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From Ruins to Home The Exploration of Shikumen's Development

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FROM RUINS TO HOME THE EXPLORATION OF SHIKUMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Landscape Architecture

in

Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture

by
Xinye Zheng
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ABSTRACT

The issue of Shikumen is the confliction between urban development and historical value preservation.

And the historical value can be better understood with Chinese modern history behind, especially the concession part (an area ruled by foreign countries and don't have the independent rights on economy, politics and military (18, Li). Because of the historic reason, the residents were made of three main streams, which were international stream, national stream and local movement. Those residences brought their culture into the concession and created a “melting pot”. This melting pot cultural phenomenon was shown in building design of Shikumen.

However, with the intensive urban development, the current state of Shikumen is becoming affordable residential area and gradually demolished due to low economical value.

With the disappearance of Shikumen, some people start realizing the historical value of the Shikumen. Many solutions were proposed to save the trace of historical path. Two representative solutions were Xintiandi and Tianzifang. Xintiandi is a government-driven mix-use project, which re-modified the buildings with similar architecture style. Tianzifang residents-driven project and was developed into a commercial tourism site. Both solution share similarity by redefining the function of Shikumen in historical perspective to enhance the economical value and follow urban development. However, in the process of commercialization, Xintiandi lost its authenticity because of removing Shikumen's original residential life. Tianzifang initially remained its identities of original residential life, which attracted lots of tourists. However, the high dense tourist activities interruption causes the loss of residences, which used to be the most attractive part of this place. In the other word, it lost its sustainability. In order to maintain authenticity and sustainability, a new model about Shikumen's preservation and development is proposed.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Addressing the issue

On January 20, numbers of graffiti murals were spotted in a demolition site near No. 600 Kangding Road in Shanghai, which used to be Shikumen historical neighborhood. Numerous local residents gathered around to take photos with the vivid art splashed across previously abandoned buildings. Since the close relation between the local life and representative local residents' characteristics, these graffiti murals,



Fig.1 Graffiti mural of Shikumen

made by French artist Julien Malland and local artist Shi Zheng, became popular not only in Shanghai but also in the worldwide. This event was published by both Chinese and other countries' online news. Gradually, it grabbed people's attentions about the demolition of Shikumen, and most of the residents of Shanghai were feeling grief and regret for the disappearance of these meaningful buildings. Beyond the physical drawings, people's emotional connection to these historical neighborhoods and the history behind them are the sources of the passion shown in this event.

Shikumen was a distinct type of housing in Shanghai in the Middle of 19th century. As the record of colony in that period, it combined the western external style design and Chinese Southern interior design into one single body. With the intense urban development in Shanghai, the conflicts between cultural values, economic value and residents' life brought Shikumen into a peculiar predicament.



Fig.2 Nanking Road (Shanghai)

In order to build the modern buildings and improve the urban environment, huge amount of

Shikumen neighborhoods were demolished. In that case, an effective way to deal with the confliction between urban development and historic value preservation is required.

1.2 History of concession

Shikumen was built in the middle of 19th century. And the historical value can be better understood with Chinese modern history behind, especially the concession part. The concession was an area ruled by foreign countries and didn't have the independent rights on economy, politics and military. (11,Zhang) Before 1840, China was a Feudal society country and Shanghai was a small fishing town. After the First Opium War, between United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Qing Empire in 1840, China started to change from the feudal society country to semi-colonial and semi-feudal society country. Qing Empire government was forced to sign the "Treaty of Nanking" with British government. Shanghai was one of the 5 treaty ports (Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai). On November 17, 1843, Shanghai was officially opened for the world. In 1845, British concession was established in Shanghai. At the beginning, concession area was the settlement that built for foreigners to avoid the confliction with local residents. However, in that turbulent era, additional Chinese moved into concession area in order to seek for the security from the policy and protection. In 1853, Small Sword Society, a political and military organization active in Shanghai and neighboring areas, uprising broke out in Shanghai. Around 20,000 local residents moved into the concession area. In 1860, Taiping troops started the violent revolution, a massive rebellion or civil war in China, which was fought between the established Manchu-led Qing dynasty and the Christian millenarian movement of the Taiping Kingdom. They captured most of the cities of South of Jiangsu province and north of Zhejiang province. More than 300,000 people became refugee and moved from South of Jiangsu province and north of Zhejiang province to Shanghai for security. Those refugees included two main streams, which were the wealthy people and the bankruptcy of the handicraftsman of Southern China. They provided huge amount of cash and abundant supply of cheap labor, which had supported the development of concession area. Because of this reason, Chinese local migration to concession area was accepted by concession authorities. The settlement established for foreigners living apart from the local residents became the typical area with the mixed residence of Chinese and foreigners. And the population formation of concession

area could be classified into international foreigners, national southern part of China and local movement.

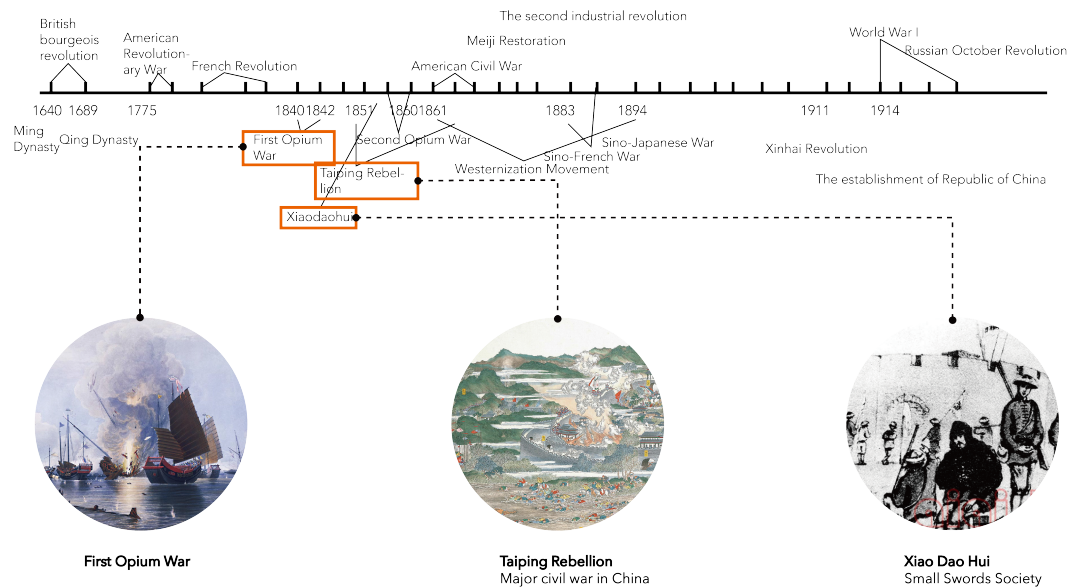


Fig.3 The timeline of 19th century

1.3 Cultural Representation

As the typical housing of concession area, the physical characteristics of Shikumen visibly represented the cultural integration happened in Shanghai. It not only adapted the outlook and arrangement of European architectural design, but also included eastern interior structural design. The structure of the buildings was transferred from traditional Southern China house, which had wood vertical post truss, brick-build wall and tile roof. Also, these buildings remained the tradition of Chinese residence, which had the closed external wall with a gate on it. However, that kind of inside structure went with western-style outlook as well as the parallel rows housing type arrangement that from Europe. The gate of Shikumen was the most unique part of the building. It joined the traditional wood door of Southern China with stone lintel that had Western

ornamentations. In order to make use of the land economically, Shikumen buildings were built as parallel rows housing. (49, Zhang)

The melting pot cultural phenomenon from the colonial history was shown in building design of Shikumen. And this kind of cultural phenomenon made deep influence to Shanghai's cultural formation. The term Haipai, literally "Shanghai style", which represents avant-garde but unique "East Meets West" culture from Shanghai can be seen as the cultural effect of that time period. (Zhang, 12) Also, it signified the character of Shanghai as one of the biggest international city in China nowadays. As the existing representative of this specific type of culture, Shikumen is especially distinctive and valuable with political, cultural, historic significance.

