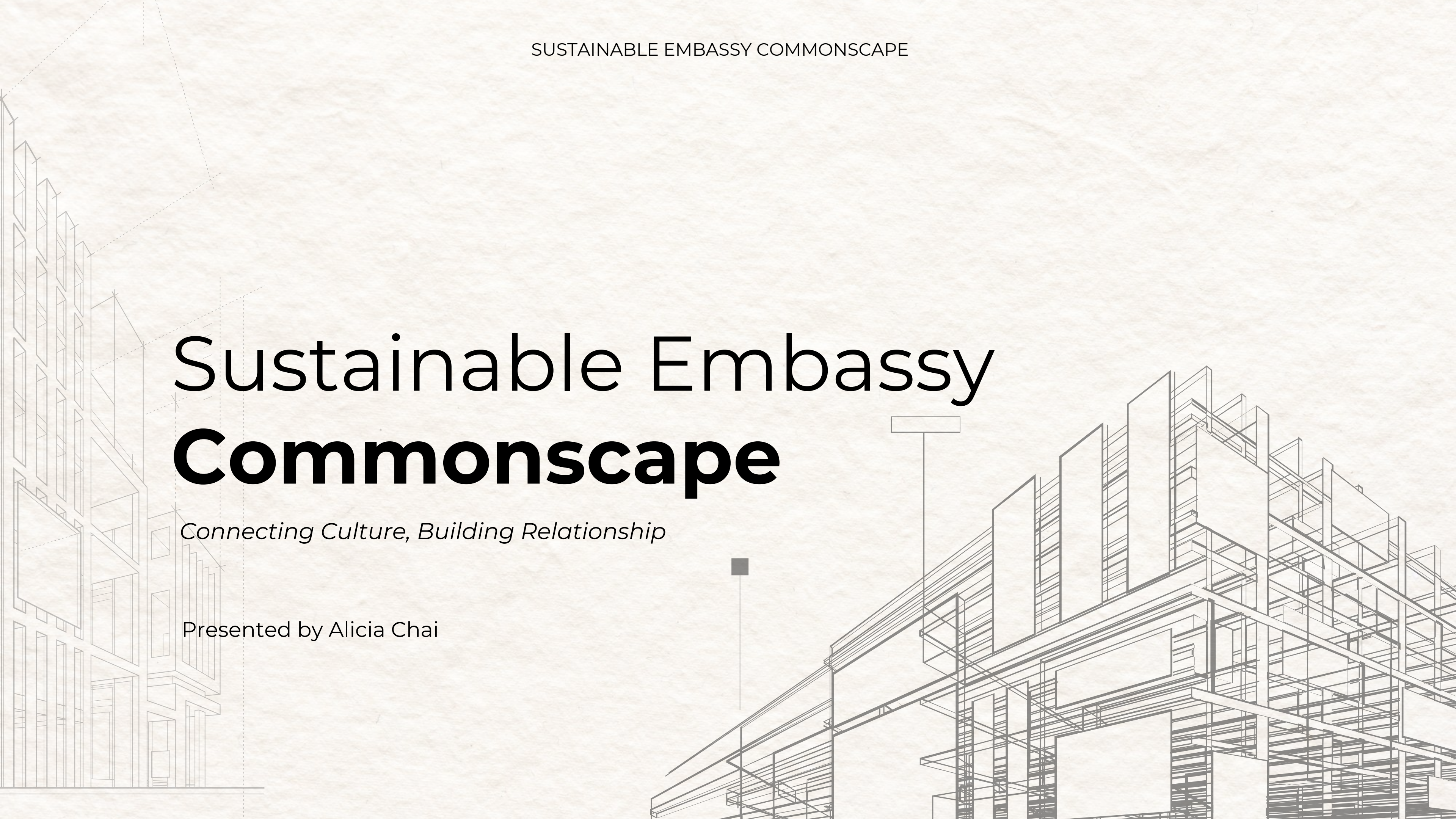


SUSTAINABLE EMBASSY COMMONSCAPE

Sustainable Embassy **Commonscape**

Connecting Culture, Building Relationship

Presented by Alicia Chai



CONTENT

1 UNDERSTANDING THE EMBASSY AREA

Identifying Current Challenges and Opportunities

2 DESIGNING THE COMMONSCAPE VISION

A Blueprint for Cultural and Community Engagement

3 ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH

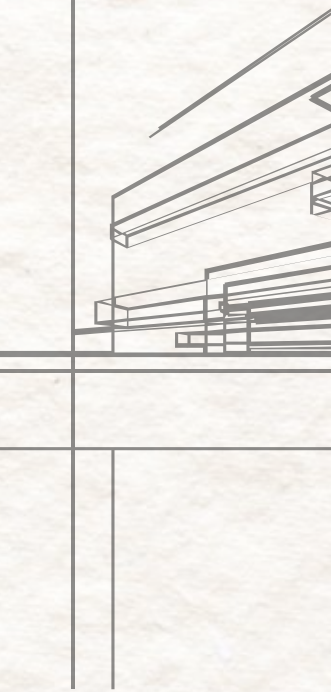
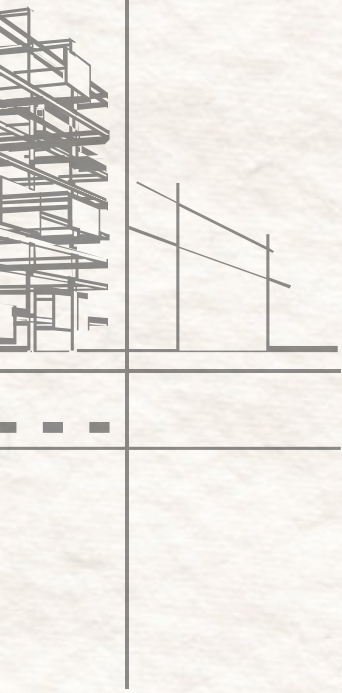
Strategies for Long-Term Impact and Expansion



SECTION 1

Understanding the Embassy Area Context

Identifying Current Challenges and Opportunities



Overview of the Embassy Area



STRATEGIC LOCATION

Embassy areas are usually in capital cities and cities with significant political importance and cultural backgrounds. (National Museum of American Diplomacy, 2022)



DIPLOMATIC HUB

The embassy area plays a crucial role in international relationship and usually are the place where ambassadors live. (Embassies & Foreign Missions, 2019)

