successful waterfront development ^[1]. Research on the functional development of public outdoor leisure and fitness in China's urban waterfront areas began with the rise of tourism and the advent of leisure-focused lifestyles. Development strategies for the Xiangjiang River have been proposed from a geographical perspective, and basic principles for urban waterfront development have been outlined ^[2,3]. Suggestions have been made regarding concepts, functions, and spatial planning ^[4]. The two rivers and four banks area in Chongqing has been studied from a brand marketing perspective, with an emphasis on the public accessibility of urban riverside spaces ^[5,6]. There is also a call to enhance the cultural significance of waterfront areas ^[7]. Further studies explored recreational opportunities in informal green spaces along riverbanks in mountainous cities, analyzed decision-making paths for quality-oriented urban waterfront renewal, and examined the redevelopment of urban waterfront areas ^[8-10].

Based on current research, this study finds the following: Firstly, while research on improving public outdoor leisure and fitness functions in urban waterfront areas has been relatively comprehensive, many studies focus more on technology and less on policies and safeguarding measures, lacking forward-looking and actionable policy solutions. Secondly, the construction of urban waterfront areas in China has generally neglected the development of public outdoor leisure and fitness functions, which has created an inherent "congenital deficiency" in the growth of the recreation, sports, leisure, and tourism industries. This has constrained urban economic development and failed to meet people's growing demand for fitness and leisure activities. Thirdly, research on enhancing public outdoor leisure and fitness functions along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area still requires further exploration, particularly at the policy level. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct policy research on improving public outdoor leisure and fitness functions in this area of Chongqing.

2. Problem analysis

2.1. Existing problems

Since Chongqing became a directly administered municipality, successive governments have played a key role in promoting the construction and development of the two rivers and four banks in the city's main urban area. Significant achievements have been made in the construction of Binjiang Road and the riverside areas along these waterways. However, overall, there remains a gap between this development and the Chinese government's guiding principles of "innovation, coordination, green development, openness, and sharing." Furthermore, the current state of development does not align with Chongqing's status as a municipality directly under the Central Government, nor does it adequately support the city's goal of becoming an internationally renowned tourist destination and a scenic city celebrated for its mountains and rivers. These shortcomings are evident in several ways, as outlined below.

Firstly, there is an overemphasis on the capacity of the riverside highway and real estate investment in the area, leading to a lack of attention to the public's outdoor leisure and fitness needs. This neglect results in insufficient publicity for the waterfront area and a functional complexity that has led to a limited number of related facilities and services, which are of low quality.

Secondly, each administrative area operates independently, resulting in poor continuity of the riverside leisure and fitness spaces, with outdoor leisure and fitness corridors that are not interconnected.

Thirdly, there is a lack of infrastructure and public services, which creates poor access conditions and difficulties with parking. Finally, cultural refinement is insufficient, and there is a lack of overall brand building. These issues contribute to the lack of vitality in the two rivers and four banks of Chongqing's main urban area,

highlighting the urgent need for improvements to meet the public's outdoor leisure needs.

2.2. Root cause of the problem

The above problems are compounded by natural conditions. For instance, the riverbanks are characterized by varying convexities and widths. The construction of viaducts and vertical retaining walls serves as a necessary measure to navigate the terrain and geomorphic challenges posed by Chongqing's mountainous landscape and river city. Additionally, limitations arise during different stages of development; however, the more significant issues lie within the system and mechanism. The root causes can be identified as follows.

Firstly, there is a lack of understanding regarding the unique characteristics of the area. The main urban area of Chongqing is a prime real estate location, featuring two rivers and four banks, which are backed by mountains and water. Many development initiatives prioritize real estate projects, and in some regions, the land financial development model has led to the aggressive appropriation of shoreline resources. Due to the absence of overall planning, the two rivers and four banks are fragmented into discontinuous plots by real estate developments, resulting in a chaotic riverside landscape that poses significant challenges for future remodeling.

