

SHANGHAI | URBAN REJUVENATION

A Community for People: Regeneration of Shanghai's 228 Neighbourhood

228 Neighbourhood in Shanghai Yangpu District, albeit constructed 70 years ago, has withstood the test of time, adapting to the increase in standard of living, growing urban population, and evolving cultural shifts. It is proof that urban renewal can create opportunities for the harmonious coexistence of historical architecture with the evolving needs of future neighbourhoods.



Minghua Xue 薛鸣华 is a principal designer at the Shanghai AMJ Architecture and Urban Planning Co., Ltd.



Lin Wang 王林 is a tenured professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Design.



Before and after the rejuvenation of Changbai neighbourhood 228.
Image: Shanghai AMJ Architecture and Urban Planning Co., Ltd.

The Challenge

The history of 228 Neighbourhood can be traced back to the 1950s, when it was built as a residential area for the first generation of workers in China. Originally named "Changbai Village", the neighbourhood is part of the *Liang Wan Hu* ("两万户") or "20,000 households" programme, designed to cope with the impact of Shanghai's industrial development reaching new heights after the opening of its port. Then, the sudden influx of workers in Shanghai forced many workers into shanty towns with poor living conditions. New residential areas for workers were key to solving the housing crisis. In 1952, Chinese architects independently designed and built nine residential areas that could accommodate 20,000 families, giving rise to the name 20,000 households.

Built after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Changbai neighbourhood is today the only remaining complete Liang Wan Hu historical style residence in Shanghai. It represents a key chapter in Shanghai's urban development trajectory; more than just an example of Shanghai's early working-class housing type, Changbai signifies the beginning of Yangpu's century-long industrial history.



228 Neighbourhood bears witness to Yangpu's century-long industrial history.
Image: Shanghai AMJ Architecture and Urban Planning Co., Ltd.

Restoration and renovation [of 228 Neighbourhood] meant prioritising the retention of the neighbourhood's past amid the creation of new functions.

Urban Renewal of 228 Neighbourhood

70 years after the completion of 228 Neighbourhood, its limited space and living patterns could no longer meet the needs and improved living standards of residents. Self-constructed expansion and spontaneous remodelling emerged, and the need for urban renewal and renovation grew. Yangpu District recognised the problem and thus began its efforts to protect and renovate the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood underwent urban renewal from 2019 to 2023—guided by the principles of restoration and renovation, which meant prioritising the retention of the neighbourhood's past amid the creation of new functions.

Urban renewal plans for 228 Neighbourhood entailed the combination of existing built infrastructure with additional public services. This was to create a mixed-used neighbourhood with long-term rental apartments, everyday amenities like fresh food markets and a neighbourhood kitchen, recreational areas, and exhibition halls. Following its renewal, 228 Neighbourhood became a model for the "15-minute community life circle", exemplifying how proximity to public services can improve dwellers' quality of life and sense of community.

Retaining the Essence and History of the 70-Year-Old Development

A key goal for the development was capturing 228 Neighbourhood's 70-year long history in its renewed landscape, through architecture and spatial form. The biggest challenge lay in figuring out how to better reflect and retain the functional characteristics and existing ambience of the neighbourhood, while improving residents' quality of life and creating a notable image for the neighbourhood.

Preliminary research by the design team underscored the importance of combining historical memory with contemporary functional needs, alongside optimising the

overall environment according to existing spatial patterns of the neighbourhood. 228 Neighbourhood was to be a living model of the workers' new village, showcasing the distinctive lives led by workers during the 70-year industrial revolution. The neighbourhood would consist of restored historical workers' new villages from the 1950s, modern workers' housing from the 1990s, and contemporary long-term rental apartments from the 2020s. These residential buildings of different periods and styles embody the collective lives led by the workers of New China, function as historical models of

workers' shared residences, and is of deep cultural significance to the Yangpu region.

