

Preservation and renewal of historical and cultural blocks under urban RBD model: A case study of Baoding West Street

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Abstract. Preservation and renewal of historical and cultural blocks is an important part of the urban renewal process. At present, China pays more and more attention to the protection of historical and cultural blocks, how to make historical and cultural blocks revitalized in modern cities is a problem worth thinking about. The urban RBD model provides new ideas for the protection and renewal of historical and cultural blocks. This paper intends to summarize the development and characteristics of the urban RBD model by using the literature research method and the field research method, conduct case studies on historical and cultural block-type RBDs, and try to summarize the theoretical methods for the protection and renewal of historical and cultural block-type RBDs; it also combs through the historical lineage and the business mode of Baoding's West Street, summarizes the existing problems, and proposes a renovation strategy for West Street by using the methods of historical and cultural block-type RBDs' protection and renewal. West Street proposes a transformation strategy.

1 Introduction

Historic and cultural blocks are witnesses to the process of urban social development, embodying the city's cultural characteristics and the carrier of the city's traditional style, and the protection and renewal of historic and cultural districts is an important part of urban renewal. Since 2015, China has designated more than 1,200 historical and cultural blocks, and each region has paid more attention to the protection and renewal of historical and cultural blocks. However, the process of protecting and renewing historical and cultural districts is plagued with problems such as the destruction of traditional features, lack of vitality of commercial businesses, and shortage of parking space. Facing the above phenomenon, China needs to explore a set of theoretical systems suitable for the protection and renewal of historical and cultural blocks.

The urban RBD (Recreational Business District) model was first proposed by Stansfield and Rickert in the 1970s and was first proposed in China in 1995 by Bao Jigang in his study of Shenzhen Overseas Chinese Town, and began to be gradually applied in China after 2000. The urban RBD model provides new transformation ideas and business models for the protection and renewal of China's historic and cultural blocks, giving rise to the historic and cultural block-type RBD. In existing research, many articles introduce the RBD model as a strategy for the transformation of historic and cultural blocks, but there is still no systematic theoretical approach to shaping the historic and cultural block-type RBD. This paper summarises the methodology of historical and cultural block-type RBD

protection and renewal and applies this methodology to actual cases.

2 Urban RBD theory research

2.1 Concept and characteristics of urban RBD

The conceptual idea of urban RBD (Recreational Business District) was developed in the 1970s by Stansfield and Rickert in their study of the structural and functional characteristics of tourist districts, which is a concentration of restaurants, entertainment, novelties, and gift shops within the city to satisfy the needs of tourists who flock to the city on a seasonal basis neighborhood [1]. According to Bao Jigang, urban RBD is an important part of the city's open space system and is a specific area in the city where a variety of facilities, mainly recreational and commercial, are clustered, where the classification of the facilities mainly includes shopping, dining, entertainment, culture, interaction, and fitness, etc [2].

The nature of urban RBD is a retail business district, the main consumers of which are residents and foreign tourists, surrounded by tourist attractions as an attraction in general, and tourism enterprises with distinctive features. Urban RBDs are mostly located near traffic arteries, densely populated tourist attractions, high tourist density, and areas with high land prices, which have a driving effect on the economic development of the city, can enrich and improve the spatial structure of the city, form a new functional area, enhance recreational and leisure and public cultural space, and

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promote the development of public transport. Urban RBD may be located within the CBD area, may deviate from the CBD existence, and has a certain degree of difference from the traditional urban CBD in terms of location, morphology, function, commerce, service objects, etc., which is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of conceptual differences between CBD and RBD [3].

| | CBD | RBD |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Location | Usually determined by the interplay of commercial importance, land prices, accessibility and economic rents, generally located in the center of the city | Often located in areas of natural beauty or historic areas |
| Morphological | Areas with a high concentration of urban retail facilities | Mostly long and designed as pedestrianised streets |
| Functionality | Mainly applicable to enhance the agglomeration of the city's financial services industry | Mainly applicable to the excavation and rejuvenation of urban historical resources, the cultivation of new urban areas, and the enhancement of urban habitat quality |
| Commercial format | Mainly administrative and financial institutions, supplemented by retail, catering and other service organisations | Leisure and tourism industries such as catering, accommodation, cultural and creative industries, public culture, etc., with a low proportion of administrative, financial and residential industries |
| Service Targets | Locals, commuters | Local residents, foreign tourists |

Historical and cultural block-type urban RBDs are often located in the center of traditional old towns in cities, and such areas are often rich in historical and humanistic relics and ancient architectural neighborhood landscapes, with a high concentration of urban recreational, commercial and other services, mostly adjacent to the city's historical and humanistic tourist attractions, with a high density of tourists and a high land price [4].

