

# THE WAGNER PLANNER

Newsletter of the NYU Urban Planning Student Association

MARCH 2005

The Pudong skyline with the Oriental Pearl Tower, left; photo by Christina Mo

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## The Past and the Future Meet in Shanghai

By Christina Mo  
Staff writer

Shanghai embraces the future. The trip from the modern Pudong Airport, 18 miles outside of the city, to Shanghai is a literal blast. A magnetic levitation train travels at a speed of 430 km/hr (267 mph) and covers the 18 miles to the city center in exactly 8 minutes. A taxi takes 45 minutes, if there is no traffic.

With an official population of over 10 million, and another 10 million in the outskirts, Shanghai's rapid growth has transformed the city in the past 15 years. There are more skyscrapers in Shanghai than the entire West Coast of the United States. China currently consumes 40% of the world's concrete and 90% of its steel. In the mid-90s, the peak of Shanghai's construction boom, it is estimated that anywhere between 25% and 50% of the world's construction cranes were in Shanghai. In 1990, the Pudong section of Shanghai was farmland; today it is home to 3,000 buildings over 18 stories, with another 3,000 planned. Pudong is now home to some of the world's tallest buildings, including the massive Jin Mao Tower (1,400 ft.) and the Oriental Pearl TV Tower (1,500 ft.).

The explosive population growth has forced Shanghai to plan extensively for

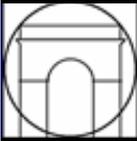
the future. The five story Urban Planning Exhibition Hall sits at the center of the city's largest public space, Renmin Square. The hall houses a large-scale model of the future Shanghai, which at over 100 feet across makes it the largest city model in the world. It contains plans for new communities, buildings, and infrastructure improvements, including plans for 11 new subway lines, 7 light rail lines, and a third ring-road expressway. Epic urban planning projects are the city government's strong point.

Along with the new construction comes an astonishing rate of destruction. An estimated 20 million sqft (4,900 acres) of building space has been demolished since 1988. Shanghai creates 30,000 tons of construction waste a day.

On the ground floor of the Urban Planning Exhibition Hall is a bronze relief that spans 20 feet entitled "Monument to the People's Great Relocation." It depicts the eviction of Shanghai residents from their homes for the new developments. The Communist government owns 90% of the residential homes and has the authority to remove tenants whenever it desires. Since the government owns the Hall, the people are depicted as happy to have their homes bulldozed for the greater good of Shanghai.

One form of architecture being de-  
(SHANGHAI continued on page 12)

Urban Planning Anytime at: <http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/urbanplanning>



THE **WAGNER PLANNER**

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*The Wagner Planner* is the independent student newsletter of the Urban Planning Student Association (UPSA) of the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at NYU. *The Wagner Planner* is edited and produced by *The Wagner Planner* staff and the Editors-in-Chief, Nicole J. Dooskin and Jordan Anderson. All currently enrolled MUP students, alumni and faculty are encouraged to submit material to *The Wagner Planner*. Just send an email to [wagner\\_planner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:wagner_planner@yahoogroups.com).

**This Month's Contributors**

**Christina Mo (photography, writing)**

Christina Mo is a second year planner and ate dumpings every day that she was in China.

**David Brito (writing, editing)**

David spent the fall 2004 semester studying in Barcelona.

**Douglas Adams (photography, writing)**

**Eric Galipo (photography, editing)**

**John Richardson (photography, writing, editing)**

John's street name is Hershey.

**Jolene Saul (editing)**

**Jordan Anderson (photography)**

Wherever you're going, Jordan thinks you ought to ride a bike.

**Nicole Dooskin (photography, writing)**

Nicole can't decide if she is an urban environmentalist or an environmental urbanist, but that's ok.

**Olivia Stinson (photography, writing, editing)**

Olivia is studying international development planning.

**Susan Willetts (editing)**

Susan is originally from North Carolina. Spending four years in Jersey City, witnessing the highs and lows of revitalization, sparked her interest in urban planning.

**Uma Deshmukh (writing, editing)**

## Letter From the Editor: Worldwide Planning

**P**lanning is, by nature, a place-based profession. It follows that New York City-based students of urban planning would feature Gotham prominently in their projects and pieces. We can easily rattle off arguments for and against the stadium, the obstacles to building affordable housing, or our top ten MTA gripes. However, planning is a discipline that is relevant and needed throughout the country and the world. Recent events like the Tsunami highlight infrastructure and communication needs. News reports about China's three-billionth citizen bring to mind the need for efficient housing and human services. Reports from the Texas Transportation Institute on congestion reminds us of how much time we spend getting to where we are going, and why transportation planning is vital.

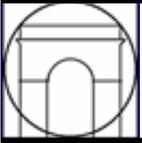
This past December, I explored the sights, sounds, and tastes of India, a country with over 1 billion citizens in a land mass a bit larger than one-third the size of the United States. In addition to the mystical and the beautiful, I also witnessed agricultural villages without electricity, small towns suffering from frequent power failures and garbage problems, and major cities choking in pollution from never-ending traffic. India faces the challenge of many industrializing countries: a large migration to its urban areas. Worldwide, urban populations are growing, and India follows this trend. Its need for improved transportation systems, more housing, and reliable energy sources represents a daunting task for planners and policy makers.

