

Exploring the Revitalization and Renewal of Urban Parks from the Perspective of Stock Development: A Case Study of the Renovation and Upgrade of Changfeng Park in Shanghai

Chen Fan*

Shanghai Landscape Architecture Design & Research Institute Co., Ltd., Shanghai 200000, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

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Abstract: From the perspective of stock development, this paper takes the renovation and upgrade of Changfeng Park in Shanghai as a case study to explore the paths for the revitalization and renewal of urban parks. After Chinese cities have entered the stage of stock development, urban parks face multiple contradictions, including value realization, management efficiency, financial structure, and diverse demands. This study proposes a transition framework: from “spatial production” to “value co-creation”, from “government-led” to “multi-stakeholder governance”, from “one-way investment” to “asset win-win”, and from “closed management” to “open sharing.” The study also elaborates on how Changfeng Park achieved renovation and upgrading through strategies such as enhancing the value of themed activity spaces, involving multiple parties in design, coordinating the green economy, and creating vibrant and open interfaces. The research results provide theoretical and practical references for resolving conflicts in urban park construction and operation and promoting the development of urban green spaces.

Keywords: Stock development; Park revitalization; Renovation and upgrade

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1. Introduction

Currently, Chinese cities have fully entered a high-quality development stage of “promoting increment through stock.” A large number of urban parks have undergone significant changes in spatial form, service objects, and functional positioning with the evolution of the economy and society. From the perspective of revitalization, although many existing parks still have a good ecological foundation, their spatial structure and service models can no longer adapt to the new goals of urban renewal. Constrained by the reality of fiscal sustainability, the gap in operation and maintenance funds continues to expand, and the effectiveness and balance of public service supply

are also insufficient^[1-2]. Park renewal is not only the renovation and transformation of physical space but should focus more on “structural restructuring” and “value reconstruction”—that is, realizing the renewal of connotative value and activation of functions through systematic functional optimization and spatial reorganization.

Changfeng Park, located in Putuo District, Shanghai, was founded in April 1957 (**Figure 1**). It is a “Five-Star Park” in Shanghai and a national AAAA-level tourist attraction. The development of Changfeng Park is deeply coordinated and symbiotic with the evolution of Putuo District. In this century, with the upgrading of the science and innovation industry and the “One River and One River” plan, the park’s visitor group has shown diversified characteristics. However, problems such as single activity content and the gradual decline of surrounding commerce have led to a gradual decrease in the park’s overall number of visitors. Changfeng Park is a microcosm of the development and changes of traditional urban comprehensive parks in China, embodying the typical dilemmas faced by traditional parks in the transition and development^[3-4]. Driven by both ecological civilization construction and the people’s growing needs for a better life, traditional urban comprehensive parks need to transform from landscape-style ecological leisure spaces to comprehensive urban vibrant venues integrating multiple functions such as ecological conservation, public services, and economic operation.

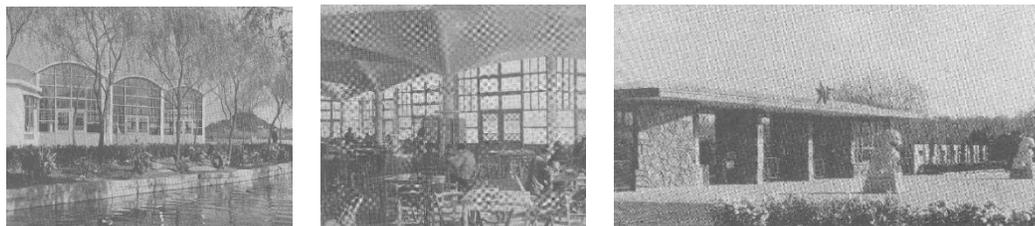


Figure 1. Old Photos of Changfeng Park in 1964 (From left to right: External view of the southeast corner of the restaurant, internal view of the restaurant, park entrance) (Source: Provided by Du An)

Against this background, combined with the actual renovation case of Changfeng Park in Putuo District, Shanghai, this paper explores how to promote the transformation, upgrading, and functional reconstruction of urban parks with a broader perspective and more forward-looking strategies in the new era, from the macro perspective of the revitalization and development of green spaces.