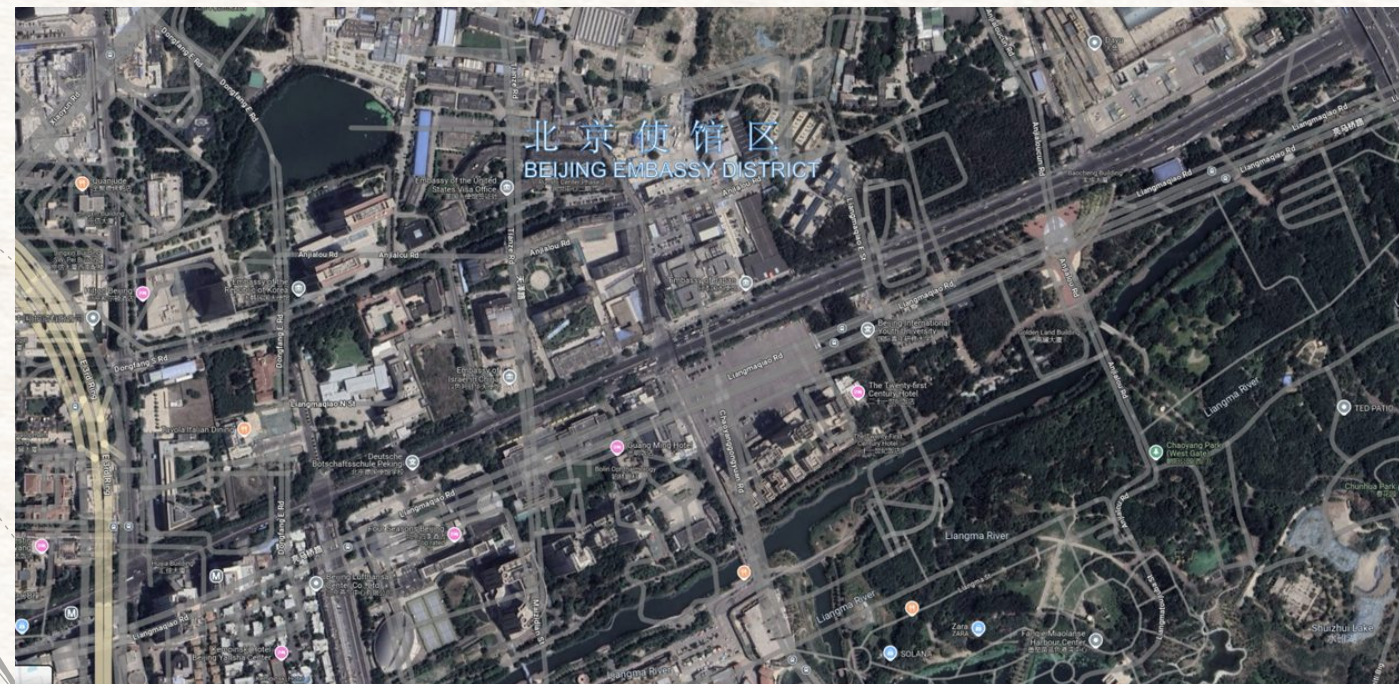


CULTURAL ROLE

Embassies serve not only political and administrative uses but also facilitate cultural expressions and social exchanges.

Personal Connection to Embassy Area in Beijing

I have lived near Beijing's embassy area since childhood, I frequently visit this vibrant district and am well-acquainted with its embassies, roads, restaurants, and facilities. However, through careful observation, I've noticed a significant gap: while the area is a hub for daily political exchanges, opportunities for cultural interaction among embassy workers are scarce. Although billboards occasionally showcase countries' achievements, they lack systematic organization and sustainable use, limiting their impact. This scarcity of leisurely cultural exchanges among embassy staff is a critical issue that needs addressing.



Existing Challenges

Through observation, interview and survey

➤ LIMITED CULTURAL INTERACTION

Observations reveal a lack of structured or informal cultural communication among embassy workers and local residents, especially considering that each embassy operates independently.

➤ SCARCE LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

While political exchanges occur daily, leisure and cultural interactions are infrequent, limiting community engagement.

➤ NEGLECTED BILLBOARDS

Existing billboards showcasing national achievements lack systematic organization, are often underutilized, and lack sustainability.

➤ COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Through a survey I designed and conducted among nearby residents and embassy workers:

- 60% endorsed constructing a public space as a vital solution.
- 100% agreed the space should be accessible to both embassy workers and residents.

Survey

on Sustainability and Cultural Diversity

PURPOSE

To assess cultural engagement, communication habits, and support for a common space in Beijing's embassy area.

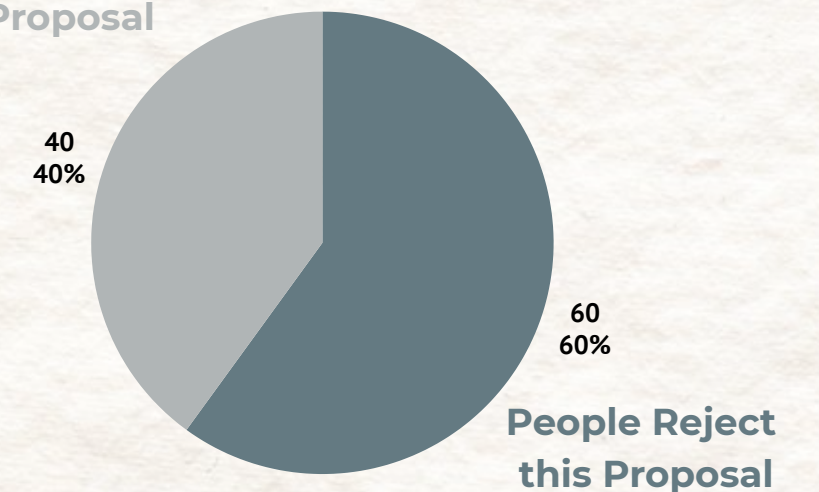
TARGET AUDIENCE

Residents and workers in the embassy area, including diplomatic staff and local community members.

STRUCTURE: COMPRISES 12 QUESTIONS COVERING:

- Knowledge of embassy area history and cultural significance.
- Time spent on communication and interaction with other embassies.
- Participation in energy-saving activities and sustainability practices.
- Needs and preferences for a shared public space to foster cultural exchange.

People Accept
this Proposal



QR CODE TO SURVEY



SDG 11

Sustainable Cities and Communities

➤ **TARGET 11.3 (INCLUSIVE URBANIZATION)**

Promotes participatory planning by engaging embassy workers and residents in designing an inclusive public space, fostering sustainable human settlement in a diplomatic hub.

➤ **TARGET 11.4 (CULTURAL HERITAGE)**

Showcases diverse national cultures and diplomatic protocols, safeguarding global cultural heritage through educational displays and community interaction.