This issue of the Wagner Planner is dedicated to planning outside of New York City. Our staff comes from all over the country and seems to travel all over the world. Christina Mo explored Shanghai this winter and reports on her experience. Doug Adams investigates the unique planning system in Houston, Texas. David Brito, enamored by all things Castilian, diagrams land use practices in Barcelona. Uma Deshmukh reports on the experience of non-profit groups providing aid to Tsunami victims in India. Olivia Stinson leads us through planning needs in Ghana via a photo essay. She also talks to Paul Smoke, the director of Wagner's International Program. These stories help explain how the lessons we learn in New York City can be applied worldwide. At the same time, they remind us that each place has its own special planning needs and issues.

Namaste,  
Nicole Dooskin

World map courtesy CIA Fact Book





## Where There's Paul Smoke...

By Olivia Stinson  
Staff writer

**P**aul Smoke is Associate Professor of Public Finance and Planning and Director of International Programs. Professor Smoke lives in the West Village, likes impressionism and says the last good book he read was *The Death of Vishnu* by Manil Suri.

*You came to NYU from MIT five years ago. What was your motivation?*

MIT has one of the most established urban planning programs in the country, but coming to NYU, and especially the Wagner School was a great opportunity to cultivate a new international development curriculum that blends concepts and skills, and balances policy and implementation in a place that is on the rise. Although it has been a huge administrative challenge, the international focus we are developing is increasingly allowing planners to develop values and skills that they will need to function in the working world.

*What areas of the world have worked in? Which ones were the most compelling, interesting and/or complicated?*

I started out studying Latin America, but an opportunity came up to work with the Harvard Institute for International Development in Kenya - which I took - and stayed for five years. Since then, I have worked in multiple African countries, particularly Uganda and South Africa. Also, through the Institute, I eventually worked in Indonesia and later moved on to Cambodia and other countries. All the places have been interesting and challenging in different ways, and I have learned how planners can make themselves relevant.

*What is the mindset with which planners enter into this complicated and compelling field? How do planners prepare themselves for some of the challenges we are likely to encounter?*

Unless you are willing to put up with challenges and frustrations, it is just the wrong field. It's the nature of the business. You have to be well prepared, and have a set of skills, but you also have to go into field situations with an open mind. One of the great mistakes in working with developing countries is having a preconceived notion of what to do, or even how to figure out what to do. You have to have an entry point, a tool-kit, a methodology to get you started, but then you have to open your mind to understand the situation and be resourceful to help craft solutions. Otherwise, two things are going to happen: one is that no one is going to listen to you, and second you are going to be deeply frustrated. There are roles for people who do short-term technical work, but you can't expect to have a big impact if you don't put in the time to learn the place, to understand how things function, and to bring things forward.



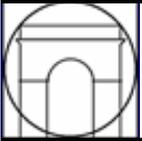
Photo by Olivia Stinson

*How do these cultures, communities, governments react to foreign experts? How do you think development initiatives started by the international community, and based on models not found in a particular culture, affect, disrupt or alter cultures?*

In the end, it comes down to how you approach things. There is a stark level of reality that if we don't provide healthcare, education and job opportunities, peoples' lives are not going to get better. Sometimes culture is an obstacle to progress, but things inevitably change as places get drawn into the world. People are wary of foreign experts because they are too used to being lectured at, but a lot depends on how they view you and if they are used to having good experiences or bad ones. The way to gain local trust is to not be over-bearing, to be respectful, to listen, to understand where people are coming from. If you are attentive, respectful and flexible, people will understand what you have to offer and what you don't have to offer - and so will you.

*Any words of advice for planners interested in international development?*

It is important to be broad-based if you are going to work as a planner in the developing world. Many countries don't need physical planner - they have them already. They need help solving urban problems with deep social, institutional and political dimensions. Try to do interesting things. It is not particularly necessary to have a regional specialization, but seize opportunities to go places, even that you don't necessarily want to go to (in a good way).



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## Planeamiento en Barcelone

By David Brito  
Staff writer

It is no exaggeration to say that the legal basis of planning in Spain is a world apart from that of the U.S. or most other countries. There is a system of planning built by a very proactive, protectionist government that sees land as a limited public resource and profits generated by land development as something the private sector must share with the public. Because the law mandates such things as minimum levels of land concessions and developer responsibility for urbanization costs, there is a limit to how much a developer can negotiate their way out of such responsibilities. This can make for a challenging experience for a foreign developer wanting to do business in the country, as was the case with the recent 84-acre Diagonal-Mar ([www.diagonalmar.com](http://www.diagonalmar.com)) mixed-use project built in Barcelona by American developer Hines Interests.

Those involved in the Spanish planning profession are proud to say that only Colombia and Japan have systems that even resemble the Spanish legal system regarding property rights and public planning. But what makes Spain so unique? Five key factors differentiate its system:

### 1. A multi-tiered land ordination system

Two distinct layers of land designation together comprise the “duties and

rights” of all land. “Classification” is the same as zoning. However, underneath the land’s zoning is “qualification” -- which designates land as “urban”, “urbanizable” or “nonurban” - and each qualification entails different property rights. Land can be designated as nonurban (not developable) for one of three reasons: for its environmental value; so it remains available for agricultural production; or simply because the municipality determines that it does not need the land to meet projected demand for housing, office or other space. To an American, this may seem like an invasion of property rights or reminiscent of communist central planning. However, wouldn’t it be a nice tool to have for those interested in slowing sprawl?

