

## **Historic Neighbourhood Upgrading with Community Participation**

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Abstract:

A substantial historic area with traditional neighborhoods characterized by 1 to 2 storey courtyard buildings remains in the Old City of Yangzhou of China. As in other Chinese cities, the area is deteriorating and threatened by rapid economic development and urbanization. There is a high risk from the unfortunate customary redevelopment model of demolition and relocation. Because of the deteriorated housing, poor municipal infrastructure and lack of proper sanitary facilities, many of the higher-income and younger generation are moving to new city areas lured by the modern living standards.

The Yangzhou Municipal Government, GTZ and Cities Alliance have cooperated to introduce a sustainable urban conservation concept which links heritage preservation to the improvement of living conditions of residents, by upgrading the historic neighborhoods and supporting self-help initiatives. A long-term strategy following a participatory and process-oriented approach has been developed and tested. In a pilot block, residents were involved through Community Action Planning (CAP), resulting in agreement on appropriate housing standards and self-help modernization of houses and facades. Living conditions were remarkably improved through this mobilization of the community. Based on the successful experience, it is now being adopted for use throughout the old city in Yangzhou, and viewed as potential model for use throughout China.

Key Words: historic neighbourhood upgrading; Community Action Planning; community participation.

### **Background**

China is developing at a tremendous pace. Rapid economic development and urbanization have led to an enormous amount of construction activity in terms of new urban districts, but also with demolition and redevelopment of inner city areas. In many cities, the historic areas are being swallowed, resulting in a loss of cultural heritage. In Yangzhou, however, there still remains a substantial historical area of 5.1 km<sup>2</sup> with about 110,000 residents, characterized by 1 to 2 storey courtyard buildings with narrow streets and alleys.

Already for several years the Yangzhou Municipal Government has recognized the historical and economic value of the old inner city and has paid special attention to preserve the historic area. GTZ (German Technical Cooperation) and Cities Alliance supported the Municipal Government's efforts in preserving the old city centre and introduced the concept of "Sustainable Urban Conservation" for the rehabilitation of the old city. It aims to improve the living conditions of residents in traditional urban neighbourhoods by upgrading these areas and supporting self-help initiatives. The program elaborated a comprehensive upgrading strategy for the whole inner city of Yangzhou, which focuses not only on the preservation of listed historic buildings, but also on the residents, particularly the lower-income groups, in improving their living conditions, and modernization of their houses. By following a process-orientated, gradual

upgrading approach, the relocation of residents was minimized. It encouraged the residents to participate in the modernization of their house and community and benefit from the growing economic vitality of these areas.

In 2006, as a component of the strategy development, a pilot neighborhood was identified by the iYET (international Yangzhou Experts Team) jointly with the government counterparts of Yangzhou. This 1.4 hectare area contained 147 households, and included the major problems that are typical of traditional neighborhoods in the Old City.

- Sanitary conditions of the houses in the area are often poor, individual toilets or bathrooms are often missing. Most of the residents still use public toilets.
- The physical condition of the housing is generally deteriorated, and desperately needs repair and updating.
- Infrastructure needs attention. The existing storm water drainage needs upgrading. It is increasingly used for discharge of grey water and sometimes with sewage from toilets. Major collection pipes for sewage along major roads leading to a sewage treatment plant are in place; however the local network is not connected and needs replacement. Gas service is not available, and electricity needs substantial improvement.
- Over the years, provisory extension of houses has reduced public spaces and access. Public space in the vicinity of the houses as well as within the neighborhood plays an important role in community interaction and small-scale economic activities (selling of food and other small goods from carts). Access is already limited due to traditional narrow lanes and high building density, and encroachments make this more problematic. Emergency access, public maintenance and services need to be addressed.



Fig.1 Aerial view of pilot area



Fig.2 Historical areas in the Old City, Yangzhou

Source: GTZ Project Team



Fig.3 Living conditions in the pilot area: makeshift kitchens, poor sanitation, broken and unsafe pavements, and limited public facilities.

Source: GTZ Project Team

Due to the deteriorating physical conditions of the buildings, many younger and richer residents have moved to new city areas. As a result, the majority of the residents are now low income.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 37% of the residents are older than 61 years, and this forewarns a significant demographic change within the next 10 years.<sup>2</sup>

