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Cheong Wa Dae: The Sustainability and Place-Making of a Cultural Landmark, Reflecting Its Role in History and Architecture

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Abstract: Cheong Wa Dae, a site of profound historical and cultural significance, holds great potential to be reimagined as a sustainable cultural landmark that meets contemporary social, economic, and environmental needs. This research explores strategies to preserve its historical identity while transforming it into a dynamic and accessible public space. Using a qualitative approach, this study integrates history and architectural reviews and sustainability frameworks, including alignment with the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Programs were evaluated through the Sustainability Impact Assessment tool to measure their ecological, cultural, and socio-economic impacts. The findings reveal that targeted strategies—such as utilizing the physical environment for global events, promoting biodiversity, and enhancing engagement through cultural and culinary experiences—are essential for sustainable transformation. These initiatives align with 11 of the 17 SDGs, with 7 goals showing a Direct Positive Impact and 4 showing an Indirect Positive Impact. This study concludes that by merging heritage preservation with innovation and sustainability, Cheong Wa Dae can evolve into a vibrant, economically viable public space and a model for cultural place-making, fostering public engagement, economic growth, and long-term ecological benefits.

Keywords: Cheong Wa Dae; modern history of Korea; UN SDGs; sustainable strategy; place-making; cultural landmark

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1. Introduction

Cheong Wa Dae, also known as the Blue House, has stood as a cornerstone of South Korea's modern history since its establishment in 1948. As the official residence and administrative office of the South Korean president, it has been a central stage for national decision-making and a venue for international diplomacy. It is centrally located in the 'old' part of Seoul, with Gyeongbokgung Palace on the south and surrounded by a series of mountains (Inwangsan, Bukaksan) on the north [1]. It is widely believed to have been part of the rear garden of Gyeonbokgung Palace and the location of a separate royal palace during the Goryeo Dynasty (918 A.D~1392 A.D) [2]. The architecture of Cheong Wa Dae, with its distinctive blue tiles and elegant, traditional Korean motifs, not only encapsulates the aesthetic values of the nation but also symbolizes its political heartbeat. However, in 2022, a pivotal transformation occurred: the relocation of presidential functions initiated by President Yoon Suk-yeol transitioned Cheong Wa Dae from a symbol of political power to a cultural and historical public site [3,4].

This research delves into the metamorphosis of Cheong Wa Dae through various political eras under different presidents' administrations from 1988 to the present, examining

how its roles and functions have evolved in response to shifting political landscapes and cultural demands. It employs a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating historical analysis and an architectural review of its main structures—such as the Main Building, the President's Residence, Yeongbin-gwan, and Sangchunjae—to understand its transformations and to explore the potential for its new role as a public space [5].

Despite its formal opening to the public on 10 May 2022, named 'Back to the People', the repurposing of Cheong Wa Dae has faced challenges as well as produced opportunities, and its current use may not fully maximize its potential as a community and a national asset. This study evaluates the effectiveness of existing programs and aligns them with the site's new public function, advocating for a sustainable redevelopment strategy that enhances public engagement and sustainability [6]. By emphasizing these elements, this paper proposes a framework for transforming historical sites into vibrant, sustainable public spaces in ways that respect their heritage while allowing them to fulfill contemporary societal roles.

Through that exploration, this paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on the sustainability of Cheong Wa Dae through sustainable place-making, utilizing its history and architecture, offering insights that could guide the transformation of similar sites worldwide, balancing historical preservation with modern utility.

The two main research questions were the following:

Question 1. *How can the historical significance of democracy and the existing architectural heritage of Cheong Wa Dae be effectively utilized and interpreted to transform it into a sustainable cultural landmark for contemporary place-making*?

Question 2. *What specific strategies can be implemented to sustainably repurpose Cheong Wa Dae into a successful cultural landmark through place-making*?

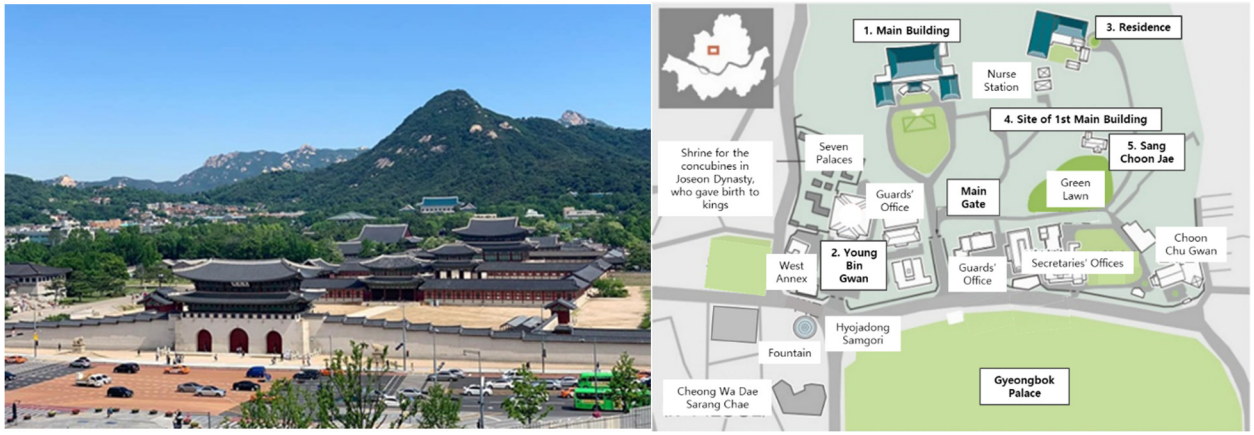
2. Background and Literature Review

2.1. History and Background of Cheong Wa Dae

2.1.1. History of Cheong Wa Dae

Cheong Wa Dae embodies a significant historical narrative that reflects the evolution of governance in Korea. Originally established as the site of a secondary palace during the foundation of the Joseon dynasty by Lee Seong-gye, the area became to be known as the back garden to Gyeongbokgung Palace in 1395 [7]. The Japanese colonial period initiated significant alterations to the site, which involved demolishing some existing buildings and constructing new structures including the residence for the Governor-General. Following Korea's liberation from Japanese occupation in 1945, the building that had served as the residence for the Governor-General was repurposed as the official dwelling for U.S. military commanders, and subsequently, it was designated the Presidential Residence by President Rhee Syngman in 1948 and at that time was called Gyeongmudae [8].