### 2. Equal distribution of “duties and rights”

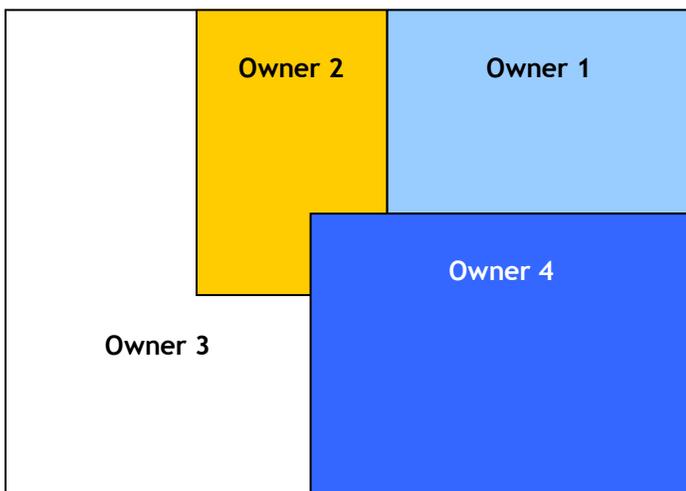
Spanish law indicates that an individual landowner should not be burdened or rewarded more than other landowners. When the municipal government creates a plan for an area, it divides the total area into smaller and more manageable districts called “sectors.” In order for property owners in these sectors to take advantage of their development rights, they are first required to pay for and execute the building of all roads, sidewalks, parks and other infrastructure the city designates as necessary in that sector. The law stipulates that all property owners

pay their share of these costs in proportion to the percentage of property they own in the sector. A property owner who has 10 percent of the land in the sector will pay 10 percent of the costs of preparing the sector for building. This is the equal distribution of “duties.”

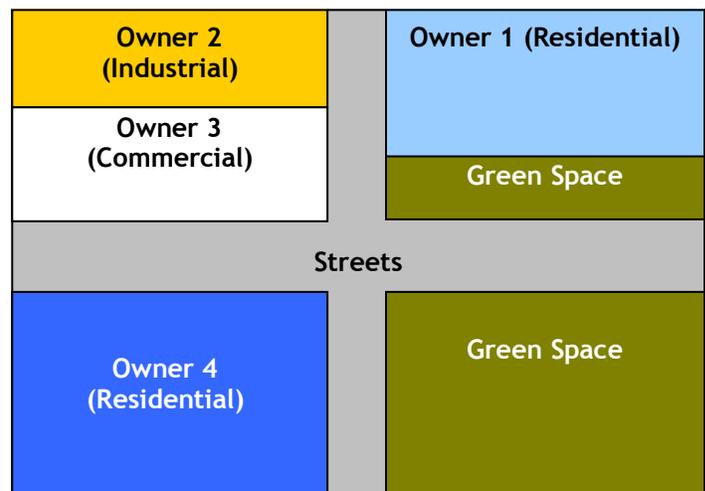
Likewise, property owners are entitled to their fair share of “rights,” or benefits, receiving development rights in proportion to the percentage of land they contribute to the sector. But rather than distributing resulting land plots (after land concessions are subtracted) based simply on square footage of resulting development rights, these rights are normalized for equal distribution of economic benefits. For example, because residential development rights are more valuable than industrial development rights, a homogenization coefficient is used to normalize all rights. Thus, developers receive their fair share in terms of economic value. A landowner who contributes 10 percent of the property to the sector will get property with development rights that represent 10 percent of the economic value of the sector, but not necessarily 10 percent of the total land.

### 3. Mandatory land concessions

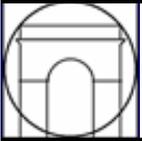
Municipal governments are legally required to receive land concessions from developers for open space, public facilities and affordable housing. The Spanish constitution says development



Sector before reparcelization



Sector after reparcelization



projects (except in some very built-up urban areas) must cede to the municipal government 10 percent of land for open space and 5 percent for other infrastructure such as schools, streets and sidewalks. While the municipality can design a plan that demands a higher percentage of land concessions, these are set as minimums. Developers must also cede 10 percent of the calculated economic value of a sector to the municipality to pay for affordable housing, paid to the city in land or cash. Unlike the customary system of negotiation in the United States, a weak municipal government cannot legally yield to developer pressure to accept negligible land concessions for public purposes.

#### 4. Reparcelation

The actual distribution of land occurs through a process called reparcelation, which is essentially land swapping. Once all required land concessions are subtracted, the remaining land of a sector is divided up among the landowners (as per the economic value system described above). While the law says each landowner's resultant parcel should be located as close as possible to the original parcel, it does not always happen this way. As seen in the examples of a sector before and after reparcelation, there may be a park or other public amenity located on that landowner's original parcel that may prevent such a distribution. Therefore, a landowner may begin with a plot of land in one part of a sector and end up with a completely different plot. The advantages of the reparcelation system are that every landowner will receive their fair share of the economic value of a sector, and the city generally does not need to condemn land in order to do such things as convert an entire plot into a park.

#### 5. Mandatory development within a specified time period

As described earlier, the amount of land available for development is determined by the government based on projections on the demand for housing, office space, industrial space and public space. Because the plans are based around these projections, the municipality expects the landowners to actually build when they receive development rights. Therefore, the landowners are often given a limited time period (e.g., five years) to act on these rights. If a landowner doesn't build, the city can then re-zone and re-"qualify" the land. This creates an incentive to quickly build as per the plan.