2. Contradictions in the construction and operation of urban parks in the stock development stage

To carry out renovation in the new development stage, researchers should first examine the compatibility between the park and various aspects of social development from multiple perspectives, and comprehensively consider to find the starting point for renovation and renewal^[5].

2.1. Contradiction in value realization: Mismatch between ecological service orientation and diversified value transformation

As an important part of the urban ecosystem, there is a significant contradiction between the ecological background needs of urban parks and the value transformation requirements in the high-quality development period. It was difficult to predict the development of visitor groups and the consumer economy at the initial stage of planning and design, so the focus was mainly on improving the ecological environment and increasing public activity space. With the rapid social and economic development and the continuous improvement of people’s

quality of life, urban parks have been entrusted with a new mission of transforming from “ecological services” to “multi-functional composite spaces.” The original ecology-oriented design pattern conflicts with the requirements of value transformation, failing to effectively and efficiently meet new demands.

2.2. Contradiction in management efficiency: Mismatch between government management and market operation

Currently, the main management departments of urban parks are the urban greening authorities designated by the people’s governments of municipalities directly under the Central Government, cities, municipal districts, and counties. Due to the different orientations between government functional positioning, personnel structure, and market operation, the integration of resources and coordinated development is restricted, making it difficult to adapt to the refined and diversified requirements for park services. The market-oriented operation level of urban parks is relatively low, and the depth of social capital participation is limited, which restricts the sustainable development and functional optimization of parks ^[6].

2.3. Contradiction in financial structure: Mismatch between public welfare and profitability

At present, the daily management of urban parks mainly includes greening maintenance, operation and maintenance work, as well as the organization, security, and service of various cultural, sports, and exhibition activities such as flower shows. These management expenditures of urban parks are basically dependent on government finances, supplemented only by simple retail services and a small number of children’s amusement facilities. The sources of funds for the construction and operation of urban parks are single, mainly relying on government finances, with low social capital participation, resulting in significant fiscal pressure on urban park operations ^[7].

3. Transformation ideas for the current renovation and upgrade of urban parks

In response to the four types of contradictions—value realization, management efficiency, financial structure, and diverse demands—this paper proposes transformation directions and ideas for the renewal and upgrade of urban parks from three aspects.

3.1. Transformation 1: From “spatial production” to “value co-creation”

In the new era, urban parks urgently need to explore the path of value transformation in high-quality development while maintaining their ecological background. This model emphasizes the in-depth integration of ecological value with cultural, economic, and social benefits, realizing the transformation of ecological value to diversified values through the rational allocation of ecological resources and effective integration of social capital. Through scientific planning and systematic design, enhance the multi-dimensional supply capacity of green spaces; promote the integrated development of diverse functions such as culture, commerce, and sports through the “park +” model, and enhance the vitality and attractiveness of parks ^[8-9]. Build urban parks into important nodes connecting humans and nature and promoting urban sustainable development.

3.2. Transformation 2: From “government-led” to “multi-stakeholder governance”

Urban parks are gradually transforming into a “multi-stakeholder governance” model. More and more

governments, enterprises, social organizations, and citizens are participating in the planning, construction, and management of parks, breaking the limitation of single government supply, promoting market-oriented operation, alleviating fiscal pressure, improving the operational efficiency and service quality of parks, and realizing the optimal allocation of resources and efficiency improvement.

3.3. Transformation 3: From “one-way investment” to “asset win-win”

In recent years, the development of parks has become increasingly difficult. Shifting to “asset win-win” reconstructs parks into “green infrastructure assets”, realizing the internalization of economic returns and externalization of social capital, alleviating the dual tension between “public welfare and profitability”, and becoming an “indispensable path” for development transformation.