In 1960, under the presidency of Yun Bosun, Gyeongmudae was officially renamed Cheong Wa Dae, a name inspired by the distinctive blue tiles of the Main Building [9]. The complex has since undergone a series of renovations and expansions throughout subsequent presidential administrations, culminating in the construction of the contemporary Presidential Residence and Main Building in the early 1990s, as shown in Figure 1. From President Kim Young-sam onward (1993), the Main Building served as the operational hub for presidential duties until 2022, when Cheong Wa Dae was fully opened to the public following the relocation of President Yoon Suk-yeol's administrative offices. This development signifies a new chapter in the historical trajectory of Cheong Wa Dae, aligning with contemporary democratic values and public engagement.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 1. (**a**) Aerial view of Cheong Wa Dae seen from the south, with Kyungbok gung Palace in the foreground. (**b**) Site map showing the locations of 1. the Cheong Wa Dae Main building; 2. Young Bin Kwan; 3. residence; 4. location of previous main building; 5. Sangchoon jae.

In the preliminary document research, it was found that there had been limited scholarly attention paid to Cheong Wa Dae and that it had received little interest, which we attribute to historical factors contributing to its obscurity. Most studies on Seoul concentrate on the city's formation and development, focusing on urban planning and evolving cityscapes shaped by infrastructural projects rather than individual buildings. Thus, the few studies on Cheong Wa Dae primarily stem from methodological preferences in research. Nonetheless, given its central location near Gyeongbokgung Palace and its prominent visibility from Gwanghwamun and Sejong-ro, Cheong Wa Dae has for a long time symbolized the presidential authority and, historically, authoritarian rule.

2.1.2. Changes in Cheong Wa Dae During Different Presidential Administrations

It is extremely rare for presidents or politicians to engage in retrospective analyses of Cheong Wa Dae from the perspective of its physical space or architectural context. While many of the past presidents have authored memoirs and autobiographies, these predominantly emphasize their political stances and actions during their respective administrations. The following sections are the summaries of the changes to Cheong Wa Dae made during different presidential periods. Noteworthy sources of information include the detailed accounts preserved by Presidents Roh Tae-woo (1932–2021) and Kim Young-sam (1927–2015), who made relevant observations and documented Cheong Wa Dae.

President Roh Tae-Woo (February 1988~February 1992)

President Rho Tae-woo assumed a pivotal role in spearheading the construction of the modern Cheong Wa Dae, making notable achievements in the promotion of Korea's distinctive cultural heritage [8]. His discernment of the inadequacy of the extant Cheong Wa Dae edifice in effectively showcasing Korean culture to visiting dignitaries created the imperative for a novel architectural endeavor. Noteworthy was the collaborative effort spearheaded by Rho Tae-woo, involving influential cultural luminaries—such as the Minister of Culture—in strategic deliberations pertaining to the new edifice's design and development. The historic rock inscription Cheonghajeilbokji, believed to have originated during the late Joseon Dynasty, was uncovered, symbolizing Roh Tae-woo's commitment to advocating for the establishment of a new Cheong Wa Dae.

Upon its completion in 1991, the freshly minted Cheong Wa Dae received a visitation by US President Bush, marking a significant milestone in transnational diplomatic engagements. The architectural aesthetics of the new Cheong Wa Dae, rooted in traditional Hanok

architectural principles, underscore its distinction as the largest structure of its kind in Korea [10]. Its design ethos, lauded for its adept fusion of traditional and contemporary architectural modalities, garnered acclaim for its successful integration of historical and modern architectural elements [11]. The inaugural ceremony, enriched by a performance of the traditional music of the Joseon period, served as a testament to the enduring cultural significance encapsulated within the newly erected edifice [10].

Contrary to the accounts in President Roh Tae-woo's memoirs, the construction of Cheong Wa Dae did not receive a favorable reception from the media or the general public. During this period, there was a pronounced demand for the opening of the Inwangsan and Bugaksan Mountains, adjacent to Cheong Wa Dae, which had been off-limits to civilians since the 1958 [12]. Furthermore, the relocation of ten centenarian juniper trees from Changdeokgung to Cheong Wa Dae faced criticism, as it was perceived as the transfer of a legacy from the Japanese colonial era [13]. The substantial costs associated with the interior finishing and overall construction expenses led to conflicts with Hyundai Group. Public interest in the completion of Cheong Wa Dae was markedly low, a sentiment that correlated with the low approval ratings of the Roh Tae-woo administration. Despite the democratization brought about by the June Democratic Uprising of 1987, President Roh, as a former military officer, struggled to gain significant public support for his policies.

President Kim Young-Sam (February 1993~February 1998)

During President Kim Young-sam's tenure, the issue of opening Cheong Wa Dae and its surrounding areas received significant national attention, symbolizing a break from past military dictatorship regimes and a transition to civilian governance. As a long-standing pro-democracy activist, Kim declared himself the first "civilian president" in 32 years and labeled his administration the "Civilian Government" [14]. His aim was to eradicate the remnants of military dictatorship through bold reforms, emphasizing the sacred sacrifice of the people in the pro-democracy movement. This included the removal of vaults in Cheong Wa Dae used by military dictators for illicit transactions, the demolition of the golf practice range in Cheong Wa Dae, and the simplification of the luncheon menu to cut costs and extravagance [14].

The societal impact of these reforms extended well beyond their political objectives, catalyzing significant socio-cultural transformations in South Korean society. The opening of hiking trails, increased public interest in historical sites like Inwangsan Mountain, development of new tourist attractions, and heightened patronage of museums and galleries reflected a renewed appreciation for traditional artists and writers [15,16]. The Seoul Metropolitan Government's initiatives to create natural history exploration routes further highlighted the administration's commitment to cultural enrichment and transparency.