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**Municipalities expect landowners to build when they receive development rights. If a landowner doesn't build within a limited time period, the city can re-zone and re-qualify the land.**

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So how does this system of planning play out in a real project? A project called 22@, which rezoned and redeveloped the entire Poble Nou district of Barcelona, provides a good demonstration. The idea was to convert the former industrial area into a district merging the creativity and chicness of SoHo with the emphasis on information technology of

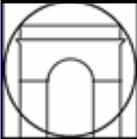


Strategic interventions in Poble Nou

Silicon Valley. Using an increase in development rights to help pay for much of it, the municipal plan required developers to provide more public space, to remove many industrial buildings and complete the street grid, and to extend the vital Avenida Diagonal—a long boulevard planned since 1859 but only built to the northwestern edge of the neighborhood. In short, the area was to be entirely transformed.

The plan here for a 42-acre "sector" in the northeastern part of Poble Nou demonstrates the process. The sector includes 2.2 million square feet of transformed floor space. Through land concessions, the municipality receives about 20 percent of the land for public facilities, open space and infrastructure. With the city having rezoned the area and planned public facilities and open space, the property owners then go about designing a plan to reparcel the land and share the costs.

In short, the Spanish planner has very different tools with which to work. While some in Spain believe it is a backward system not adapted to the liberalized economies of the 21st century, a planner can readily appreciate the position of strength that the government possesses in urban matters. There are some signs that the system is being forced to adapt. The Diagonal Mar project mentioned earlier resulted in many public concessions that the government was not accustomed to making, including reductions in the amount of public space provided and the semi-privatization of space that has been seen in some New York projects.

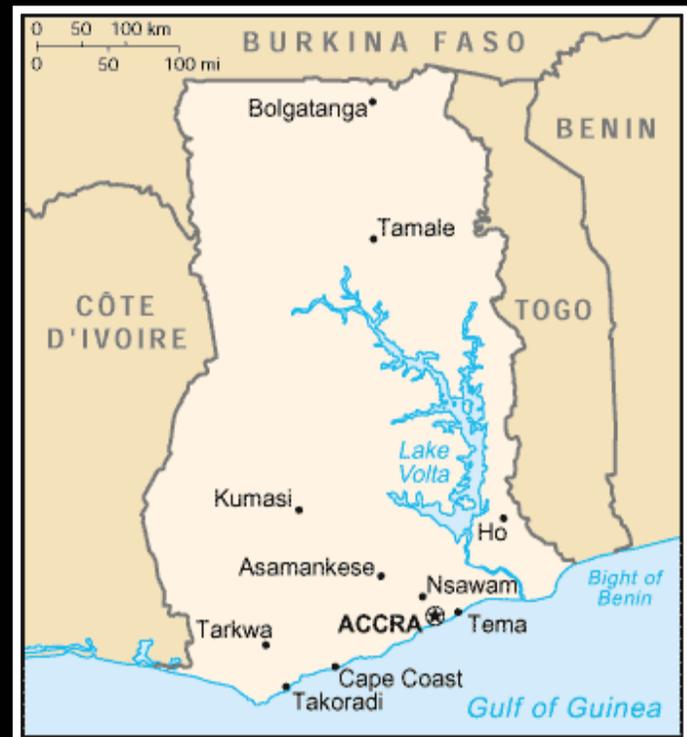


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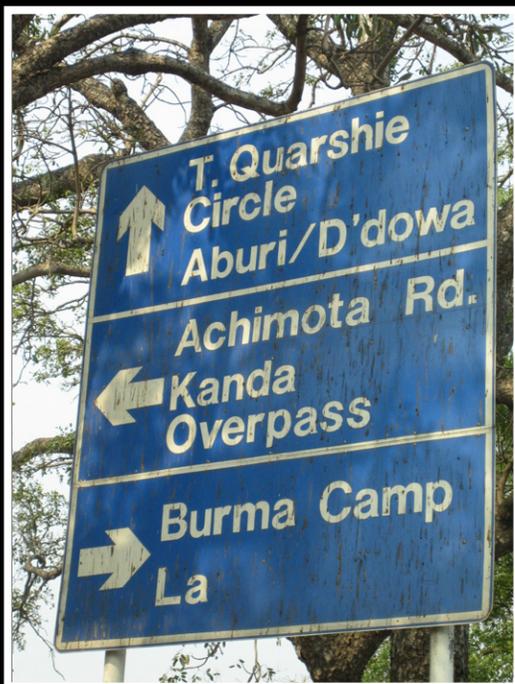
## Photo Essay: The City of Accra, Ghana

By Olivia Stinson  
Staff writer

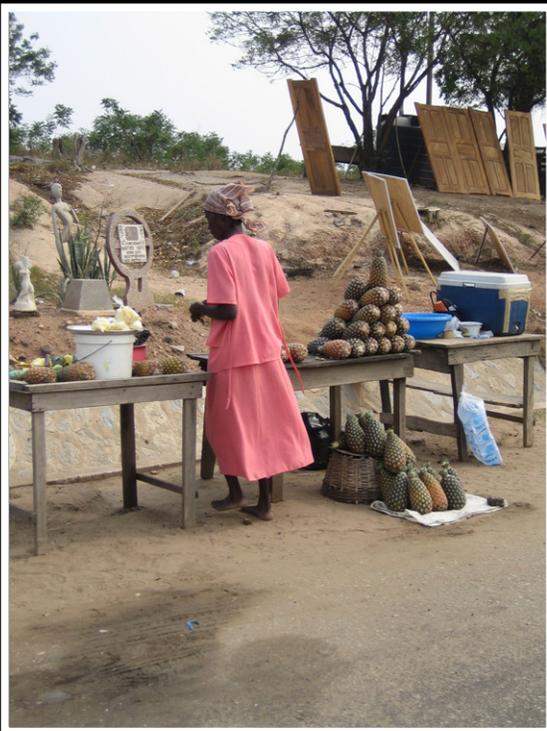
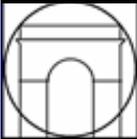
Accra, where half the population lives below the World Bank's absolute poverty threshold of \$307 per year, is considered one of West Africa's most prosperous cities. The economy in Accra continues to grow steadily, but the lack of formal employment opportunities results in a vast, highly visible informal sector comprised of mostly food vendors. More than two thirds of Ghana's manufacturing is centered in the greater metropolitan region, which has become increasingly industrialized with cocoa processing plants, aluminum smelting, oil refinement, and concrete factories. Other than a few large administrative buildings, most of the colonial architecture constructed by the British has disappeared. Modern nationalist buildings and monuments now characterize the urban. Accra's population continues to grow rapidly due to continued rural-urban migration.