4. Renovation strategies of Changfeng Park

The renovation and upgrade of a park is not only the renovation of facilities or the subjective aesthetic expression of designers, but should address core contradictions, reface and adapt to the trends of population and social changes, and consider the role and direction of green spaces from the perspective of urban development. The renovation and upgrade design of Changfeng Park starts with the following three strategies to guide the continuous deepening of the plan.

4.1. Multi-stakeholder participatory design process

In the initial stage of design, the project team systematically collected the usage needs of different visitor groups through a combination of online and offline questionnaires, which were summarized and integrated into the design plan (**Figures 2 and 3**). For example, the demands put forward by the elderly group, such as adding sheltered rest spaces, seats, facilities for storing morning exercise clothes, and fitness equipment, were all responded to in the design.

After the plan was stabilized, extensive feedback from units and groups around the park was solicited through public announcements and special consultation meetings. Among them, the suggestion put forward by East China Normal University of “adding an east-west path through the park to reduce the separation of the Xilao River” was implemented through the new cross-river plank road; the demand for popular science facilities put forward by Jinshajiang Road Primary School was also fully reflected in the design^[10].

In addition, Changfeng Park Company, as the future operation and management unit of the park, participated in the project promotion throughout the process. It not only put forward targeted pain points in park maintenance but also gave various suggestions and demands from the perspective of the economic operation of the whole park, providing strong support for the feasibility of the design plan.

3 Technical Methodology Summary

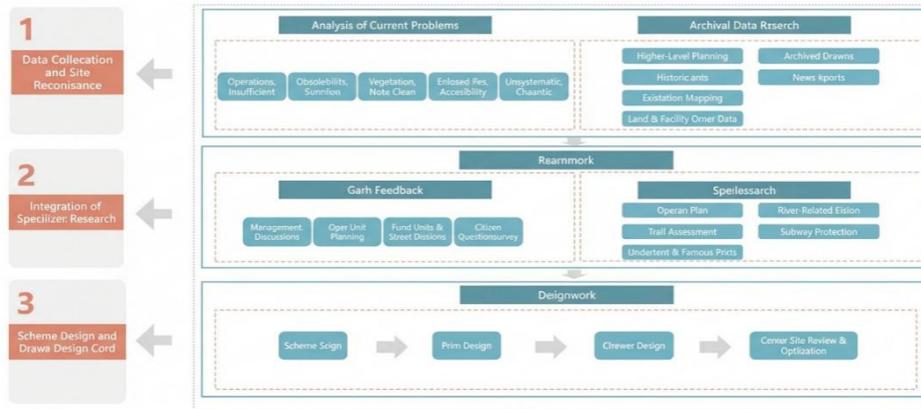


Figure 2. Technical route diagram of design work (Source: Drawn by the author)



Figure 3. Conclusion framework of the citizen questionnaire (Source: Data from the 2024 Changfeng Park Renovation and Upgrade Project Team)

4.2. Overall coordination of the green economy

For many years, the operation and management of the park have achieved economic balance through a combination of financial appropriations and independent operations. However, different management entities have led to a lack of coordinated development with surrounding units (Figure 4). The core issue of park renovation and renewal concerned in this design is the sustainable development of the park: under the new economic and social conditions, the result of the renovation should help the park achieve self-financing, reduce the burden on public finances, and inject vitality into society.

On the one hand, it is necessary to improve the utilization rate of functional spaces to bring good economic benefits to the park. In the design of this case, the park space has added more services, and people of different ages and levels can obtain leisure services in the park. The overall architectural space has been rearranged and combined with landscape venues to upgrade the service content of the park^[11].

