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## **Xiong' an New Area: Building an Ideal City with Sustainable Competitiveness Postprint**

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### **Abstract**

Hebei Xiong' an New Area should not only be constructed as an ideal city with sustainable competitiveness, but also pioneer innovations for the development of ideal cities in China and provide valuable experience for the construction of ideal cities worldwide. As an ideal city with unique characteristics and sustainable competitiveness, Xiong' an New Area should embody: a people-centered livable city, an entrepreneurship-oriented business-friendly city, a fair and inclusive harmonious city, an ecological city where water and urban areas coexist in harmony, an innovation-driven knowledge city, a pastoral city integrating urban and rural areas, a smart city with seamless communication, and an open and pluralistic cultural city.

### **Full Text**

#### **Special Issue: Science & Technology Supporting Xiongan New Area' s Planning and Construction**

##### **Xiongan New Area: Building an Ideal City with Sustainable Competitiveness**

Xiongan New Area should not only become an ideal city with sustainable competitiveness but also pioneer innovations for China' s ideal urban construction and provide experience for building ideal cities worldwide. As a uniquely distinctive ideal city with sustainable competitiveness, Xiongan should embody: a people-centered livable city, an entrepreneurship-oriented business-friendly city, a fair and inclusive harmonious city, an ecologically integrated water-city, an innovation-driven knowledge city, a garden city integrating urban and rural areas, a smart city with convenient connectivity, and a culturally open and diverse city.

**Keywords:** Xiongan New Area, sustainable competitiveness, ideal city

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Since the dawn of humanity, whether in nomadic, agricultural, or industrial societies, people have always needed places and spaces to live and have continuously pursued ideal habitats. Scenarios of abundance, picturesque landscapes, harmony, freedom, and tranquility have long captivated human imagination. However, ideal poetic dwelling places like the Eastern “Peach Blossom Spring” or Western “Garden of Eden” have remained unattainable utopias due to technological and institutional constraints [1]. More than 2,000 years ago, Aristotle observed that “people come to the city in order to live a better life.” By 2008, more than half of the world’s population had come to cities, making urban areas humanity’s primary habitat. Today, as human society enters an era of economic globalization, technological informatization, urban agglomeration, and ecological human settlements, cities have brought both blessings and concerns to humanity. In the future, with socioeconomic development, scientific and technological progress, and changes in resources and the environment, cities as habitats will face even fiercer competition and more unsustainable challenges.

China’s ancient cities have a long history and have created many glories. After a long and tortuous development process, particularly since the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the reform and opening-up, China’s industrialization and urbanization have developed miraculously. From 1978 to 2016, the urbanization rate increased from 17.92% to 57.35%. Cities have become the main dwelling places for the Chinese people, and the living environment has continuously improved, but numerous unsustainable challenges remain [2,3]. Looking ahead, on the basis of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020, China will basically achieve socialist modernization by 2035 and fully achieve modernization by 2050. Meanwhile, the people will put forward more new demands and expectations for cities as their main habitats.

Although making all cities sustainably competitive is a greater goal, according to the basic law of uneven and asynchronous development, as well as China’s experience in promoting reform and opening-up, we should first select some cities or regions for bold innovation and exploration under the guidance of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era. Then, by identifying and revising problems, solving issues and accumulating experience, and achieving results and creating models, we can lead national urban development toward ideal goals [4-6].

**The Primary Mission of Xiongan New Area.** The establishment of Xiongan New Area is a major decision and deployment of the central government, a millennial plan and national priority with multiple important tasks. First is to relieve Beijing of functions non-essential to its role as the capital, and second is to promote the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. After decades of reform and opening-up, leveraging its advantages as a megacity and the special status as the capital, Beijing has achieved unimaginable development over 30-plus years. Meanwhile, the massive concentration of population and industry in the central urban area has brought severe “urban diseases.” Moreover, due to administrative divisions, special institutional ar-

rangements, and urban layout issues, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region exhibits serious 不协调 and unbalanced development: while central Beijing and Tianjin prosper with big-city diseases, surrounding Hebei simultaneously suffers from severe poverty. Additionally, because industries are mutually unrelated, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region experiences negative-sum games economically, socially, and environmentally. To address large-scale urban development and solve “urban diseases,” we should build a multi-centered metropolitan area, especially across administrative boundaries, developing and cultivating sub-centers on a larger scale to undertake spillover economic effects and promote coordinated Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei development. Building Xiongan New Area is one of the most ideal choices. At the same time, empowering Xiongan New Area to explore new urban development models and new orientations for leading global development is not only feasible but also necessary.

