

# Urban Design Practice of Jianshui Creative Slow Living Area in the New Form of Society

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**Abstract:** After the 2019 pandemic, Jianshui, a historical and cultural city, witnessed a systematic growth in tourist numbers and revenue. The impact of tourism income, coupled with the shift of capital from large cities to small cities with lower population density, accelerated the social transformation of Jianshui county town. Simultaneously, a considerable amount of incremental construction and internal urban renewal emerged in response to the development needs of the county town. Urban design and place-making methods that adapt to the socio-economic form of Jianshui county town urgently need exploration and research. This paper takes the inclusive path of the three dominant design disciplines in human settlement environment (planning, architecture, and landscape) as a methodological guide. It demonstrates the "meticulous work" of urban design with the goals of high-quality development and high-quality living from the dimensions of planning, landscape, and architecture. The proposed urban design practices include planning for overall decision-making, optimizing spatial matrix through landscape enhancements, shaping carrier images through architecture, and ensuring sustainable development through operational support. These methods aim to serve as references for planning methods that strive for high-quality development and high-quality living.

**Keywords:** Human Settlement Environment; Urban Design; Jianshui

## 1. Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges of epidemic control in large and mega-cities became pronounced due to high population density and intricate demographics. Some capital began to shift towards smaller cities with lower population density. Simultaneously, with uncertainties in international epidemic prevention and control and ongoing domestic efforts, cross-border travel reduced, leading to an increase in short-distance trips. Post-2019 pandemic, Jianshui, a historical and cultural city, experienced a systematic growth in tourist numbers and revenue. This influx of capital significantly impacted the social structure of Jianshui county town, accelerating the transformation from a tourism-service economy to an experiential economy<sup>[1]</sup>. Additionally, regional plans such as the creation of an internationally renowned characteristic town in Lin'an Ancient City and the development goals of West Village Purple Pottery Town for a first-class characteristic town, along with the "One Lake, Two Cities" development plan for Jianshui Stone Screen, have generated substantial project construction demands for Jianshui county town. Faced with this sudden surge in incremental construction and internal urban renewal, urban design and place-making methods that adapt to the socio-economic form of Jianshui county town require urgent exploration and research.

## 2. Current State and Issues of Jianshui Creative Slow Living Area

The Jianshui Creative Slow Living Area is situated in the ecological core of the West Village Purple Pottery Town, around the Five Dragons Lake, overlooking the Purple Pottery Museum to the southwest, surrounded by high-end Purple Pottery living communities to the east and north, and facing a five-star hotel across the lake to the southeast. It occupies the highest point in the core area of the Purple Pottery Town and is conveniently located, with a distance of 2.7 km from Jianshui Bus Station and 8.1 km from the train station.

Due to the surge in project construction demands brought about by the incremental construction and internal urban renewal of the Jianshui County's National Purple Pottery Industrial Park, internationally renowned characteristic towns, and first-class characteristic towns, Jianshui County hastily carried out project construction without adapting to the transformation of its socio-economic form. This lack of a systematic, top-down, and socio-economically adaptive urban design and place-making theoretical

approach resulted in a series of prominent problems.

### **2.1. Vague Project Positioning**

Due to the absence of a clear and effective project positioning for the project site in the upper-level planning document "Jianshui West Village Purple Pottery Town Development Overall Plan (2017-2019)," the site's positioning experienced multiple changes, including the Purple Pottery Art Museum, Central Square, iconic buildings, and cultural and creative blocks, leading to a vague project positioning.

### **2.2. Lack of Operational Formats**

While the overall plan "Jianshui West Village Purple Pottery Town Development Overall Plan (2017-2019)" planned for related products such as the Purple Pottery Museum, Purple Pottery Town e-commerce entrepreneurship park, Purple Pottery Town innovation center, and town reception hall, there is a lack of planned products specifically for the landscape view corridor at the highest point (i.e., the design plot of the Creative Slow Living Area). As a result, the design plot struggles to generate a scalable flow of popularity.

### **2.3. Unclear Functional Requirements**

Situated in the ecological core area at the highest point of the Purple Pottery Town, surrounded by various formats such as residential areas, museums, five-star hotels, pottery paradise, and Purple Pottery production research base, the project's functionalities urgently need clarification.

### **2.4. Mixed Architectural Styles**

Due to the sudden acceleration of construction in Jianshui County town, the construction team, under pressure from task objectives and without reasonable exposure to urban design processes, urgently needed visual project construction plans. This led to a shift in design concepts and prompted some opportunistic design teams to enter, resulting in an array of oddly constructed buildings. The ecological core area of the Purple Pottery Town now presents a mixed architectural style, lacking design control standards.