The civilian government undertook efforts to restore the historical trajectory of democracy by dismantling architectural remnants from the Japanese colonial period and restoring traditional Joseon-era structures. This was an attempt to physically embody the constitutional spirit linking Korea's rich cultural heritage, the independence movement, and the democratization movement. A representative example includes the demolition of the Japanese Governor-General's Residence within the Cheong Wa Dae grounds and the Governor-General's Building, which obstructed Gyeongbokgung Palace, as part of the Gyeongbokgung restoration project.

The dismantling of remnants from past military dictatorship regimes continued, including the demolition of several secret "safe houses" located near Cheong Wa Dae. The transformation of the safe houses into public spaces such as Mugunghwa Hill (named after the national flower) and the Hyoja-dong Sarangbang (a reception area) symbolized the conversion of the secretive political spaces of military dictators into symbols of openness

and accessibility. These efforts reflected a continued commitment to removing the vestiges of authoritarian rule and fostering a more transparent and inclusive political environment in South Korea [17].

President Kim Dae-Jung (February 1998~February 2003)

Succeeding the Kim Young-sam administration, President Kim Dae-jung continued the policy direction of his predecessor by expanding public tours and making efforts to enhance their content. In seeking to improve the tour system, issues concerning the 'tour content', 'waiting times', 'national policy promotion', and 'post-visit management' were identified as key concerns. The administration noted that the tour content was monotonous and lacked 'unique elements that could provide entertainment or emotional impact'. It also pointed out the inadequacy of 'facilities that could be effectively utilized during waiting times' and the absence of 'post-visit management for visitors to the premises'. Additionally, the tours were overly focused on merely 'introducing facilities', and the administration considered leveraging them as opportunities for 'national policy promotion' [18].

President Roh Moo-Hyun (February 2003~February 2008)

On 17 March 2002, the Roh Moo-hyun administration began discussions on renovating the Main Building of Cheong Wa Dae. The core of the discussion focused on reorganizing the functions of the Main Building and centralizing the secretariat, which was previously located at a distance. The renovation goals are worth noting: achieving a 'working Cheong Wa Dae through a horizontal network between the president and staff' and repurposing the Main Building as a 'comprehensive memorial hall for former presidents' to promote progressive historical education [19].

At the same time, the Roh Moo-hyun administration announced plans to simultaneously open Bukaksan Mountain (north of Cheong Wa Dae) to the public, restore the Seoul City Wall, and reconstruct Gwanghwamun Gate. President Roh emphasized the necessity of opening Bukaksan Mountain, which had been monopolized by the Blue House. The overarching goal of the plan was to transform Seoul into a 'UNESCO Historic City'. The plan included fully opening Bukaksan Mountain by installing trails and observatories centered around Sukjeongmun Gate and restoring 7.7 km of the 18.2 km long Seoul City Wall that had been destroyed or lost to recover its original form. Additionally, the administration sought to restore the Woldae (a raised ceremonial platform) in front of Gwanghwamun Gate, the main entrance to Gyeongbokgung Palace, reinstall the Haetae statues (traditional deities of Korea) to their original locations in front of the Woldae, and create a plaza in the area.

President Lee Myung-Bak and Park Geun-Hae (February 2008~February 2013, February 2013~March 2017)

During the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008~2013), public tours of the Blue House continued to expand. Moreover, the construction of the Cheong Wa Dae Sarangchae during the Park Geun-hye administration (2013~2017) stands out as a notable development. The Park administration demolished the Hyojadong Sarangbang, which had been established during the Kim Yong-sam administration, rebuilding and expanding it to create an exhibition and promotional hall.

The Cheong Wa Dae Sarangchae is located near the western gate of Gyeongbokgung Palace, in front of the fountain, giving it a strategic position in which it serves as a connecting space between Gyeongbokgung Palace and Cheong Wa Dae. In 2013, the Park administration opened the Hall on second floor of Sarangchae, creating a space to showcase the history of the current and former presidents as well as Cheong Wa Dae itself. The administration installed a 'media wall' using LED technology [20]. In July of the same

year, the administration opened the Happiness Nuri Hall, a hands-on-experience facility that included a government policy promotion area and a QR lounge utilizing QR code technology [21].

While the creation of the Cheong Wa Dae promotional space outside its main premises was a new initiative, the promotional methods, such as those used for government policy promotion, were not significantly different from previous approaches and thus failed to attract widespread interest.

President Yoon Suk-Yeol (May 2022~Present)

On 10 May 2022, President Yoon Suk-yeol relocated the Presidential Office to Yongsan and opened Cheong Wa Dae fully to the public. To commemorate this event, videos such as 'Goodbye 74 Years of Cheong Wa Dae' were produced. In conjunction with the opening, the Yoon administration launched a website entitled Cheong Wa Dae, Returned to the People (https://www.opencheongwadae.kr/mps, accessed 10 May 2022), where numerous videos were uploaded to explain the significance of opening Cheong Wa Dae within the broader context of restoring Gyeongbokgung Palace and the Seoul City Wall and opening Bukaksan Mountain. The initiative was also framed as part of a broader effort to eliminate authoritarian elements associated with past dictatorial regimes.

Since the June Democratic Uprising in 1987, South Korea has embarked on a path of democratization, moving away from its past under authoritarian regimes. As examined above, Cheong Wa Dae has undergone significant transformations in tandem with these historical shifts [22]. Once a symbol of authoritarianism, it has evolved into an open space that reproduces traditional culture and fosters communication with the public. Additionally, the Cultural Heritage Administration recently published a report titled Preliminary Investigation of the Rear Garden of Gyeongbokgung Palace based on archaeological research conducted at Cheong Wa Dae. This reflects not only the contemporary significance of Cheong Wa Dae but also a concerted effort to restore cultural heritage from Korea's traditional eras, such as the Joseon dynasty.

