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11.307 Beijing Urban Design Studio
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Design Concept

In response to the dynamism of the location of the site at a real and conceptual urban periphery our design concept revolves around:

- Examining the city as a dynamic socio-spatial, economic and political network rather than a static conception of built form.
- Questioning the determinism of large scale master-planning and exploring how urban design can become an adaptable process that responds to a rapidly changing urban context.
- Developing a new conception of value in real estate development through iterative planning.
- Re-imagining industrial processes and providing a dynamic program structure that supports this.

Our Approach

The area around the Shougang factory site shows evidence of rapid development, particularly in the creation of high-rise housing estates. At the same time, many recently-urbanized families occupy low-rise, dense housing pockets interspersed within this new fabric, and have little access to public space, public transport and employment opportunities. With the relocation of the steel mill, many workers and their families will remain within the district and will require housing and employment opportunities.

The new housing developments outside the Shougang factory site do not adequately address the social demands within the area, nor do they address the cultural and environmental value of the district as an historic industrial district and as a green urban edge.

In focusing on developing a public framework within the site that strongly responds to the civic logic of Beijing – rethreading the Shougang site back into the city – new opportunities for access to dynamic urban networks would be provided. This would increase:

Economic value, through developing in a series of iterative layers or stages and through the remediation of certain areas of the site;

Social value, through prioritizing the development of a dignified public-space network, which would remain and be reinforced through iterative development layerings of the site, thus creating community centers and urban connections;

Cultural value, through the retaining and reinterpretation of the industrial role of the site within Beijing, thus preserving certain existing spaces, structures and skills in a dynamic and meaningful way;

Environmental value, through the linking of Shougang's vast riverfront, mountain areas and green spaces back into the public structure of Beijing.

Thus our design approach is strongly linked to the notion of civic layering, where a series of urban design "moves" happen to maximize on the economic, social, cultural and environmental value of the site, each being influenced by the layers that came before and after. In concentrating on securing the main civic "moves", a certain amount of freedom and responsiveness is allowed, where the development of the site may be taken up by multiple parties over time without compromising civic structural and access to public spaces.

In determining a "first move" catalyst layer, the highly-imageable notion of an exposition was drawn upon. A new type of industrial exposition is proposed for the site as an instrument for re-examining the potential role of industry in Beijing and solidifying the identity of the site as a space of both industrial innovation and tradition.