

SHENYANG: RECOVERING STRONGLY

| BASIC INFORMATION | | World Rank | Similar To |
|---|-----------|------------|---|
| Urban Area Population (2007)* | 4,660,000 | 54 | Boston, Belo Horizonte, St. Petersburg |
| Projection (2025) | 5,550,000 | 68 | Alexandria, Phoenix, Belo Horizonte, Philadelphia |
| Urban Land Area: Square Miles | 280 | 125 | Las Vegas, Katowice, Guadalajara, Hamburg |
| Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers | 725 | | |
| Density: Per Square Mile | 16,600 | 308 | Ankara, Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto, Tucuman, Port Harcourt |
| Density: Per Square Kilometer | 6,450 | | |
| *Continuously built up area (Urban agglomeration) Land area & density rankings among the approximately 750 urban areas with 500,000+ population. Data from Demographia World Urban Areas data. See: ¹ <i>Demographia World Urban Areas Population & Density</i> <i>Demographia World Urban Areas: 2025 & 2030 Population Projections</i> | | | |

November 25, 2008

LOCATION

Shenyang is the capital of Liaoning Province, in the “Dong Bei” (northeast or literally, east north) of China, which is also referred to as Manchuria. Shenyang is approximately 400 airline miles (625 kilometers) northeast of Beijing and is the largest urban area in Manchuria. Shenyang is located on the Hun River, though the river traverses the southern section of the urban area. The main business centers and core of the urban area are well to the north. Shenyang is also located on the Dong Bei Plain, which has little relief. As a result, there is little in the way of geography to restrict the growth of the urban area, though hills being just to the east of the urban area.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Shenyang is an historic city. It served as the capital of China briefly during the 17th century. In the past it was variously known as Shengjing and Mukden. Shenyang is a rust belt urban area that has seen a considerable decline in manufacturing activity over the past 20 years. The municipality itself experienced further significant difficulty in the first part of the decade when both the Mayor and the Vice-Mayor were convicted of corruption and sentenced to death. The Mayor’s sentence was

¹ <http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf> and <http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua2015.pdf>.

suspended, but the Vice-Mayor's was carried out. In the interim, the municipality and urban area have done quite well, with an expansion of service and commercial activities and both central government and provincial activities. The urban area's continuing progress is well illustrated by observing the incredible residential building boom that may be the largest in China, at least relative to Shenyang's size.

The Shenyang urban area now has nearly 4.7 million people and is expected to increase to nearly 5.6 million by 2025. Shenyang is China's ninth largest urban area, smaller than 8th ranking Wuhan and larger than 10th ranking Chongqing. The urban area is relatively dense, covering 280 square miles (625 square kilometers) and a population density of 16,600 per square mile (6,450 per square kilometer).

However, as is the case in virtually all of the urban areas in China, the pattern of density is very uneven. The two most dense districts of Shenyang's core have more than 80,000 persons per square mile (more than 30,000 per square kilometer), a density not exceeded in the west or Japan for such large areas outside New York or Paris. The five core districts have a population density nearly equal to that of the ville de Paris, and a population 60 percent larger. The outlying parts of the urban area (within the urban footprint) account for more than 1,000,000 people, but at a much less dense 6,500 per square mile (2,500 per square kilometer), roughly the suburban density of the Los Angeles urban area.

CENTRAL LIAONING: AN EMERGING MEGAREGION

A mega-metropolitan region appears to be developing around Shenyang. Shenyang is expanding rapidly and provincial maps indicate that a fourth ring road will be built between 30 and 45 miles (50 and 75 kilometers) from the core of Shenyang. The road would skirt the eastern fringe of Fushun (to the east)² a nearby urban area of approximately 1,300,000 population. The fourth ring would also be built between Liaoyang, an urban area of 550,000 population to the south and Anshan, an urban area of 1,510,000 just further to the south. Today, these separate urban areas have a population of more than 8,000,000. With China's strong migration from the country-side to urban areas, the Central Liaoning area could develop into a megaregion or metropolitan region of 12,000,000 or more.

GETTING TO SHENYANG

Airport access is by Shenyang's Taoxian International Airport. The new CRH fast train from Beijing makes the more than 400 mile (650 kilometer) trip to Shenyang in little over 4 hours. Shenyang is also connected to the rest of the nation by the modern "7918" expressway system, which provides access in every direction. This system had reached 27,000 miles by the end of 2006 (45,000 kilometers) and will eventually exceed the United States interstate highway system in length.