2.2. Architectural Characteristics of Cheong Wa Dae

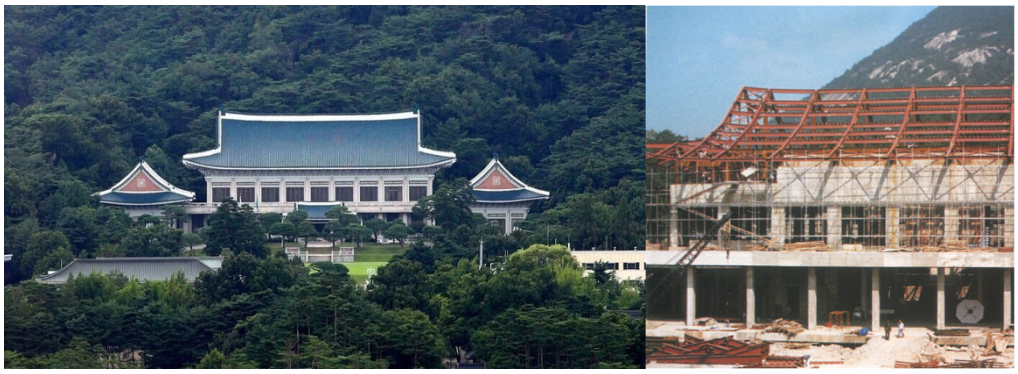
In 1960, with the inauguration of President Yoon Bo-sun (Fourth President of the Republic of Korea), the term "Cheong Wa Dae" was adopted to signify a renewed assertion of Korean identity following the end of Japanese colonization (1910–1945) [23]. During the 1960s, the changes made to Cheong Wa Dae were largely limited to its renaming. Throughout the 1970s, the developmental emphasis at Cheong Wa Dae was on expanding its facilities, notably with the construction of Yeongbin-gwan (Reception Building) and the Administration Building. Subsequently, the focus transitioned towards incorporating traditional elements of Korean architecture into the design of these structures. This architectural shift was not merely aesthetic but also strategic, serving to enhance Korea's diplomatic image through a built environment that communicated national heritage and values.

Following the global exposure Korea received during the Seoul Olympics in 1988, significant architectural developments at Cheong Wa Dae included the completion of the Main Building in 1991 and the construction of the President's Residence and Chunchoo-kwan a year prior. The construction of the main building marked a pivotal moment in the transformation of Cheong Wa Dae. A large structure featuring prominent traditional architectural elements was erected, making it highly visible from nearby Sejong-ro and City Hall [24]. Whereas Cheong Wa Dae had previously been a relatively secluded space, the completion of the Main Building established it as a prominent visual landmark in the Gwanghwamun area, alongside Gyeongbokgung Palace.

A key feature of these structures is their construction from reinforced concrete, representing a modern reinterpretation of traditional Korean architectural styles, which traditionally employed wood. This evolution in materials and techniques underscores a blend of modernity and tradition, reflecting the broader socio-political narratives of South Korea's development on the international stage.

2.2.1. Main Building

Completed during the tenure of President Roh Tae Woo in 1991, the Main Building at Cheong Wa Dae stands out not only due to its large scale but also because it successfully maintains the aesthetic elegance and symmetry characteristic of traditional Korean architecture, thereby avoiding any sense of disproportion [25]. One notable architectural reinterpretation in the Main Building is the elevation of the first floor to function as a platform, creating the illusion that a traditionally styled structure has been superimposed upon it. This enlarged representation of a traditional structure is harmoniously integrated with the surrounding environment through the addition of two smaller flanking wing buildings and a distinct entrance building [26]. Without these design adaptations, the Main Building might have appeared an oversized and incongruous manifestation of traditional architecture, particularly given that it spans two levels, while traditional Korean structures are typically single-storied, as illustruated in Figure 2.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 2. Cheong Wa Dae, Main Building. (**a**) Exterior view (**b**) during construction, showing the roof structure in steel and the rest in GRC (glass-fiber-reinforced concrete).

A striking aspect of the architecture of the Main Building is its fusion of traditional aesthetic forms with modern materials. Although the structure and roof echo the design of a traditional palace, they are constructed from reinforced concrete instead of wood. The roof, adorned with approximately 150,000 blue tiles, exemplifies the classic gabled roofline of historical Korean architecture [27].

Internally, the building comprises variously sized reception halls that predominantly feature Korean-style motifs. These can ben seen in the interior views, in Figure 3. However, an exception is the reception hall designated for first ladies, which deviates in style. Hyundai, the construction firm responsible for these interiors, drew inspiration from both historical Korean palaces and contemporary luxury hotels to design spaces capable of accommodating high-profile receptions and significant ceremonial events. This blend of traditional and modern influences reflects a deliberate architectural strategy to signify Korea's rich heritage alongside its modern achievements.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 3. Interior views. (**a**) Interior corridor view of the Main Building towards the west wing building, note the wooden paneling and the design of the lighting which resembles the head of a dragon from the crowns of Korea; (**b**) Main reception room, traditional door motif and the furniture resemble much of the ambience of old palaces.

2.2.2. Young Bin Kwan

The Young Bin Kwan, translated as 'Reception of Honorable Guests', constructed in 1978, serves as a venue for hosting major gatherings and state visit receptions. The construction of Youngbin-gwan holds particular significance in the architectural history of Cheong Wa Dae, as its design predominantly reflects Western influences while incorporating traditional Korean elements and motifs to create a distinctly Korean atmosphere. It was reported in the newspapers that the design was a compromise between Korean style and the Western style of the reign of Louis XIV [28].

A significant architectural detail of Youngbin-gwan is its exterior cladding, which employs granite sourced from the Jeollabuk-do Iksan region. Additionally, a distinctive design feature can be observed in the construction of the building's four central columns, which are crafted as monolithic structures weighing 60 tons [29], rather than as segmented formations. This is illustrated in Figure 4a. This choice not only enhances their structural integrity but also contributes to the aesthetic continuity of the facade.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 4. Youngbin-Kwan. (**a**) Exterior view of Youngbin-kwan with a series of stone columns that are similar to the Doric order. (**b**) Main reception room on the first floor, where the interior is decorated with Western-style details including grand chandeliers, and where patterns of bay leaves and roses of Sharon, which symbolizes Korea, have been repeatedly used.