Central to the rejuvenation of 228 Neighbourhood would be the full preservation of the unique style and environment of the block's 70-year history. The renewal sought to improve the environmental quality of the development by strategically lining its periphery with taller housing blocks and shorter multi-story residential buildings, creating a "project package" that would comprehensively shape 228 Neighbourhood and its surrounding areas.



Bird's eye view of the neighbourhood after renewal.
Image: Shanghai AMJ Architecture and Urban Planning Co., Ltd.

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Building a Model Community

To achieve the underlying goal of architectural coexistence through renewal, the design team proposed three major overall improvement strategies: (1) continuing the neighbourhood's historical appearance and emphasising its cultural connotation; (2) strengthening functional improvement and improving service facilities; and (3) optimising the block environment and improving landscape quality. These strategies were aimed at transforming 228 Neighbourhood into a model community, guiding a new era of urban renewal which seeks to combine historical preservation with modern amenities to provide a holistic approach to urban planning and service.

A key feature of this new model community is its garden city concept, which is aimed at integrating and synergising the built with the natural environment to the

benefit of living communities. This prompted the design team to create a public square within the workers' new village—in the form of an open space with a garden environment—to balance the high-rise, densely populated urban surroundings.

The team designed a traditional-styled courtyard by combining wooden fences with green landscapes, setting up gardens outside according to the architectural space and functions to form a dynamic shared space for public use. These courtyards also improve the overall landscape quality. In addition, a large lawn space in the centre of the neighbourhood, open-air cinema, outdoor children's football fields, landscaped corridors, central stages, and other functional spaces were also created to integrate greenery with shared spaces, thereby creating an exchange centre for the workers' new village.



228 Neighbourhood's central square.
Image: Shanghai AMJ Architecture and Urban Planning Co., Ltd.



Children playing in the large lawn space in the heart of the neighbourhood.
Image: Shanghai AMJ Architecture and Urban Planning Co., Ltd.



228 Neighbourhood's logo, aimed at capturing the (re)development trajectory of the neighbourhood.
Image: Shanghai AMJ Architecture and Urban Planning Co., Ltd.



The public often gather around the seating spaces adjacent to 228 Neighbourhood's logo, placed left of the entrance of the neighbourhood.
Image: Shanghai AMJ Architecture and Urban Planning Co., Ltd.

Urban renewal of 228 Neighbourhood involved not only the rejuvenation of the neighbourhood but also its surrounding environment.

228's Unique Brand Identity

To bring out Changbai neighbourhood's distinctive characteristics, the design team explored the evolution of the neighbourhood over three time periods—the 1950s, 1990s, and 2020s. The housing typologies over the three periods were ultimately incorporated into the neighbourhood's logo, with the aim of showcasing the historical significance and cultural uniqueness of Changbai. The entrance archway and cultural signs of the old workers' village around the neighbourhood were also retained, to serve as a reminder of Changbai's historical significance to industrial workers, as well as one of the nation's first developments post-independence.

Urban renewal of 228 Neighbourhood involved not only the rejuvenation of the neighbourhood but also its surrounding environment. This was done through the enforcement of strict regulations and consistent codes of design throughout the neighbourhood. The design combined the brand identity of 228

Neighbourhood with the renewed landscape, proposing targeted design strategies for surrounding residential buildings, street building facades, walls, green public spaces, urban furnishing, and even design of shop signs, doors, and windows to ensure a coordinated street facade. The facades of two existing substation buildings along the street were also optimised to transform the original negative environment into a beautiful urban public space for culture appreciation, interaction, and relaxation. All of these efforts served to visually coordinate and unify the planning of the entire area.

In sum, the renewal of Yangpu District's 228 Neighbourhood reveals the importance of an all-encompassing rejuvenation plan—one which involves the preservation and embrace of history and culture, revitalisation of housing and living conditions for people of the new age, injection of new public spaces for all ages, and rebranding of the neighbourhood—to best capture the nuances of the neighbourhood over its 70-year history. 🌀