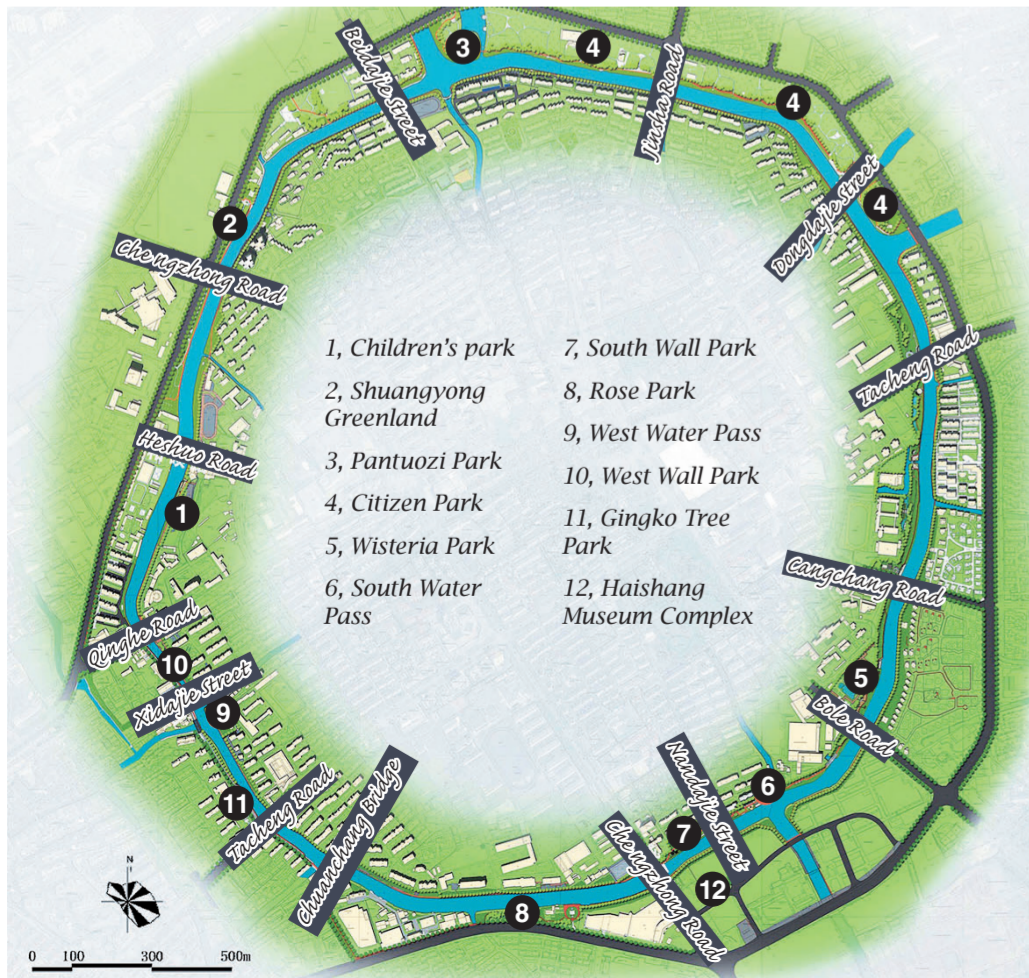


# Engineering challenges overcome to create a river walk



The environment along the footpath becomes greener.



**Staff Reporters**

The 6.5-kilometer ring river of Jiading is Shanghai's only existing moat. A footpath along the inner edge of the ring river is now open to the public.

When people walk on the path, the Jiading edition of the renowned Chinese painting "Along the River during the Qingming Festival" is revealed in successive scenes.

Its designer, Wang Huibin, was honored to take the job as the ring river is like a father in his mind.

Wang and his team came up with a plan last September to create a live "Along the River during the Qingming Festival" in Shanghai. With a sufficient budget, Wang hoped to build a time-honored landmark.

Granite and concrete were adopted as materials of the path while stone balustrades were decorated with engraving boards and stone lion columns to create a style consistent with the 800-year-old town.