THE URBAN FORM

Shenyang is generally circular in its urban form, which is to be expected for an urban area located on a plain. The urban area is somewhat longer from east to west than from north to south (20 miles by 15 miles or 32 kilometers by 24 kilometers).

² See Rental Car Tour: "Fushun: Rust Belt But Hopeful," <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-fushun.pdf>.

Shenyang has two central business districts, which might be referred to as downtown and uptown. The two central business districts are fairly close to one another, but there is a clear distinction between the two in the density of office towers. With its two nearby central business districts, Shenyang resembles Fukuoka, with its nearly adjacent Hakata and Fukuoka central business districts.

Downtown: Downtown Shenyang is located to the east of the main Shenyang railway station. Downtown is the older of the business centers (Slides 9-81). It appears to have more shopping than uptown, with the largest concentration of shopping on Taiyuan Street, the east-west thoroughfare that begins at Shenyang railway station. Downtown also has a number of hotels and office buildings. Many of these are comparatively new, though the building activity in the downtown area does not appear to be as intense as in uptown. Typical of China's central business districts, downtown Shenyang is not terribly densely developed. The tallest buildings are not concentrated together as would be expected in the central business districts of the United States, Canada or Australia. Often, many blocks separate buildings of substantial heights.

One of downtown's principal attractions is a large and prominently placed statue of Chairman Mao Zedong (Slides 36 and 37). There are attractive street light fixtures at Mao's statue and along the other major streets of downtown (Slides 30 and 36).

Also, as is the case with virtually all central business districts in China, there is a large amount of residential development within the commercial area. This is not the result of planning so much as it is of the fact that the strong commercial cores have been built and expanded in and around areas that were previously residential areas. Much of the residential construction is of the pre-reform standardized design found throughout China, generally being from five to nine stories tall. Despite the standardized facades, these buildings are considerably more attractive than their Russian counterparts of the same period, by virtue of the fact that many living units have bay windows and the buildings were of lower rise than was the practice in the Soviet Union (for example, Slides 67-70). Originally, residents rented these units, but most are owned now.

The downtown area also has a substantial number of new high rise condominium buildings, including many that are under construction.

Uptown: Uptown's anchor is the North Shenyang railway station, which is located 2.7 miles (4.7 kilometers) to the northeast of Shenyang station. The urban area's most modern and tallest office buildings are located in Uptown (Slides 82-129). There are also hotels and a major enclosed shopping mall. The Shanghai Pudong Development (SPD) Bank building is one of the most unique designs in the world, and one that I like despite its unconventionality (Slides 86-89 & 110). Uptown is also home to the urban area's principal bus station, adjacent to the SPD Building. Uptown will also be home to one of the world's tallest office structures, the Shenyang International Finance Centre, which is under construction.³ The tower will rise to 89 floors and nearly 1,400 feet (420 meters), ranking it among the top ten in the world.

The first ring road separates uptown into two parts, the more northerly being nearly exclusively commercial office buildings and shopping centers. The southern expanse contains a large public park, many commercial office buildings and the civic center, including city hall.

³ <http://www.building.hk/view.asp?id=196>

Like downtown, the density of tall buildings is not great, with large expanses between many. An exception is the area of the SPD Building, which will also gain the Shenyang International Finance Center and the area immediately north of the civic center.

There is a large coal-fired electric generating plant in the eastern sector, inside the Ring Expressway (third ring road). One of the towers carries a slogan, “Better Life Together”, illustrating the hope of China for a better life through technology (Slides 229 and 230). Another indication of prosperity is the ‘Orient Home’ stores that are the equivalent of a Home Depot in the United States or LeRoy Merlin in Europe (Slide 184).

Other Office Developments: There are a number of high-rise office developments located outside both downtown and uptown. This is typical for an urban area in China.

Housing: Throughout the rest of Shenyang, there are many of the standardized pre-reform condominium buildings, often within the same block and only pedestrian walkways between. At the same time there is considerable construction of high-rise condominium towers. Shenyang has many very large such developments, some with many buildings. Among the urban areas visited in China in the last five years, Shenyang appears to have the most high-rise condominium development.