Furthermore, as the historical popular housing, voluminous Shanghainese used to live in Shikumen, it adheres intimately the memory of home to them. The series of open spaces of Shikumen consist the public life and private life of residents. From the street, the lane of the neighborhood to the sub-lane of the neighborhood, these open spaces associated the commercial activities, community activities and family life creating a closely neighborhood atmosphere. In consequence, Shikumen is an important part of physical identities of Shanghai city and emotional reposing for Shanghainese.

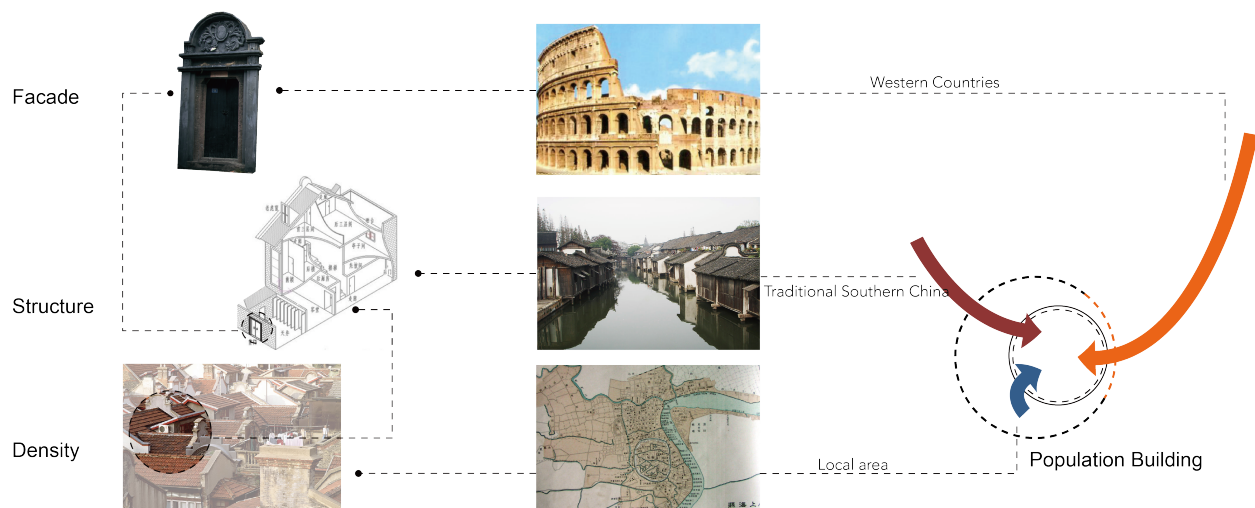


Fig.4 Shikumen's cultural representation

1.4 Current state of Shikumen

Shikumen's existence witnessed Shanghai's transformation from a small fishing town to an international city. But with the intensive urban development, the poor quality of the facilities and limited resident's capacity become the weakness for Shikumen compared to other residential area. With the losing of primary residents and some new comers movement, the current state of



Fig.5 Shanghai Shikumen

Shikumen is becoming an affordable residential area and gradually demolished due to low economical value. In 1930s, there were around 200,000 Shikumen buildings distributed in Shanghai. More than half of Shanghai residents lived in Shikumen buildings until the mid-90s. The total amount of Shikumen building area was more than 60% of Shanghai's residential area.. From 1990 to 2003, 38000000 square meters historical neighborhood were demolished. Shikumen accounted for a large proportion. (10, Feng)



Fig.6 12 historic district of Shikumen

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW- ANALYSIS ABOUT EXISTING MODEL



Fig.7 The photo of Xintiandi



Fig.8 The photo of Tianzifang

Most Shikumen development projects are based on one-sided understanding or definition. There are about three kinds of ways dealing with Shikumen neighborhood. The first way is completely demolishing. The residents will be moved to other places and the land will be used for other commercial real estate project such as hotel, office or mall. The second way is repairing the building by destroying the primary structure and scale of the buildings to improve people's living environment. The third way is changing the function of the buildings to achieve the commercial development of Shikumen. (11, Zhu)

From the previous development projects, Shikumen's development can be concluded into two types of models, Xintiandi model and Tianzifang model.

Xintiandi model is the representative of the projects as part of urban renewal. Xintiandi is a project located in Shanghai Jingan district. It's a government-driven project, which includes mixed-use development, green space building and imitating of the Shikumen buildings style to build the commercial use housing. The previous buildings were demolished due to the bad building conditions and tight open space, which was not suitable for modern public activities. And the residents were moved to other part of Shanghai. (30, Zhu)

Tianzifang is a project located in Luwan district of Shanghai. It's a resident-driven project. Tianzifang used to be a neighborhood that was going to be demolished. On the process of relocating the residents, some artists moved into these areas and rent the buildings for studio or gallery. With the influence of the art studio or gallery, more and more people visited this area. Since 2000, Tianzifang has developed into a popular cultural enthusiasm area included Shikumen neighborhood block with Taikang Art Street. Due to the high economical value came with the tourism industry development, government terminated the demolished plan of Tianzifang and created a tourism attraction that mixing restaurants, shops, galleries and art studios with neighborhood.

Even though, both models tried to find a new position for Shikumen in order to adapt city's development in different ways. However they still have weakness.

As a successful commercial development project, Xintiandi persisted the outlook of Shikumen with the renewal function including restaurant, cultural facilities, clothing and etc. Besides the historical buildings outlook, international modern cultural atmosphere is another important attractive part of Xintiandi. Several international brands, restaurants and bars with different foreign styles well interest both local residents and tourists. Tourists visit this area with the expectation for Shanghai-style cultural atmosphere. Xintiandi Model signifies the Shanghai style in a modern way. However, the authenticity is a controversial question due to the lack of local residents and residential use. The image of the culture was constructed based on people's preference today.

From the perspective of authenticity, Tianzifang model initially remained the local residents and their daily life in that area. Also, the primary life and environment are the most attractive part of it. Nevertheless, under the unplanned development, the dense tourists activities interrupt local residents life extremely. More and more residents move out and lease their home to businessman. Also, the uncontrolled retail business increase leads to the similarity to the other tourist sites. Due to the decrease of authentic, Tianzifang trends to lose the most beautiful part,

the folk daily life in Shikumen. In conclusion, the cultural sustainability is the key problem for Tianzifang.

Both models tried to redefine the function of Shikumen in order to enhance the economical value and keep on the path of the urban development. But the cost due to commercialization seems inevitable. Xintiandi model persisted the Shanghai-style cultural with a modern exemplification while losing the local residents' life that tight to cultural authenticity of Shikumen neighborhood. Tianzifang model persisted the residents' life. However, the confliction between tourists and residents make Tianzifang model become cultural unsustainable.

How to solve the confliction between Shikumen's preservation and Shanghai's urban development? Is there a potential way to maintain both cultural authenticity and sustainability of Shikumen's development? How to maintain the local life and city cultural characteristics in an economical way?

