CHINA

Yuxi breathes new life into old localities

Renovation of residential compounds improves living conditions, fosters ties

By YANG ZEKUN in Yuxi, Yunnan
yangzekun@chinadaily.com.cn

In Yuxi, Yunnan province, walls separating aging residential compounds are giving way to shared spaces, as urban renewal projects improve living conditions and foster closer ties among residents of different ethnic groups.

Lianjiang community in Eshan Yi autonomous county is one example. Once divided by walls, former factory housing compounds are now connected by roads and shared facilities. Renovations that began in 2019 have put 32,000 square meters of previously unused land to better use.

Established in February 2021 following the upgrades, the community encompasses 58 residential compounds and is home to more than 11,000 residents, including people from the Han, Yi, Hani and Hui ethnic groups.

Luo Jiafu, Party chief of the community, said practical services and regular activities help residents interact while respecting their different customs.

At the community's Yi embroidery room, artisans teach women from different ethnic groups, creating opportunities for them to exchange skills and build relationships. Some participants have used what they learned to find jobs or start businesses.

Festive gatherings also take dietary customs into account. Luo said the community uses vegetarian fillings during *zongzi*-making activities for Dragon Boat Festival out of respect for Hui residents. *Zongzi* are sticky rice dumplings wrapped in leaves.

"The key is to respect the customs of each ethnic group," Luo said, adding that no disputes arising from ethnic tensions or disrespect for other ethnic groups had been reported since the community was established.

The community also provides services to meet residents' daily needs. Its canteen offers affordable meals close to home, with residents aged 60 and above able to buy a meal consisting of two meat dishes and two vegetable dishes for 8 yuan ($1.2), Luo said. Social workers and volunteers also visit older people living alone and provide support for children in need.

Employment assistance offers another way for residents to benefit from community services. A housekeeping company provides training at a venue supplied by the community and recruits qualified participants. Staff members also help connect unemployed residents with local employers, including clothing workshops.

Shared spaces encourage everyday interaction. Eleven pavilions built during the renovations provide places for older residents to chat and for neighbors to discuss community affairs. A morning market offers free stalls where residents can sell homegrown produce and handmade goods.

The community has also improved its response to neighborhood problems. Community workers collect residents' requests and help address complaints involving issues such as water leaks and noise. According to community figures, 96 disputes have been resolved, helping prevent routine disagreements from straining relations among neighbors.

Across Yuxi, similar initiatives are combining housing improvements with better public services and closer social ties. The city launched its old neighborhood renovation program in December 2019 and had upgraded 1,321 residential compounds by the end of 2025.

Across 53 areas, 656 compounds have undergone coordinated renovations, with 78,000 sq m of temporary structures removed and more than 150,000 people benefiting, according to city authorities.

In Manha community, Xinping county, 586 households comprising 2,196 people from five villages live together in a community that includes 14 ethnic minority groups. Homes were allocated randomly, breaking up the previous pattern of residents living separately according to their villages of origin and creating opportunities to build new neighborhood ties.

Yuxi has also introduced guidelines to encourage residents to play a more active role in neighborhood affairs. Residents' committees, homeowners' committees and property management companies jointly discuss issues such as renovation, parking and public services.

Drawing on feedback from channels including the 12345 government service hotline, the city has identified 214 residential compounds for targeted action on property management problems this year, with a separate plan for each compound.

Yuxi is extending the approach through housing redevelopment, resettlement projects and the reuse of former industrial sites. In Xinping, 27 communities have signed an agreement to cooperate on local industries, cultural exchanges and community governance.

Under a plan issued earlier this year, Yuxi aims to establish 105 demonstration communities by 2028 while continuing related initiatives across all 294 communities in the city.

Tested models, tech boost Shandong corn harvest

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
zhaoruixue@chinadaily.com.cn

A farmer threshes harvested corn at a farm in Zouping, Shandong province, on Oct 15. Farmers across the city are taking advantage of the fine weather to thresh and dry their corn, helping ensure the harvest is safely stored. DONG NAIDE / FOR CHINA DAILY

In the cornfields of Shangzhuang town in Rongcheng, a county-level city in Weihai, Shandong province, harvesters rumble back and forth, cutting stalks and threshing ears of corn in a steady rhythm.

The scene reflects a broader push across Shandong, one of China's major grain-producing regions, as the province presses ahead with its autumn harvest.

By Thursday, the province had completed 98.6 percent of its autumn corn harvest, according to the Shandong Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Corn accounts for more than 90 percent of Shandong's autumn grain output, making it the main crop in the season's harvest.

Located on Shandong's eastern coast, Weihai typically sees a later corn harvest than other parts of the province. Shangzhuang town has 3,240 hectares of corn, with more than half of the crop harvested by Thursday, according to the town's agricultural office.

To improve farming efficiency, the town has been removing field ridges and consolidating small plots, making more land available for cultivation and enabling machinery to operate more easily across larger fields.

