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I believe this can add magnificence and satisfaction to local neighborhoods. The rest of the world, including my home country, have a lot to learn from Shanghai's efforts.

Awan Ahmed Zamir

Tongji University student majoring in industrial design



Lively colors and animal patterns reactivated dull concrete space beneath the Middle Ring Road.

to prevent stray balls from landing on highways,” Dai Fuqi, the founder and chairman of Rucker Park, told Shanghai Daily.

He called the reclaimed spaces “unexploited rich ore” for urban sports.

SKF Café opened last year beneath the Wuning Road Bridge on its approach to Suzhou Creek. It's become a popular place with locals.

In the downtown area, the city has opened 42 kilometers of creekside paths that pass under 33 bridges spanning the waterway.

Architect Zhang Bin decorated the tight space under the bridge in Putuo District — a site that now stands out for its European-style décor.

Apart from the café, the space also provides a public toilet, wooden benches and a vending machine.

“My goal was to activate ‘negative space,’ while attracting businesses to ensure its continuing maintenance,” Zhang said.

The Shanghai native spent most of his childhood on the bridge, often watching production at the nearby iron-steel workshop. He jogged beneath the bridge approach for physical education exercises at school.

Such an emotional bond motivated his effort to revitalize the site. And the payoff is heavy community use.

“I was surprised to find such an ambient atmosphere,” said an African drum coach who calls himself Prince and



A boy plays on a swing in a playground below Kaixuan Road Bridge in Changning District.

teaches people to play drums on the benches near the café on weekends.

The owner of the café, surnamed Ge, said the site attracts nearby office workers, local residents, shutterbugs and joggers. She voluntarily takes charge of the cleaning and maintenance of the space.

Elsewhere in Shanghai, a sports park for skateboarding, rock climbing and football is planned beneath the South-North Elevated Road, which stretches for 30 kilometers across the city's downtown.

Northern Baoshan District is

converting a site beneath a bridge crossing the Wenzaobang River, a major tributary of Huangpu, into an art gallery and exhibition space.

“The purpose of these micro urban renewal projects is not only to beautify neglected urban spaces but also to provide more conveniences or services to residents,” said Wu Jiang, a famous architect and former vice president of Tongji University. Wu has championed the concept of treating overlooked urban spaces as “living organisms,” advocating their renewal over massive dismantling and rebuilding.



A coffee house under the Wuning Road Bridge crossing Suzhou Creek.



Children play basketball at the New Hongqiao Central Garden adjacent to a section of Yan'an Elevated Road.