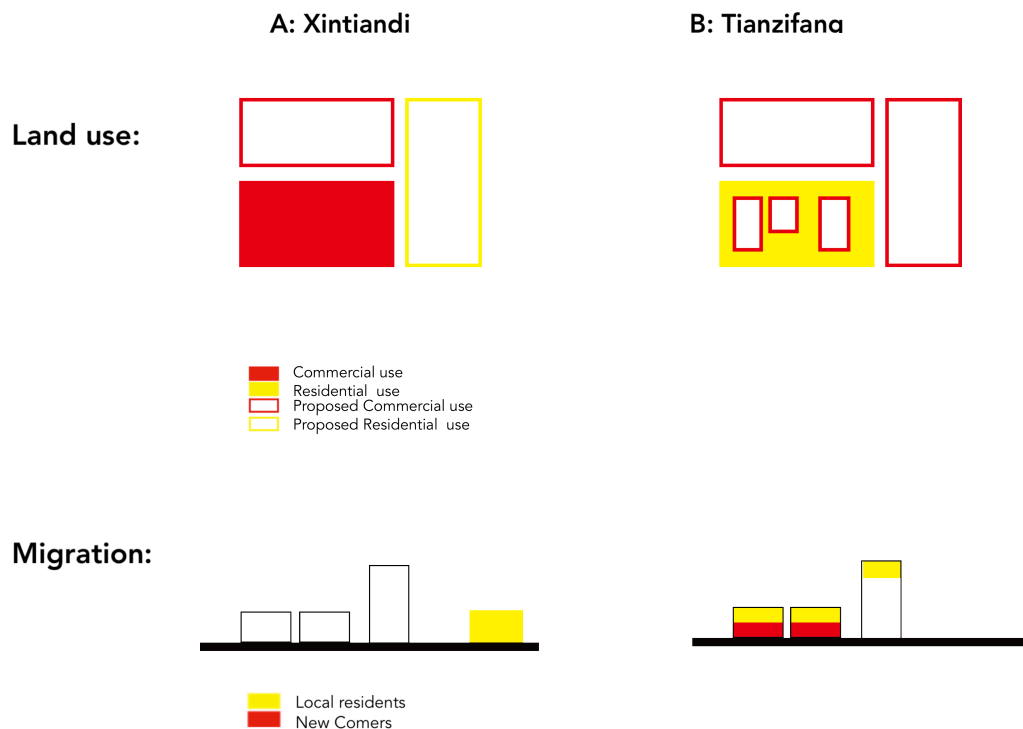


Fig.9 The drawings about land use and immigration of Xintiandi and Tianzifang models

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN AND PLANNING

In order to establish a new model for Shikumen's development, the cultural authenticity and cultural sustainability of Shikumen's history need to be stated. Since history is moving forward, every phase is part of its authenticity. However, the real cultural authenticity is not only about the physical expression or functional use in certain phase but also related to the value in spiritual level. From the previous analysis, the cultural value in spiritual level of Shikumen comes from the local residents' life as well as the representation of Shanghai-style culture. About cultural sustainability, a good model with cultural sustainability will be contributed by maintaining the cultural authenticity and increasing local economical value in modern urban area. From these perspectives, a new model is proposed to preserve part of the existing functional residential housing while restrictedly introducing commercial activities and it can be described as Restrictive decentralized development model.

3.1 Site location

Based on the layout of current distribution of Shikumen, there are 12 concentrated neighborhood districts. The proposed site is located in one of Shikumen historical district in Pingdeli block, Jingan district. These areas are under the demolishing planning process. During the process, half of the residents have already relocated to the other space of Shanghai. If the demolition will be complete in the future, free land will be used for mix-use development.



Fig.10 The drawing of the site in different scale

3.2 Phase1: Clarification of preserved area and developing area

Pingdeli block, the main design space, is not a completely residential block. It also includes public services (church, kindergarten, history museum and etc.) and retail business. Based on the distribution of non-residential area and building qualities, the design space can be split into preserved area and developing area. Preserved area will retain the residential use completely,



Fig.11 Building Functions

which can support the cultural authenticity. Developing area is prepared for future introducing of cultural facilities and commercial activities.

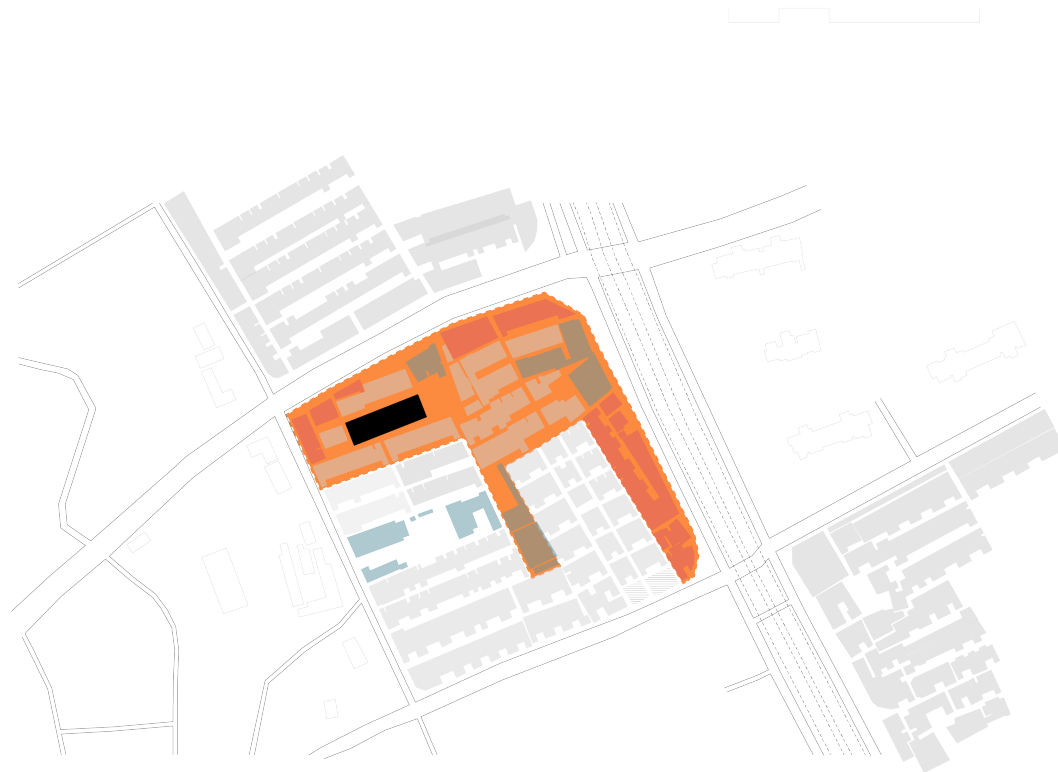


Fig.12 Proposed developing area

3.3 Phase 2: Memorial landscape attraction

In order to maintain the cultural authenticity and increase local economic value, a cultural based mix-use development is proposed. Before the commercial activities introducing, a memorial landscape attraction is going to be built as the catalyst of the whole development scheme. The landscape design project is going to simulate people's passion and attention to Shikumen.