2.2 Historical and Cultural Block-based Urban RBD Case Study

This paper analyses the characteristics and problems of Suzhou Guanqian Street, Harbin Central Avenue, and Chengdu Jinli Ancient Street is summarized in table 2, and extracts their respective advantages as follows: Suzhou Guanqian Street is characterized by traditional old snacks, and creates many gourmet old shops in the neighborhood, such as Taoxiangcun and Songhelou [5]; Harbin Central Avenue, which is 1,450 meters in length and occupies an area of 1 square kilometer, is a concentration of the Renaissance, Baroque, eclecticism and other Western architectural styles, through the reshaping of the spatial structure of the street form so that tourists get a different spatial experience [6] Chengdu Jinli Ancient Street built on the core building Wuhou Temple, the building to the end of the Qing Dynasty and the early civil Sichuan residential style, the content of the Three Kingdoms culture and traditional Sichuan folk culture as the connotation.

Table 2. Summary of case base info

| name | typology | specificities | Aspects to be upgraded |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Suzhou Guanqian Street | Historical and Cultural Blocks Pedestrian Street | Continuity of the streetscape Guidance of street space Concentration of famous and old shops Numerous scenic spots and monuments Full-featured, integrated center: culture, commerce, tourism, finance | Open Space and Facilities Car parking space |
| Harbin Central Street | Historical and Cultural Street Pedestrian Street | Distinctive western architectural features Appropriate scale of street space Characterful façade and node spaces | Parking space Traffic problems Single and homogeneous retail format Lack of characteristics in commercial space and poor sense of cultural experience More than 20 red sites are not utilised |
| Chengdu Jinli Ancient Street | Modern and integrated urban block Historic Site Pedestrian Street | Relying on the core attraction "Wuhou Temple". Characterised by "Three Kingdoms culture and traditional Sichuan folk culture". Rhythmic space Spatial structure combining dots, lines and surfaces Bar Street | Parking space Transport issues Accommodation comfort Consumer price |

Through the analysis of the above three cases, it is found that the shaping of historical and cultural block-type RBDs requires the following conditions: proximity to important tourist attractions and tourist attractions; distinctive commercial characteristics that can attract people; rich architectural heritage and historical and humanistic remains that can shape a good street style; and convenient transportation and sufficient parking space. Accordingly, an evaluation study on the protection and renewal of historical and cultural block-type urban RBDs from four aspects, namely, recreational space, commercial space, cultural space, and traffic space, is attempted.

3 Case Study of Baoding West Street

3.1 Overview of West Street

West Street is in the Lianchi District of Baoding City, west to Hengxiang South Street, east to Lianchi South Street, belonging to the Governor's Office - West Street Historical and Cultural Block is the economic, political and cultural hub of the ancient city of Baoding. West Street is surrounded by well-developed traffic and prosperous business, with the Governor's Office, the ancient Lotus Pond, the Bell Tower, the Daci Pavilion, the Catholic Church and other historical and cultural monuments, and a high concentration of people, carrying the city's recreation, business, culture, leisure and other functions.

3.2 Sorting out the historical and cultural lineage of Western Street

West Street was built in the Chunhua period of the Song Dynasty, Song, Jin, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties as a key military and political location, with many official offices, and commercial development of the gradual. West Street's east-west length of about 846 meters is 7.5 meters wide, with the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Republic of China period characteristics of the style, the type of building to the cultural and commercial buildings, both schools, ancestral halls, government offices, financial, traditional residential buildings; building levels to two-story mainly; building style both Chinese slope roof grey walls, but also the Western style of the arched coupon pilasters, is known as the "East and West, the north and south fusion of" architectural gallery. The architectural gallery is known as "East meets West, North meets South". The spatial layout of West Street has been shaped by the Republic of China and was once known as the "First Street of Zhili", which is an important symbol of Baoding as a famous historical and cultural city [7].

Before 1949, West Street was home to several military and political units, cultural and educational units, and religious institutions, as well as hundreds of centuries-old businesses such as Taoxiangcun, Samuel Mao Sauce Garden, China Pharmacy, and Baoding Printing Bureau, carrying the political, economic, and cultural pulse of the city of Baoding. At this time, West

Street was a co-development place for government offices and businesses, and the space gradually became open.

