

Project Title: Shunde Guipan River Waterfront

Project Location: Shunde, Guangdong Province, China

Sub-Catagory: Planning & Analysis

Purpose

The central river of the larger Shunde New City delta system, the 10 kilometer Guipan River Waterfront reconnects a city to its river and a people to a lost culture. Channelized and hardened, the Guipan River shares the fate of many rivers in China and across the world. Inspired by the dendritic Pearl River forms, the proposed waterfront park is a tapestry of movement, combining wetland terrace, urban forest, gathering spaces, and pond into one cohesive public park. Wetland terraces are designed to retain and filter adjacent urban run-off, framed by river pier overlooks. An urban section incorporates trails, art walls, plaza, and children's play areas; a more residential section includes re-purposed fish ponds and ecological interpretive center.

Culture - Living on the Water

The channeling and consolidation of river systems throughout the Pearl River Delta has destroyed both nature and local culture. Throughout its history, the Shunde region has been widely known as a water-based society, one where daily life revolved around the water's edge. Transportation, food, and daily gossip originated along the canals. Families once congregated and socialized under the cool shade and broad welcoming branches of the village Ficus tree. Thus, the restoration of both natural and cultural systems has become the central objective of the Guipan River. New gathering spaces are provided along the water's edge, anchored by the village Ficus tree. The Guipan waterfront integrates the local "mulberry and fish pond" agricultural system as a typology of new wetlands and park spaces, expressed as a series of wetland filtration ponds.

Role of Landscape Architect

The landscape architect played the lead design role in the vision for the riverfront park. Working with local government officials, engineers, and ecological consultants, the landscape architect crafted a water filtration strategy that utilizes existing fish ponds and new wetland terraces tied together with a rich layer of programmatic elements.

Significance

The riverfront park provides a major open space amenity to a rapidly growing city, restore protected wetlands for the second largest bird migration fly-over in China, improve river water quality, and re-connect a people to a lost river culture. The project blends both recreational, cultural, and ecological needs into a framework that improves the quality of life for the people of Shunde.

Special Factors

From ecological processes we learn that maximizing edge surface area increases the opportunity for the exchange of nutrients; for example in healthy wetlands, edges increase the transfer of oxygen. However, in China, the channelization of the delta has reduced edge surface conditions; in turn reducing the health and habitat potential of its rivers. The opportunity exists to exploit these correlations between edge intensity and water- not only ecologically, but economically as well. Thus, a braided system of fine-grained edge condition is proposed to increase filtering capacity and reconnect the new planned City of Shunde to the river. Through the increased water edge condition, more opportunities are developed for the citizens of Shunde to walk, work, and recreate along the river edges. In addition, increased edge conditions and accompanying wetland areas increase opportunity for natural habitat. The plan proposes large areas of wetland re-vegetation and protected river islands as a resting place for migratory birds.