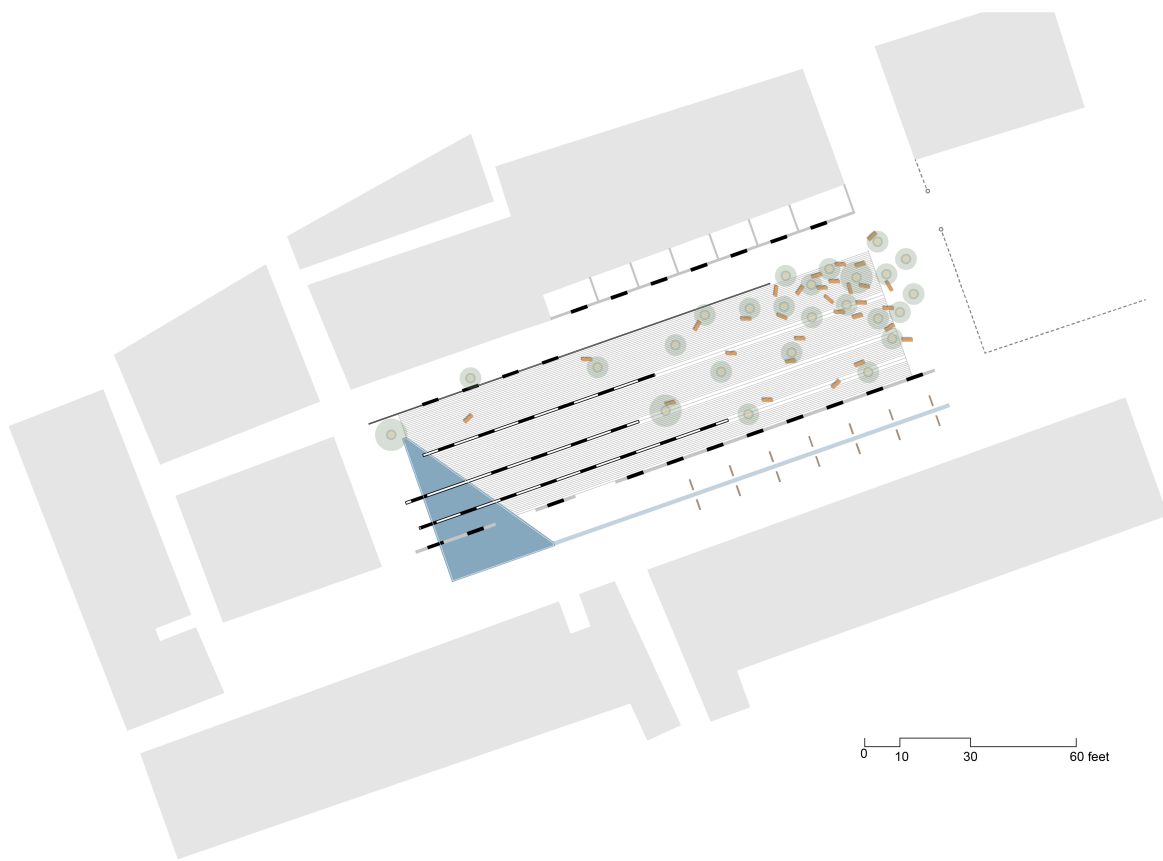


Fig.13 Site plan

As the result of Shikumen' development until today, the ruin of Shikumen is a motivating record about people's attitudes toward history, society development and space identity in recent period. However, it is obvious that the historical and cultural value of Shikumen is significant. It's necessary to let that period of history be known in the modern life. The memorial design

project proposed to emphasize the disappearance of Shikumen by redesign the vacant lot with the ruin of Shikumen building into a plaza.

The design project proposed to be built in Pingdeli block. It is a 7500 square feet vacant lot with historical Shikumen buildings remain (the outer wall of the building).

3.3.1 Goal

The memorial landscape design project is proposed to redesign the ruin area by using remaining parts of the buildings to represent the loss of Shikumen and remind people about the pre-exist history and notice the change and beauty of Shikumen history.

3.3.2 Strategies

Retain the remainders as part of Shanghai's history.

For Shikumen, demolishment is a critical part of the historical result. Retain the remainders can helping people to see the history and culture behind Shikumen from demolished buildings. In this project, as the thread of the concept, façade of the building is going to be re-performed with the significant meaning of Shikumen's cultural characteristics.



Fig.14 The existing façade of the building

Redesign the remainders into Memorial landscape.

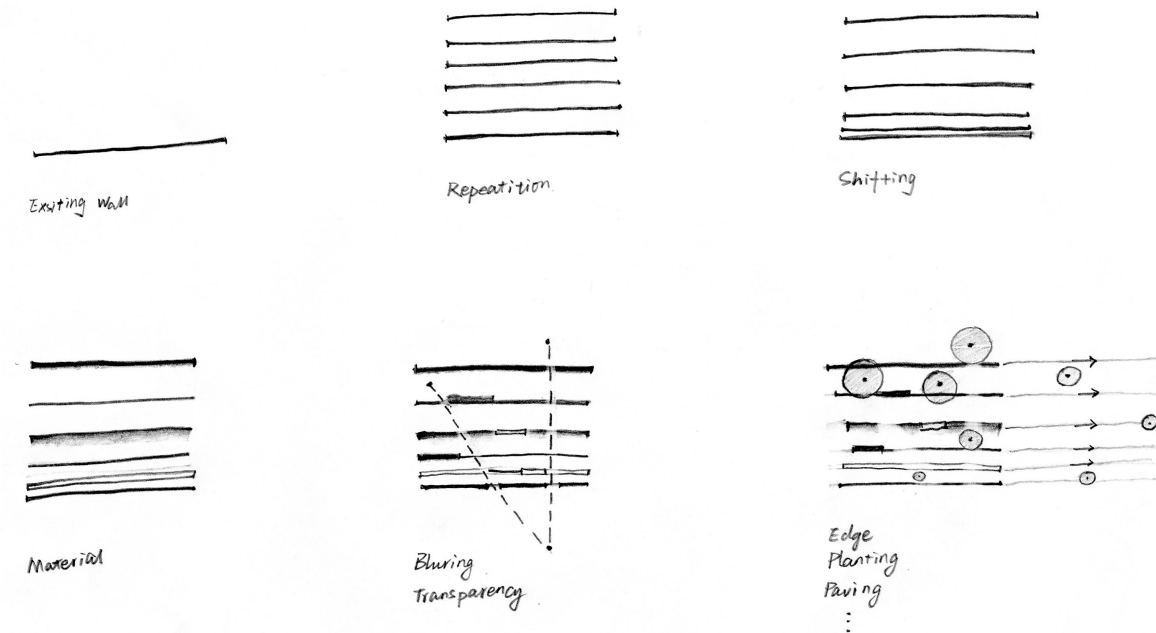


Fig.15 The drawing about the design process

In order to emphasize the disappearance of the history and express the path of the time flow, the reconstruction of the façade will assemble past and present through layers and laminations, trans laminations and adjacencies. Except the existing façade of the historical building, four more additional walls are going to be built with same size. For materials, the additional walls will combine the new bricks with the old bricks from demolished buildings in different percentage. The decrease of old bricks using percentage from the wall near the existing façade to the wall far from the existing façade will represent the past of history and the loss of Shikumen. At the end of these wall series, there's going to be a glass wall. The preserved Shikumen buildings with residents' life can be seen through the glass wall. In this way, from the experience of walking through these walls, the change of the Shikumen's representative meaning will be expressed. The special history behind Shikumen is the major meaning for the existing façade wall, at the beginning of the crossing-experience. After the crossing-experience, the residents' life that can be looked through the last wall with transparent material that represents the modern meaning of Shikumen, home.

