



# Urban Balcony Embracing Rewilded Nature —Xi'an Yannan Park Phase II, China

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## FEATURES

Rewilding Nature; Urban Design; Sponge City; Stormwater Management; Socio-Ecological Infrastructure; Climate Resilient Landscape; Urban Nature

EDITED BY Tina TIAN

1. The project creates a recreational area for the community, a “green sponge” for stormwater management, and a low-maintenance, rewilded urban nature space. The site has been transformed into a landscape of ravines and hills, with ravines serving as stormwater channels and hills hosting sports facilities.
2. The pre-existing site in 2016 before the ecological restoration.

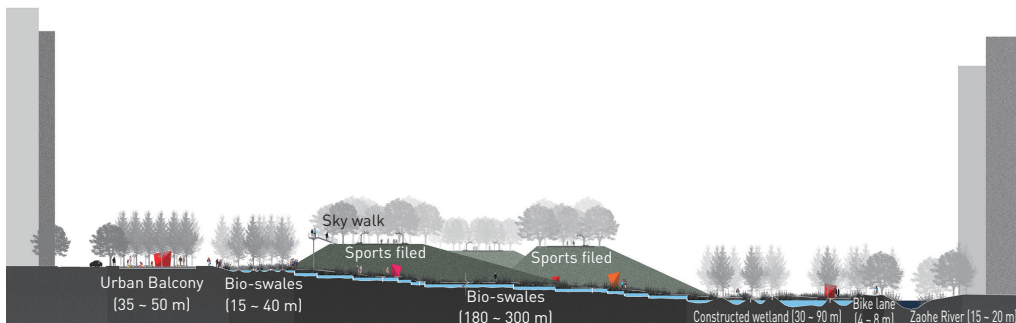
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3. Site plan: the design features a linear activity zone spanning four residential blocks, fostering diverse social interactions.
4. Section of the site.
5. Urban Balcony: a 50-m-wide balcony extends over 1,500 m along the western edge, featuring permeable gravels, 20,000 Pagoda trees, and amenities like pavilions, playgrounds, and seating, promoting community activities.
6. The skywalk connects hilltops and crosses ravines, offering transportation and security benefits, with unique urban and natural views.

## 1 Challenges and Objectives

Xi'an, a bustling city with 13 million inhabitants, faces unique urban design challenges. The Yunnan Park Phase-II, nestled in a densely populated district, is encircled by dense residential buildings. The 80 hm<sup>2</sup> site, a previous construction waste dump, is bordered by a raised highway to the north and a concrete

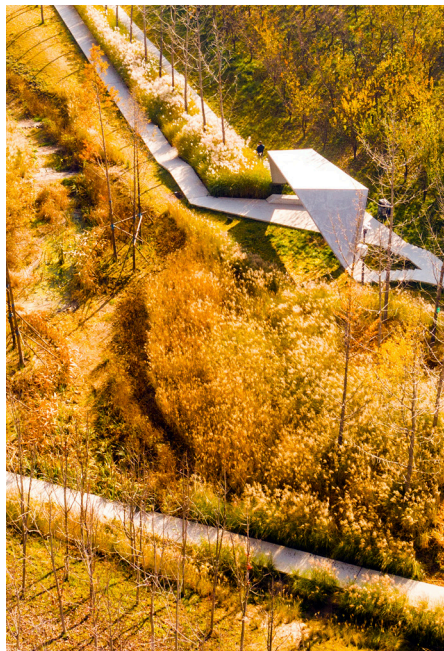
drainage canal to the east, making barriers to urban connectivity. The western side of the site, near residential communities, presents an opportunity to merge public activities and social life with urban wilderness. The city's temperate climate, with its contrasting season conditions, demands innovative solutions for stormwater management and outdoor shading.

The project aims to deliver a recreational haven for local communities by establishing a resilient "green sponge" for urban stormwater management and creating a low-maintenance, rewilded urban natural space for enjoyable experiences.

Given the large scale of the site and the short timeline mandated by the local government, several challenges emerged,



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including managing the earthwork and topography, transforming the lifeless concrete drainage, and rapidly developing a low-maintenance, mixed-use park.

## 2 Design Strategies

The design strategies encompass five aspects.

1) Urban Balcony. A 50-meter-wide balcony stretches over 1,500 m along the western edge, featuring permeable gravels and 20,000 Pagoda trees (*Sophora japonica*) for shade. Amenities include pavilions, playgrounds, and modular, colorful fiberglass seating, encouraging diverse community activities. The balcony serves as a communal living room, hosting a variety of activities, from Tai Chi to dancing and social gatherings.

