The West Bund in Xuhui District along Huangpu River has become a gathering place for AI companies from home and abroad. — Ti Gong

This year's WAIC dedicated an area to metaverse to exhibit technologies, demonstrate applications and display products. — Dong Jun

US$51 billion 💰

Shanghai's industrial scale of metaverse-related sectors will reach 350 billion yuan (US$51 billion) by 2025 with a batch of supportive measures from the city and district governments, according to the city government.

The center, based on cooperation between Yangpu and local universities such as Tongji, Fudan and Shanghai Jiao Tong as well as the tech giant Alibaba, aims to use the AI technology to support the city's digital transformation and development of the global scientific innovation center.

According to the blueprint, the center will develop and widely apply AI in local communities and districts till 2026 as the first phase of its development.

In the second phase between 2027 and 2035, the center will make major breakthroughs in AI applications and create an intelligent social governance demonstration for other Chinese cities.

One of its focuses is the cloud-native, which aims to promote open-source and sharing technology among domestic technology companies.

Yangpu initiated a joint development plan with partners from Yangtze River Delta cities on the Digital Native Evolution sub-forum during the WAIC.

DaoCloud, a local start-up firm, and

Chinese tech giant Huawei jointly unveiled a super integrated machine for cloud-native coordination at the subforum.

The luggage case-like machine incorporates six servers with high-density computing structure and storage network.

It will be used in future unmanned chain stores of Watson to record and analyze the consumption habits of each customer, said Chen Qiyan, founder of DaoCloud.

"Based on the cloud-native technology, the data collected by each chain store will be integrated in real time, with no need to send the information

to the headquarters of Watson," Chen explained.

Metaverse is also reshaping the industrial transformation of Shanghai's former iron and steel production center in northern Baoshan District, one of the key development strategies of the city.

Ten promising industrial metaverse applications were unveiled at the 9th China Industrial Internet Summit over the weekend among the high-tech parks, intelligent manufacturing factories and biomedicine companies in Baoshan. They included automated quality inspection and malfunction diagnoses, unmanned logistics in industrial parks as well as patrolling robots alongside production lines.

"These applications reveal the industrial Internet has upgraded to be the 'meta-industry,'" said Zheng Yang, deputy director of the economic commission of Baoshan.

"We aim to use metaverse technologies to increase output, while reducing the cost for many manufacturing companies who have to handle complicated production processes."

A group of meta-industry incubation parks and industrial bases will rise from the Nanda Digital City and Wusong Smart City, two new sub-centers based on the former chemical and steelmaking factory clusters in the city's north.

The first batch of meta-industry pilot factories will also be unveiled at leading companies such as steel producer Baowu, pharmaceutical firm CanSino and Fanuc Robot.

Shanghai's AI output has surpassed 300 billion yuan (US$43.5 billion) annually, double the figure in recent years.

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Xuhui District has unveiled the city's first batch of district-level supportive policies for the metaverse industries. The district government pledged to support metaverse content designing, scenario creation as well as research and development of wearable devices.

"Leading global metaverse companies are welcome to Xuhui to develop a batch of pilot applications on game, consumption, culture, education, medical services and government affairs," said Yu Linwei, deputy director of Xuhui.

"Xuhui will support the metaverse sectors same as the AI industry when it emerged several years ago."

A high-tech innovation carnival was launched in the Caohejing Industrial Park during the WAIC, inviting global professionals to a metaverse scenario designing competition.

Last Saturday, elite Chinese returning from abroad established an AI association on the West Bund, one of the host sites of the WAIC 2022.

The AI branch of the Western Returned Scholars Association is expected to attract more professionals to meet Shanghai's ambition to become a hub of the AI technologies, said Zhang Yi, an official with the Shanghai Commission of Economy and Informatization.

A cloud-native server, which looks like a luggage case, was jointly unveiled by DaoCloud and Huawei at a sub-forum of WAIC.
— Ti Gong