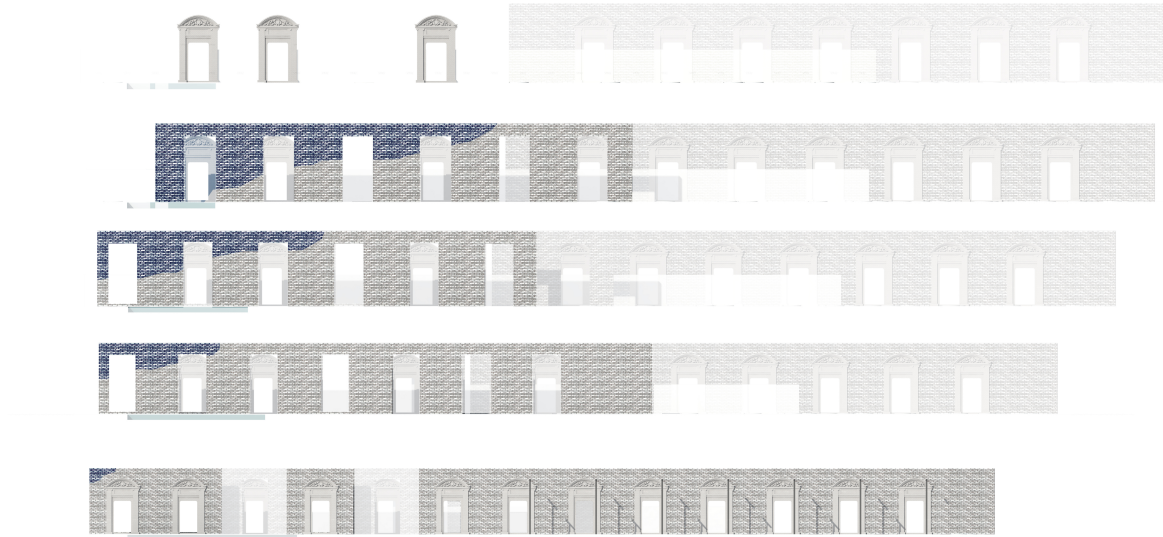


Fig.16 The layers of wall to represent the past of history



Fig.17 The photo of Xintiandi

Symbolize the Shikumen resident life abstractly.

Shikumen's open spaces can be categorized as a series includes street, neighborhood lane, sub-neighborhood lane and courtyard. It's a transition from public space to private space, which consists commercial use, neighborhood use and family use. The formation about the transition of space density is though trees planting and benches arrangement that express the transition from public atmosphere to private atmosphere.

Magnolia is chosen to be the planting element in the site. As the city flower of Shanghai, magnolia tree is adored because of the white flower and upstream form. It's grows well in Shnaghai and always appears as the icon of Shanghai in different design area.