➤ **TARGET 11.7 (ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC SPACES)**

Provides a safe, inclusive, and accessible green space for all, including women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, enhancing community engagement and cultural exchange.



Sustainable Embassy Commonscape facilitates access to safe, inclusive public spaces with display boards and facilities showcasing global cultural heritage and strengthens interpersonal and diplomatic ties, aligning with SDG 11's emphasis on inclusive, sustainable communities.

SDG 11

Sustainable Cities and Communities

WHO DOES IT AFFECT



EMBASSY WORKERS

Benefits diplomatic staff by providing a space for cultural exchange and leisure, fostering informal relationships crucial for effective diplomacy.



LOCAL RESIDENTS

Offers nearby communities access to inclusive green spaces and cultural education, enhancing community engagement.



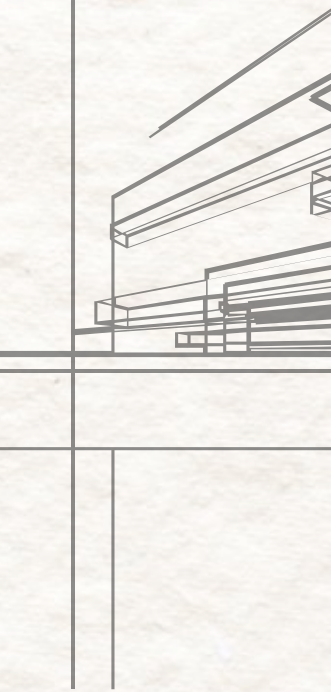
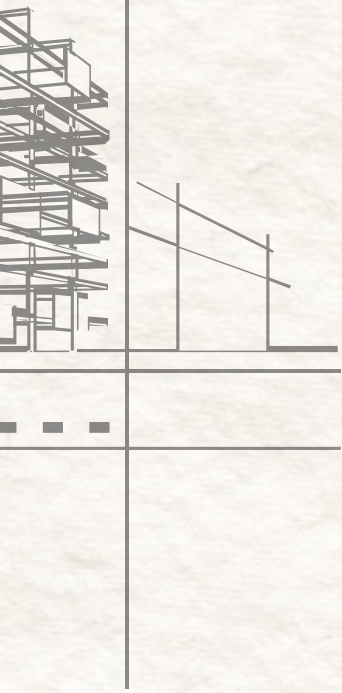
BROADER DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY

Impacts visiting diplomats and international guests by promoting mutual respect and cultural understanding through shared spaces.

SECTION 2

Designing the Commonscape Vision

A Blueprint for Cultural and Community Engagement



Project **CONCEPT**

The proposed ***Sustainable Embassy Commonscape*** in Beijing's embassy area is a vibrant hub designed to foster cultural expression, community engagement, and sustainable diplomacy. By showcasing unique cultural elements, such as special protocols and fun facts about different countries, the space promotes mutual respect and strengthens informal diplomatic ties. Tailored for both embassy workers and local residents, it serves as a dynamic venue for entertainment, interaction, and mutual learning, encouraging meaningful exchanges in a relaxed environment. Sustainability is prioritized through eco-friendly facilities and cultural displays that preserve global heritage, aligning with SDG 11's vision for inclusive and resilient urban communities.



Key Features



CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Serves as a vibrant hub for cultural exhibitions, leisure activities, and educational displays of diplomatic protocols and global traditions; Fosters interaction among embassy workers and residents, promoting mutual respect and cross-cultural understanding.



COMMUNITY BUILDING

Facilitates meaningful interactions among embassy workers, fostering long-lasting relationships that strengthen diplomatic and community ties.