Secondly, there is an absence of a comprehensive planning mechanism for the leisure development of the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area. The property rights of land resources in this area are complex and fragmented, involving multiple administrative departments, which complicates management efforts.

2.3. Solutions to the problems

Based on the aforementioned reasons, improving the functions of public outdoor leisure and fitness solely through the units involved in the two rivers and four banks of Chongqing's main urban area is quite challenging and unlikely to result in comprehensive progress. Drawing from relevant domestic and international experiences, the enhancement of public outdoor leisure and fitness functions in this area requires the implementation of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. This approach should be guided by the government, with supportive policies and measures in place to promote and ensure its reasonable development.

3. The overall design of public outdoor leisure and fitness functions on two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area

3.1. Guiding ideology

It is essential to clarify that the government is leading the effort to enhance public outdoor recreation and fitness along the two rivers and four banks in the main urban area of Chongqing. This can be achieved through the formulation of an operable and forward-looking policy system along with safeguard measures. The goal is to establish this area as a leisure function hub for the national central city, an ecological corridor for sustainable development, a cultural stage for healthy living, and a showcase for the image of an international metropolis.

3.2. Basic principles

The basic principles include reasonable positioning, overall planning, optimizing structure, integrating resources, highlighting key points, and improving overall levels.

3.3. Development goal

Transform the two rivers and four banks into Chongqing's public outdoor leisure and fitness belt, an urban landscape display area, and an important tourism corridor for the community.

3.4. Development orientation

Create a beautiful and comfortable landscape garden that serves as a “public living room” for the community.

3.5. Strategic path

Adopt a strategic path characterized by “government leadership, policy promotion, market promotion, and collaboration between government and business.”

4. Policy suggestions for improving public outdoor leisure and fitness functions on two rivers and four banks in Chongqing’s main urban area

Based on the actual situation and the Tourism Law of the People’s Republic of China, as well as the Outline of National Tourism and Leisure Development (2022-2030) and other relevant laws and regulations, and considering the characteristics of the two rivers and four banks—specifically their wide coverage, large quantity, numerous construction and usage subjects, and dispersed nature—the following policies and measures are proposed.

4.1. Strengthen government leadership, improve institutions, and improve organizational guarantee

- (1) Elevate the improvement and management of the leisure and fitness functions of the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing’s main urban area to the municipal management level. Establish the “Leading Group for the Construction of the Two Rivers and Four Banks in the Main Urban Area of Chongqing” along with its office. Implement a joint meeting system to coordinate developing and constructing relevant areas.
- (2) Clearly define the management bodies along with their rights, responsibilities, and interests at all levels. The management subjects are further refined to include the competent functional departments, construction units, property rights units, user units, and relevant administrative regions of Chongqing. Based on the nature and characteristics of these various management subjects and their relationship with the improvement of sports and leisure functions along the two rivers and four banks in the main urban area of Chongqing, the respective rights, responsibilities, and obligations should be clearly defined.
- (3) Establish a coordination and liaison mechanism among Chongqing municipal departments. Actively promote the establishment of a cooperation framework between people’s governments at all levels and their functional departments. Jointly study and address major issues in the process of enhancing the construction of sports and leisure functions along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing’s main urban area. This will ensure the efficient and orderly progress of key project planning, land use, environmental protection, and related initiatives.
- (4) Establish a comprehensive management system for the leisure and fitness functions along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing’s main urban area. Adhere to established procedures and standards, and progressively enhance the relevant management framework.
- (5) Establish and enhance the supervision and assessment system for key projects and important tasks, and implement a work responsibility and accountability system.

4.2. Formulate plans and emphasize the leading role of planning

- (1) Formulate a development plan for outdoor recreation and fitness along the two rivers and four banks in

Chongqing's main urban area, and adjust and improve district-level planning in related areas. Ensure coordination between the enhancement of sports and leisure functions and the planning of urban development, industry, ports, highways, and environmental protection, while emphasizing the guiding and regulatory roles of the plan.

