



Renovation of Bund City Hall heralds historic revival

A comparison of the Bund City Hall Plaza in 2019 (above) and 2024 (far above)

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A major renovation has been completed of the former home of the Shanghai Municipal Council and city government near the Bund, marking the start of a new round of a renovation campaign for the Bund's buildings.

The central courtyard of the more than century-old historic building is now open to the public, with a global promotion campaign to attract commercial tenants starting on May 17.

The Bund City Hall Plaza, originally built to manage local foreign settlements, later housed the Shanghai Municipal Council and the city government.

It is a five-story neoclassical building with a granite facade, Baroque styling, Ionic columns and arched windows.

Many significant events in Shanghai's history took place here, including the first raising of the national flag in the city in 1949. Also, physicist Albert Einstein gave a lecture on the theory of relativity in the building's auditorium in 1923.

"The courtyard is truly breathtaking," said James Macdonald, head of Savills Research China, who was involved in the renovation project. "Its charm is reminiscent of those found in the UK, but it's a rare gem in Shanghai.

"Imagine being able to step away from your office during lunch and bask in the sunshine, and fall in love with the space," he told Shanghai Daily.

According to Macdonald, retailers prioritize location, accessibility and functional space, as well as brand alignment, identity and storytelling. They also seek uniqueness and visual appeal, and this project checks all of these boxes.

Huangpu District government and the Shanghai Land (Group) Co jointly founded Shanghai Bund Regeneration in 2014, which is in charge of the project.

In 2015, the company officially launched the protective renovation, marking it as a model project for urban renewal in Shanghai and the first initiative in the comprehensive renovation of the Bund's second-row buildings. The goal was to preserve the building's historical elements while adapting it for modern use.

Renowned British architect David Chipperfield, a 2023 Pritzker Architecture Prize winner, led the design efforts. The project focused on retaining as much of the original structure as possible while upgrading it to meet contemporary needs.

The restoration work included meticulous historical research and the use of advanced techniques to ensure accuracy.

For instance, original design plans were found in the British Museum to guide the renovation. The project also involved moving and stabilizing a red mansion within