"In the past, the plots were fragmented and field ridges took up space, making it hard for large machines to enter. After ridge reduction, the fields are level and connected, and harvesters work much more efficiently," said Ge Yongqing, a local villager. "The local cooperative manages the land in a unified way, and machines have come to help with harvesting, so we have far fewer worries," he added.

In Dalijia village, also in Shangzhuang town, more than 330 hectares of land have been consolidated for intensive corn cultivation through the transfer of land management rights, according to the local agricultural office. By combining small, scattered plots, the village has improved land use efficiency and standardized field management and mechanized operations.

"This year's corn has grown well, and the yield is expected to reach 400 kilograms per *mu* (about 0.067 hectares). Local authorities have coordinated harvesters to work in different areas at staggered times, allowing us to make the most of the farming season and ensure that all the grain is harvested," said Chang Dajun, Communist Party of China secretary of the village.

A similar model is being adopted in Qianyan village in Sangluoshu town, Huimin county, a county-level administrative area of Binzhou. Rather than farming their land themselves, villagers contribute their land management rights to the village cooperative as shares. The cooperative then hires an agricultural company to handle the entire production process, from plowing and sowing to field management and harvesting.

Under the profit-sharing arrangement, farmers receive a guaranteed income of 1,000 yuan ($150) per *mu* after planting costs are deducted. Any remaining profits are divided among farmers, the village collective and the service provider, with 60 percent going to farmers, 20 percent to the village collective and 20 percent to the provider. Farmers do not need to pay the production costs upfront.

Grain production trusteeship now covers more than 90 percent of Huimin county's farmland, helping shift agricultural production toward larger-scale, more intensive operations. The county has completed its corn harvest.

Smart farming technology is also being deployed in Zouping, a county-level city administered by Binzhou. At an unmanned farm demonstration base in Jiaoqiao town, autonomous harvesters equipped with the Beidou Navigation Satellite System follow preset routes. Working in coordination, the machines carry out harvesting, plowing and sowing in a continuous sequence across the 1,000-*mu* demonstration base.

"Our research team has integrated route planning, environmental perception, navigation and positioning, and precision control into a single terminal, effectively installing a smart brain on farm machinery," said Wang Liangliang, a senior engineer at the navigation and remote sensing integration application research office of the Qilu Research Institute.

The base is also equipped with a digital twin-based intelligent management and control system that automatically collects data on crop growth, soil moisture, pests and diseases, and generates plans for farming operations.

"With unmanned operations, comprehensive production costs have fallen by 10 percent," Wang said.

Smart data reshaping agriculture in Heilongjiang

HARBIN — As autumn winds ripple through fields of fragrant rice at a Beidahuang farm in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, grower Wei Guodong rubs a freshly plucked panicle between his palms, revealing plump, gleaming grains.

"This year's harvest looks solid," he says with a smile.

The farm belongs to Heilongjiang Agriculture Company, the A-share-listed arm of Beidahuang Group, a major state-owned agribusiness in the province.

Wei's confidence had been boosted months earlier, during the seedling stage, when the greenhouses at the farm underwent a full-chain smart upgrade that is now reshaping rice production in one of China's major grain-producing regions.

Liu Dong, a manager at the 852 Farm branch, said the company invested this year to retrofit its seedling greenhouses with sensors, automated film rollers, smart irrigation valves and panoramic cameras. The system monitors soil pH, temperature, humidity and light around the clock, allowing a single skilled technician to manage up to three greenhouses and cutting labor costs by about 60 percent.

That same data-driven approach runs through the summer growing season, when crops are most vulnerable to weeds, pests and weather. At the farm, an AI laser weeding robot uses industrial cameras to distinguish crops from weeds in milliseconds. With millimeter-level positioning and a weed-removal rate above 95 percent, the machine can cover about 5.3 to 6.7 hectares a day, easing labor shortages while reducing herbicide use.

By harvest season, multispectral drones and ground instruments at Heshan Farm measure chlorophyll levels and crop maturity in soybean fields. The readings are cross-checked with satellite remote sensing to produce high-precision maturity maps that show which plots are ready, which need more time and when the optimal harvest window opens.

"In the past, we relied on experience. Now we rely on data," said Liu Zhaokai, deputy head of the farm's agricultural development department.

Beidahuang's changes reflect a wider push in Heilongjiang province to deepen the integration of technology and modern farming. The province's overall agricultural mechanization rate has reached 99.34 percent, the highest in China, with smart agriculture demonstration zones being built to shift production from "watching the sky" to "watching the screen" — a microcosm of the thousands of farms across China embracing smart agriculture.

Nationally, the shift has been made a priority in recent policy documents. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has launched an action plan that calls for demonstration zones, agricultural big data platforms and wider adoption of smart equipment.