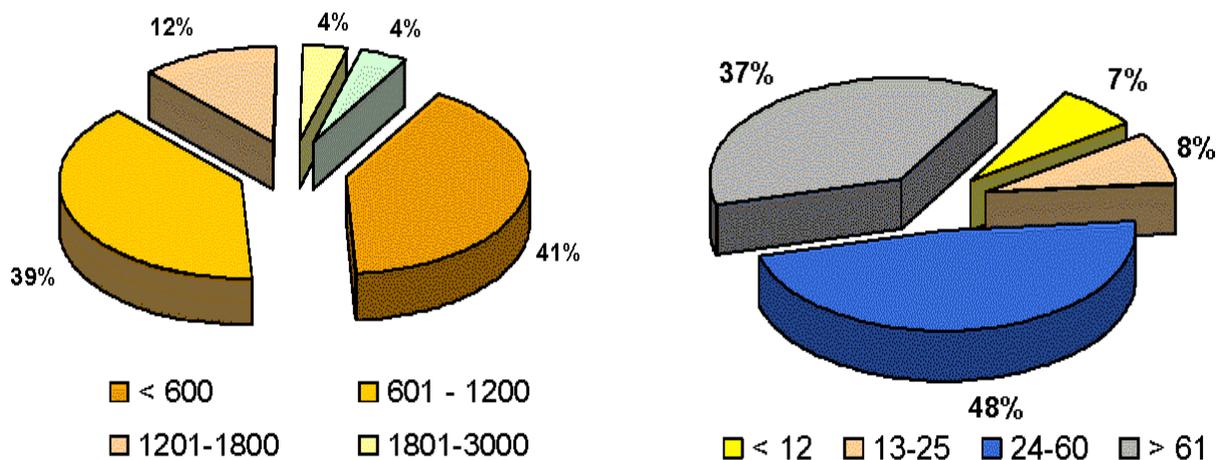


Fig.4 Population by income in pilot area, RMB/month (left); Demographic structure in the pilot area (right). Source: GTZ/Yangzhou Municipality (2005), p. 25

The challenge of the program is to involve the residents in the improvement of the area as an alternative to demolition. The opportunity for Yangzhou is to link upgrading with historical rehabilitation and develop a model for conservation applicable throughout China. In this approach, a parallel focus is placed on families and history, with neither being dominant. ‘Community Action Planning’ (CAP) was introduced to improve the awareness of residents and encourage the active involvement of the communities. By the active participation of the community, the CAP methodology brings in the community as a development partner with the city.

## The ‘CAP’–Workshop in the pilot neighborhood

An initial CAP workshop, organized by iYET and YFCC (Yangzhou Famous City Company), focused on testing Community Action Planning and developing strategies and a development timeline for a pilot block. The target was to establish a participatory planning approach for rehabilitating and upgrading the historical neighborhoods.

Established by GTZ experts and representatives from local authorities, iYET was composed of both local and foreign professionals. A special government institution ‘Old City Office’ (OCO) was established as primary partner representing the city, and was the key counterpart of the iYET team. The implementing partner was the YFCC, a technical organization. Several other city agencies also participated in a supporting role: mainly the Cultural Bureau, Planning Bureau, Construction Bureau, House Management Bureau, and Environmental Protection Bureau.

### *The Framework for Structuring Inputs*

A three-level framework was developed to structure the issues to be explored with the community - Lane/street, Facade and House.

- “Lane/street” is the key planning element whose change is immediately visible. This deals essentially with the surface and is generally the responsibility of the city for its improvement and maintenance. Quick and low-cost interventions are possible in the lanes, and reinforce street community for mutual support. This is important as the lane community is intended as the key driver for improvement. The terminology ‘lane’ is more appropriate than street, since they are very narrow and handle mainly pedestrian traffic.
- “Facade” is the other clearly different element with potentially different actors in conservation. As the lane, it is highly visible and reinforces the sense of community when improved. The strategy that was explored was how to involve the homeowner by offering a cost sharing arrangement. A 30/70% split in costs was tested, and exceeded expectations.
- “House” relates to improvement of the interior of the house. A strategy of improving one house per lane initially served as a model for residents to follow, while also providing education opportunities, for example, skill training and a focus of training visits.

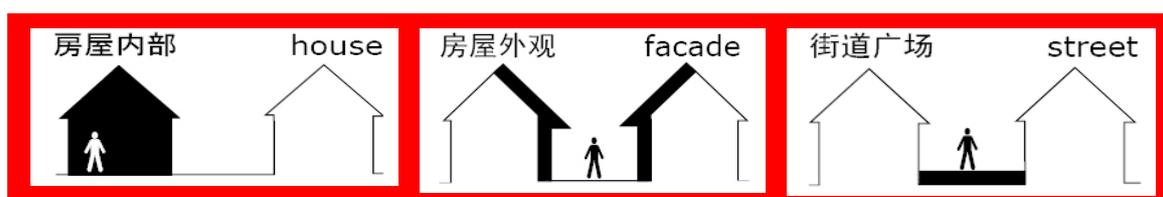


Fig.5 Framework Symbols for the CAP workshop

Source: GTZ Team/ iYET

The framework provided:

- Manageable elements to facilitate implementation, recognizing the varied actors, funding possibilities, and interests
- A parallel to community groups for effective support.
- Recognizable entities are clearly defined, very visible and public

Before the workshop disposable cameras were distributed to selected families in each lane. There were asked to record what they determined as ‘good historical’ elements and ‘non-historical’ elements. These photographs were the starting point for the assembled workshop.

#### *Task 1: Develop Awareness of Old City*

About 30 residents and 20 representatives from the various interested institutions (OCO, Urban Planning Bureau, Construction Bureau, YFCC, neighborhood committee and iYET) attended the workshop.

On the first day of the workshop, the following questions were the drivers of the discussions:

*“What would you be proud to show visiting relatives or tourists?”*

*“What would you want to pass on to your children?”*

The purpose was to:

- build awareness, and a common understanding of what are historical elements and what are considered not historical;
- understand elements according to future planning and implementation.