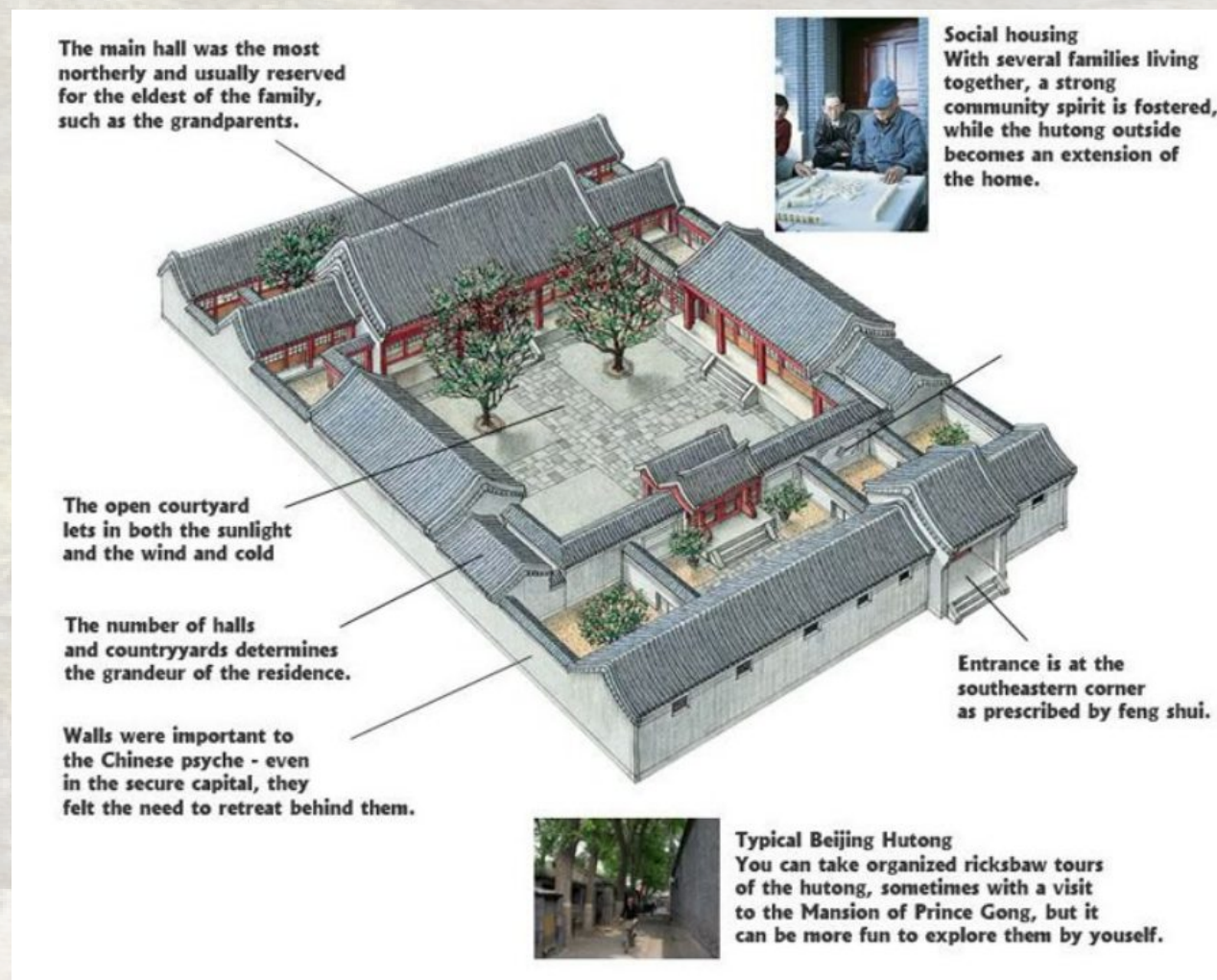


SUSTAINABILITY

Utilizes eco-friendly construction materials and regular maintenance of green facilities to ensure durability and environmental harmony; maintains a high-quality, sustainable urban environment aligned with SDG 11's vision.

Demo In Beijing

Initial Research



CONCEPTUAL & CULTURAL

Drawing from the enclosed and interconnected layout of the Forbidden City and siheyuan (courtyard houses), I observed a cultural philosophy of connection and unity. In contrast, embassies in Beijing often function in isolation. **My design envisions a sustainable, service-oriented hub that mirrors the siheyuan form—creating a gathering space that fosters collaboration among embassies while integrating local cultural elements.**

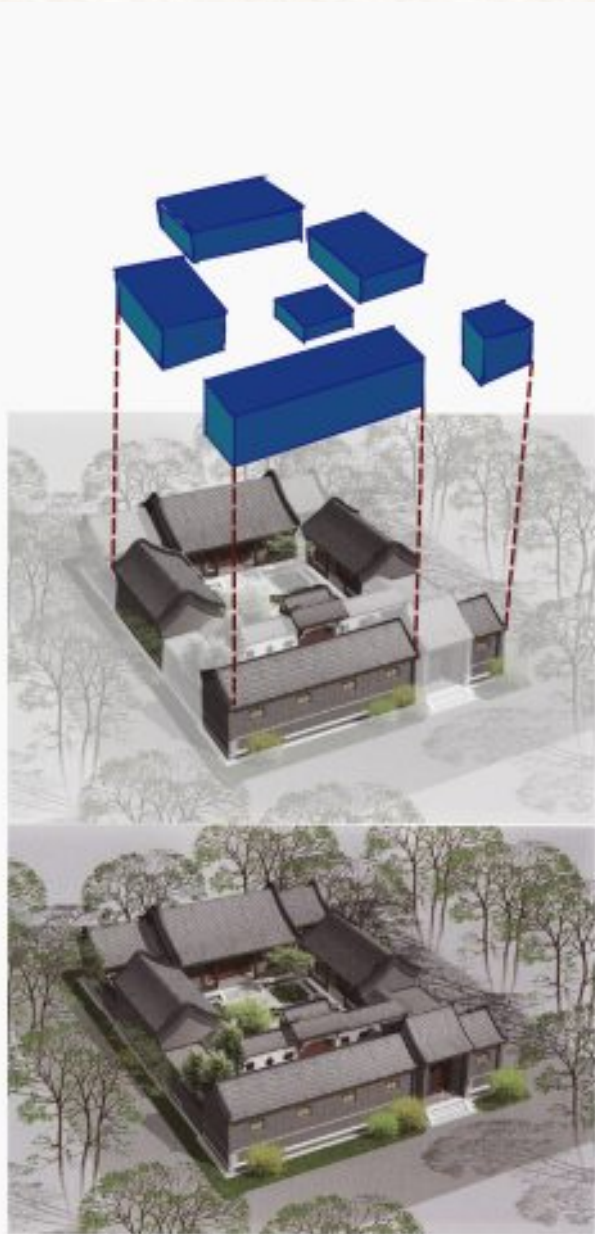


CIRCULATION PATH DESIGN

Inspired by the winding spatial logic of classical Chinese gardens, the redesigned circulation path employs layered spatial sequences to expand experiential scope within limited footprints, creating infinite landscape perceptions.

