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Abstract

In China, during the ‘Big Construction’ phase of the 1950s-1960s, many historic districts were not appreciated and respected. Beijing is the capital of China and is also the political and cultural centre of China. With the registration of Beijing as a “Famous Historic and Cultural City” in 1982, Beijing was defined as China’s political and cultural centre but not just as an economic centre. In 1990 Beijing Municipal People’s Government announced the first batch of 25 Municipal Historic and Cultural Conservation Areas that included Beijing’s Guozijian and Yandaixiejie Districts. Eighteen years later, in 2008, the First “Chinese Historic and Cultural Districts Selection and Promotion Activities” was launched by the Ministry of Culture and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. With the announcement of the First and the Second Lists of Top 10 Chinese Historic and Cultural Districts in 2009 and 2010 respectively, the conservation of historic districts was generally well received and elevated in agreements from state-level government to local level governments across China. Beijing’s Guozijian District and Yandaixiejie District were contained in the first and second lists respectively.

This paper considers literature about the development history and regulations of historic district conservation in Beijing, and reviews the evolution of historic district conservation in Beijing. It discusses the conservation effectiveness of Beijing’s Guozijian and Yandaixiejie District’s through residents’ and visitors’ evaluations and perspectives. It thereupon draws key conclusions as to the importance of the need to conserve Chinese urban historic districts that benefits on conserving the urban soul and memory.

Keywords: Beijing Guozijian District, Beijing Yandaixjie District, Historic Preservation and City Memory