Internally, the ground floor houses a large reception hall primarily utilized for state receptions, while the second floor accommodates banquet rooms of varying sizes, tailored to different event scales and functions, as can be seen in Figure 4b [30]. This architectural stratification effectively segregates the ceremonial functions of the building from its

more social uses, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the spatial dynamics required for state functions.

2.2.3. President's Official Residence

The most recent Presidential Residence at Cheong Wa Dae, constructed in 1990 on the directive of President Roh Tae-woo, represents a pivotal architectural and functional shift wherein the public and private spaces of the presidency came to be distinctly segregated [31]. Before the establishment of this separate residence, the family of the president resided on the second floor of the Main Building.

Named 'Insoomoon'—a term symbolizing 'benevolence and longevity'—the building is notable for being the first at Cheong Wa Dae constructed in both the traditional Korean architectural style and using authentic materials. The design features gabled roofs distinguished by double layers of eaves, which are meticulously covered with blue tiles, reflecting both aesthetic values and cultural significance [32]. This construction not only adheres to traditional architectural principles but also symbolically reinforces the residence's role in embodying and preserving the cultural heritage without disrupting the modern functionalities of a presidential estate. These are illustrated in Figure 5.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 5. President's Official Residence, Insoomoon. (**a**) Exterior view of the President's Official Residence, the first building to be built in the traditional Korean manner. (**b**) Many rooms designed for the President's family are finished in a modern Western interior style.

2.2.4. Sang Choon Jae

Constructed in 1983, the building known as 'Sangchunjae', which translates to 'a home where the spring remains', exemplifies authentic traditional Korean architectural design and construction. Its primary function was to showcase traditional Korean architecture to the visitors of Cheong Wa Dae, and it was utilized for hosting small events and receptions. Sangchunjae is one of four main buildings that have historically accommodated the personal and professional needs of Korea's fourteen presidents. Figure 6 illustrate the traditional exterior as well as interior, with furniture that have been custom made to suite the overall ambiance of the architecture. These structures were designed with specific functions in mind, which have evolved over time to adapt to the changing needs of their occupants, particularly with the introduction of a separate residential building to distinguish between living and working spaces.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 6. Traditional Han-ok building, Sangchoon-Jae. (**a**) Exterior view of Sangchoon-Jae showing the beauty of traditional Korean Han-ok built-in wood. (**b**) The interior space is much larger than a traditional domestic-scale Han-ok, in order to hold state events and receptions.

The evolution and development of Cheong Wa Dae are evident in its construction history, which mirrors broader historical and cultural shifts in Korea. Significant phases include the 1970s construction of a guesthouse that blended traditional Korean patterns with Western-style architecture, the 1980s construction of Sangchunjae in the Hanok style, and the 1990s construction of a large building that emphasized Hanok characteristics while incorporating Western techniques. These structures embody Korea's trajectory of "adopting Western architectural techniques while pursuing traditional values", reflecting the nation's effort to balance Western modernism with its cultural identity. This architectural diversity symbolizes Korea's evolving national identity while addressing the functional needs of state activities, serving to represent Korea's cultural stature on the global stage through the delivery of practical spaces for governance. The unique synthesis of traditional Korean and Western styles, while using modern materials and accommodating large assemblies, exemplifies this hybridity. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, these buildings encapsulate pivotal moments in Korea's democratic history, enriching their historical and cultural significance. Collectively, Cheong Wa Dae's architecture stands as both a physical and symbolic manifestation of Korea's cultural heritage, modern evolution, and democratic journey.

3. Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted in this study to produce recommendations for establishing strategic programs for Cheong Wa Dae involved the following steps. First, an analysis was conducted of the programs and events held since its opening to the public, along with a review of visitors' responses based on data collected by the government. Second, strategic programs were designed in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), utilizing analyses provided by the National Research Council for Economics, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Finally, these programs were evaluated using the SDG Impact Assessment tool, a qualitative assessment framework, to assess their potential for ensuring the sustainability of Cheong Wa Dae as a cultural landmark and enhancing its place-making outcomes.

3.1. Analysis of Current Programs and Events

From May 2022, the spaces of Cheong Wa Dae had to take on a completely new role [16]. New programs were set up for public participation, categorized under Performances, Exhibitions, and Education. Since 2022, there have been around 20 performances and 2~7 exhibitions annually. The educational courses were set up from 2024 [23]. These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Performances, exhibitions, and educational courses at Cheong Wa Dae, 2022~2024.

Performances	Exhibitions	Educational Courses
15 Seasonal Concerts 1 Taekwondo Demo 6 Traditional Concerts 3 Night Tours 2 Venue Hires	7 Venue Hires	3 History and Architecture 4 Trees and Forest 1 Venue Hire

In the case of performances, regular music concerts tailored to the seasons are the most frequent, with genres varying, Figure 7 shows the promotional posters for the events during October to December 2024. Traditional music concerts and nighttime opening events are relatively consistent. For educational programs, most activities focus on learning about the architecture and history of Cheong Wa Dae or exploring its forested areas, such as Nokjiwon, to observe its trees and natural environment. Performances, exhibitions, and educational events are all promoted through web posters; however, due to the inconsistent and disjointed naming of the events, it is challenging to discern any coherence or systematic structure to them, let alone understand the nature of the events. While performances, excluding traditional music, encompass a wide variety of genres, they are often named and promoted with only a superficial reference to the genre, more aiming to attract public interest. Exhibitions and educational programs are particularly unstructured, to the point of being unclassifiable. Exhibitions have no discernible principles or standards, while educational programs, despite frequent title changes, repeatedly introduce the cultural and natural open spaces of Cheong Wa Dae [33].



Figure 7. Posters of performances in October~December 2024 (varying from Taekwondo Demonstrations to Classical Music, Opera, and a Night Walk in the Grounds).