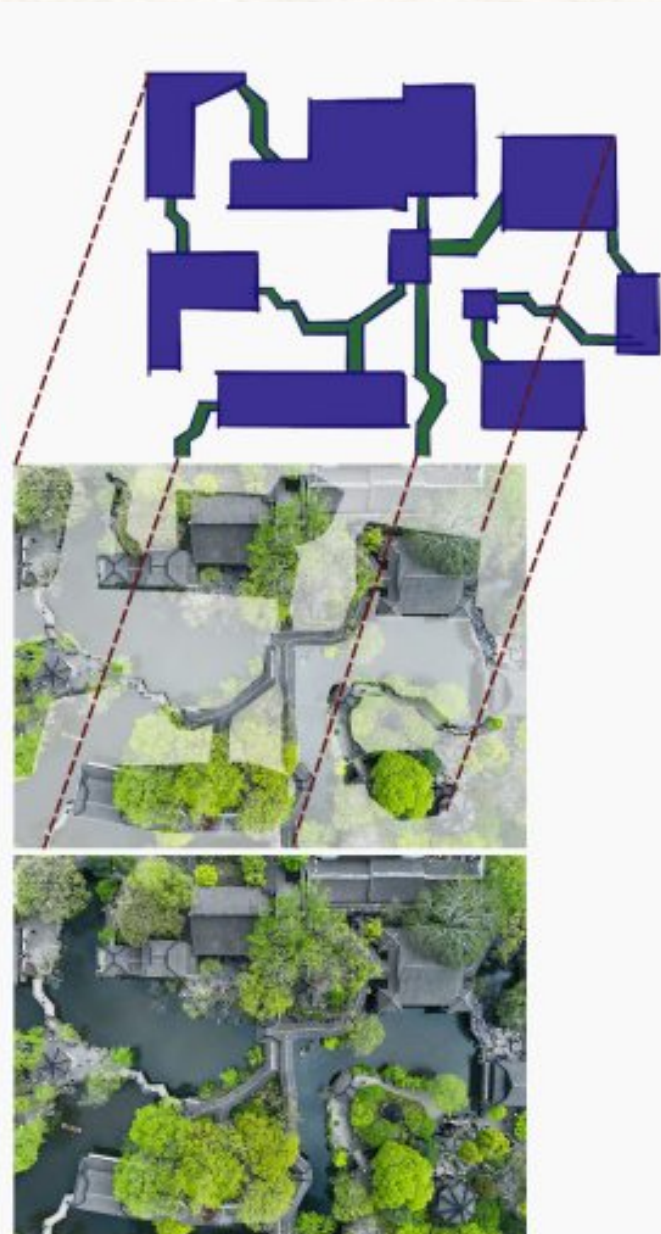
Demo In Beijing

Design Concept



SIHEYUAN STRUCTURE

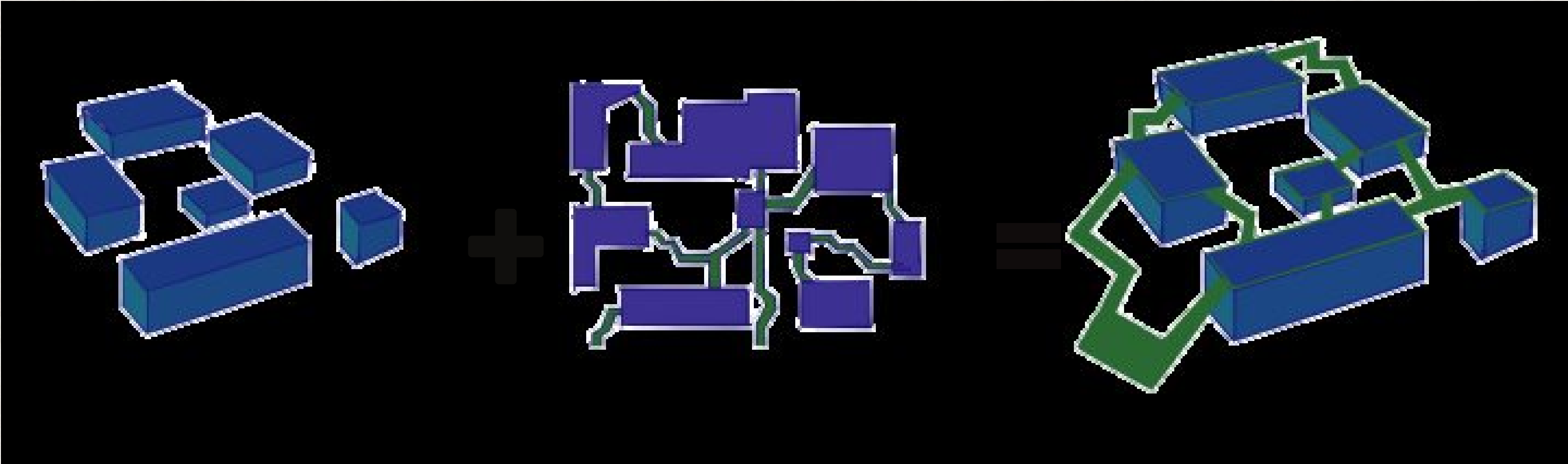
This design adopts the er jin siheyuan (two-courtyard) layout, using the enclosed, aggregated form to arrange functional spaces—such as leisure zone, exhibition areas, and cultural showcase—around central courtyards. This layout promotes a sense of unity and structured flow among diverse embassy functions



GARDEN PHILOSOPHY

This design integrates the philosophy of classical Chinese gardens, emphasizing yi bu yi jing (a new view at every step) and qu jing tong you (a winding path leading to serenity). Meandering pathways connect pavilions and gathering spaces, creating an immersive journey that reveals layered visual experiences while facilitating both formal and informal interactions.

SUSTAINABLE EMBASSY COMMONSCAPE



**Traditional Chinese
Courtyard House
(Siheyuan)**

Centripetal layout brings
people and function
together in a harmonious,
enclosed form

Classical Garden Path

Garden pathways link the
architectural
boxes together

**Sustainable Embassy
Commonscape**

Integrating the two unique
Beijing architectural
elements

Design Layout

Sustainable Embassy Commonscape is strategically divided into five functional zones to foster cultural exchange, inclusivity, and sustainability.

