

# A Walk in the Clouds

## Landscape Design of Beijing Sijiqing Life Science & Technology Park

### Project Statement:



*Visitors ascend from the first floor via the 'heavenly ladder,' gradually stepping into the sky.*

The opening of the Life Science & Technology Park marks the realization of a long-held vision to revitalize Beijing's Sijiqing area. Designed as a catalyst for social, environmental, and economic transformation, the project addresses longstanding challenges such as inefficient industrial layouts, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of cohesive corporate, and public spaces. The new design integrates these elements, shaping Sijiqing into a thriving hub—now recognized as the "Best Community for Technological Innovation."

A defining feature of the park is the seamless coexistence of ecological restoration and community vitality. The design maximizes ecosystem recovery while fostering diverse social interactions. A forest-style planting strategy and an innovative "cloud-shaped" sky terrace for rainwater storage enhance the microclimate, while a rich plant palette ensures a dynamic seasonal experience. The ambitious planting program introduces over 600 carefully selected canopy trees and a broad range of native and climate-adapted groundcover species.

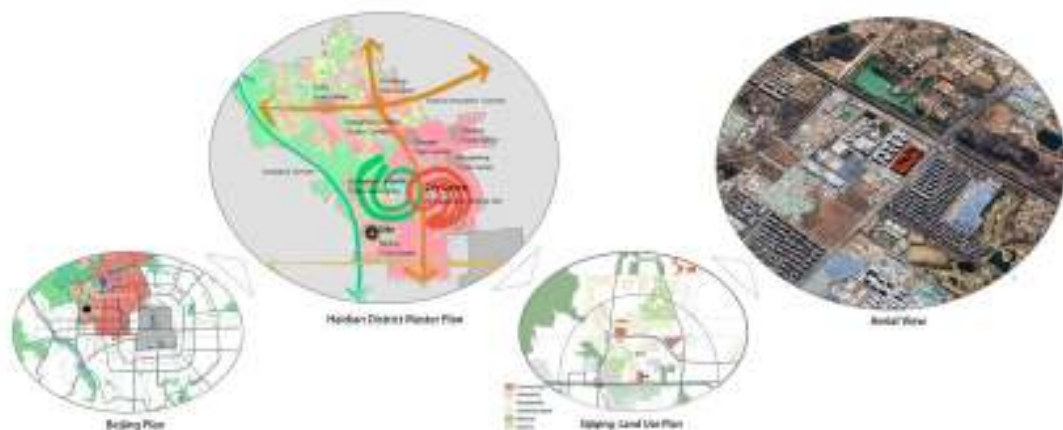
Sustainability extends beyond ecology, embedding itself in the park's vibrant, flexible public realm. Dynamic art installations attract a diverse audience, making the space not just an environmental success, but a cultural and social landmark. The result is one of Beijing's most forward-thinking landscapes—an

immersive, “surreal” experience that redefines urban nature.

## **Project Description**

Haidian District, the first in China to achieve an annual GDP exceeding \$150 billion, serves as a cornerstone of Beijing’s economy, driven by its strong culture of innovation. As the heart of Zhongguancun’s technology enterprises, the district is rich in scientific, educational, and cultural resources. However, within Haidian, Sijiqing remains one of the most livable yet relatively underdeveloped towns, with traditional industries such as agriculture and auto repair still prevalent. The challenge lies in leveraging its environmental assets to foster local employment, attract top-tier corporate talent, and set a new benchmark for integrated urban and industrial development.

The Sijiqing Life Science & Technology Park is the first large-scale science and technology hub in the area, covering 25,000 square meters. Designed as a multi-functional industrial complex specializing in biopharmaceuticals, medical devices, and healthcare, the site benefits from excellent connectivity and proximity to residential, retirement, and recreational (both sporting and cultural) facilities. The landscape design plays a crucial role in integrating these spaces with the surrounding community—creating an open, shared environment that enhances daily life. Through artistic and ecological interventions, the design encourages interaction, enriches the work-life experience, and fosters creativity in scientific research.