Source: CIA World Factbook



A street sign pointing to some of Accra's main landmarks. Tetteh Quarshie Circle, the world's largest roundabout, has been under construction for a number of years. Situated at the intersection of the main roads from the north of the city, Togo to the east and Côte D'Ivoire from the west, the circle is currently the scene of crushing traffic jams and is among Accra's largest infrastructure projects.



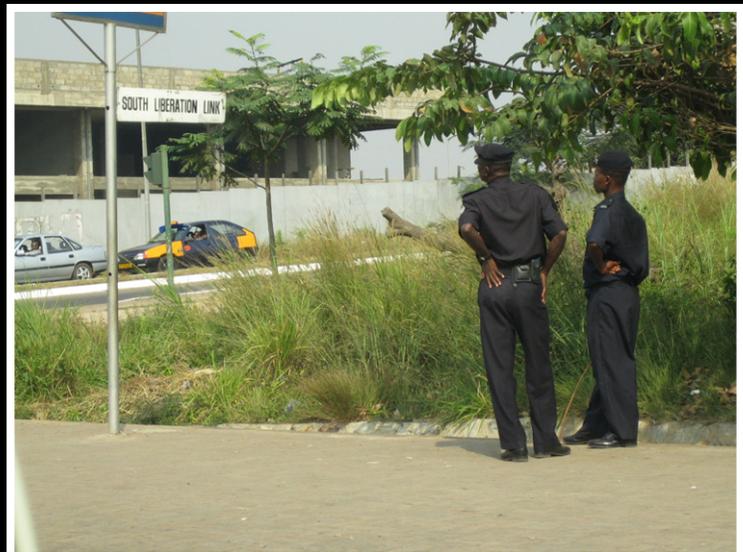
Women run many of Accra's micro-businesses to supplement household income, selling seasonal fruits and vegetables or bags of water.



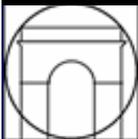
A woman walking in Jamestown, a labyrinthine slum in the southern part of Accra, and one of its oldest neighborhoods.



People waiting for a *trotro*, the mini-buses that are Accra's principal form of public transportation. The average cost of a trip is about 500-1000 cedis, between 5 and 15 cents.



The police maintain a constant presence along the main roads and central shopping areas. Accra is considered one of the safer cities in West Africa.



## India Faces New Planning Challenges After Tsunami Disaster

By Uma Deshmukh  
Staff writer

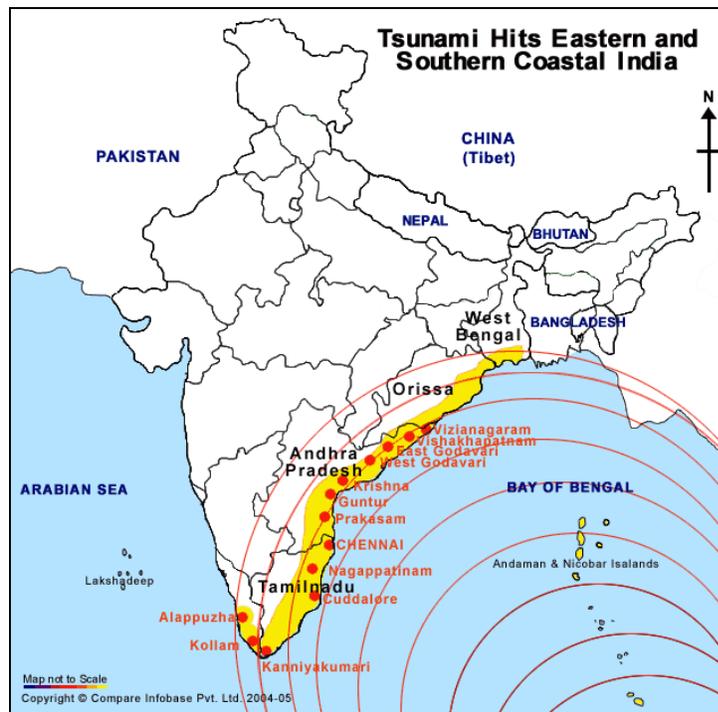
Less than three months after the tsunami violently struck the coast of South India, local organizations and community members in Tamil Nadu and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are making plans to steadily move beyond the emergency relief stage of their efforts to begin tackling the colossal issue of reconstruction and redevelopment in the region.