## **3. Foundation of Interdisciplinary Integration in Human Settlement Design Discipline**

For a considerable period, many designers have adhered to intuition-dominated design methods, fervently advocating the creation of strokes of genius through intuition. However, they often fail to realize that relying solely on intuition cannot effectively address the urban issues mentioned earlier, and they tend to avoid discussing instances where intuition has led to mistakes<sup>[2]</sup>.

In his work "Introduction to Human Settlement Science," Mr. Wu Liangyong proposes the establishment of a multidisciplinary group encompassing architecture, landscape, and urban planning, along with related scientific and technological disciplines, forming the "dominant profession" in the comprehensive system of human settlement science<sup>[3]</sup>. Moreover, with the frequent emergence of design consortia, the collaboration among the three major dominant professions in human settlement—planning, landscape, and architecture—has become increasingly close and efficient. Consequently, methods for urban design and place-making have become more diverse and blended. Reviewing the bid announcements for major projects reveals that comprehensive and high-quality urban design is no longer confined to the independent thinking of a single profession. Instead, it represents the integration and elevation of multidisciplinary research outcomes. Against the backdrop of goals such as high-quality development and a high-quality life, the intricacies of urban design craftsmanship lie in the "cross-weaving" among the three major dominant disciplines in human settlement.

Building upon the "cross-weaving" of the three major dominant disciplines in human settlement, this paper explores urban design theories and methods that adapt to the socio-economic transformation of Jianshui. It focuses on dimensions such as strategic planning for overall decision-making, optimizing spatial matrices through landscape enhancement, shaping the image of architectural carriers, and ensuring the benign development through operational support.

## 4. Urban Design Exploration under the Path of Interdisciplinary Integration

### 4.1. Strategic Planning for Overall Decision-Making

#### 4.1.1. Defining Project Positioning

(1) Identification of Core Values Through Urban Development Keywords:

Core values such as "ecological," "smart," "cultural," "happy," and "innovative" were determined based on Xi Jinping's important speech at the Central Urban Work Conference in December 2015.

(2) Setting Construction Standards Based on Urban Development Orientation:

Classification of 105 characteristic towns in Yunnan into different levels, aligning with the project's location in Xizhuang Purple Pottery Town <sup>[4]</sup>, and considering it as part of Jianshui's cultural and industrial demonstration zone <sup>[5]</sup>.

(3) Analysis of Tourism Market for Dominant Demands:

Emphasis on the increasing trend of short-distance tourism due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Capitalizing on Jianshui's potential as a cultural tourism destination, with a focus on high-quality, differentiated, and benchmarked construction demands <sup>[6][7]</sup>.

(4) Project Quality Defined by Site Characteristics:

Utilizing the natural terrain, sunlight, and the "Ziqi Donglai" landscape pattern to create a high-quality project that integrates with the natural topography.

(5) Highlighting County Cultural Resources:

Integrating the project with historical architecture in Jianshui's old town and ensuring a positive urban spirit in cultural heritage.

(6) Balancing Comprehensive Elements for Clear Project Positioning:

After considering design values, town development orientation, tourism market demands, site characteristics, and Jianshui's cultural resources, the project is positioned as "Purple Pottery Impression," aiming to create a modern, fashionable, culturally rich, and all-encompassing art district for a well-rounded living experience.

#### 4.1.2. Design Strategies

(1) Building an Ecological Foundation:

Emphasizing ecological civilization, preserving protective landscapes on the northwest side, optimizing current terraced topography, and incorporating low-impact development facilities to create an elastic sponge foundation.

(2) Diverse Spatial Experiences:

Catering to various demographics and designing spaces for shopping, exhibitions, leisure, holidays, and children's entertainment to ensure a rich and diverse experience.

(3) Creating Vibrant Boundaries:

Designing interactive and recreational facilities at the project boundaries to attract crowds and enhance social opportunities, connecting commercial outdoor spaces with shops and walkways.

(4) Showcasing and Guiding Commercial Displays:

Designing commercial displays with transparent facades to attract customers, enhancing visual guidance through vertical landscape elements, and using technology for interactive installations to increase commercial appeal.

(5) Integrating Technological Interactive Facilities:

Incorporating gravity-powered mist systems, self-powered water cycling bicycles, and interactive photovoltaic flooring based on the landscape and architectural design, creating a technologically advanced and interactive intelligent space to boost commercial popularity.

(6) Cultural Inheritance and Development:

Adapting historical elements with modern design, simplifying traditional culture, and incorporating it into the overall urban development while meeting the comprehensive needs of urban development and resident life [8].