The new condominium developments are widely spaced south of the Hun River, spread across greenfield land. In the longer run, it is likely that the properties being “leap frogged” over will be developed as the process of market infill occurs, as it has in American, Canadian and Australian urban areas (at least until the adoption of compact city policies in Australia).

The largest developments are in the southern part of the urban area, some north of the Hun River, but most further south, between the river and the Taoxian International Airport (Slides 130-147).

Villas, or detached housing, are found in nearly every direction in the suburbs and exurbs. In the airport area there is a particularly large concentration (Slides 172-176).

Small Businesses: As is the case in virtually all Chinese urban areas, many major streets are lined by small businesses (Slides 76-79)

Industry: Shenyang has a number of industrial parks, generally located on the urban fringe to the north, west and south. Each of these parks is typified by exceptionally wide streets, often 8 lanes (Slides 141, 192 & 203).

Universities: A number of universities have built new campuses (Slides 237-246) on the north side of the urban area, outside the third ring road (called the Ring Expressway)

Holland Village: Holland Village is a unique residential area that has no residents (Slides 148-161). Holland Village is a nearly one-square mile (1.5 square kilometer) of housing and related development, designed to resemble Holland. It is located in the northwestern part of the urban area, inside the third ring road. Holland Village was developed by Yang Bin, a Chinese businessman who was educated in the Netherlands. Reportedly, he ran into difficulties with the law over development irregularities and taxes and was sentenced to prison. By that time, however, much of Holland Village had been developed, including a replica of the Amsterdam railway station and other public buildings.

There is also a large windmill and a number of canals. In all, there are nearly 1,500 apartments, which are empty.

TRANSPORT

Shenyang is well served by high-quality roads. The urban area has very wide streets, which is typical of China. There are two ring roads that are at least partially built to freeway standards. The third ring road, or Ring Expressway, is a toll facility and built to freeway standards. There is a freeway standard thruway (free road) between Shenyang's Ring Expressway and Fushun. A fourth ring road --- a part of the nation's 7918 expressway system, is also to be built. Toll expressways (freeway standard) connect Shenyang with Dadong to the east, Dalian to the southeast, Beijing and beyond to the southwest, Changchun and Harbin to the north, toward Inner Mongolia to the north and toward the province of Jilin to the east. Few American urban areas have more freeways radiating from them (for example, Chicago and Indianapolis).

A number of "three-wheeled" cars were observed in Shenyang (Slide 8). Generally, these types of vehicles have not been seen in China's other urban areas.

Like many Chinese urban areas, Shenyang is building a Metro. But, Shenyang appears to be doing it all at once. In other Chinese urban areas one might find one line under construction. In Shenyang, the evidence of construction is all around. The first line will be opened in late 2009.

EATING IN SHENYANG

The local food is superb. My rule in China is to never frequent a restaurant that takes credit cards. That way, there is a good chance of getting genuine local food. The experience is a happy one, though language difficulties make it virtually impossible to enunciate any recommendations. There are, along all business streets in Shenyang and China, a plethora of good local restaurants. Ordering can be difficult, since few such establishments have menus in English (though rather more than have Mandarin menus in Western Europe or the United States). Moreover, given the humble status of these restaurants --- low prices, good food, they will not be found in any of the tour guides.

It is recommended, however, that tap water be avoided. The hotels provide bottled water. Generally, bottled water should be relied on in all but the most affluent nations. This is my unfortunate advice after having contracted Montezuma's revenge on every continent but Australia and Antarctica (where there is little need of urban rental car tours).

"CITIES" IN CHINA

Analysts are often confused by the "city" terminology used in China. All of the Shenyang urban area is contained within the city of Shenyang. Similarly, most (if not all) Chinese urban areas are contained within a single city. While Chinese "cities" are municipalities, they are far different from municipalities in the western world, by virtue of their geographical size and vast rural territories. They routinely include large areas of agricultural land, which keeps their density relatively low and leads publishers and analysts to report density data that is so low that it belies a complete misunderstanding of urban geography. For example, the largest municipality in the world is Chongqing, which has more than 30,000,000 people. Its land area is more than 30,000 square miles