With nearly 11,000 dead, and over 5,000 missing, thousands of disaster survivors in South India are now faced with the task of rebuilding and restoring their ravaged communities. Among the top priorities are short and long-term housing and infrastructure development, restoration of livelihood for damaged coastal communities, community participation in planning and redevelopment efforts, and equity in rehabilitation processes. The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), a regional network of grassroots community organizations, recently released a report outlining detailed recommendations for effective and inclusive planning practices in the affected areas.

Housing construction is a central issue for community members. ACHR reports that an estimated 400,000 people were left homeless in India. Although the provision of temporary shelters continues to be a main concern, focus is steadily shifting towards preparations for permanent, sustainable housing development for displaced peoples. As scattered and makeshift relief camps with temporary housing are being established for survivors, ACHR recommended establishing short-term accommodations for community members situated as close as possible to their former settlements. This temporary arrangement will restore a sense of unity for traumatized people, and facilitate the beginning of interactive planning discussions for permanent housing and community development.

ACHR also drew from the expertise of representatives from Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan, an umbrella organization that was formed after the earthquake that devastated Gujarat in 2001. Abhiyan is noted for successfully leading a collaborative effort for post-disaster rehabilitation in Gujarat, and was called on by ACHR to help organize development programs in Tamil Nadu. Their projects for long-term housing construction involve the design and building of cyclone-proof structures with technical assistance from the Foundation for Building Technology & Innovation. This goal suggests an intensifying focus on durable and sustainable housing, unlike the tenuous, poorly constructed structures that previously existed and could never withstand such devastating forces.

Furthermore, attention has concentrated on the restoration of livelihoods in the coastal fishing community. In addition to repairing damaged boats and fishing equipment, the recently formed Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Coordination (TRRC) in Tamil Nadu stressed the need for inclusion of

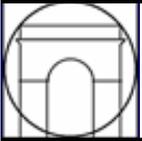


Map courtesy [www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com)

all affected laborers in the relief efforts. These workers include farmers involved in coastal agriculture, salt pan workers, and women working in limestone production. Due to the widespread environmental effects of the tsunami, both along the coast and inland, comprehensive evaluation of the effects on the coastal and ecological habitats is necessary to determine the impact on the livelihoods of coastal laborers.

Considering the environmental impacts, stakeholders must also deal with the zoning along the coastline. While rapid redevelopment is a priority, environmental protections in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), which encompasses India's entire coastline, must be ensured. Current CRZ policies divide coastal regions into three zones placing various restrictions on the distance of allowable development from the coast. In CRZ I, no construction is permitted within 500 meters from the coastline, while CRZ II and III allow low-level activity and limited development.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, concerns have been raised around the enforcement of CRZ policies, as many of the damaged structures along the coast in Tamil Nadu were built too close to the shoreline. In light of the disaster, those in favor of strengthening the CRZ rules feel that construction along the coast is dangerous and should be strictly prohibited. Furthermore, environmentalists believe that coastal development is ecologically unsound, and that natural elements, such as mangroves and coral reefs, can offer protections against floods and related disasters. Currently, CRZ restrictions are more rigid in areas with fragile eco-systems.



According to an article recently published in the Indian Express, the Environment Ministry has begun revisiting the policies with the possibility of creating area-specific rules that may ease restrictions where there are no identified ecological problems.

As community organizations begin development efforts, plans to rebuild communities in their previous locations are often at odds with CRZ regulations and other environmental protections. In many cases, residents were living along the coast for lack of alternatives or of livable space further inland, due to severe overcrowding. In addition, fishing communities have historically located close to the shoreline to facilitate access to the sea, the primary source of their income. As a result, some organizations have requested exemptions from CRZ restrictions, allowing villagers to return to their settlements. Alternatively, other organizations welcome coastal protections where the traditional way-of-life of coastal inhabitants can be preserved and their needs can be integrated into new policies.

Many also fear that relaxed CRZ policies will allow the construction of hotels on the coast, as part of the government's effort to develop tourism, which will lead to the displacement of coastal communities after all. According to the ACHR report, this calls for the incorporation of the redevelopment in coastal communities into the larger planning agenda, to ensure that modifications in CRZ policies priori-

tizes and protects the needs of the affected communities while enforcing environmental regulations.

Ultimately, organizations working towards redevelopment agree that one primary goal is to ensure full community participation and dialogue in planning processes to guarantee that the affected communities get the assistance they need. Concerns over ownership and control have consistently pervaded reconstruction projects in the developing world, particularly between local people, the government and the international community. Recommendations from ACHR and Abhiyan emphasize the importance of a people-driven, community-based approach for effective reconstruction. This includes consistent involvement of survivors, linkages between affected communities, and open dialogue between communities and the government. In addition, community leaders are striving to guarantee equal access to relief efforts across castes and religious groups in the affected areas, and have called on the government to enforce measures for equality and inclusion in rehabilitation processes.

In the face of such a massive disaster, it is clear that the healing of devastated communities will not happen overnight. The world will continue to mourn for the lives lost and missing, and for all those affected by the tsunami. But with the rapid provision of basic needs and collaborative planning for long-term development, people will be able to steadily rebuild and restore their broken communities.