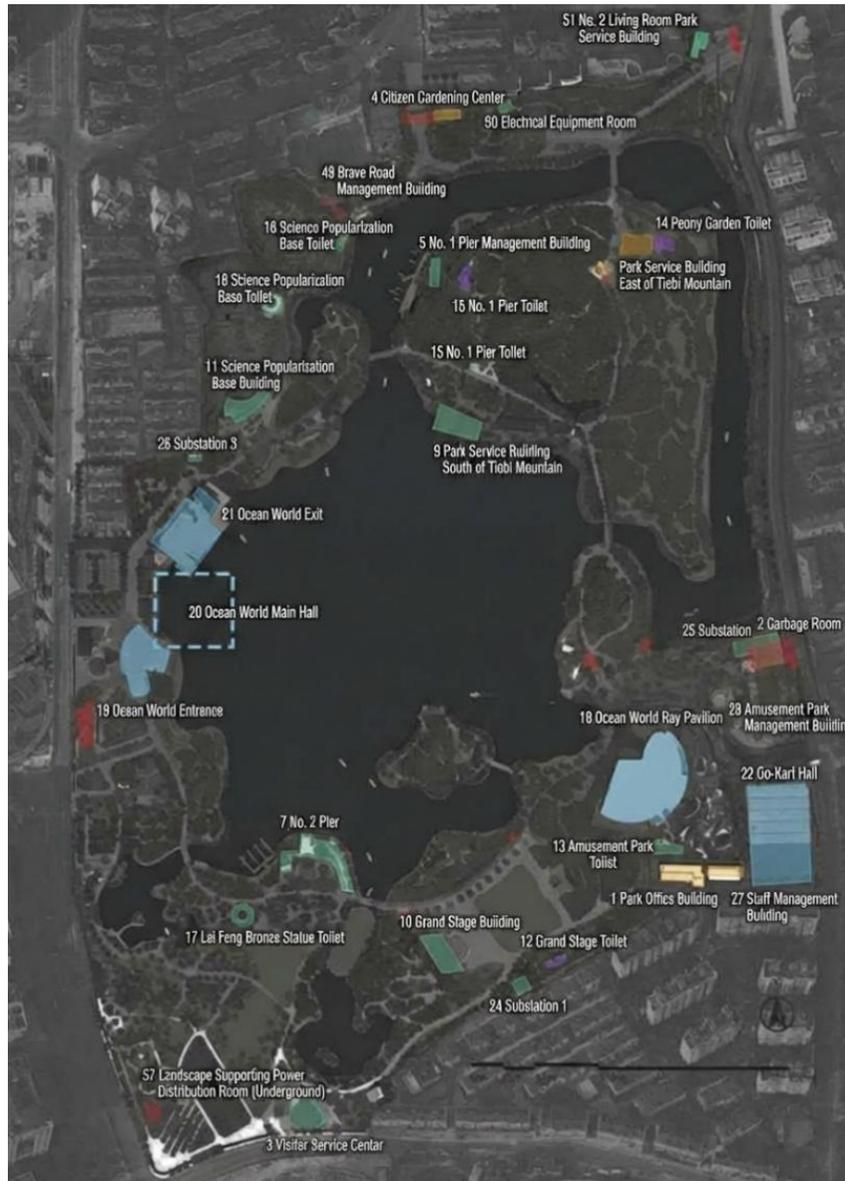


Figure 4. Layout diagram of building renovation in Changfeng Park (Source: Data from the 2024 Changfeng Park Renovation and Upgrade Project Team)

The adjustment of the architectural layout mainly moves the previously introverted activity spaces closer to the junction of the park and municipal space, and the operation content of the buildings has been planned (**Figure 5**). Both the location and content are more targeted to the service objects, and the interaction between the park and the surrounding sites has been activated.