**The Development Model of Xiongan.** Xiongan must subvert the unsustainable traditional urban development and operation model supported by land finance. The overall development model could consider leveraging its locational advantage of being close to Beijing and Tianjin and its late-mover cost advantages. By creating first-class infrastructure integrated with Beijing and high-quality public services equal to Beijing’s, it can quickly import first-class enterprises and populations from Beijing, the nation, and even the world, forming high-end industrial clusters and human capital. This will generate considerable tax revenue and a sizable localized high-end market demand, thereby rapidly achieving a sustainable urban development cycle. Its development model could adopt a “tax finance development model,” that is, raising urban development funds through municipal bonds, development funds, and PPP (public-private partnership) models for infrastructure, then paying financing interest and returning financing through future development project revenues and taxes. To this end, new explorations are needed in financing, land, and fiscal systems.

**The Basic Functions of Xiongan New Area.** Based on Xiongan’s positioning as a sub-center of the capital, especially its proximity and transportation integration, and according to the theory of generalized comparative advantage, the functional positioning of Xiongan New Area and the entire Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei urban agglomeration should be generally consistent yet each with its own emphasis. Given global and China’s future development trends, the overall functional positioning of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, and Xiongan’s unique advantages and future mission, the new area’s basic functions should focus on five main aspects: technology manufacturing, financial services, education and training, health and wellness, and decision-making management.

Building Xiongan New Area into an ideal city with sustainable competitiveness requires not only the general characteristics of an ideal city but also the embodiment of basic urban functions while maintaining unique natural ecology and socio-cultural personality.

**The Distinctive Character of a Future Ideal City with Sustainable Competitiveness**

Xiongan New Area is located in the hinterland of Beijing, Tianjin, and Baoding, with large areas of water and wetlands, encompassing the “Kidney of North China” –Baiyangdian. This region is rich in biodiversity, has an excellent ecological resource environment, low current development intensity, ample development space, and a foundation for sustainable development. According to traditional Chinese cultural concepts of urban “mountain-river positioning” and axis establishment, this area is the best choice for a capital sub-center.

Based on these ideal standards, adhering to “global vision, international standards, Chinese characteristics, and high-point positioning,” and combining “regional planning, historical inheritance, and era characteristics,” Xiongan New Area should be built into an ideal city with distinctive character and sustainable competitiveness [7-9].

**First, a people-centered livable city** that takes residents’ happiness as the central goal of urban development. People gather in cities for a better life; therefore, cities that cannot provide decent living conditions are unsustainable. An ideal city should be a place where people enjoy high-quality lives—where birds fly in blue skies with white clouds, fish swim in clear rivers and lakes, elderly people stroll in pleasant climates with fresh air, and children play in clean, tree-lined communities. An efficient and convenient public transportation system connects every corner of the city; job seekers can find satisfactory work; people are generally well-educated, enjoy safe, nutritious, and delicious food, maintain healthy bodies, and receive timely, quality medical care when occasionally ill. The municipal government diligently manages the city with people’ s happy lives as the ultimate goal of urban development, ensuring that everyone has access to education, employment, medical care, elderly care, and housing.

Xiongan New Area must be built into a truly people-centered livable home. Starting from citizens’ needs, the city should be well-planned with appropriate density, green and low-carbon design, and a return to simplicity, while comprehensively improving basic public services, developing social undertakings, and providing quality resources in education and healthcare. Simultaneously, it should mobilize the broadest participation of ordinary citizens in planning, decision-making, construction, and management, allowing every tree and blade of grass in the city to serve the happy lives of the majority of ordinary people.

**Second, an entrepreneurship-oriented business-friendly city** with vibrant economic vitality. Urban vitality relies on urban industries and enterprise development, and the sustainable development and prosperity of enterprises constitute the main support for urban sustainability. An ideal city should provide a good environment for entrepreneurship and business. Here, a mature business culture has formed, and enterprising entrepreneurial spirit is highly respected; market mechanisms are well-developed and flexible, and government services for enterprises are meticulous and thoughtful. In such an environment, people carry forward the entrepreneurial spirit, rely on government services, and use market mechanisms to start businesses boldly; abundant factor supply, efficient government, and strong demand greatly improve the success rate of entrepreneurship,

making new industries, new enterprises, and new businesses emerge endlessly; large, medium, and small enterprises develop together, creating unlimited commercial vitality.

As a new city, Xiongan New Area should adopt the most standardized market systems and most advanced management systems to create the best business environment and innovation atmosphere, making innovation and entrepreneurship most convenient, attracting global enterprises, and enabling local enterprises to spring up like mushrooms.