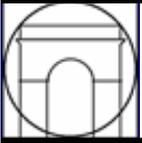
# metroChapter

## **New York Metro Chapter Annual Conference**

**New National Challenges • New York Solutions  
A Survival Guide for Planners**

**Conference schedule and registration  
[www.nyplanning.org](http://www.nyplanning.org)**

**Friday, April 22, 2005 • Baruch College Newman Conference Center • 151 East 25th Street, 7th Floor**



## Defining Urban Form Without Zoning in Houston, Texas

By Doug Adams  
Staff writer

The largest city in the U. S. without zoning regulations, Houston takes pride in its citizens' individualism and self-sufficiency and seeming lack of government intervention in the free-market. Numerous attempts via city council legislation and referenda to enact zoning and comprehensive planning legislation ended in failure. As recently as 1991, the city council voted unanimously to enact zoning legislation, only to have it defeated via referendum. The population within the city limits is the fourth largest in the U. S., and the Houston metropolitan area population is the tenth largest. Between 1970 and 1990, Houston's population grew seventy-three percent and per capita land consumption increased twenty-six percent. Such growth is not without consequences. The city ranks second in the nation for per capita land consumption and first in the nation for congestion in 2001 and smog pollution in 2000.

Houston's civic leaders advocate strongly for economic development, job creation, and other pro-growth urban policies as the best tools for improving the community's quality of life while downplaying the need for social services. The city and state consistently maintain among the lowest per capita public expenditures in the country, particularly on public welfare. Per capita spending on parks, recreation, hospitals, health, and even highways and utilities consistently places Houston and Texas at or near the lowest level.

Lack of a formal comprehensive plan or zoning laws does not mean that planning does not occur in Houston. The city has a planning and development department with more than six hundred employees, including more than fifty professional urban planners, and planners also work in other city departments. The city regulates parking, signage, and property set-backs and operates one of the country's more successful bus-based transit systems. However, most policies and



Houston, TX; photo courtesy [www.houstonarchitecture.info](http://www.houstonarchitecture.info)

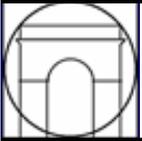
practices affecting Houston's urban form vary from traditional land use planning. Neighborhood planning and control, large-scale transportation infrastructure projects, and large individual projects such as civic and sports facilities are the primary focus of planning efforts in Houston.

Private property restrictions in the form of deed restrictions and neighborhood covenants are common in Houston. Deed restrictions specify how a parcel may be used and are passed from seller to seller as property changes hands. Houston abounds with hundreds of neighborhood associations aimed at protecting community character, ensuring the exclusion of large and incompatible developments and applying other property controls. From individual neighborhood associations, a neighborhood planning and control movement evolved, emboldened by the inability to secure traditional zoning protections. The neighborhood associations are strongly allied and receive considerable ongoing support and resources from the mayor and planning department.

Despite Houston's self-promotion as the archetype *laissez-faire* city and the small-government rhetoric of its

civic leaders, public intervention has played a key role in shaping the development of the city. While civic leaders may have little stomach for social spending, they have vigorously pursued public intervention in economic development. Houston's very existence as a national economic powerhouse is determined by its successful competition for state and federal infrastructure subsidies. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing to the present, Houston secured funding to create the Houston Ship Channel from the less than twelve-foot deep shallows and sandbars of Buffalo Bayou, San Jacinto River, and Galveston Bay. Today the channel is forty-five feet deep and 530 feet wide. Today, Houston's port ranks first in the nation in foreign tonnage and second in total tonnage. Houston's lobbyists in Austin and Washington assured its ascendancy as the commercial hub of Texas and the region.

In the 1850s, Houston successfully competed with Galveston, the nineteenth century commercial hub of Texas, for designation as the railroad center of the state. Houston's primary economic engine, the petrochemical business, owes much of its success to



government tax breaks and state- and federally regulated production quotas. Direct federal subsidies allowing the construction of oil and gas pipelines starting in the 1940s serving the East Coast, coupled with Houston's port facilities allowing convenient off-loading of foreign oil shipments, ensure the city's industry dominance regardless of the long term availability of Texas oil reserves.

Provision of subsidized infrastructure and services dominate discussions of planning and growth management in the Houston area today. Most Houston politicians seem to define *planning* as merely ensuring that government continues to provide minimally adequate services such as highways and schools with no intervention regarding actual private land use. A search of Houston-area newspapers from the previous ten years finds no articles addressing what is typically be considered planning or growth management from a traditional perspective. In fact, the only discussions of land use controls or regulations centered on desires to limit multi-family rental construction because its residents pay no property taxes yet their children attend the schools.

Prior to the automobile, Houston's lack of planning might have resulted in a dense and dramatically diverse city. Indeed, generally speaking, central Houston has a viable street grid with a variety of mixed uses. The central neighborhoods mirror the healthy di-



I-10 and I-45 Interchange; photo courtesy [www.houstonarchitecture.info](http://www.houstonarchitecture.info)

versity of uses described by mixed-use advocates such as Jane Jacobs; the older pattern is aided by the lack of traditional, Euclidian zoning. Today, however, it results in traffic congestion, pollution, rigid neighborhood protection from free-market excesses, and more-or-less typical suburban sprawl.

While Houston may lack the most traditional tools of U. S. land use planners - zoning and comprehensive planning - its urban form and growth patterns are not as different as one might expect, especially compared to other fast-growing, Sunbelt cities. In general, the issues, successes, and difficulties faced by Houston mirror those

faced by the rest of the nation as we continue to come to terms with how to best manage growth and modify public policies resulting in the dramatic changes in urban and suburban form witnessed over the past sixty years. The real differences may appear in the future as other communities look to employ zoning and comprehensive planning in new and creative ways and Houston has few options beyond business-as-usual.



