

# Yangpu's Rise as a Hub for Anime and Gaming Culture



By Cheng Jiajia and Zong He

Yangpu is emerging as a powerhouse in Shanghai's digital economy, with over 8,000 digital enterprises—a nearly 20% year-on-year increase—now contributing over 40% of the district's tax revenue. This sector is not only driving economic growth but also reshaping lifestyles and fueling the rapid expansion of the cultural and creative industries.

At the end of last year, the Bailian ZX Fun Hub and Shanghai Dimension Travel Festival launched at Wujiaochang Square, elevating Yangpu's status as a center for anime and gaming culture. The event marked the transformation of the former Umax Life Plaza into the Bailian ZX Fun Hub, now the city's largest

commercial landmark dedicated to anime and gaming. Visitor numbers surged to ten times that of the same period in 2023, while consumer spending increased sevenfold.

Looking ahead, how can Yangpu leverage its geographic, talent, and resource advantages to power the anime and gaming industry? How can this thriving sector contribute to the district's broader urban development?

A recent industry roundtable in Yangpu brought together key stakeholders, including the district's commerce commission, cultural and tourism bureau, youth league committee, and investment promotion office. The discussion focused on strengthening support for the sector and fostering a more dynamic eco-

system.

For many anime and gaming enthusiasts, Shanghai is already a "capital of anime culture." Yangpu is seizing the moment, responding to the industry's evolving demands, and strategically positioning itself as a leader in the sector. The district is actively working to enhance the visibility, influence, and economic impact of its anime and gaming industry, while also driving innovation and consumer growth. Going forward, Yangpu aims to strike a balance between emerging and traditional industries, exploring new policy initiatives to support industrial standards, innovation, supply chain expansion, market trends, and industry security.

"This discussion has provided

clear direction for our investments in Yangpu's anime and gaming sector," said one industry professional. "It has strengthened our confidence in the district's future, and we remain optimistic about its continued growth."

Yangpu is fast becoming a hub for China's anime and gaming culture. Leading industry players such as Bilibili and Papergames, along with over 30 upstream and downstream enterprises, have formed a thriving ecosystem. These businesses collaborate with niche stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues, offering a fully immersive, 24-hour experience that includes discounts, cosplay scavenger hunts, and interactive check-in spots.

From New Year's Day to the Spring Festival, Yangpu has rolled out a series of themed events, including the Bailian ZX Guochao IP Festival, Bilibili's New Year's Eve Cheers Night, the Dimension Travel City Walk, and an industry forum, further enhancing the district's reputation as a hotspot for Chinese-style anime and gaming culture.

With over ten universities in its jurisdiction, Yangpu benefits from a strong concentration of young enthusiasts and industry creators, providing fertile ground for the anime and gaming sector to flourish.

In 2024, the district launched the "Elite Creator Program" to attract top global internet content creators and establish a hub for short drama production in Shanghai, with a focus on Chinese-style animation, fashion, and original creative content.

On January 15, 2025, the Yangpu Internet Content Creation Industry Federation was officially established, introducing eight key initiatives to support creators, including rights protection, knowledge development, skills enhancement, wellness pro-

grams, and industry collaboration. During the event, ten outstanding promotional projects by content creators were showcased, including a suona performance of the Black Myth: Wukong theme song.

Moving forward, Yangpu plans to bridge subcultures with mainstream culture, refine policies, and enhance support for content creation, platform operations, and derivative product development.

The newly opened Wujiaochang C Hall · GuWAN Dimension Street has gathered over ten exclusive anime brands, pop-up IP experiences, and themed zones such as the Guzi Market, Otaku Dance Alliance studio, a nighttime Genki Forest lounge, and a cosplay makeup room—offering a 24/7 immersive experience. University Road has also become a favorite among anime fans, featuring a diverse mix of restaurants, bars, cafés, and specialty "Guzi" stores. The integration of commerce, tourism, culture, and entertainment is further accelerating the high-quality development of Yangpu's anime and gaming industry.