Despite the diverse range of events hosted at Cheong Wa Dae, the absence of a clear strategic direction or purpose is evident, resulting in programs that often appear to be organized merely for the sake of holding events or attracting visitors. A critical shortcoming lies in the failure to meaningfully integrate Cheong Wa Dae's extensive historical and cultural heritage into educational initiatives, exhibitions, and performances. Furthermore, there is a notable difficulty in establishing sustained and systematic educational programs, with the current offerings limited to isolated seminars addressing topics such as the architecture, history, and landscape of Cheong Wa Dae. Programs designed for children and families are particularly problematic, as they frequently focus on art and cultural themes that lack substantive relevance to the site's identity. To establish and sustain a coherent cultural identity for Cheong Wa Dae, it is imperative to examine its cultural significance within both

national and international contexts. Such an approach would provide a solid framework for preserving its historical legacy while simultaneously facilitating the creation of a new, meaningful cultural landmark that resonates with contemporary society.

3.2. Review of the Statistical Data on Cheong Wa Dae Visitors

In order to review the visitations of Cheong Wa Dae from its opening, we analyzed data provided by the Korea Tourism Data Lab. Table 2 supplies our analysis of tourism trends in Jongno-gu, where Cheong Wa Dae is located, based on navigation destination types from 2019 to 2023 for both domestic and international visitors. Overall, while domestic and international visitors did not show significant differences in their tourist activities, there were noticeable differences in their selection of tourist destinations.

Table 2. No. of visitors to Jongno-gu in 2019~2023, indicating that Cheong Wa Dae has attracted the interest of international visitor.

Year	Number of Visitors (Per Year)	No. of Navigation Destination Entries	Cultural Tour (%)	Historical Tour (%)	Most Popular Destinations	Tourist Attractions of Interest
2019	141,843,568	2,373,156	684,075 (28.8%)	299,402 (12.6%)	Kyungbok Palace MMA Kwanghwamun	Kyungbok Palace Kyungkyojang (D) Bukchon Village Changduk Palace Insadong (I)
2020	104,020,835	2,239,689	588,564 (26.3%)	225,969 (10.1%)	MMA Kwanghwamun (D) Kyungbok Palace (I)	Kyungbok Palace Donui Museum (D) Bukchon Village Changduk Palace (I)
2021	107,124,443	2,697,643	679,127 (25.2%)	305,496 (11.3%)	NMMA (D) Kyungbok Palace (I) Kwagnhwamun	Kyungbok Palace Iksundong Ground Seesaw
2022	130,160,538	3,275,565	826,406 (25.2%)	415,075 (12.7%)	NMMA (D) Kyungbok Place (I) Kwanghwamun	Kyungbok Palace Iksundong Changduk Palace Insadong (I) **CheongWaDae (I)**
2023	138,906,958	3,252,811	814,416 (25%)	393,663 (12.1%)	Kyungbok Palace NMMA Kwanghwamun	Insadong Iksundong (D) Kyungbok Palace (I) Ground Seesaw **CheongWaDae (I)**

Data from Korea Tourism Data Lab (https://datalab.visitkorea.or.kr/, accessed 10 May 2022), where (D) and (I) indicate domestic and international visitors.

It can be seen from the table above that, excluding the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, tourism in Jongno-gu has steadily increased; however, that trend is characterized by the absence of dramatic growth or significant fluctuations. Cultural and historical tourism accounts for a substantial proportion of the increase, representing approximately 35–40%, with historical tourism exhibiting a gradual upward trend each year. While domestic and international tourists demonstrate differences in their choices of destinations, overall, the palaces from the Joseon Dynasty—such as Gyeongbok Palace, Gwanghwamun, and Changdeok Palace—remain highly popular. Additionally, the Na-

tional Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, located near Gyeongbok Palace, attracts considerable attention.

Notably, since 2021, new areas such as Ikseon-dong and Ground Seesaw Seochon have emerged as popular domestic tourist destinations, diverging from the traditional focus on Insadong. Despite the overwhelming influx of visitors during its initial opening in 2022, the data analysis of Cheong Wa Dae does not reveal significant prominence. This can be attributed to the limited parking facilities in the vicinity, leading most visitors to rely on subway transportation. Nevertheless, the Cheongwadae tends to draw attention, though primarily from international tourists, while domestic visitors exhibit relatively limited interest.

The Cheong Wa Dae Public Opening Task Force under the Cultural Heritage Administration (now the National Heritage Administration) conducted a satisfaction survey of 1000 visitors aged 15 and older from 22 to 26 June 2022. The key findings are shown in Table 3 [24].

Table 3. Visitor satisfaction survey (22 June 2022~26 June 2022).

Questions	Answers
Reasons for Visiting Cheong Wa Dae (Multiple Responses)	Curiosity about the President's working space (36.9%) Because it is a viewing area being opened to the public for the first time (29.0%) Interest in its historical significance in connection with Gyeongbokgung Palace (11.8%) Interest in the surrounding natural environment, such as hiking trails (6.0%)
Future Directions for the Use and Management of Cheong Wa Dae (Multiple Responses)	Preserve its original form as it currently stands, reflecting the life and history of the President (40.9%) A modern historical and cultural space preserving the history and national heritage from the past to the present (22.4%) A new cultural and artistic space, such as a museum or exhibition hall (15.2%)
Priorities for the Management and Operation of Cheong Wa Dae	Prevention of damage and preservation of Cheong Wa Dae's buildings, natural green spaces, and trees (64.3%) Operation of programs that highlight the historical significance and symbolism of Cheong Wa Dae (23.8%)

The above findings indicate that the primary reason for visiting Cheong Wa Dae was curiosity. However, there was also considerable interest in its future preservation and utilization. Key aspects identified for preservation include the life and history of the President as well as the buildings and green spaces of Cheong Wa Dae. In terms of utilization, significant focus was placed on its historical connection to Gyeongbokgung Palace and its potential as a modern historical and cultural space.

Although curiosity accounted for as much as 76% in this initial survey conducted during the early stages of the site's opening, there was a broad consensus on the need to preserve its original form while integrating cultural and historical elements for meaningful use.