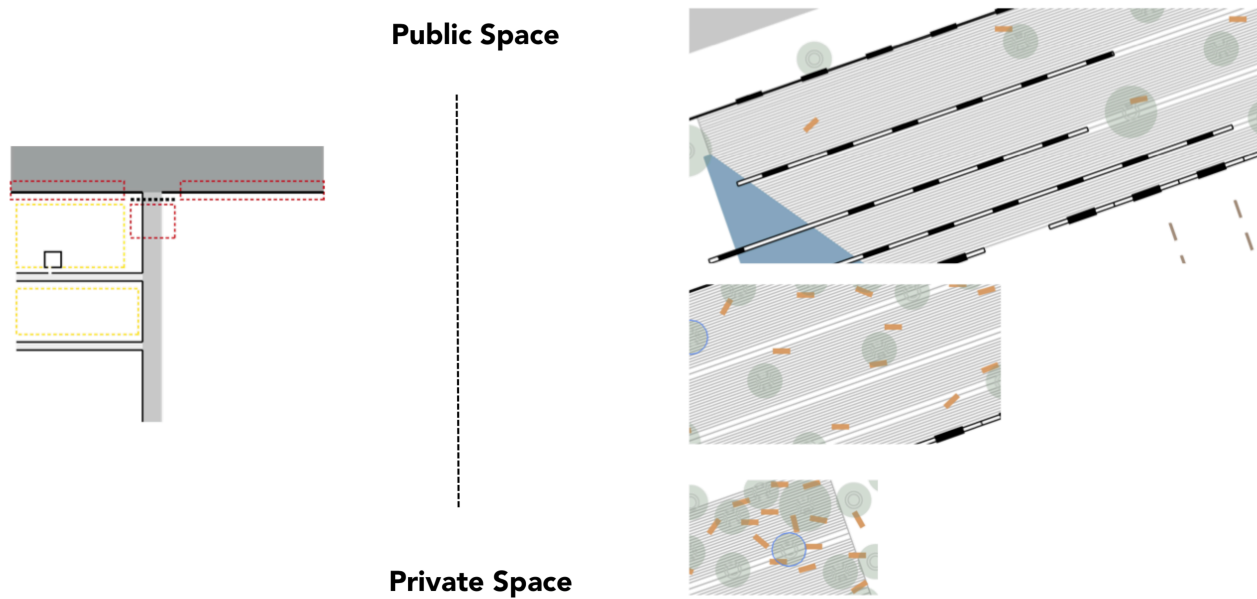


Fig.18 The drawing to show the abstractly symbolization of Shikume's open space

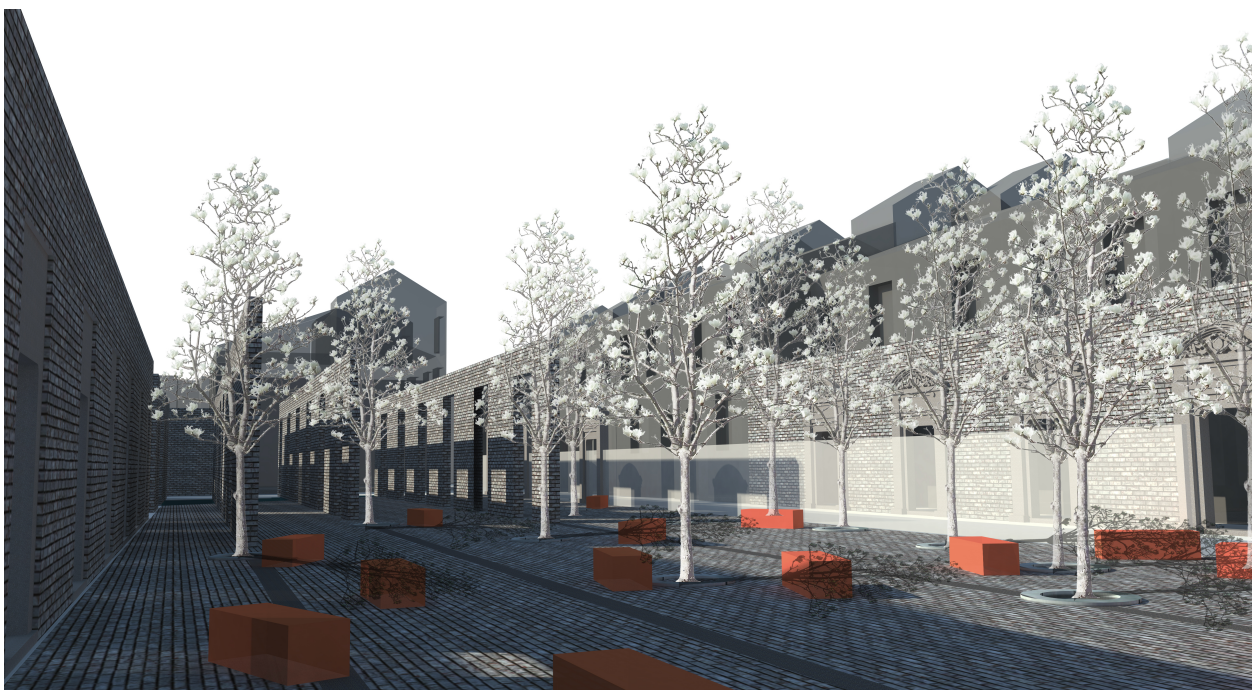


Fig.19 Perspective 1

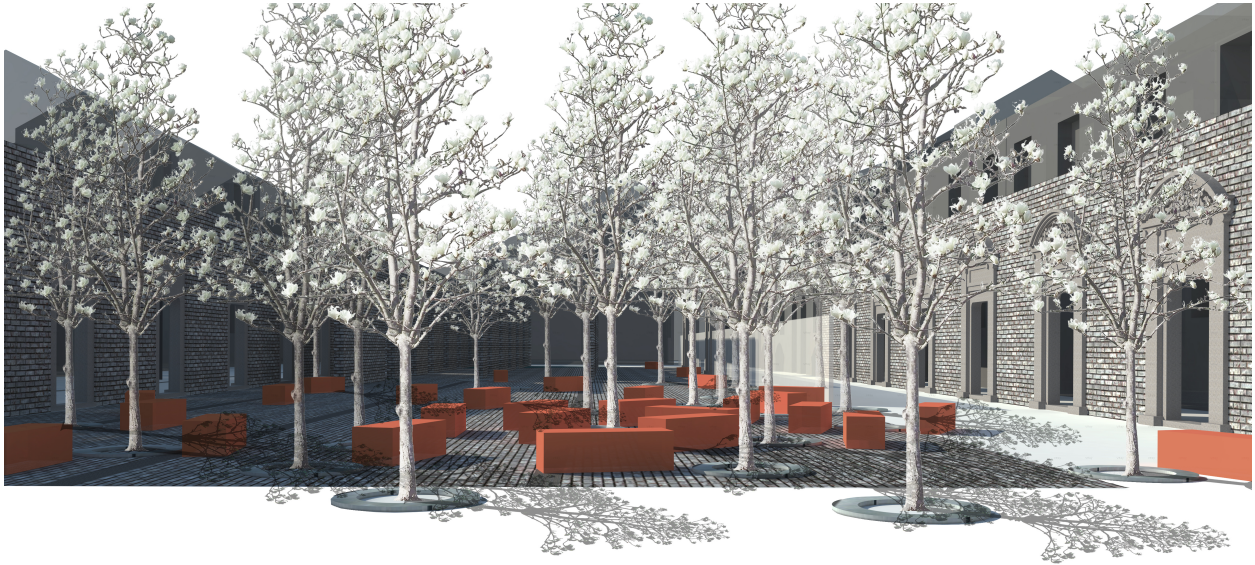


Fig.20 Perspective 2

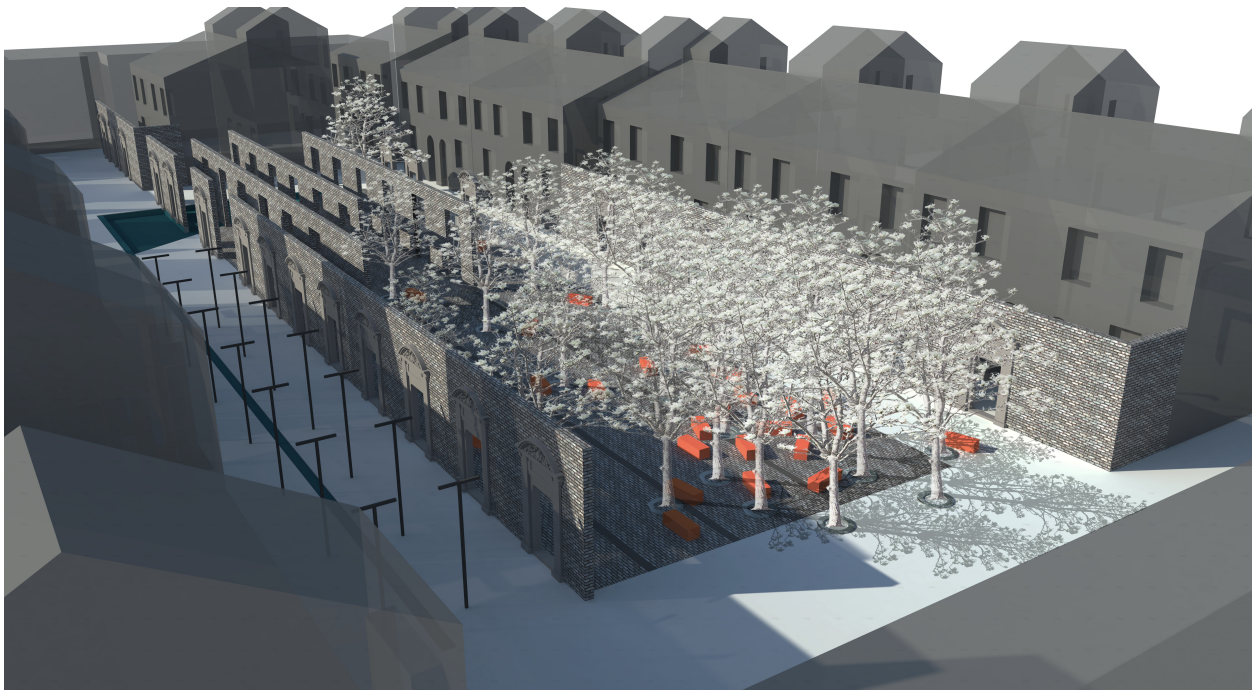


Fig.21 Bird eye view

3.4 Phase 3: Residents' relocation

The high living density is one of Shikumen's characteristics. Usually, there are three to four families live in one building unit. Based on Tianzifang development model, commercialization may lead to local residents immigration movement. In order to provide the same cultural atmosphere based neighborhoods for local residents, the reuse of some existing empty Shikumen buildings are necessary.

For this project, East Wiwenli is another Shikumen block next to Pingdeli where the developing area is proposed. In this block, Because of low building quality, there is a huge amount of vacant buildings. For the third phase, the process of repairing the vacant house in East Siwenli and improving the living building facilities are planned for preparing the needs of residents' relocation. In this way, the local residential atmosphere can be sustainable by providing adequate local residential density.



Fig.22 Drawing to show the immigration

3.5 Phase 4: Building reusing

With the introducing of commercial activities, an economical way that minimizes the change of the building and maximizes the commercial value will be appropriate. Because of this reason, the proposed developing model also includes the strategies for building unit scale.

The rooms of the building can be divided into three parts based on the inside circulation. First part is Tianjing, the small courtyard inside of the building besides the gate. Second part is the living room next to yard. Third part includes the second entry, stairs and second floor. Based on the analysis and classification of building space, the reusing design can be divided into three types. Type A included part one of the building, which can be used for shop. Type B included part one and parts two, which can be used for restaurant or shop. Type C included all of the buildings, which can be used for gallery, hotel, restaurant and shop.

These three types of building reuse will be implement in different spaces of the block in order to support the restrictive commercialization of the neighborhood.