After 1949, with the continuous improvement of economic vitality and the expansion of public demand, the space pattern of Baoding Old Town was not enough to meet the needs of the public at that time, and West Street went through a period of "big demolition and construction", the historical style was seriously damaged, the old firms moved out, and the commercial pattern declined [8].

In 2011, the Governor's Office - West Street Historical and Cultural District was selected as the first batch of historical and cultural districts in Hebei Province, and in 2022, Baoding City carried out a renewal and renovation project for West Street, basically restoring the neighborhood appearance of West Street.

3.3 Existing problems

Through multiple field studies of West Main Street around Spring 2024 as can be seen in Figure 1 to Figure 5, the following problems were identified on West Main Street.

(1) Recreation: Individual shops are not coordinated with the overall style of the neighborhood. There is a lack of unified planning for the signboards on West Street, the signboards at key intersection nodes are not coordinated with the style of the ancient street, and the public space is not fully utilized.

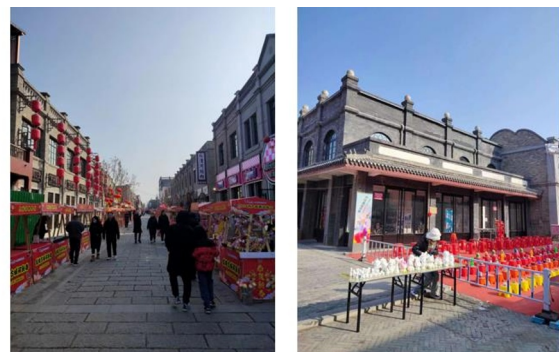


Fig.1. Streetscape and Public Space Ground Floor Commerce (Photo credit: Original).

(2) Commercial: the phenomenon of commercial tides is serious, and the industry lacks vitality. West Street in the holiday period of heavy traffic, commercial prosperity, and a non-holiday period of a sharp decline in the flow of people. West Street has a lot of cultural curiosity shops door to door, the price is prohibitive, and tourists do not have a high desire to buy; the most vibrant shops are catering and cultural visits to play cards.



Fig.2. Field survey on February 7, 2024
(Photo credit: Original).



Fig.3. Field survey on February 14, 2024.
(Photo credit: Original).

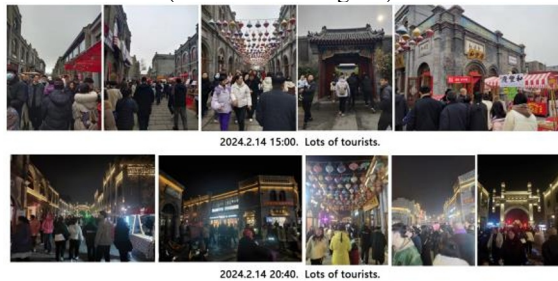


Fig.4. Comparison of commercial forms
(Photo credit: Original).

(3) Cultural aspects: lack of an overall cultural pulse. West Street carries the old Baoding's cultural and economic education function, has hundreds of century-old shops, covering restaurants, pharmacies, department stores, schools, post offices, bookstores, inns and other functions, but also Taoxiangcun, locusts Maui sauces, and many other shops continue to this day, but today's West Street lacks an overall cultural vein, commercial dispersion, it is difficult to restore the scene of yesteryear.

(4) Traffic: the surrounding traffic jams, and the urgent need for parking space. West Street is a pedestrian street, crossing several city roads, around the parking space is tight, and there are no large-scale above-ground and underground car parks, resulting in many tourists, and the public discourages the idea of shopping.



Fig.5. Indiscriminate Parking at Intersections
(Photo credit: Original).

4 Feasibility Study of Applying the RBD Model to West Street and Renewal Strategy

4.1 Feasibility Exploration

In terms of location, West Street is located in the center of the old city of Baoding, which belongs to the scope of the ancient city of Baoding and has a long history. Regarding historical features, West Street has the street style of the Ming and Qing Dynasties and the Republic of China, as well as several historically protected buildings and buildings with protected features. In terms of traffic, West Street starts from Hengxiang Street in the west and Lianchi Street in the east, both roads belong to the city's main road, with high traffic flow and high accessibility. In terms of commerce, West Street is distributed parallel to Yuhua Road, with a horizontal distance of 240-400 meters from Yuhua Road, which is the busiest commercial road in the old city of Baoding and has a thriving business scene. West Street is mainly a retail business with various functions such as leisure, catering, and entertainment. In terms of tourism reliance, there are many cultural relics and tourist attractions such as the Governor's Office of Zhili, the ancient Lotus Pond, the Bell Tower, the Catholic Church, and the Huaijun Gongzhu Museum within 500 meters of West Street, which are rich in historical and cultural resources, with a high density of tourists and leisure and shopping crowds in the vicinity.