**Third, a fair and inclusive harmonious city** where social institutions are fair and reasonable and filled with inclusive spirit for harmonious interpersonal relations. Only cities with fair social systems and inclusive social spirits that operate smoothly and orderly can achieve sustainable development. An ideal city should be a place where people are equal and live in harmony. Here, personal safety is fully guaranteed; the government is under effective public supervision at all times, constantly paying attention to public demands and responding fully and promptly, making it a true service-oriented government; social security covers all residents equally, and people from different cultures, ethnicities, regions, political factions, and social strata can compete fairly together; various social conflicts can be resolved through reasonable mechanisms that balance the interests of all parties, respecting and reflecting everyone' s interests.

In the future, Xiongan New Area' s residents will mainly come from local residents, Beijing citizens, and even residents from across the nation and the world. Xiongan will become a city dominated by immigrants and should be built into a diverse, inclusive, and safe harmonious city.

**Fourth, an ecologically integrated water-city** where humans and nature coexist harmoniously with high ecological civilization. The natural environment is an essential component of people' s production and living processes; a continuously deteriorating natural environment will ultimately endanger people' s production and life and hinder urban sustainable development. An ideal city should be a place where humans and nature coexist harmoniously. Here, humans are not conquerors or transformers of nature but organic components of it; people' s production and living processes are treated as part of the natural cycle, coordinated with other natural cycles; low-carbon economic development models are formed, water and animal and plant resources are abundant, and natural resources such as land, minerals, and energy are used with maximum efficiency; ecological environment construction becomes an organic component of urban construction, with artificial and natural environments organically integrated, green building industries developed, and waste from production and living processes maximally recycled and reused, with small amounts of non-reusable harmless portions discharged into the environment and ultimately completely purified by the urban ecosystem itself.

Baiyangdian is a natural wetland where water surfaces and reed lands crisscross, with water everywhere, villages in the lake, embankments in the lake, and inter-

connected ditches. On this basis, Xiongan New Area can build a landscape city through deep ditching and hill stacking, achieving dynamic integration. As the poem goes: “Water converges in nine streams, worthy of floating Fan’ s boat in blue waves; lotus blooms for ten miles, no need to dream of Su’ s dike.” The future Baiyangdian scenery will become more beautiful, the lake water clearer, and the surface more open. The future Xiongan New Area can form a considerable central urban area, broad water surface, and urban garden through excavation, renovation, and accumulation of shallow lakes. The northern urban area with physical buildings represents yang, while the southern lake area dominated by water represents yin. Surrounding the lake core, a circle-layer structure is constructed, with green spaces and water systems arranged in parallel intervals, forming a green garden, beautiful landscape, modern town, and ancient lake village where water and city merge and blue and green reflect each other. Meanwhile, villages and residents in the lake, as well as the tradition of reed cutting and mat weaving, should be preserved as much as possible, allowing nature to become humanized and humanity to become naturalized—extending the natural ecosystem into the social ecosystem to form a unique spatial form integrating urban and rural areas and blending humanity with nature.

**Fifth, an innovation-driven knowledge city** that takes innovation as the fundamental driving force of urban development and has developed knowledge industries, undertakings, hardware infrastructure, and software infrastructure. Only innovation is the inexhaustible and ultimate driving force for sustainable urban economic and social development. An ideal city should be a place that continuously drives economic and social development with new knowledge. Here, a comprehensive education system can satisfy the thirst for knowledge of people from all walks of life; citizens with knowledge and skills are committed to knowledge innovation and product or service creation in different fields and at different levels, with the creative class becoming the main body of citizens; the knowledge economy is developed, and knowledge industries become the leading industries, with knowledge being both the most important input factor and the most important output of economic development; at the same time, various innovation achievements can be quickly transformed into new products, fully meeting people’ s strong demand for new knowledge and new products; the government is committed to knowledge inheritance and dissemination, creating conditions and providing guarantees for various innovation activities, thereby fostering an atmosphere in the whole society that encourages innovation and tolerates failure.

Xiongan New Area is positioned as a science and technology innovation city. Not only should its leading industries select high-end manufacturing and innovation services, but urban construction and infrastructure should also widely apply the most advanced technologies, while making high-end industries green and low-carbon, turning green innovation industries into leading industries.