The statistical data provided by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism for the period between May 2022 and December 2023 indicate a significant decline in visitor

numbers. This can be seen in Figure 8. By the end of 2023, the number of visitors had fallen to one-third of the initial figures recorded at the time of opening. According to a recent survey conducted by the National Research Council for Economics, Humanities, and Social Sciences, this decline can be attributed to several factors, including the low quality of the visitor experience and unannounced restrictions on access to spaces within the Main Building and the Yeong Bin Gwan.

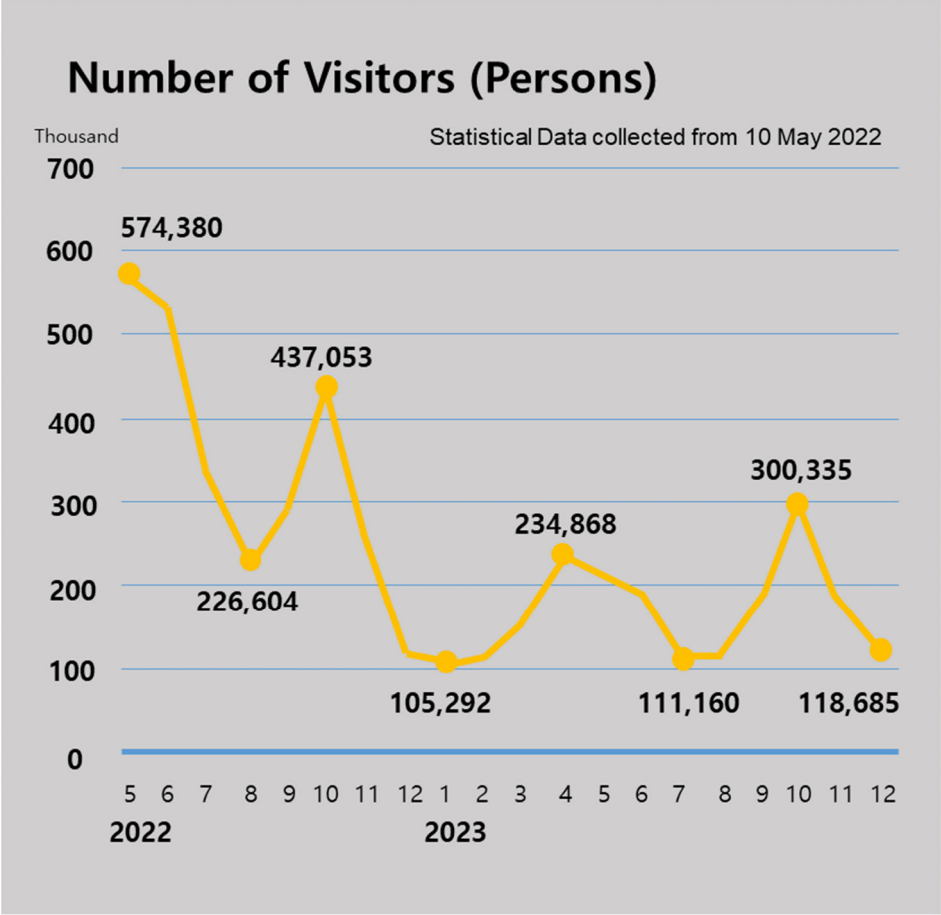


Figure 8. Graph showing the decrease in the number of visitors since opening. Redrawn by the author; original data from the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, published by Dailian News.

Although the government initially projected an annual economic impact of 200 billion Korean Won (approximately USD 145 million) and an estimated influx of three million visitors, these expectations were not realized. Moreover, the government has since ceased publicizing updates regarding the economic impact and instead shifted its focus to promoting the total number of international visitors, which has reached 600,000. This figure has been framed as evidence of Cheong Wa Dae's establishment as one of Seoul's premier tourist attractions.

4. Discussion

From our analysis of current programs and events, including their content and their alignment with the historical and cultural values of Cheong Wa Dae, as well as statistical data, several insights can be drawn.

First, to re-establish Cheong Wa Dae as a cultural landmark rooted in its historical significance, educational initiatives should be prioritized. These initiatives can encompass a broad range of activities, such as permanent exhibitions, special exhibitions, and educational programs designed for various age groups. Educational programs should be

more tuned to maintaining the beliefs and values of the past and the present, to contribute towards creating new values, attitudes, and behaviors within society [34]. Such programs should emphasize the development of democracy and the historical, political, and cultural importance of Cheong Wa Dae [35,36].

Second, creating a sense of "place" is essential to transforming Cheong Wa Dae into a meaningful destination. This can be achieved through "place-making" strategies that leverage its unique physical environment. Examples include hosting high-profile events such as summits and conferences on global issues in Cheong Wa Dae's distinctive spaces, promoting its extensive grounds and nearby hiking trails (such as those on Bukaksan and Inwangsan Mountains), and offering educational programs focused on biodiversity, landscape preservation, and green space cultivation.

Third, the culinary traditions associated with Cheong Wa Dae provide an opportunity to highlight its cultural heritage. Programs could include experiences centered on the meals historically enjoyed by past presidents and state guests, as well as curated menus showcasing the unique culinary offerings served during global diplomatic visits.

Finally, incorporating sustainability into the programs can enhance awareness of energy-saving and reuse practices, positioning Cheong Wa Dae as a model for environmentally friendly initiatives with a reduced ecological footprint. This sustainability theme could extend across all proposed activities, serving as a testbed for innovative, green solutions. This is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of key initiatives under the four categories, against the SDGs that can be addressed.

	Education (Historical Significance)	**Cultural Landmark**	**Experience of Culinary Tradition**	**Promotion of Sustainability**
Social Sustainability (SDGs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 16)	Learning from permanent and special exhibitions of past presidents' lives and work and of key events of Korea's democratic history	Learning from utilizing 253,505 m^2 of landscape of Cheong Wa Dae, preservation and maintenance	Themed cooking classes (culinary culture of Cheong Wa Dae)	Ecological education programs (e.g., biodiversity of the site) Green initiatives
Environmental Sustainability (SDGs: 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)	Learning from global political events and issues	Utilizing 253,505 m^2 as learning opportunity, hiking trails and tours	Themed cafe and restaurant with a cultural and historical narrative	Platform for energy saving and reuse and energy production initiatives
Economic Sustainability (SDGs: 8, 9, 10, 12)	Learning from global political events and issues	Venue for hosting high-profile summits and conferences	Food festivals: Global and local partnerships, attract more visitors	Adaptive reuse of the existing structures

SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals: The ideation and implementation will require not only preservation efforts but also collaboration between the government's authorities, international organizations, the private sector, and local communities.