(more than 80,000 square kilometers) --- nearly as large as Austria or the state of Indiana. The urban area of Chongqing, however has a far more modest population of 4,000,000

<http://www.rentalcartours.net>
<http://www.demographia.com>
<http://www.publicpurpose.com>



North Shore of Bo Hai (Yellow Sea): Flight from Beijing 2



Landing at Shenyang 3



Landing at Shenyang 4



Landing at Shenyang 5



Shenyang Taoxian International Airport 6



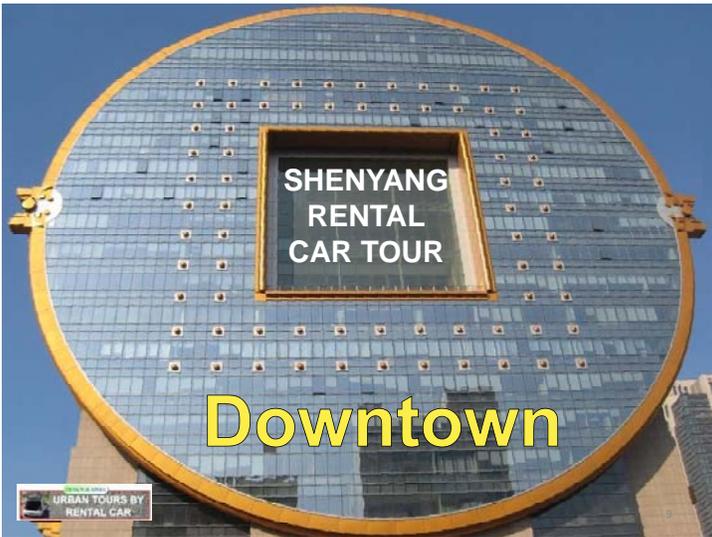
Expressway (Freeway) Interchange

7



Three Wheel Car

8



Shenyang Railroad Station

10



Shenyang Railroad Station

11



Shenyang Railroad Station

12



Downtown

13



Downtown

14



Downtown with Shopping Mall



Downtown



Downtown: Pedestrian Mall

17



Downtown: Shopping Center

18



Downtown: Wal-Mart

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Downtown

20



Downtown

21



Downtown

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Downtown

23



Downtown

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Downtown

25



Downtown: Pedestrian Mall

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Downtown

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Downtown: Park

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Downtown



Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown: Hospital

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Downtown

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Downtown: Chairman Mao Statue

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Downtown: Chairman Mao Statue

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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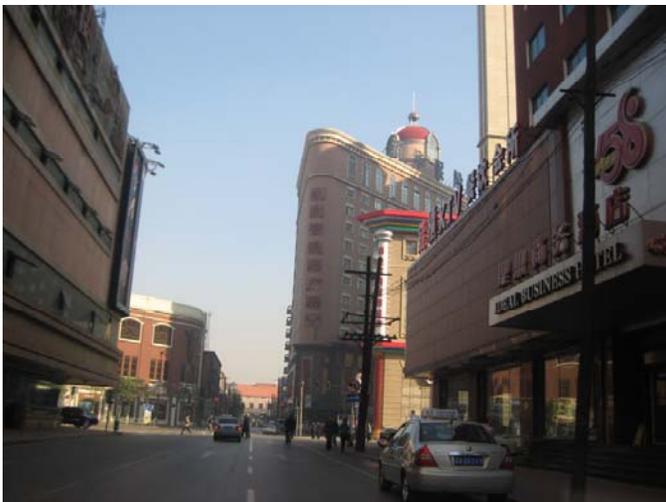
Downtown

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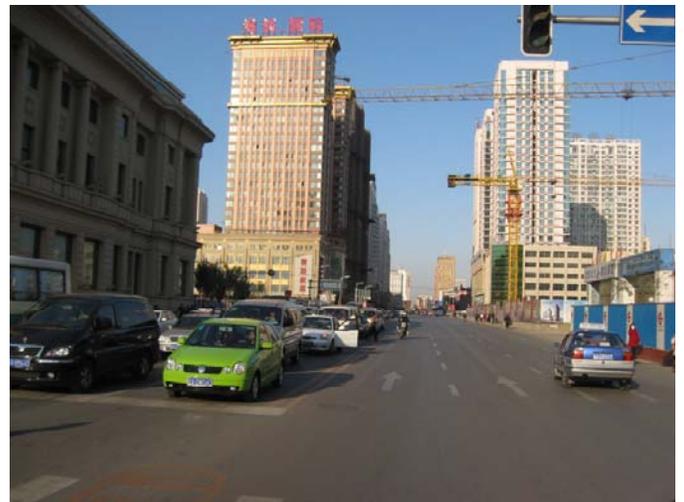
Downtown: Metro Construction