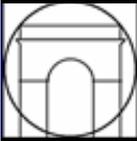
Alamo Square, San Francisco  
photo by Jordan Anderson

## American Planning Association Conference San Francisco, March 19–23

On-line registration is now closed for the national APA conference, but you can still register on-site in San Francisco at the \$140 student member rate.

Don't miss this opportunity to network with planning professionals, learn best practices from the experts, and have a great time in the process!

<http://www.planning.org/2005conference/>



(SHANGHAI continued from page 1)



Entrance to a lòngtáng (residential alley) in Shanghai; photo by Christina Mo

stroyed are lòngtáng—back alleys that form whole communities and are the city’s indigenous urban architecture, found only in Shanghai. Within the lòngtángs are shikumén, a traditional Shanghai home. Shikumén, literally stone gate, are an interesting and beautiful mix of Eastern and Western architecture. They combine the interior Chinese courtyard with British terraced homes. A common wall forms the alley of the lòngtángs and each shikumén has a front door on the alley. Often the doors were topped with an elaborate stone carving, hence their name. Behind the front door lies a courtyard and three surrounding annexes. Within one of the annexes is a staircase leading to the upper floors. Generally one family lived in a shikumén. From the 1850s to the 1940s, shikumén made up 60% of Shanghai’s housing.

Lòngtáng communities are two to three stories tall. The government says that with such a large population in need of space lòngtángs are an inefficient use of land. Skyscrapers would hold many more people. Additionally, skyscrapers are modern and there is a great desire to be “modern.” The city cites the fact that most shikumén do not have adequate electricity or plumbing; old women can be seen carrying

chamber pots to the public toilets at the entrance to each lòngtáng. They are also wildly overcrowded. These are all reasons, according to the government, to tear them down.

The Communist government recently allowed private ownership of land, creating an enormous financial incentive for developers to build high rises. Pressures from government and private development may be too much for the traditional communities to bear. One often hears a Chinese saying repeated with regard to older buildings: “You must destroy the old to make room for the new.”

One area where the shikumén homes are surviving and flourishing is the Xintiandi development in the French Concession section of Shanghai. Xintiandi is a 7.5-acre mixed-use development by Hong Kong based Shui On Group. Originally built in the 1920s and 30s the shikumén of Xintiandi had become an overcrowded slum by the mid-90s. Shui On decided to salvage the homes rather than raze them. Its 8,000 residents were relocated at a cost of \$75 million. The structures were then restored with modern facilities, electricity, running water, heat, air conditioning, and fiber optic lines.

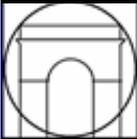
Three methods of restoration were used. Total preservation restored both the exterior and interior of the building and all architectural details on the inside and out were maintained. Partial preservation only restored the façade and roof; the interior was remodeled to suit the tenant’s needs. Finally, total reconstruction only saved the portions of façade or stone doorways.

Xintiandi, literally translated as between Heaven and Earth, is now home to a vibrant mix of retail, restaurants, and bars on the ground floor and apartments on the second and third floors. Considered one of the trendiest places in town, there are also offices, a lakeside park, a parking lot under the park and lake, a movie theater, and two museums. A hotel is in the works.

Though Shui On claims that Xintiandi is a financial sacrifice to preserve part of Shanghai’s past, the development nets \$8.7 million a year. It has proven that low-rise development and preservation can make a profit. Shui On deemed the project to be successful enough to repeat in the city of Hangzhou two hours south of Shanghai. Other Chinese cities are beginning to notice. Perhaps one day the saying will be “There is room for the old in the new.”



Scale model of Shanghai master plan in Urban Planning Exhibition Hall  
Photo by Christina Mo



## Urban Planning Students at (mostly) Work and Play

Photo Credits: Eric Galipo, Nicole Dooskin, and Christina Mo



Georges Jacquemart instructs planners on Powerpoint savvy



Alumni Danielle, David, and Meryl catch up at the networking event



David, Davidson, and Anne at the new student reception



Renee and Nicole at "The Gates"



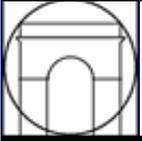
Vaidila with Brigit and Meredith at the networking event



Planners hit Galapagos in Williamsburg



Rae Zimmerman welcomes planners, old (Nick) and new (Adam)



## Ask the Urban Planner

By John Richardson  
*Staff writer*

**Question:** Why do some countries drive on the left-hand side of the road, while others drive on the right?

**Answer:** After extensive research (consisting of a couple Google searches), I have discovered what I believe to be a plausible explanation as to why our merry friends on the Sceptred Isle drive on the left (wrong) side of the road. I can say wrong with no fear of repercussion because we right-sided drivers are in the world majority. In addition to the United Kingdom, countries that drive on the left side of the road include India, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, and a number of former British colonies throughout Africa and Asia. In total, some 34 percent of the world's population favors left-side driving.

All these people have the unruly roads of medieval England to thank for their current orientation. According to a number of unverifiable sources, the horse-beaten highways of the English countryside were quite dangerous; travelers, worried about their safety, made sure to pass incoming traffic on the right, closer to the business end of their right-handed swords. In the case of an attack, it was better to have a passing opponent on the right so he or she could more easily meet your steel. (If a ne'er-do-well came at you from behind I am not sure what good being on the right side would do you, but I digress.) The explanations for why the rest of the world, notably the French, adopted a left sided posture are not as interesting. Most explanations mentioned the necessity of riding a team of horses on the left rear, thus freeing your right whipping hand.



A pony-drawn carriage in (sword optional) New Zealand; Photo by Jordan Anderson

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