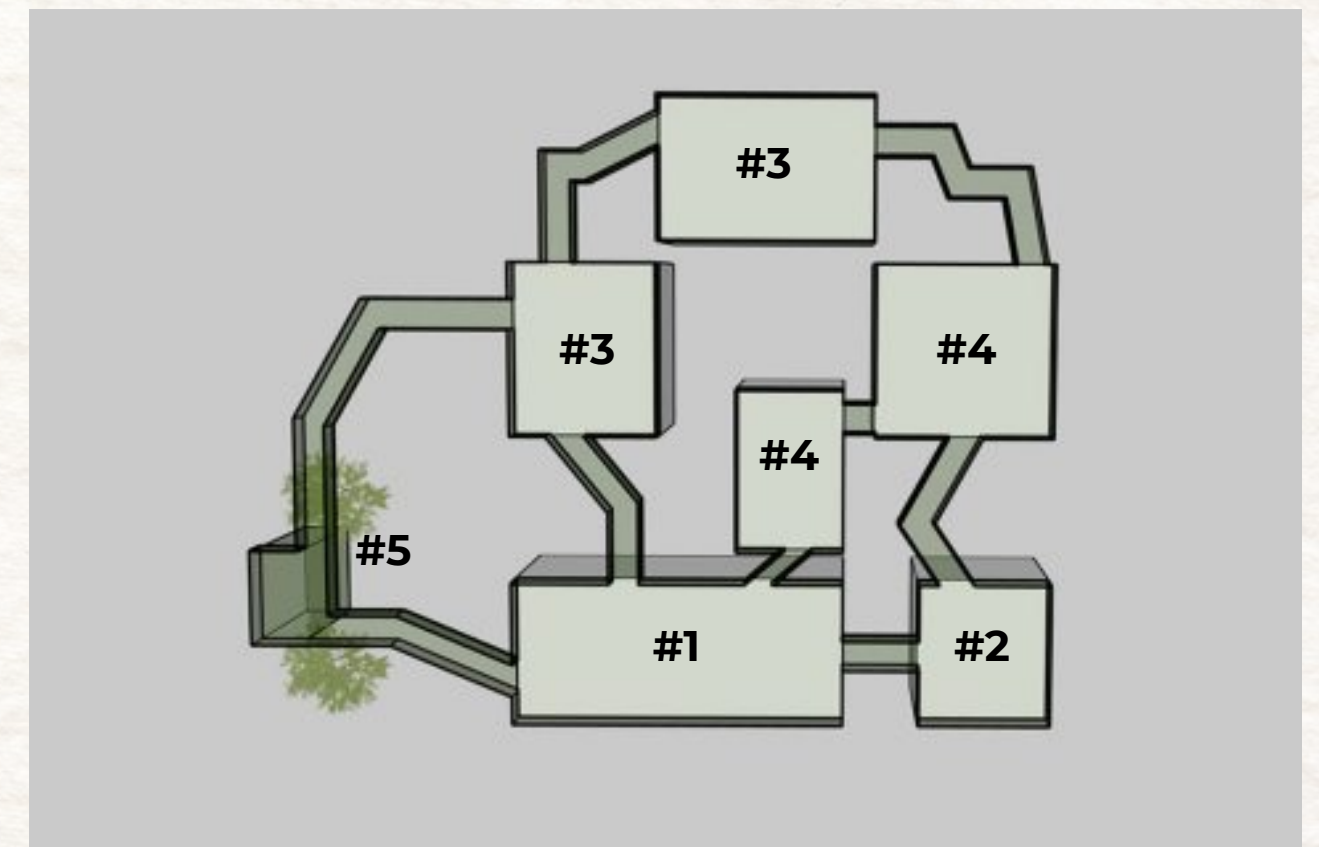
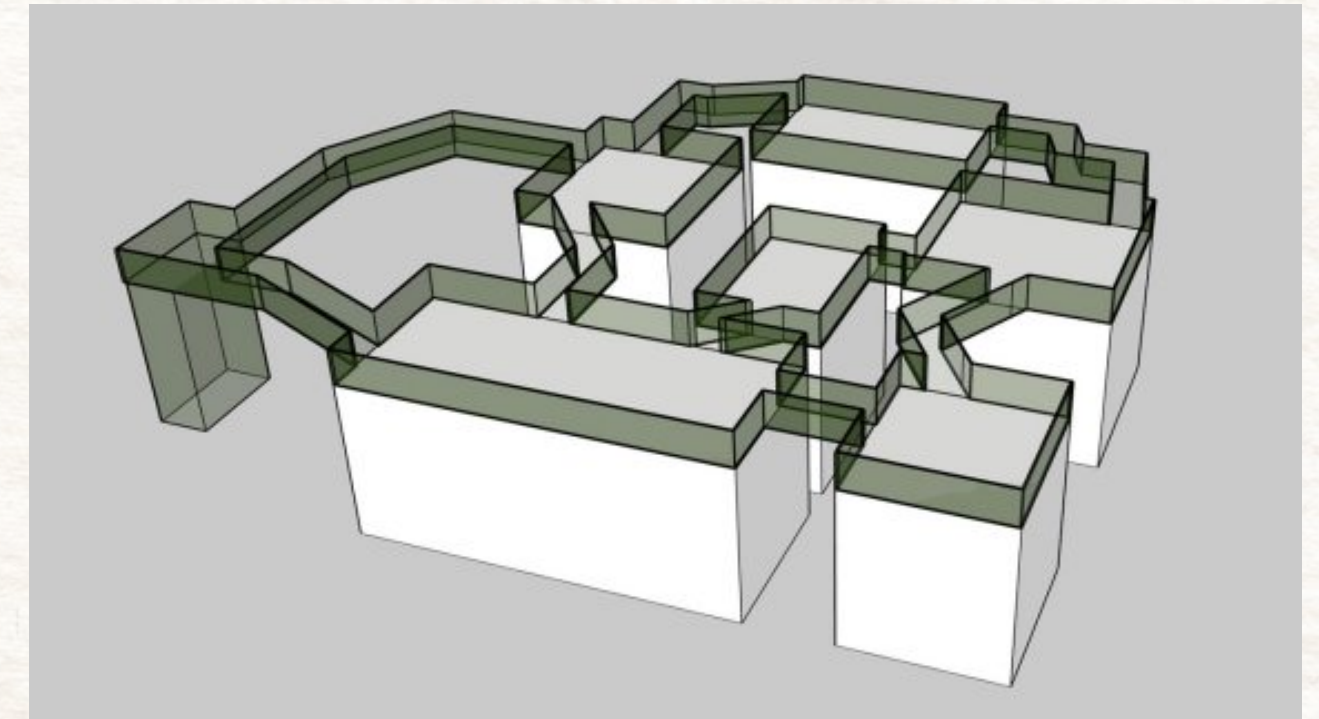
#1 The Leisure Activity Zone provides a relaxing space for embassy workers to unwind and connect informally, strengthening diplomatic ties.

#2 The Children's Activity Zone offers a safe, engaging area for young visitors, ensuring accessibility for families.

#3 The Cultural Showcase Zone features global traditions and diplomatic protocols through repurposed billboards and exhibits. A neighboring section presents current challenges faced by various nations, offering a space for dialogue, collaboration, and the development of actionable solutions.

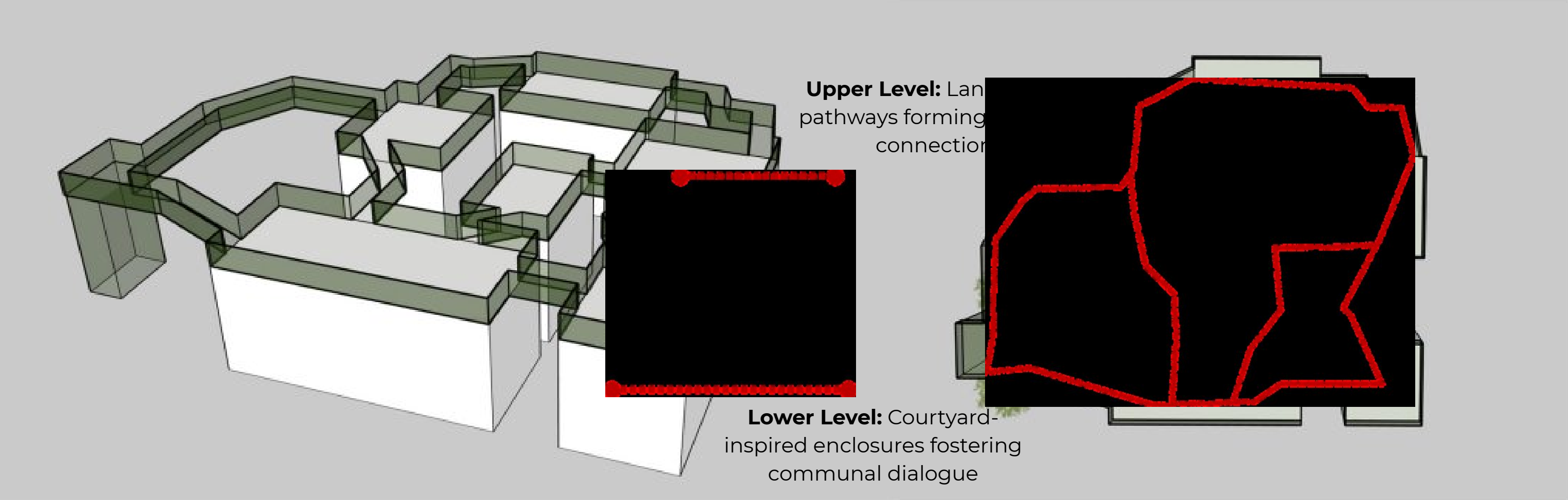
#4 The International Event Zone hosts signature festivals, events as well as pop up, encouraging vibrant cultural exchanges among nations.