*The site seeks to enhance community engagement and vitality while establishing a new model for low-density corporate park development.*



importantly, human relationships. The goal is to offer a space where people can rediscover and re-engage with the city.

The design revitalizes the previously monotonous community space through immersive cloud-shaped art installations. Anchored in the concept of "working in the park," the project fosters a unique identity for the city, transforming the site into a vibrant social, ecological, and cultural landmark.

At 23 meters high, the **super sky terrace** is a striking installation that merges nature, technology, and environmental sustainability. In summer, it provides shade and shelter for the central garden, while at night, it transforms into an illuminated gathering space, integrating projection media to redefine the skyline. The central courtyard, which remains shaded for much of the year, benefits from the terrace's design, turning it into a sunlit "living room." Spiral staircases connect three cloud-like terraces at varying heights, offering visitors unique vantage points of the park by day and night.

Beyond the super sky terrace, additional cloud installations contribute to the park's layered experience, each with its own narrative and function, fostering a rich sense of place. Rainwater retention systems are seamlessly integrated beneath the sky terraces, with concealed drains channeling water to underground storage tanks. This system mitigates stormwater impact and provides partial irrigation for the sunken park's greenery.



*The lower section of the sky terrace serves as a rainwater retention system during summer storms. This system enables staggered rainwater management, providing irrigation for green spaces or replenishing groundwater in the sunken areas as needed.*





*The sky terraces serve as the park's central point, acting as a floating garden. This elevated installation not only introduces much-needed sunlight to shaded areas but also transforms into a vibrant 'Sky Ballroom,' providing a dynamic space for social activities.*



*As the largest cloud installation, the hovering **Sky-Terraces** play with flexibility in uses, it features floral-patterned flooring and essential utilities, including water, electricity, and integrated sound systems.*

### **Sustainable Spatial Efficiency**

The design minimizes environmental impact while maximizing functional space, ensuring a balance between social activity needs and ecological

sustainability. Within the site's limited footprint, innovative strategies mitigate the urban heat island effect and address the challenge of insufficient green space.

A diverse, climate-responsive planting strategy enhances the site's microclimate. New forest ecosystems and amended soils support a rich variety of native, drought- and flood-resistant species, complemented by low-maintenance ornamental grasses. A multilayered mix of trees, shrubs, and grasses adapts to Beijing's distinct seasonal changes while fostering a thriving habitat for birds and insects, forming a self-sustaining ecological network.

To create a more insulated research environment, tree density around the park's perimeter has been increased, reducing external disturbances. Over 650 trees of varying sizes establish a shaded corridor, lowering ambient temperatures by 0.75–1°C and sequestering an estimated 5–6 tons of carbon emission annually. The site's stormwater management system prioritizes groundwater recharge and treatment, further enhancing its ecological resilience.



*Balancing functionality and aesthetics, the design maximizes green space by integrating the curbing flush with the road surface. drought-tolerant plants are strategically placed within these areas to support on-site rainwater retention and management.*

The site's earthwork balance is strategically utilized to shape diverse landforms and sunken spaces, creating varied spatial experiences while enhancing stormwater management. Systematic rain gardens, positioned both within and beyond the site, capture 54% of annual rainwater runoff. Permeable pavements cover the entire site, achieving a permeability rate

exceeding 65%—well above Beijing's sponge city construction standards. From the outset, the design intentionally excludes artificial water features, minimizing upfront investment, energy consumption, and long-term maintenance costs.



*The hilly landforms and retaining walls serve as a metaphor for the nearby Western mountains, integrating the mountainous landscape into the park.*

### **A Surreal Sensory Experience**

The design concept, "**A Walk in the Clouds**," serves as a contemporary metaphor for navigating life's complexities, prompting visitors to reflect on the evolving relationship between humanity and nature—what has been lost and what can still be reclaimed. This garden is a bridge between the past, present, and future, offering a multi-layered experience that is both thought-provoking and immersive.