#### **4.1.3. Rich Business Planning**

(1) Dian Nan Qiong Yu [9]:

Focusing on Jianshui Purple Pottery's rich texture and elegant temperament, planning around themes such as "Cherishing Antiquity," "Seeking Knowledge," "Joyful Travels," "Heartful Observations," and "Craftsmanship" to develop 30 operational products.

(2) Chuang Xiang Man Huo:

Centering around the theme "Chuang Xiang Man Huo," subcategories include "Water and Clouds Fun," "Mountain Harmony Garden," "Fun Leisure Square," "Lin Cheng An," and "Night Calm Wave," leading to the planning of 24 operational products to meet the demands of all user types for all-day and all-weather operations.

#### **4.2. Landscape Optimization of Spatial Matrix**

##### **4.2.1. Constructing an Ecological Base**

(1) Adaptive Terraced Landscape Base:

Utilizing and strengthening the existing terraced topography by adjusting and enhancing the terrain. Designing functional buildings to align with the terrain and optimize the vertical levels to meet the requirements of reasonable functionality, technical feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and landscape aesthetics.

(2) Low-Impact Development for Elastic Sponge Base:

Employing low-impact development practices to create an elastic sponge base. Managing storm water through permeable paving in areas without an underground garage and utilizing a combination of permeable paving, drainage pipes, and water recycling facilities in garage areas [10].

##### **4.2.2. Creating Interactive Spaces**

(1) Diverse Age-Appropriate Spaces [11]:

Abandoning standardized landscape facilities and considering the diverse needs of different age groups. Designing spaces that provide interactive landscape experiences, fostering multi-dimensional and multi-angle interaction for users of all ages.

(2) Day and Night Activation:

Enhancing street life through the application of sound, light, and interactive installations, providing a vibrant night-time atmosphere. Incorporating technology-driven interactive features to improve commercial popularity and supplement night-time businesses in the Chuang Xiang Man Huo area.

(3) Infusing Cultural Elements:

Designing visual elements based on the entire process of Purple Pottery production, applying pottery products to landscape elements and retaining the landscape's cultural elements in pavement and other facilities to effectively integrate cultural elements [11].

#### **4.3. Shaping Architectural Images**

##### **4.3.1. Research Architectural Massing**

(1) Adherence to Urban Planning Regulations:

Aligning with Jianshui's urban planning regulations regarding building density, volume, and height, ensuring that commercial and office buildings north of Jianshui Avenue adhere to a density  $\leq 45\%$  and a plot ratio  $\leq 1.3$  [12].

(2) Limited Building Height and Strategic Building Placement:

Restricting most buildings to 2.5 floors to reflect regional characteristics. Designing distinctive functional buildings connecting upper and lower terraces and incorporating buildings with different

volumes (1 floor or 3.5 floors) to enrich architectural rhythm.

#### **4.3.2. Extracting Cultural Characters**

##### (1) Simplifying Cultural Heritage:

Summarizing Qing Dynasty, Republic of China, 1980s, and Purple Pottery production buildings into basic contours. Applying a minimalist design language to deform and strengthen architectural contours, coordinating with building functions, and connecting upper and lower terrace spaces.

##### (2) Green Roof Application:

Using green roof technology to create accessible rooftop gardens, enhancing the fifth building's facade with a combination of modern design and traditional elements. Blending traditional culture with modern design to create an attractive and culturally rich commercial space.

##### (3) Use of Local Materials:

Selecting characteristic local materials such as blue bricks, blue stones, pink walls, gray tiles, and wood (substituting dark wood-painted aluminum alloy for wood in some buildings). Mimicking the texture, form, and color of local architecture to evoke memories in the minds of users.

#### **4.4. Operational Guarantee for Healthy Development**

##### **4.4.1. Advocating Cooperative Development**

Establishing a platform company for cooperation between different specialized companies in accommodation, dining, cultural performances, cultural IP shaping, tourism products, and property management. Ensuring macro-regulation, interest coordination, project approval, basic construction, and investment attraction.

##### **4.4.2. Experience Marketing**

##### (1) Transition to Experience Economy:

Adapting to the economic transformation by focusing on high-quality planning and using a few high-end products to elevate overall project quality. Creating an attractive image, stimulating consumer desires through sensory experiences, and satisfying and reinforcing users' desire for display through high-quality project quality<sup>[13]</sup>.

##### (2) Combination of Experiential and Word-of-Mouth Marketing:

Combining experiential marketing and word-of-mouth marketing by offering users an all-day and all-weather experience. Encouraging users to spontaneously promote the project through electronic channels such as TikTok, Xiaohongshu, and WeChat Moments.