#5 The Natural Courtyard integrates green spaces with sustainable design, enhancing environmental harmony and aligning with SDG 11's vision for inclusive urban communities.



Project Visualization

This project explores a new form of diplomatic architecture by integrating traditional Chinese spatial philosophy with contemporary international exchange needs. A dual-level structure articulates a journey from local rootedness to global dialogue.



Upper Level:

Above, an aerial garden system—comprising walkways, green roofs, and platforms—draws from classical Chinese gardens to connect the structures.

Lower Level:

This configuration reflects Chinese spatial logic—moving inward from public to private—and symbolizes inclusivity with clear boundaries. Each courtyard acts as a container for cross-cultural dialogue, enabling interaction that is both defined and flexible.

Sustainability & Material Strategy

Rooted in the principle of “originating from tradition, serving the present, and looking to the future,” the design embraces local materials and craftsmanship to achieve cultural continuity and ecological sustainability.

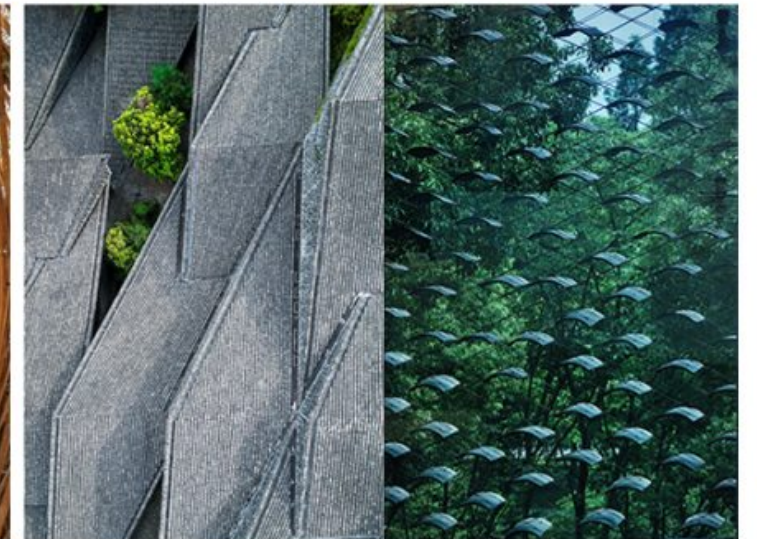
Drawing inspiration from sustainable embassy zones in cities worldwide, the project envisions a shared, eco-conscious space for global cultural exchange. Architectural forms are adapted to local context while serving as a platform for international dialogue, blending tradition with innovation and locality with universality.

Example for
Beijing Embassy Area

Bamboo Weaving



Grey Bricks & Tiles



Mortise-and-tenon Joint



Glass Bricks

Project **Innovation**

CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Incorporates local and international cultural elements into the space's design to enrich cultural expression and foster inclusivity.

SCHEDULED CULTURAL EVENTS

Hosts regular activities, such as performance arts, cuisine festivals, and concerts, to promote ongoing cultural exchange and community engagement.

ARCHITECTURAL MATERIAL STRATEGY

Applies sustainable, locally sourced materials and methods adapted to regional climates and cultures, reducing environmental impact while honoring global architectural traditions.



Project Resources

➤ TECHNOLOGY

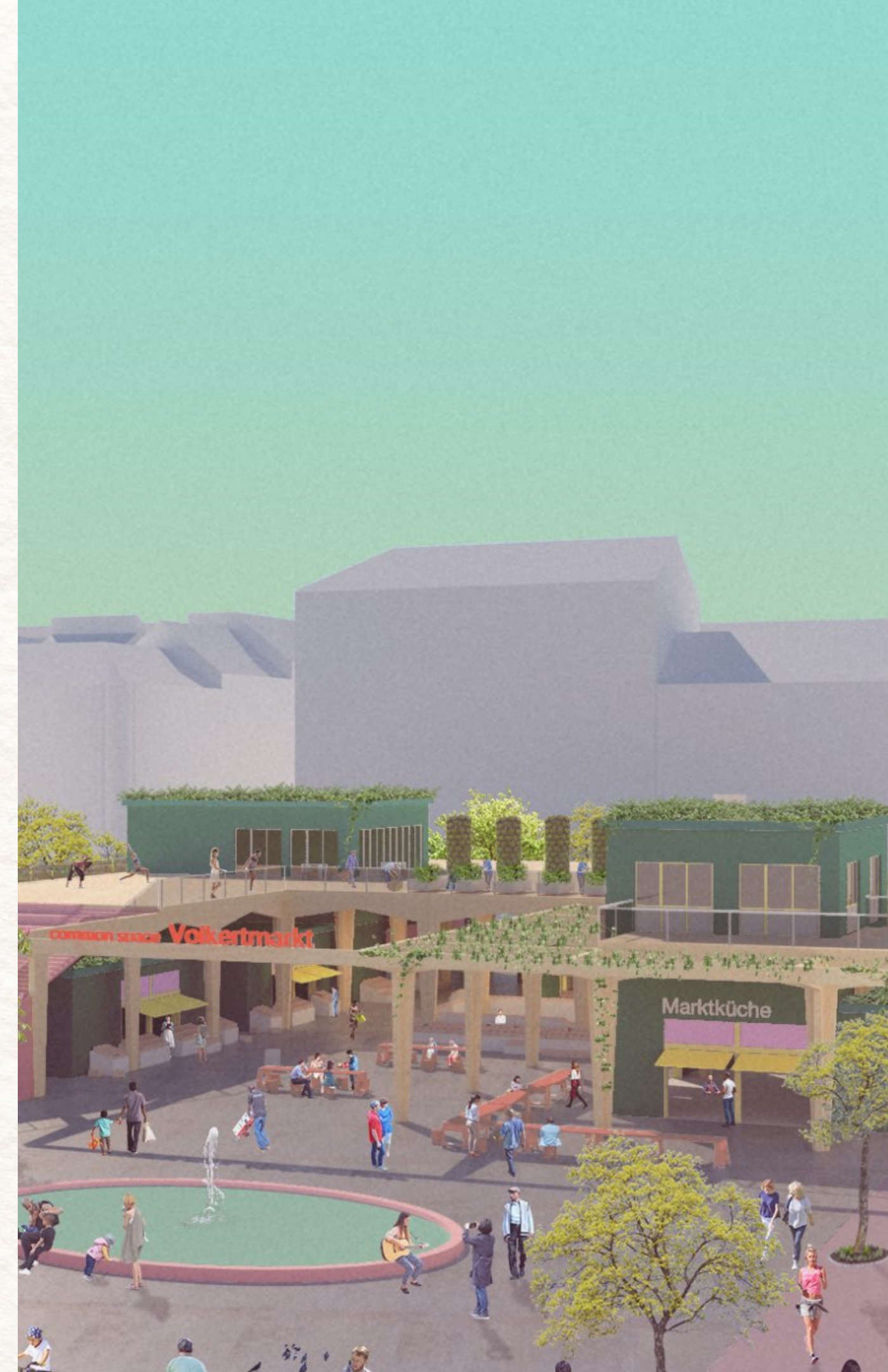
This proposal leverages technology such as solar-power and digital management system. This supports SDG 11's call for sustainable infrastructure and innovative urban solutions.