Designed as a playful and dynamic space, it provides shade for quiet contemplation, a courtyard where visitors can reconnect with their inner selves, and a communal platform for gatherings, collaboration, and shared experiences. Here, individuals can simultaneously embrace their personal identities and engage with the collective values of the community.





*"**Dynamic Clouds**" is a wind-driven, sheet-like installation that marks the beginning of the park's narrative. Constantly shifting and swaying in response to natural light and wind, it creates a dynamic and ever-changing visual experience.*



*the "**Clouds Pavilion**" sculpture serves as the focus landmark, guiding pedestrian circulation and anchoring key sightlines throughout the landscape.*





*"Clouds Pavilion" extends the spatial narrative, providing a vibrant gathering place ( a semi-private retreat ) for relaxation and conversation, while also becoming a photogenic focal point for visitors.*



*Life : The interplay between natural light, shadow, and the built environment subtly evolves throughout the day, and visually marking the passage of time.*

*Right: Diversified projections and lighting at night bring a stronger and more directive visual experience to the space.*

Rejecting the traditional two-dimensional approach to landscape design, the project embraces a **multi-sensory, four-dimensional experience** that incorporates **time, movement, and atmosphere** to craft a compelling spatial story. The **cloud-inspired art installations** evoke an ethereal and

surreal quality, unfolding through three distinct experiential layers—“**Under the Clouds, Within the Clouds, and On the Clouds**”. As visitors move through these spaces, they gradually immerse themselves in the **unique spirit of place**, where the biotope’s natural habitat and artistic interpretation converge into a picturesque and thought-provoking landscape.



*A mirrored wall divides the corridor into three exclusive garden spaces, creating a visual illusion. The interplay of reflections, combined with the architectural backdrop, generates a dramatic kaleidoscopic effect, immersing visitors in a surreal, dreamlike atmosphere.*

### **Seamless Integration of Landscape and Architecture**

The design reinterprets the narrative traditions of Chinese gardens in a modern context. While meeting functional site requirements, the landscape seamlessly integrates with architectural view corridors, employing classical techniques such as framed views, borrowed scenery, and layered perspectives. This approach fosters a deep connection between the built environment and the surrounding landscape.

With the trust of the client, the design team also shaped the central courtyard and sunken retail space, incorporating hollowed-out grille panels and cloud ceiling structures. These elements further reinforce the thematic cohesion, with shifting light and shadows fostering an ethereal, Zen-like ambiance.  
(page16)

A linear paving pattern effectively guides movement through the space, ensuring clear flow, high accessibility, and intuitive wayfinding across the headquarters campus.



*Dark gray permeable paving, complemented by embedded linear lighting, provides a key visual guide, reinforcing spatial orientation throughout the park.*

### **Diversity and Inclusion: A Park for All**

The park is fully open to office workers and the broader community, offering a diverse range of services and recreational amenities. Features such as cloud pavilion, sky-terraces, a half-court basketball area, running trails, and an amphitheater encourage physical activity, social interaction, and mental well-being in a natural setting.

Since its opening, the park has hosted a variety of events, from cultural exhibitions and brand activations to community races. Notably, the **2024 Sijiqing Spring Festival Cultural Bazaar** attracted over 6,000 visitors over three days, reinforcing the park's role as a vibrant cultural and social hub.





*Left: Our team designed architectural elements, including the Patio façades, staircases, and cloud-shaped ceiling structures in the sunken plaza. This resulted in a cohesive design language that seamlessly integrates the built and natural environments.*

*Right: The **2024 Four Seasons Spring Festival Cultural Bazaar** was a success! Vibrant moments captured by on-site photography.*

## Credits:

**Design Company: The Academy of Design and Arts, Tsinghua University and Zii Design Ltd**

Design Director: Feng CHEN & Yanyang ZHOU

Project Manager: Chunyang HAO

Project team: Yingzhe SUN, Kristiana LENIART

Ecological Consultants: Jing WANG, Danhua ZHANG

**Client: Beijing Jiulongguangsha Apartment Property Management Center**

**Construction Company : Zhongzhou Yiwei (Beijing) Construction Engineering Co., Ltd.**