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential



Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

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Downtown: Residential

80



Downtown: Residential

81



URBAN TOURS BY RENTAL CAR



North Railway Station

83



Uptown

84



Uptown

85



Uptown: Shanghai Pudong Development Bank

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Uptown: Shanghai Pudong Development Bank

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Uptown: Shanghai Pudong Development Bank

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Uptown: Shanghai Pudong Development Bank

89



Uptown: Residential

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown with Shopping Mall

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Uptown

110



Uptown

111



Uptown

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Uptown: Civic Center Area

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Uptown: Civic Center Area

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Uptown: Civic Center Area

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Uptown: City Hall

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Uptown: Civic Center Area

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Uptown: Civic Center Area

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown: Civic Center Area

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Uptown: Civic Center Area

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Uptown

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Uptown

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Uptown

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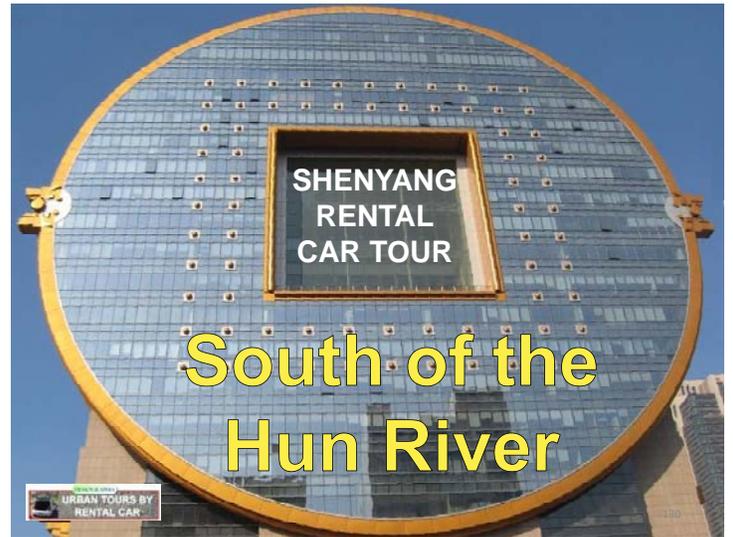
Uptown

128



Uptown

129



South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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Olympic Stadium

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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South of the Hun River

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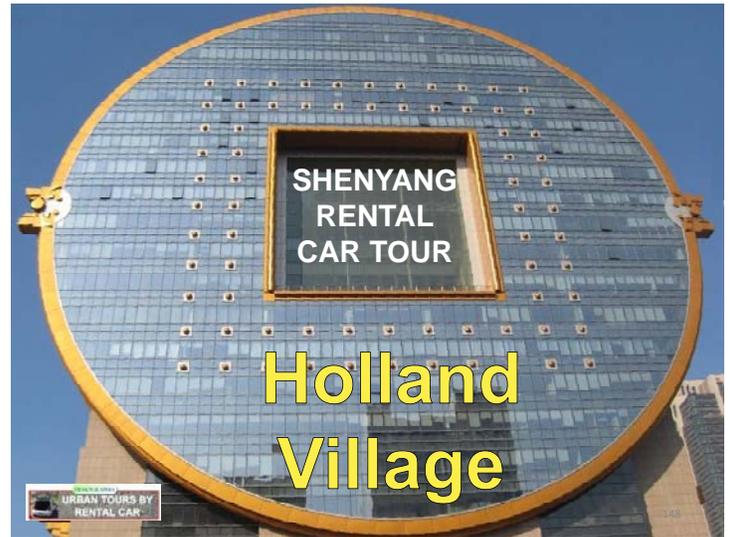
South of the Hun River