All programs should align with the overarching goal of preserving and promoting the physical and symbolic value of Cheong Wa Dae. Consistency in thematic identity is critical; for instance, a classical concert could integrate themes of global partnership, equity, or cultural hybridity, referencing the architectural duality of Cheong Wa Dae as a fusion of traditional Korean and Western styles, for example. Each program must offer a distinctive representation and interpretation of Cheong Wa Dae's historical, cultural, and architectural

significance as a way of ensuring the place-making of Cheong Wa Dae as a unique and sustainable cultural landmark.

The key programs outlined above have been strategically aligned with the principles of sustainability at Cheong Wa Dae, while also addressing the broader framework of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To evaluate their effectiveness, the programs were assessed using the qualitative Sustainability Impact Assessment tool [37]. This evaluation method systematically determines whether individual actions and programs result in Direct Positive, Indirect Positive, Indirect Negative, or Direct Negative outcomes or have No Impact.

The 17 SDGs are divided into 169 specific targets and 232 unique indicators, providing a comprehensive framework for assessing their impacts. The Sustainability Impact Assessment tool applied to the aforementioned programs yielded the results shown in Figure 9.

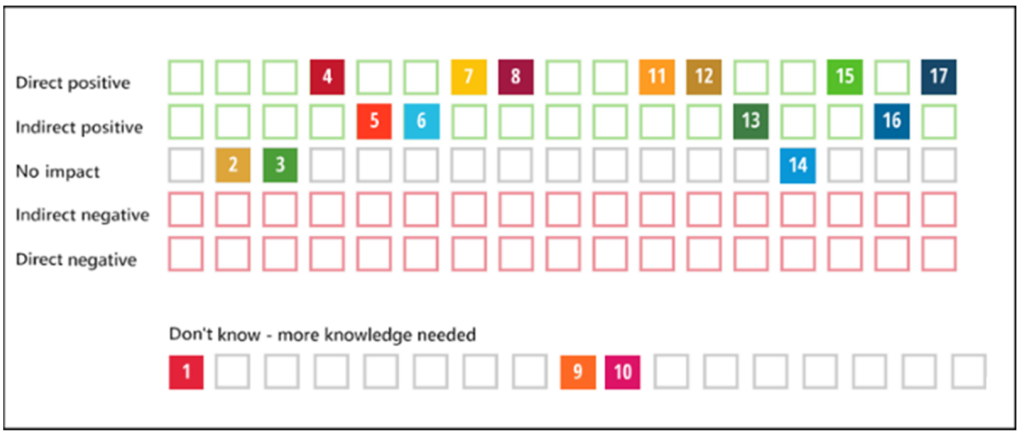


Figure 9. Results of the level of SDGs' impact.

The programs designed to reinvent Cheong Wa Dae align with 11 of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrating their comprehensive approach to sustainability. Among these, seven goals are projected to generate a Direct Positive Impact, specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). These goals reflect the programs' capacity to directly contribute to critical areas such as education, energy efficiency, sustainable economic growth, urban development, resource management, biodiversity conservation, and global partnerships.

In addition, the programs address four goals that are expected to produce an Indirect Positive Impact. While not directly targeting these SDGs, the activities nonetheless foster supportive conditions that align with the broader objectives of sustainability. Such impacts may manifest through secondary benefits, such as promoting public awareness, encouraging responsible behaviors, or strengthening the overall infrastructure required to achieve the SDGs.

This alignment underscores the programs' potential to position Cheong Wa Dae as a model of sustainable development, combining cultural preservation with ecological responsibility and global collaboration.

5. Conclusions

The reinvention of Cheong Wa Dae as a new cultural landmark presents a unique opportunity to merge its historical, cultural, and environmental significance with contem-

porary needs for social, economic, and ecological sustainability. This research highlights the potential of Cheong Wa Dae to transcend its historical identity and evolve into a dynamic public space—a "place" that fosters repeated visitation, engagement, and meaningful connections [38]. By aligning its programs with the principles of place-making, sustainability, and cultural innovation, Cheong Wa Dae can be reimagined as a symbol of both heritage preservation and forward-looking development.

The historical and democratic legacy of Cheong Wa Dae, combined with its rich architectural heritage, provides a strong foundation for transforming it into a sustainable cultural landmark. By interpreting and presenting its historical value through educational programs, exhibitions, and cultural narratives, Cheong Wa Dae's role can be embodied as a living representation of Korea's democratic evolution and cultural identity.

This research identified specific place-making strategies that ensure Cheong Wa Dae's sustainable transformation into a vibrant, accessible, and economically viable landmark. These strategies include the following:

1. Leveraging its physical environment to host global events, promote natural landscapes, and facilitate biodiversity initiatives.
2. Developing programs that emphasize cultural and culinary experiences, as well as enhancing visitor engagement through heritage-based offerings [39].
3. Incorporating principles of sustainability, and aligning programs with the UN SDGs, to ensure long-term ecological and social benefits.

By combining these strategies with consistent thematic narratives, Cheong Wa Dae can be evolved into a space not only with preserved historical and cultural significance but also achieving repeated visitation, economic growth, and public connection [40]. This transformation will establish Cheong Wa Dae as a model of sustainable place-making, where tradition and innovation coexist to meet contemporary needs. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Jeff Malpas' concept of place as a social construct [38], Henri Lefebvre's emphasis on the production of lived spaces, and Aleida Assmann's "Spaces of Memory", ref. [35] the site's redevelopment can address its historical and modern identities holistically. By fostering interactive engagement, public accessibility, and emotional connection, Cheong Wa Dae has the potential to transition from a passive site of observation to an inclusive, dynamic cultural space, which will sustain its relevance and significance for future generations.

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