2) Ravines and hills. Utilizing existing construction debris, the design creates ravines for stormwater channels and hills for sports facilities. A bio-swale system alongside the Urban Balcony collects and filters stormwater runoff, leading it to the rewilded drainage. The ravines, recharged by stormwater, foster a lush, diverse plant community, guiding visitors from the bustling balcony to the tranquil natural areas and the waterfront.

3) Rewilded drainage. The transformation of the eastern concrete drainage into a vibrant, rewilded waterway with tree islands and native plantings boosts the site's ecological diversity.

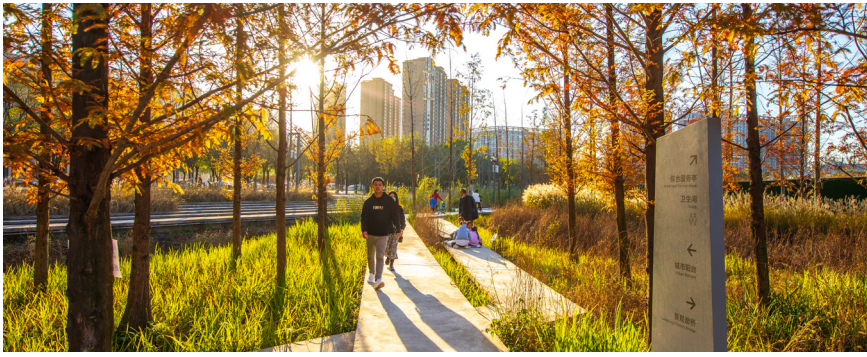
4) Path network. An intricate path network, raised above ground and weaving through tall grass, offers a nature-immersive experience. The paths, made of prefabricated concrete slates, are designed for efficient installation and aesthetic variation.

And 5) skywalk. Parallel to the Urban Balcony, a skywalk links hilltops and ravines, doubling as a transport route and security measure. It also provides unique views of both the urban and natural landscapes.

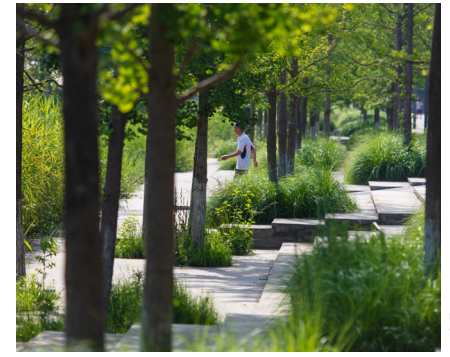
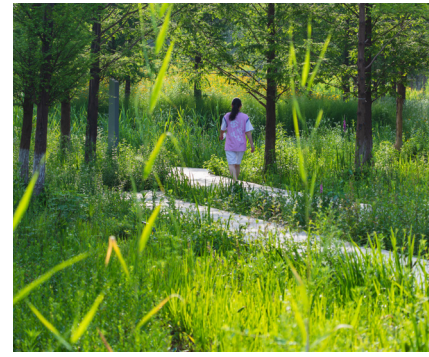
## 3 Conclusion

This urban design project is distinguished by its integration of a socially active Urban Balcony, as a solution for urban stormwater management. Its creation of a low-maintenance, rewilded urban natural space strengthens the city's bond with nature.

7. Elevated sports facilities on the hills are linked by the skywalk.
8. While the overall green space has a low-maintenance, "messy" appearance, the paths and structures, made of prefabricated concrete with fine detailing, create a stark contrast between human innovation and natural elements. The ravines imbedded with paths, nourished by stormwater, offer an immersive experience of a diverse plant community.
9. An elevated path network weaves through tall grass, guiding visitors from the vibrant Urban Balcony to serene natural areas and the waterfront.



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10. Raised pathways, amidst tall grass and over drainages, are made of prefabricated concrete slates for quick installation and design versatility.
11. Stepping down from the Urban Balcony, visitors find themselves amidst rewilded nature. The bio-swale system alongside the Urban Balcony filters stormwater runoff, supporting a diverse plant community.
12. Colorful, modular fiberglass seating offers versatile spaces for community gatherings. The vibrant, shaded seating areas draw people of all ages from across the city.

**Location:** Yanta District, Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province, China

**Scale:** 80 hm<sup>2</sup>

**Client:** Xi'an Yanta District Infrastructure Construction Investment Management Co., Ltd.

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**Project Managers:** Yuan Li, Yu Zhang

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## 城市阳台拥抱再野化自然——西安雁南生态公园二期

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项目关键词

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**项目地点:** 中国陕西省西安市雁塔区

**项目面积:** 80 hm<sup>2</sup>

**项目委托:** 西安市雁塔区基础设施建设投资管理  
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**首席设计师:** 俞孔坚

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林涵、刘倩颖

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