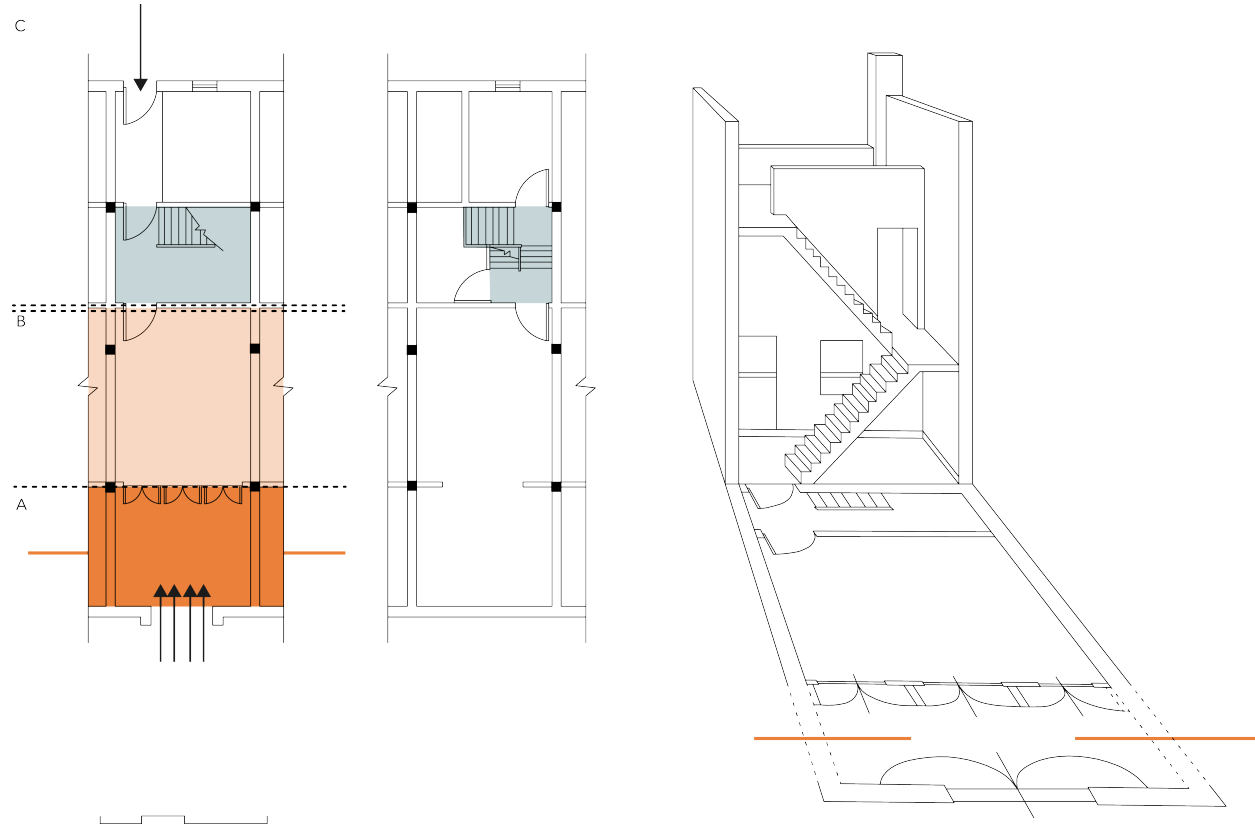


Fig.23 Building reusing

3.6 Phase 5: Cultural neighborhood development

According to the analysis about cultural sustainability of Tianzifang model, extreme tourists activities will lead to a cultural unsustainable development. In order to avoid the high-density tourists' activities and acceleration of the similarity from tourist business, the developing areas

will spread in the larger Shikumen district. The memorial landscape projects as the catalysts will be distributed in different Shikumen neighborhoods. Tourists will be split in different areas. With proper tourists density, local residents can use the memorial landscape site as public community area too.