**Sixth, a garden city integrating urban and rural areas** where the boundaries between city and countryside are blurred throughout the entire region,

sharing each other' s advantages. An ideal city should be a place of comprehensive urban-rural integration based on the city. Here, social structure and industrial structure develop in coordination; central urban areas, small towns, and villages develop together in all aspects as an organic whole; urban and rural residents enjoy modern urban public services such as quality education and good medical care, as well as convenient transportation and efficient information networks in a pastoral and beautiful environment, perfectly integrating the convenient life brought by modern cities with the comfort and tranquility brought by the countryside, allowing people to enjoy high-quality lives leisurely.

Xiongan New Area can form considerable central urban areas, broad water surfaces, and urban gardens through excavation, renovation, and accumulation of shallow lakes. The northern urban area with physical buildings represents yang, while the southern lake area dominated by water represents yin. Surrounding the lake core, a circle-layer structure is constructed, with green spaces and water systems arranged in parallel intervals, forming a green garden, beautiful landscape, modern town, and ancient lake village where water and city merge and blue and green reflect each other. Meanwhile, villages and residents in the lake, as well as the tradition of reed cutting and mat weaving, should be preserved as much as possible, allowing nature to become humanized and humanity to become naturalized—extending the natural ecosystem into the social ecosystem to form a unique spatial form integrating urban and rural areas and blending humanity with nature.

**Seventh, a smart city with convenient connectivity** that continuously carries out efficient material and information exchanges. Information is an essential condition for social actors to act. Various actors in the city must continuously obtain new information to take correct actions and achieve their own sustainable development; therefore, information is also a necessary condition for urban sustainable development. An ideal city should be a place that continuously and efficiently carries out information exchange and material exchange. Here, the latest information technology penetrates all areas of households, enterprises, and government activities. Through efficient information transmission and sensing networks, the city' s management and service systems, as well as transportation, power, water supply and drainage, and ecosystem systems, are comprehensively interconnected with people' s production and living processes, thereby maximizing the integration and sharing of information resources. On the one hand, this supports the refinement and dynamization of urban production and living process management, enabling various urban systems to make “intelligent” responses to changes; on the other hand, it creates conditions for broad social participation in urban management and services, pooling public wisdom to promote continuous innovation in urban management and services.

Xiongan New Area should build a unique landscape smart city, integrating the most advanced and applicable intelligent infrastructure into the green landscape. Externally, it should establish high-density, three-dimensional networks of soft and hard infrastructure for transportation, communication, and energy, con-

necting Xiongan with Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the nation, and even the world. Internally, it should hide numerous pipelines underground, have cars shuttle through underground passages, and let pedestrians stroll leisurely on streets, with traditional characteristic buildings shining brightly on both sides; let rivers flow through the city, forest parks with fresh and comfortable air, green belts surrounding the rippling Baiyangdian waves, making the water-city integration shine as the Pearl of North China.

**Eighth, a culturally open and diverse city** that gathers diverse, locally grounded, distinctive, and charming cultures. Culture is the ultimate source of urban charm, and only a charming city can continuously attract various talents and achieve sustainable development. An ideal city should be a place where various cultures collide, blend, and reflect each other. Here, under the attraction of a free and open social culture, people from around the world come to work and live; various cultures continuously inject new elements into urban culture, with distinctive buildings and diverse cultural venues becoming stages to display these elements; numerous well-preserved material and intangible historical and cultural heritages demonstrate the city's profound history and constitute the city's unique memory; diverse cultures provide strong impetus for the vigorous development of creative industries, and complete public cultural facilities and services provide good conditions for people's cultural activities, making cultural undertakings prosperous; various cultures from ancient and modern times, both Chinese and foreign, converge here to jointly depict a unique and colorful urban cultural panorama.

The region where Xiongan New Area belongs has a long history, profound cultural accumulation, rich underground relics, distinctive aboveground buildings, and concentrated red cultural heritage. With future development and intensive contact and integration with the world, global multiculturalism will profoundly influence Xiongan. It is believed that Xiongan will surely form a unique lake-city culture blending local and global, historical and modern elements.

In the process of building Xiongan New Area into a poetic city with sustainable competitiveness, we must first uphold humanity's beautiful value orientation—the unremitting pursuit of perfect natural environment, harmonious social environment, and free and peaceful mind, and thus “harmony between humanity and nature” dwelling. Second, we must eliminate past utopian concepts of “despising wealth, neglecting the economy, escaping reality, isolating from the world, governing by non-action, and adhering to old ways,” and follow the new development concept of “innovation, coordination, green, openness, and sharing” [10]. Finally, we must adhere to distinctive Chinese characteristics and local personality. The rising Xiongan New Area belongs not only to China but also to the world; it is not only competitive but also sustainable; it is not only a beautiful reality but also a poetic distance; it is not only a future for unrestrained imagination but also an ideal that can be gradually realized.

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