##### **4.4.3. Timely Sequential Development**

##### (1) Utilizing Surrounding High-End Residential Areas:

Accumulating popularity by developing the project after the completion of the second phase of surrounding high-end residential areas. Integrating cultural creativity, leisure, and real estate, allowing both to mutually influence each other<sup>[12]</sup>.

##### (2) Main Benefits:

Reserving sufficient time for early-stage investment and attracting investors.

Providing purchasing power assurance through the stable permanent population in high-end residential areas.

Leveraging the initial operation of other projects like Wulong Lake Ecological Park to bring in tourists and business professionals, ensuring a balanced income for the project.

#### **4.5. Summary**

The urban design practice of the Chuang Xiang Man Huo area is rooted in the current socio-economic transformation of Jianshui, a city renowned for its historical and cultural significance. Guided by the integrated approach of the three dominant design disciplines in the human settlement environment—urban planning, landscape design, and architectural design—the project embodies the concept of

"embroidering" the city design with a focus on high-quality development and a superior quality of life.

#### **4.5.1. Contextual Grounding**

The design practice takes into account the social realities of Jianshui's historical and cultural importance, recognizing the need for a transformation in its socio-economic structure. This approach is grounded in an understanding of the city's unique historical and cultural identity, acknowledging the importance of preserving and enhancing these elements in the face of economic change.

#### **4.5.2. Interdisciplinary Integration**

The project employs an interdisciplinary integration approach, harmonizing the three major design disciplines – urban planning, landscape design, and architectural design. This synergy ensures a comprehensive and cohesive development strategy that addresses the multifaceted aspects of the urban environment.

#### **4.5.3. Three-Dimensional Development**

The design unfolds across three dimensions: urban planning, landscape design, and architectural design. Each dimension contributes to the overarching goal of achieving high-quality development and fostering a superior quality of life for the residents. The "embroidering" craftsmanship metaphor emphasizes the meticulous and detailed nature of the design process, highlighting the intricacies involved in creating a well-crafted urban space.

#### **4.5.4. Unique Spatial Characteristics**

The culmination of the design efforts results in a distinctive spatial quality characterized by its scarcity<sup>[13]</sup>. This uniqueness stems from the careful consideration of historical and cultural elements, the integration of natural features, and the deliberate crafting of a living environment that aligns with the goals of high-quality development and living standards.

#### **4.5.5. Reference for High-Quality Development**

The project's final outcome serves as a reference and inspiration for methods of planning and development that aim for high-quality outcomes and an elevated standard of living. By showcasing the successful integration of historical, cultural, and economic considerations, the practice provides valuable insights for future urban development endeavours.

In essence, the Chuang Xiang Man Huo area's urban design practice not only addresses the immediate socio-economic challenges of Jianshui but also contributes to the broader discourse on achieving high-quality development and a superior quality of life through meticulous, integrated, and contextually sensitive urban planning and design.

## **5. Conclusions**

As a national historical and cultural city, Jianshui bears the responsibility of achieving multiple goals, including the creation of an internationally recognized characteristic town (Jianshui Lin'an Ancient Town), establishing a leading national characteristic town (Xizhuang Purple Pottery Town), and building a national-level cultural industry demonstration zone for purple pottery. However, despite these ambitious objectives, the development process in Jianshui often encounters prominent issues such as real estate development disrupting planning layouts, external cultural imports disturbing local characteristics, and a blind emphasis on local development at the expense of historical areas.

These challenges highlight a lack of comprehensive planning guidance and execution in urban development, demonstrating a susceptibility to individual city development viewpoints that may not represent a holistic understanding of the city. As noted by academician Cheng Taining, while various urban concepts like eco-cities and smart cities may be individually correct, the overuse of such ideas may result in a lack of overall grasp and comprehension of the city<sup>[14]</sup>.

This study focused on Jianshui's "Chuangxiang Manhuo District," utilizing the cross-integration of knowledge from three dominant professional fields in human settlement design. It explored the city's design under the confluence of these disciplines, proposing strategies such as planning for overall decision-making, optimizing spatial matrices through landscape enhancement, shaping architectural images, and ensuring the sustainable development of operations.

By presenting a roadmap that includes planning decisions, optimizing spatial matrices through

landscape enhancements, shaping architectural images, and ensuring sustainable operational development, this paper aims to serve as a reference for avoiding challenges encountered in the development of Jianshui County. It advocates for the healthy progression of urban development.

In conclusion, this paper, using "Chuangxiang Manhuo District" as a case study, has delved into the design of the city under the confluence of three major disciplines in human settlement design. By integrating knowledge from various fields, it provides a comprehensive perspective on city planning, landscape design, architectural shaping, and operational sustainability. This not only holds relevance for the future development of Jianshui but also serves as a reference and inspiration for other cities in their planning and design processes.

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