➤ HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources including regular guides, cultural content creators, embassy liaisons, guards, and maintenance staff—ensuring the space remains both culturally vibrant and efficiently managed. In addition, collaboration with a renowned local architectural firm will bring valuable expertise and innovation to the design process.

➤ FUNDING

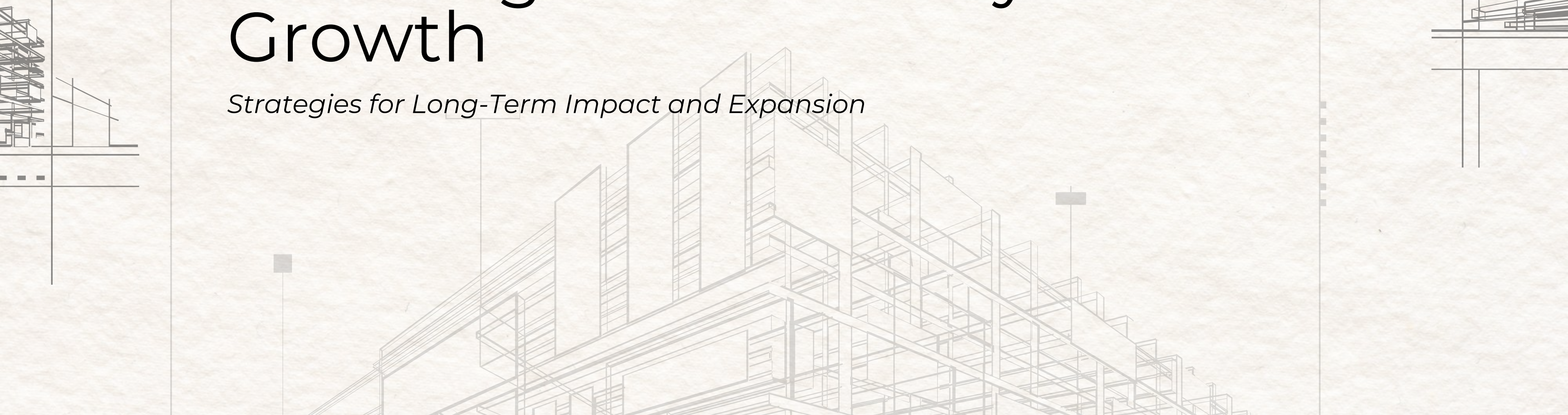
Secures support from cultural institutes, embassies, and NGOs; supports SDG 11.4 by leveraging diverse resources to safeguard and promote cultural heritage.



SECTION 3

Ensuring Sustainability and Growth

Strategies for Long-Term Impact and Expansion



Expansion & Growth Strategy

RANKING	CITY	NUMBER OF EMBASSY
1	BEIJING	173
2	SHANGHAI	76
3	GUANGZHOU	65
5	CHENGDU	20
5	CHONGQING	12

SCALABLE MODEL

- Pilots in Beijing’s First Embassy Area, with a framework for replication in other embassy-rich cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Chengdu.

LOCALIZED CULTURAL INTEGRATION

- Adapts the common space design to incorporate local cultural elements specific to each city, enhancing relevance and appeal.

BROADENED ACCESSIBILITY

- Engages embassy workers, local residents, and tourists, fostering cross-cultural understanding and promoting cultural tourism.

SUSTAINED FUNCTIONALITY

- Maintains core functions (cultural exhibitions, leisure activities, and community engagement) across all locations, ensuring consistency and impact.

How to Sustain



COMMUNITY-LED ENGAGEMENT

Encourages ownership through resident- and embassy-driven workshops and cultural events, fostering active participation and inclusivity.



DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

Implements a digital app or website for event scheduling, cultural learning, and community feedback, enhancing accessibility and sustained interaction.



PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Builds long-term collaborations with cultural institutes, universities, and international organizations to secure funding and expertise, supporting scalability and cultural richness.



SOLAR-POWERED INFRASTRUCTURE

Reduces operational costs and environmental impact with solar energy, aligning with SDG 11.7 for accessible, green public spaces.



VOLUNTEER AND INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Engages local students and volunteers in managing events and maintenance, reducing costs and building community investment in the space's success.



ADAPTIVE REUSE AND EXPANSION

Pilots the model in Beijing's First Embassy Area, with a framework for replicating and adapting the design to other embassy areas globally, ensuring scalable growth.

Global Expansion



SCALABLE GLOBAL VISION

- Expands beyond China to cities with diplomatic hubs and tourist appeal, such as Washington, D.C., Brussels, and Canberra.
- Adapts design to reflect local cultures while maintaining core functions of cultural exchange and community engagement.



ATTRACTING DIVERSE USER

- Draws tourists through cultural exhibitions and events, boosting local economies and cross-cultural understanding.
- Enhances educational programs, community events, and international collaborations to engage broader audiences.

Scalability & Global Potential



The Embassy Commonscape is designed with adaptability in mind, making it easily replicable in embassy districts around the world. While its core functions—fostering cultural exchange, collaboration, and community—remain consistent, the two-level structure can be flexibly reinterpreted using locally inspired materials, architectural traditions, and historical context. By integrating regional culture into the design, each site can achieve a unique identity while serving as a shared space for embassy staff to gather, connect, and engage in meaningful dialogue.

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