Zhang Xingwang, vice-minister of agriculture and rural affairs, said that in 2025, the contribution rate of agricultural scientific and technological progress in China exceeded 64 percent. Smart agriculture applications now span the entire industrial chain, with more than 300,000 agricultural drones in use and annual drone operation area exceeding 30.66 million hectares.

For farmers in the fields, the shift is already tangible. The rice in Wei's hands may still smell the same, but the way it was grown has been transformed from instinct and tradition to sensors, algorithms and screens.

XINHUA

LONG MARCH, NEW JOURNEY

Red Army bugle book inspires discipline and promotes tourism

By ZHAO YIMENG
in Ninghua, Fujian
zhaoyimeng@chinadaily.com.cn

A small, yellowed book with curled edges may look unremarkable at first glance. Yet the military bugle sheet music preserved at the Ninghua Revolutionary Memorial Museum in Fujian province tells the story of a Red Army soldier who kept a 40-year promise. Today, the artifact is helping teach young people about discipline and perseverance.

Small enough to fit in the palm of a hand, the book contains more than 340 pieces of bugle music used by the Red Army. The melodies once signaled everything from daily routines and troop formations to marching and combat.

For students visiting the museum today, the book offers a tangible connection to a period that might otherwise seem distant, said Yang Liting, a museum guide.

The story behind the artifact began in January 1930, when Luo Guangmao joined the Red Army at the age of 15. Recognizing his strong voice and breath control, the army selected him as a bugler and sent him to study with the bugle unit of the ground combat department of the Central Military School.

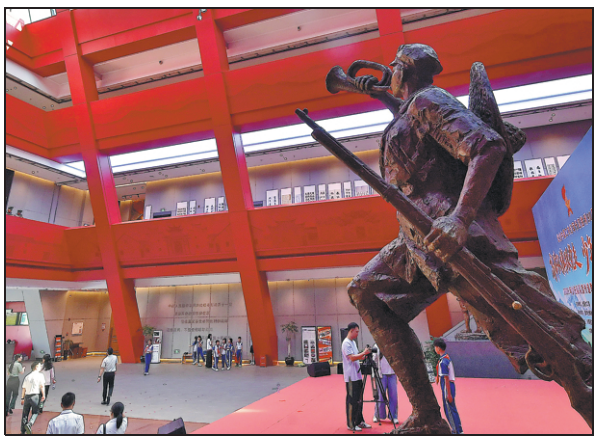
At the end of his training, a military commander presented Luo with the sheet music, emphasizing that it was both important and confidential.

"Protect it as you would your own life," the commander told him.

"Where I am, the sheet music will be there," Luo replied.

Luo later served as a bugler alongside Zhu De, one of the Red Army's principal commanders. In 1934, after being wounded and transferred to the rear, he became separated from the main force. Determined to protect the book, Luo secretly returned home and entrusted it to his mother, who hid it beneath the floorboards of a granary.

The book was rediscovered in 1974, when the granary was being demolished. The following year, Luo donated it, along with his bugle's mouthpiece, to the Ninghua Revolutionary Memorial Museum.



Visitors explore the Ninghua Revolutionary Memorial Museum in Fujian province on Oct 13. ZHANG BIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Lin Mengjia, head of the museum, said the artifact's educational value lies not only in its rarity but also in the promise Luo kept for 40 years.

"It can teach students to keep their promises," Lin said.

The bugle music also reflects the Red Army's strict discipline, she said. Soldiers were expected to respond to bugle calls according to their prescribed melodies, demonstrating their discipline and obedience to orders.

Opened to the public in January 2021, the museum is dedicated to Ninghua's history during the revolutionary period and highlights the county's role as one of the important birthplaces of the Long March spirit.

"Rather than exaggerating the stories, the museum seeks to showcase what happened as accurately as possible," Lin said.

Its educational programs also reach beyond the museum, extending to schools, government offices and businesses.

Since opening, the museum has received nearly 1.5 million visits, averaging about 250,000 a year. Research and study groups have become an important part of its audience, with the number of such groups this year increasing by about 30 percent from previous years.

The museum's influence can also be seen in Phoenix Mountain village in Ninghua county, one of the key departure points for the Long March. Red-themed educational tourism has helped improve the village environment and boost its rural economy.

Wang Xinggang, director of the village committee, said the influx of visitors has brought economic benefits. Sales of local specialties, agricultural products and handicrafts have increased, while the village's collective income rose from almost nothing to more than 200,000 yuan last year.

A local rice wine known as Red Army Cola has become a link between revolutionary history and modern tourism. According to local accounts, villagers offered the wine to Red Army soldiers during their stay, when the warm beverage helped them ward off the cold.

Annual sales of the rice wine have grown from less than 2 to 3 metric tons to nearly 20 tons, Wang said.

"Young people have also begun returning to the village to start businesses, including a cultural and creative workshop producing local handicrafts," he added.