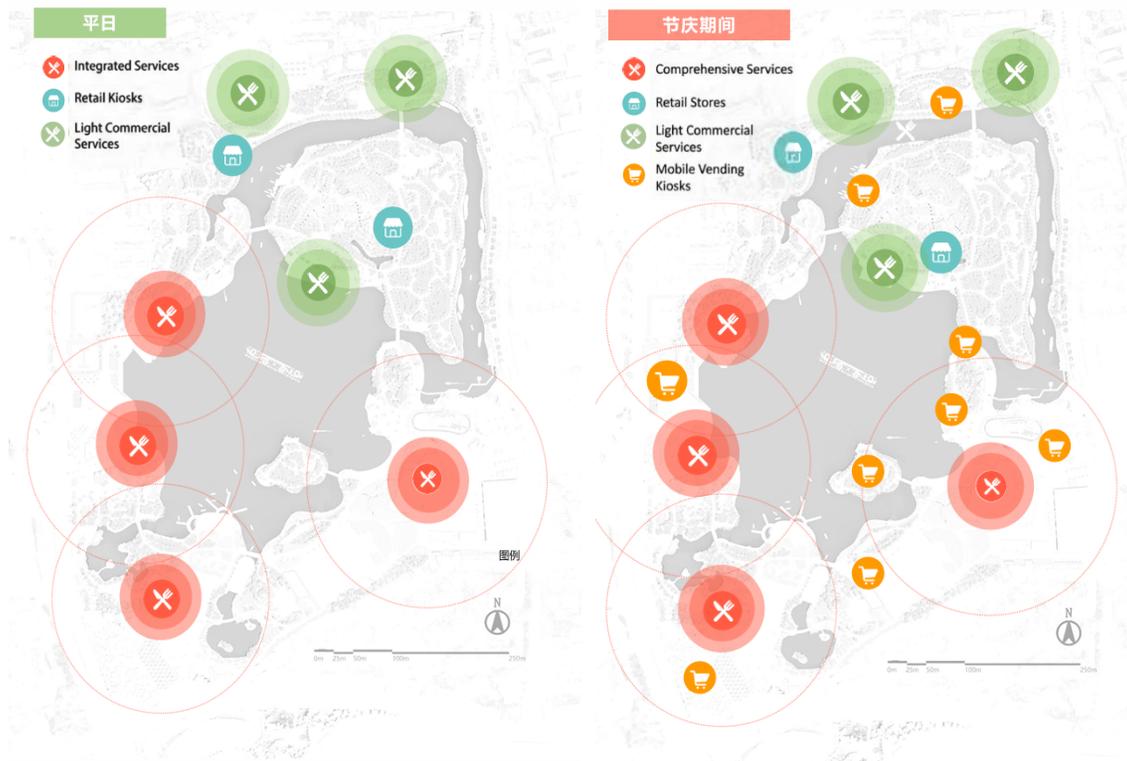


Figure 5. Layout diagram of park service facilities (Weekdays/Holidays) (Source: Data from the 2024 Changfeng Park Renovation and Upgrade Project Team)

On the other hand, it is also necessary to consider the spillover value brought by the park to the area. In the design of this case, the operation status of adjacent commercial plazas was fully investigated ^[12]. According to their suggestions, pop-up and market spaces for sports and catering were added in the park to activate the leisure economy of the area.

The park renovation creates conditions for “night tours” through lighting upgrades. Through this renovation, the complex relationship of “multi-management” in the park has also been reorganized, with the district urban investment company as the unified operation subject, unifying powers and responsibilities, and laying a better foundation for the operation and development of the park.

4.3. Strengthening the value of themed activity spaces

Looking back at the history of Changfeng, Changfeng Park is a memory of childhood for several generations; combined with the analysis of the park and the area’s visitor groups, “child-friendliness” is a feature of the area and a foothold for long-term development. Creating a better environment for children’s growth and development, continuing traditions, and providing space for families to relax, consume, and live are also the foundation of Changfeng Park’s vitality ^[13–14].

This renovation retains the park’s original “Ocean World” and reconstructs the disappeared “Brave Road” at the original site. In addition, combined with the needs of teachers and students of nearby schools, a new “Natural Science Popularization Center” and other educational and entertaining attractions have been built. In the design of the Brave Road, the traditional “ground construction” model of amusement facilities is abandoned, and an expansion system is embedded in the natural terrain and greenery for the first time, designing two differentiated

routes: a low-age exploration route and an older-age challenge route (**Figure 6**). Utilizing the terrain drop of Heisong Mountain, medium and high-difficulty projects such as climbing, zip-lining, and suspended walkways are designed. All facilities are cleverly integrated with mountain rocks and native vegetation, retaining the wild charm of the mountain forest while ensuring the safety of challenges. This technical attempt is also the first in public green spaces in Shanghai ^[15].