As part of the district's transformation, Wujiaochang is evolving into a "dimension-themed community." In addition to the Bailian ZX Fun Hub, Wanda Plaza's C Tower will be entirely revamped into an anime-centric complex, Hopson One will host anime pop-ups and cultural exhibitions, Bailian Youyicheng will focus on young consumers with a broad anime-related retail concept, Suning will leverage its electronics expertise to create a gaming experience zone, and University Road will introduce more specialty "Guzi" stores. With over 50,000 square meters of dedicated anime and gaming spaces, Yangpu is shaping up to be a leading destination for enthusiasts and creators alike.

## Yangpu: A Magnet for Global Innovation

By Cheng Jiajia and Zong He

As a key hub for foreign investment in Shanghai, Yangpu has been enhancing its business environment with the "Warm Yangyang" Foreign Investment Service Initiative, launched in 2024 to provide more tailored and supportive services for international enterprises.

Recently, the Italian Innovation Center was established along Yangpu's waterfront, marking a new chapter in international collaboration. Yangpu also signed a Friendship and Exchange Agreement with Rome's First District, setting the stage for expanded trade and investment, deeper innovation partnerships, and strengthened cultural ties. By leveraging their unique strengths in culture and innovation, the two regions aim to build a dynamic bridge for China-Italy cooperation.

At a recent foreign investment and trade forum, three key trends

were highlighted in Yangpu's evolving business landscape:

**A Growing Hub for Industry Leaders**

Global giants such as Nike, Continental, Siemens, Henkel, Synopsys, Lear, Ford, Thyssenkrupp, IBM, and Dell continue to establish a strong presence in Yangpu. The district is shaping two major corporate and R&D hubs: Dalian Road in the south and GKIC in the north, forming a strategic base for international enterprises.

**Accelerating Technological Innovation**

Henkel's largest consumer goods R&D center in Asia, Nike China's Sports Research Lab, Siemens' Shanghai Yangpu Process Industry Digital Experience Center, Dell's Edge Innovation Joint Lab, Ford China's Design Center, and Continental's joint innovation consortium with the district government and Tongji University have

all established a presence in Yangpu, driving the development of a regional innovation ecosystem.

**Expanding Global Networks**

The San Francisco Bay Area Council, Nordic Innovation Center, Brazil Center, Italian Innovation Center, Swiss Chamber of Commerce, New South Wales China Center, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shanghai Center) have all established a presence in Yangpu, further strengthening international collaborations and widening channels for foreign investment attraction.

According to statistics, Yangpu is currently home to over 1,300 foreign-invested enterprises, employing more than 60,000 people. From January to November 2024, 107 new foreign investment projects were established, marking a 48.6% year-on-year increase, with \$477 million in actual foreign capital utilization. Additionally, six key projects were signed and implemented, par-

ticipating in two rounds of Shanghai's centralized foreign investment signing events, with a total investment exceeding \$400 million.

Since 2024, the district's foreign investment task force has been working collaboratively to implement four key initiatives: facilitating the establishment and expansion of foreign investment projects, enhancing the quality and efficiency of foreign capital utilization, organizing high-profile investment promotion events, and strengthening protections for foreign investors.

At the same time, international trade relations continue to deepen. The Lao Trade and Economic Cooperation Exhibition Hall, the first comprehensive national-level overseas pavilion for Laos, has officially received operating authorization. During the China International Import Expo (CIIE), Yangpu established a Digital Trade Exhibition Zone within the Lao National Pavilion,

showcasing the district's digital economy achievements.

This year's district government work report highlights Yangpu's commitment to upgrading the "Warm Yangyang" foreign investment service initiative in 2025. The district aims to attract and cultivate high-quality foreign investment projects, refine policy support for greater precision, respond to investor needs more swiftly, and improve problem-solving efficiency, ensuring that foreign enterprises feel a stronger sense of belonging in Yangpu. Actively integrating into the global innovation network, Yangpu will leverage platforms such as the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shanghai Center), Brazil Center, and Nordic Innovation Center to strengthen its role as a hub for multinational R&D centers, connect businesses with high-quality resources, and expand its ecosystem of global innovation partnerships.