Fig.24 Distribution of the sits for proposed model

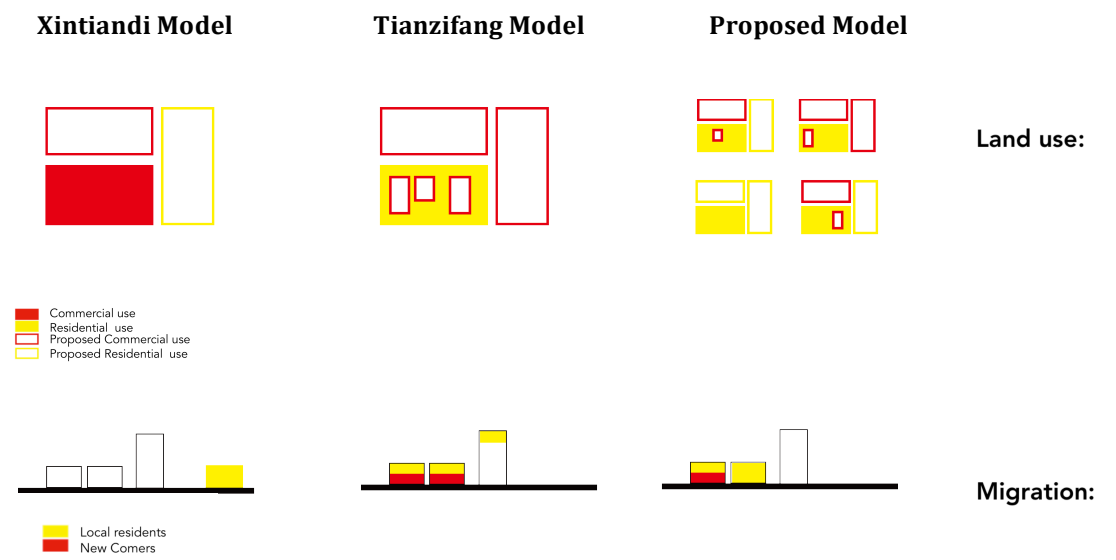


Fig.25 Comparison of different models

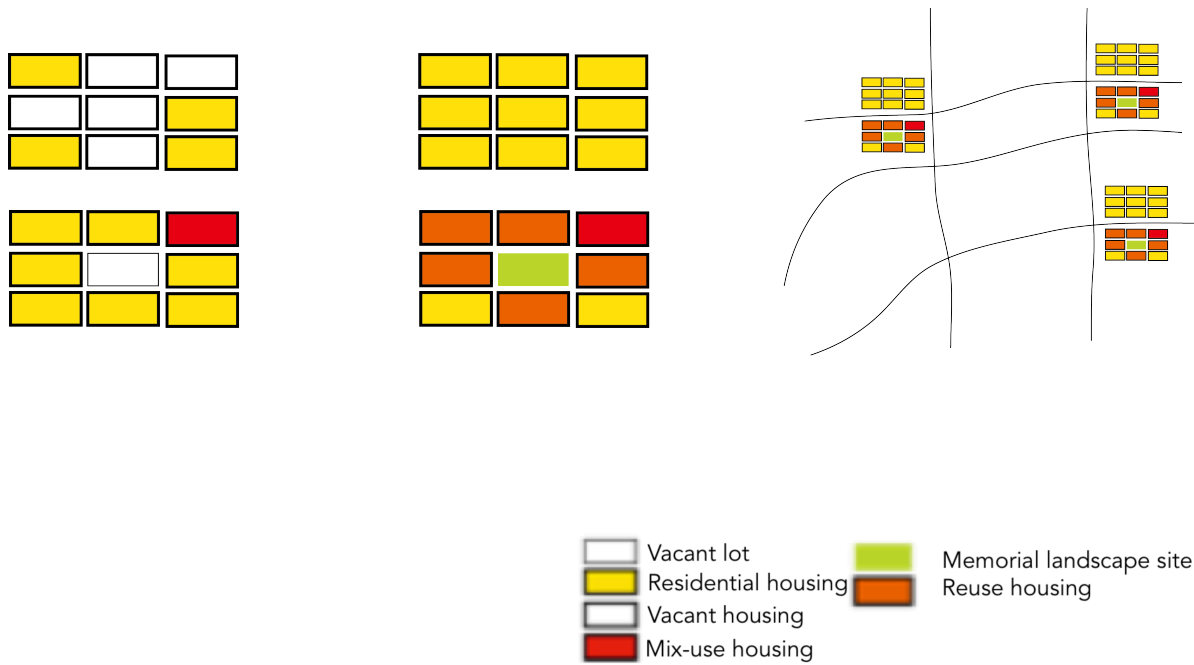


Fig.26 poposed development model

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

4.1 Psychological effect (emotion touch)

This project is based on the emotional resonance effect as the catalyst of development. City maintains the collective memory of residents. When Aldo talked about Maurice Halbwachs theory about collective memory, he mentioned, “One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city’s predominant image, both of architecture and of landscape, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it”(130, Rossi) As the physical representation of the history, city will develop with the influence of people’s attitude towards history. “In spite of history, memory can imagine and reconstruct a future time of fantasy. This memory is set into motion through the inventive potential of the typological apparatus, the analogous design process”(10, Rossi). With the history and people’s understanding about the history, the physical record of history will develop to different innovative type.

Shikumen was the main type of residential housing in Shanghai during semi feudal semi colony period. People’s attitude related closely to that period, which is a complex issue with political meaning and Chinese people’s sensation. From Shaoyi’s opinion, “it related to the interaction between remember and forget. On one side, Shanghai can forget the identity form semi feudal and semi colony society by ignoring the history before 1949 (the establish date of the People's Republic of China. On the other hand, Shanghai can face these debatable period of history positively and reconstruct the identity of city” (203, Sun). For this project, a positive open attitude towards the history of that period is promoted. It’s going to be emphasized that the 19th century history is the resource of Shanghai’s global culture. Furthermore, people’s emotion to Shikumen is the expressing of their feeling of home. This project expects to help people understand the history behind Shikumen better, which supports the understanding of Shanghai’s character and positive attitude toward Shikumen.

For the memorial landscape design part, the reconstruction of ruins is also a state of flexible attitude towards history. History is always moving forward. As the necessary part of history, the ruins with people's understanding and respect can help a space developed with the sustainability of history. "Ruins provide the incentive for restoration, and for a return to origins. There has to be (in our new concept of history) an interim of death or rejection before there can be renewal and reform. The old order has to die before there can be a born-again landscape. Many of us know the joy and excitement not so much of creating the new as of redeeming what has been neglected, and this excitement is particularly strong when the original condition is seen as holy or beautiful" (102, Jackson).

About the insistence of residential use, it's based on the request of residents' memory of a home. Aldo talked about the function of historic building that "European city has become the house of the dead. Its history, its function, has ended; it has erased the specific memories of the houses of individual childhood to become a locus of collective memory" (10, Rossi). In order to maintain of residential use in Shikumen area, a respect to the sprite of the space and residents' emotional need about home is going to be expressed.

4.2 Economical effect

The economical effect of Shikumen's development is related to the interaction of multiple interests.

4.2.1 Government

In China, government is the leader of the multiple interests groups. For Shikumen's development, government-driven development model and real-estate-driven development model are the major models. From previous experience, government development-driven model will become the central type of Shikumen's development, which is due to the economical atmosphere in Shanghai (297, Li). From the perspectives of government, Shikumen's development is related to the balance of urban development and distribution of public resources. From previous urban development, when government regards the center of city management as economical issue, they usually take benefits from residents. Because of this reason, the government policies are require

to transform from economical development to provide a justice city and benefits distribution system (298, Li). With this kind policies' guidance, Shikumen can find a better role in urban development and influence a cultural sustainable city.

4.2.2 Developer

With the development of society and economical environment, urban extensive construction period has ended. Under today's development pattern, the innovative way and attention to users are needed (299, Li). According to the proposed model, the developer of Shikumen will change role from full-percent control to coordinate with residents and open market.

4.2.3 Users

The users of Shikumen in the future will include local residents and visitors.

● Visitors

Visitors' activities lead to the increase of economical value directly. They support the retail business inside of Shikumen district. Also, as an urban tourism activity, the visiting of Shikumen area can make effect to the promotions of urban facilities improvement in Shikumen

● Local residents

Even though local residents are the major stakeholders of

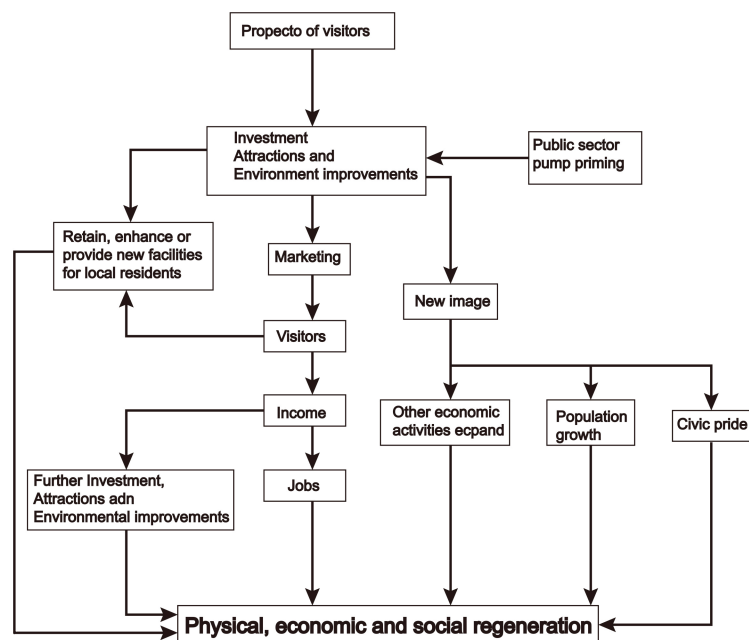


Fig.27 Tourism and Urban development

Shikumen, they don't have the initiation for their rights in today's situation. With the preservation of residential use and restriction of commercial development, the proposed model is going to make some efforts to protect their benefits.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

“The things surrounded us all have a past, and are recognizable because we share that past...What is preserved, like what is remembered, is neither a true nor a stable likeness of past reality” (410, Lawenthal) History and present are not exclusive. They influence each other at the same time. “Historic preservation has helped us to see how much the past is altered to suit the present. Old buildings and artifacts have long been adapted to new uses, but the impulse to preserve has made such adaptation much more self-conscious” (410, Lawenthal). Historic settlement, as the stagnation of history, shows how much the past altered to suit the present.

“Every relic is a testament not only to its initiators but to its inheritors, not only to the spirit of the past but to the perspectives of the present”(412, Lawenthal). This project is proposed to find the modern role for historic neighborhood. This process cannot keep the past stable and segregated. But with the historical inspiration, city can find the better position for itself. “Without a past that is malleable as well as generously preserved, the present will lack models to inspire it and the future be deprived of a lifeline to its past”(411, Lawenthal).

For Shikumen’s development, in order to solve the confliction between the historic preservation and urban development, the acceptance of the change happened on historical space. However, the spirit of space needs to be maintained, which means people need to respect the history and culture behind Shikumen. For Shanghai, Shikumen represents the resource of its global culture character. For local residents, Shikumen express their emotion for home. The better the historic and cultural value can be continued, the warmer and more unique-Home can be.

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