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Hun River

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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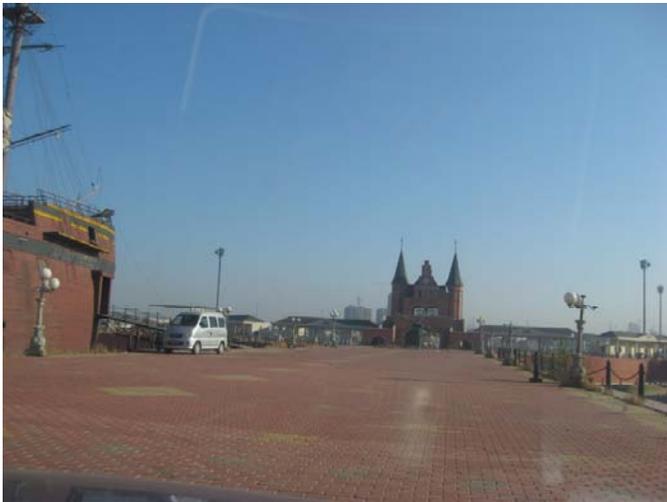
Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Holland Village

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Near Airport

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Near Airport

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Eastern Sector: Townhouses

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector: DIY Store

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector: Auto Dealer

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Northern Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector: Auto Dealer

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector: Stadium

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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Western Sector

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South of Downtown

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South of Downtown

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South of Downtown

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South of Downtown

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South of Downtown

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South of Downtown

222



Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector: "Better Life Together"

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Eastern Sector

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Eastern Sector

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South of Downtown

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South of Downtown



South of Downtown

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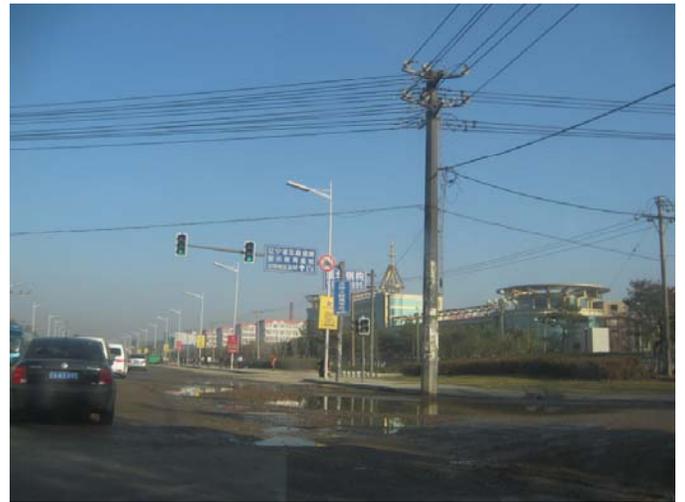
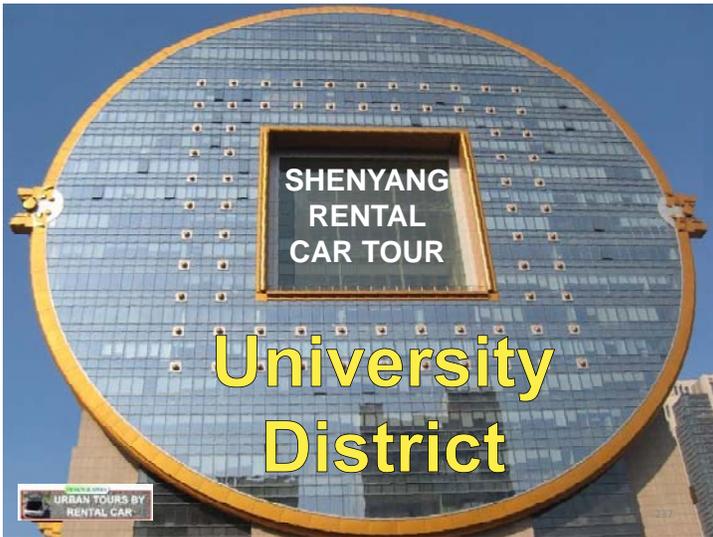
South of Downtown

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South of Downtown

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University District: Outside Third Ring Road

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University District: Outside Third Ring Road

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University District: Outside Third Ring Road

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University District: Outside Third Ring Road

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University District: Outside Third Ring Road

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University District: Outside Third Ring Road

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University District: Outside Third Ring Road

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University District: Outside Third Ring Road

245



University District: Outside Third Ring Road

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