However, the engineering was not as smooth as Wang thought. Some sections of the footpath were above the water but beneath a bridge, which made piling almost a mission impossible.

Fortunately, workers managed to remove silt from the water and then carried out the construction.

The footpath involved 122,000 square meters of land. How to balance the interests and demands of all parties with regard to land acquisition was a real teaser.

At the site of the former North Water Pass built in the reign of Emperor Jiading (1522-1566), a steel bridge was built for the convenience of future reform.

"We shall set the possibility for the future," Wang said. In his opinion, the ring river is like a pretty girl. Simple make-up is enough to set off her beauty.

"Showing what history gives to the original appearance and flavor of the town is our design principle. I hope the footpath restores the cultural and historical details along the riverbanks and the spirit of the ancient water town."

Jiading native Zong Fugen still remembers joyful moments with his friends on the ramparts when he was a child. Zong, 78, witnessed the walls become ruins.

He was relieved to hear that the South Wall, South Water Pass, West Wall, West Water Pass and the North Water Pass were put under government protection as historic sites.

"They are witnesses of Jiading's history," Zong said.

Both ends of the surrounding footpath met at the end of June. In Zong's opinion, it was a notable moment in Jiading's history.

Zong walked along the footpath. When he arrived at the section of Meiyuan neighborhood he stopped in front of a birch tree. Zong believed the tree, as tall as six stories, was planted in the 1950s responding to the call of "greening the motherland."

"Too many stories took place here. They should be noted that more people will know."

Zong had no idea that Jiading Town was collating relevant historical materials and a book is expected to be

issued by the end of the year.

Ren Liushun, vice director of Jiading's construction commission, vowed to protect the texture of the city and let the footpath have more connotations and flavors by strengthening the excavation and protection of historical and cultural resources in the area.

"The next step is to pilot waterscape tourism, develop ring river travel into a brand name and bring a new vigor to the old town." Ren hopes the business will attract around 2 million visitors a year.

Compared with the tourism development, to enhance the management of the footpath is more urgent. Walking unleashed dogs, reckless cycling, unlicensed fishing and careless littering take place almost every night.

Shen He, Party secretary of Lijing neighborhood, vowed to establish long-term management.

"Both ends meeting is a preliminary step. To manage and maintain the footpath well is of top priority," Chen Xinghua, vice director of Jiading Town, said.

Jiading Town will work with other government agencies to establish daily management. Apart from the supervision of the ring river and water courses around, regular patrols and maintenance will be set up.

A 9.5-kilometer footpath along the outer edge of the ring river will be completed next month. After that, Jiading plans to promote the coordination of both the outer and inner footpaths.

In such a case, it was just the beginning when both ends of the inner footpath met. The neighborhoods, schools and commercial facilities along the river were once blocked.

Among the riverside neighborhoods, Jiazhong had the most blockages — two bicycle parking lots, a neighborhood club and five parking spaces.

Local residents were persuaded to have all the buildings demolished to make way for the footpath. With the support of residents from six neighborhoods along the river, the project went smoothly.

Even the Jiading Campus of Shanghai University changed its riverside layout several times.

It was 20 years ago that the proposal to build a ring river footpath was initiated. The footpath was built section by section. Until the end of 2016, most sections of the inner edge of the ring river had been covered by footpaths but the connection of each section had not been established.

Illegal buildings and bridges were major obstacles in the way. The builder, Oasis Investment Holdings Group, had to overcome the difficulties and complete the engineering in around three months after the Spring Festival of the year.

With the support of a number of agencies, including traffic police, urban management, greenery and marine navigation, it built three more bridges and 600 meters of waterfront road were made.

The lighting system along the footpath was improved to enhance its nighttime appearance and surveillance cameras installed.

(Translated by Li Xinran)



More people take a walk at the footpath along the ring river.



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Wang Huibin  
Designer of the footpath



The wall north to the West Gate in 1951 — Wang Yongtang



The South Water Pass