In conclusion, West Street meets the basic characteristics of a historical and cultural neighborhood-type urban RBD and can be protected and renewed by applying the urban RBD model.

4.2 Proposing a Conservation and Regeneration Strategy for West Street Using the Urban RBD Model

4.2.1 Recreational space

Focusing on the protection of historical buildings and maintaining the street style. The protection and renewal of West Street should first ensure that the architectural style is not destroyed, and maintain the existing scale of the street through gradual micro-renewal. The signboards, trademarks, and corner space decorations of individual businesses should be uniformly regulated, and the application of colors and materials should be controlled to make the street space more holistic.

Increase the vitality of public space. The traffic nodes, corner spaces, and open courtyards of West Street should be more public and open to increase the open space. Open the former residences of celebrities and the space of ruins as museums and exhibition halls to show the historical heritage of West Street.

Focus on the environmental design of open spaces. In streetscape design, it is necessary to study the city's history culture, and regional characteristics, excavate cultural connotations, and integrate them into streetscape design. In the greening configuration, pay attention to the choice of greening form, point, and status quo greening combination. In the configuration of street furniture, open space should carry the gathering and

evacuation of street commerce, but also provide rest and recreation space [9].

4.2.2 Commercial space

Optimize the commercial format and introduce Baoding's traditional local characteristics. At present, although the commercial space of West Street already has a certain scale and number of traditional features, the positioning is high, and it is difficult to stimulate tourists' purchasing desire. The business of West Street should be more city-like, but instead of randomly introducing food stalls from all over the world, it should give full play to the traditional characteristics of Baoding and introduce old Baoding brands, such as Anjia Beef Hooded Biscuits and Baiyun Zhang Baozi.

Increase the vitality of the industry and get rid of the limitation of relying on activities to recruit people. West Street organizes various activities to attract people during holidays, and after the activities, the popularity will dissipate. To get rid of this phenomenon, West Street must enhance its business form and increase vitality. Baoding's Pepper Garden Street, Ligao Antique Market, and Daximen Flowers are difficult parking problems but do not affect the surging tide of people, if the flower market, and antique market, such as the high popularity of the commercial market introduced into West Street, not only to ease the traffic jams, the residents caused by the disruption of the problem, but also to the West Street to bring a better form of vitality.

4.2.3 Cultural space

Historical and cultural heritage: West Street is rich in cultural connotations and is a symbol of the cultural lineage of the ancient city of Baoding. In the renovation and renewal of West Street, it is necessary to fully protect and display the existing cultural space, as well as to explore the traditional culture and integrate it with new businesses, especially to fully explore the red revolutionary spirit of West Street and strengthen the construction of red tourism.

Intangible cultural heritage: West Street has a long history and has accumulated a large amount of intangible cultural heritage over centuries of precipitation, such as Baoding old tunes, Quyang stone carvings, Ding porcelain, Yishui ink stone Zhili official dishes, etc. Reintroducing the intangible culture into West Street for cultural exhibitions and commercial activities is very important for the cultural inheritance of West Street [10].

4.2.4 Traffic space

Optimise node traffic and increase parking space. To cope with the large influx of people on West Street during holidays, to ensure that the city traffic will not be paralyzed, a sufficient number of parking spaces should be planned around West Street to ensure that people can enter West Street on foot from various intersections nodes. In addition, it is necessary to make use of the rich historical and cultural resources and tourism resources in

the surrounding area to set up reasonable excursion routes and develop cultural and creative tourism.

5 Conclusion

Historical and cultural blocks are the continuation of urban culture, and the protection and renewal of historical and cultural blocks is an important part of urban renewal and construction, and the introduction of the urban RBD model provides new ideas for the protection and renewal of historical and cultural blocks. This paper summarises the protection and renewal of historical and cultural block-type RBD from four aspects of recreation, commerce, culture, and transportation through research and case analysis of urban RBD mode, uses the field survey method and literature combing method to analyze the history of West Street in Baoding and the current situation, and puts forward the protection and renewal strategy of West Street by using urban RBD mode in the hope of supplementing the method of protecting and renewing the historical and cultural block and renewal methods.

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