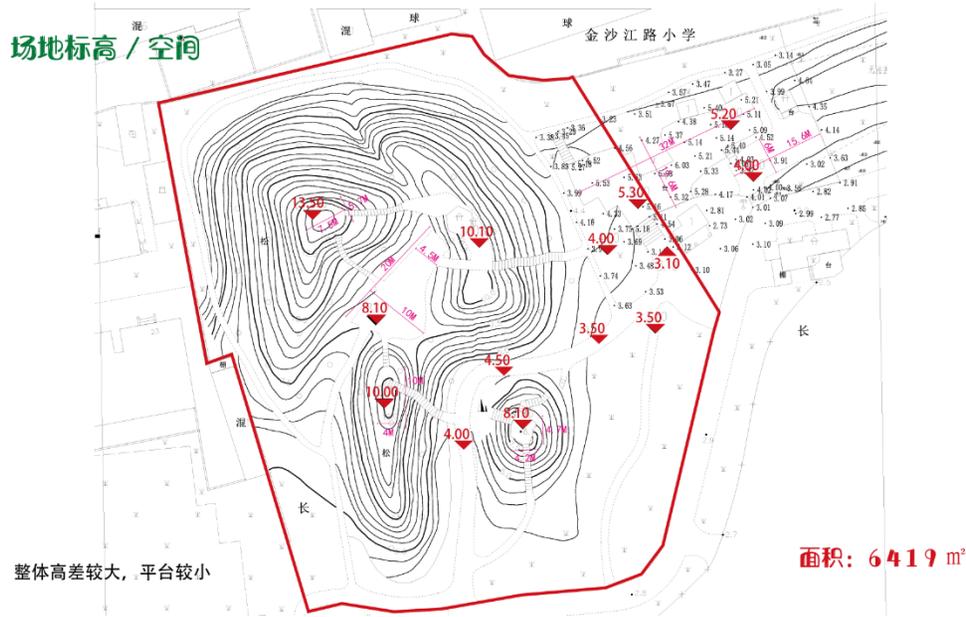


Figure 6. Topographic map of the current “Brave Road” (Source: Data from the 2024 Changfeng Park Renovation and Upgrade Project Team)

5. Conclusion and outlook

In summary, in the renovation of Changfeng Park, the designers’ subjective judgment on aesthetics has been relatively weakened in both the design process and methods. Instead, more attempts have been made to start from visitor groups and urban development, focus on operation management and sustainable development, objectively evaluate site functions, and strive to integrate the park into the city, rather than creating an exquisite but lifeless “green core.”

The renovation and upgrade of Changfeng Park has three core drivers, taking a point-to-area approach. In the early stage, it was supported by “timing”—government policy guidance: from “industrial relocation” to “science and innovation center” policy support, promoting functional iteration. In the middle stage, it had “geographical advantages”—transportation upgrades: the opening of Metro Line 15 and the North Cross Passage strengthened the connection between the area and the city center. The most important thing is how the park empowers itself—relying on resources such as East China Normal University, the Suzhou River, and commercial areas to build a humanistic and ecological brand. At present, the renovation of Changfeng Park has entered the phased implementation stage. According to preliminary research, the proportion of the park’s independent operation income in the operation and maintenance expenditure is about 40%, and due to the increase in prices and maintenance requirements, the proportion of independent operation income is decreasing year by year, and the operation and maintenance pressure is increasing. Through this renewal, it is expected that the operating income after renovation can reach more than 50%, and through the improvement of influence, it will drive the overall

improvement of commerce around the park in the urban area, enhance its social benefits, and play a demonstration role in terms of child-friendliness.

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Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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