- (2) Break down barriers and strengthen overall planning. Relevant districts should align with municipal plans, timely optimize and adjust their local planning, and move beyond the traditional construction models of districts, towns, and streets. The aim is to develop the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area into an organically integrated outdoor leisure and fitness corridor.
- (3) The planning should integrate the existing geomorphic features, reflect a clear hierarchy, and highlight Chongqing's beautiful landscape. It is important to achieve an organic balance between functionality and aesthetics, emphasize key areas, and create a harmonious integration of mountains, water, and city. The design should develop an appealing urban public space that meets market demand. While ensuring the tidiness of the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area, the unique characteristics of each section should also be showcased.
- (4) Establish construction standards and technical specifications to enhance the outdoor leisure and fitness functions along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area. Based on the level and type of each facility, refine the design, construction, management, and maintenance standards, along with technical specifications, to support supervision, assessment, evaluation, and law enforcement. This ensures that planning and design remain cutting-edge, scientific, and consistent.
- (5) Adopt differentiated approaches and implement them step-by-step. It is essential to fully consider the specific conditions of each area and continue promoting the initiative while also accounting for the market demand and positioning of each location, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.
- (6) Plan the integration of leisure and fitness functions along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area with municipal infrastructure such as urban roads, highways, and ports, ensuring thorough preparation in advance.

4.3. Promote the market, engage government and business, and increase policy support for leisure development

- (1) Governments at all levels should fulfill their roles in comprehensive coordination, communication, and liaison, effectively manage project investments, and guide social forces in investing in and operating the leisure industry.
- (2) Actively explore the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, collaborate with both government and business and promote the construction and management of outdoor leisure and fitness facilities.
 - (a) Effectively address the sources of construction and management funds. Clarify the channels, methods, and measures for improving the leisure and fitness functions along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area. This includes defining the responsibilities and obligations of governments, departments at all levels, and affiliated units regarding construction, maintenance, and management funds, specifying the proportions of funding, and establishing timelines for implementation.
 - (b) Establish a special fund account for multi-party financing. First, create a fund account specifically for improving leisure and fitness functions along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area. Second, lower the barriers to multi-party financing. Following the principle that "those who benefit should bear the burden," encourage all levels of government and enterprises to raise

funds independently. Banks should provide low-interest or interest-free loans, and there should be active applications for urban renewal funds, tourism adjustment funds, and infrastructure relocation funds. Additionally, encourage social investments in related projects.

- (3) Enhance government support for the construction and functional improvement of leisure and fitness facilities, and ensure the rational allocation of construction funds across all levels, including urban development, transportation, and parks along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area.
- (4) Governments at all levels should support the recruitment and training of high-end leisure and fitness professionals, prioritize employee training and skill development, and provide human resources support for the development of the leisure and fitness industry along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area.

4.4. Strengthen management and actively build the brand of leisure and fitness area of the two rivers and four banks of Chongqing's main urban area

- (1) Build the brand of the two rivers and four banks leisure and fitness area in Chongqing's main urban area based on a cluster of leisure and fitness industries, creating a competitive advantage for the region.
- (2) Establish and improve a diversified cooperation mechanism involving government, industry, education, and research. This will enable continuous innovation of the leisure and fitness brand for the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area and enhance its competitiveness.

5. Conclusion

With the establishment of China's all-round well-off society, the country's urban spatial patterns have undergone significant transformation in recent years, driven by industrial restructuring and urban renewal. Focusing on the improvement of public outdoor leisure and fitness facilities along the two rivers and four banks in Chongqing's main urban area, this paper proposes policy measures and suggestions based on Chongqing's specific circumstances.

These have two key levels of significance. Firstly, as the manager of urban renewal, the role of the government in the urban renewal process and how to effectively perform these roles offer valuable reference points. Secondly, exploring the government's public management behavior and operational mechanisms provides theoretical insights for improving government efficiency and refining management practices.

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Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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