The discussions were summarized to determine a common shared understanding and highlight issues.

The residents’ then placed their photographs in the 3-level framework to structure their inputs. This made clear and very visible the historical and non-historical elements, and determined the elements requiring detailed design improvements for compliance with historical areas (Fig. 6a).

#### *Task 2: Consider priorities and cost*

The next task was to:

- understand concerns from different perspectives: family and city;
- understand the relative importance of concerns;
- relate concerns to costs to determine budgeting needs in implementation;
- determine concerns that are the same and easy to implement, and concerns that are very different and require negotiation.

A 3 x 3 matrix was used to structure the derived policy agreements to facilitate compliance (Fig. 6b).

#### *Task 3: Do field survey of problems and issues*

On the second day, a lane survey was undertaken. The purpose was to update data on the street and the surface situation for the preparation of a detailed inventory.

*Task 4: Prepare street community inventory*

This stage provided the basic information for implementation for the lane and facade. Families identified elements and their location on a large-scale plan. Elements by type, location, and number were marked so they became directly transferable for detailed technical plan development.

*Task 5: Analyze Issues*

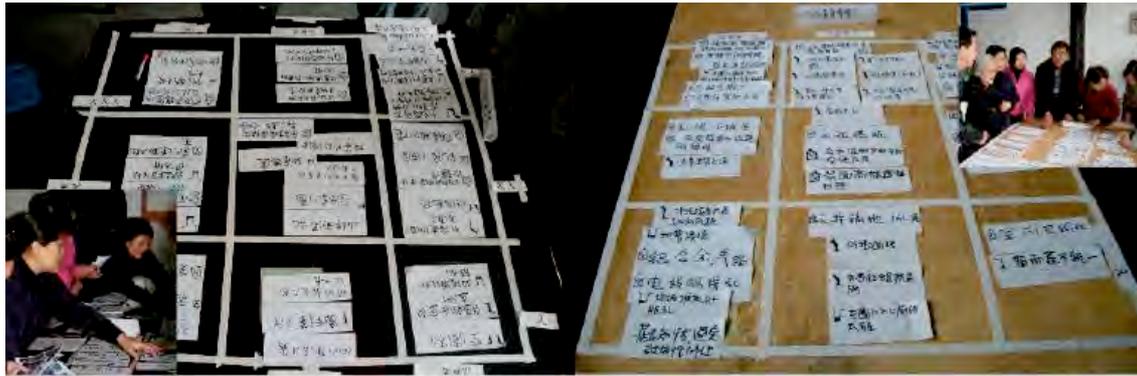
On the third day, all the workshop participants discussed the issues to be addressed, recommended what should be done, who should be responsible, what the financial resource could be, and which policies should support them (Fig. 6c).



就试点地块的房屋修缮、沿街外观整治、街道整治存在的问题进行讨论

房屋内部	立面	街道广场
衣服晾晒凌乱；	空调机；	垃圾堆放处脏乱；
室内空调机；	外窗铝合金防盗网；	东圈门入口厕所太脏；
改建时坡屋顶改成平屋顶；	落水管外露；	街道为水泥地面；
乱搭小坡屋占道；	外窗雨蓬不统一；	缺乏老年活动场所；
空房屋破旧不堪；	铝合金门窗；	没有外来参观者的停车场；
窗户样式不统一；	院落内的乱搭乱建；	东圈门铺地下雨时积水；
地窖不通；	无化粪池（下水直通阴沟）；	东圈门街道铺地有破碎现象；
天井铺地方水泥铺地；	室内天花板不规范；	
人和文化遗留；	人口居住密度太高；	
公私混合产权不利于实施改造；	公房内多家混合居住不利于实施改造；	
居住空间拥挤；	高楼遮挡阳光；	
电线、有线电视线路的走线零乱；		

(a)



对古城风貌重要的因素				对居民自身重要的因素			
重要性	最重要	次重要	一般	重要性	最重要	次重要	一般
整治费用	空调机;	雨水管外露;	东圈门入口厕所太脏;	整治费用	水泥楼房太高;	天井铺地为水泥铺地;	室内空调机;
花费不高的整治因素	外窗铝合金防盗网;	外窗百通不统一;	衣服搭晒凌乱;	花费不高的整治因素	地窖不通;	铝合金门窗;	外窗百通不统一;
花费较高的整治因素	垃圾堆放处脏乱;	砖的颜色不统一(有红有白);	基础空铺地;	花费较高的整治因素	垃圾堆放处脏乱;	居民不知情,有破坏性核爆的现象;	东圈门入口厕所太脏;
	擅自加高房屋层数;	铝合金门窗;	天井铺地为水泥铺地;		乱搭小楼层占通道;	公厕内多家混合居住不利于实施改造;	院落内的乱搭乱建;
	外墙面污;	铝合金门窗;	缺乏老年活动场所;		公厕内多家混合居住不利于实施改造;	违章建筑占道;	室内天花板不规范;
	改建时破屋顶改成平屋顶;	院落内的乱搭乱建;	室内天花板不规范;		违章建筑占道;	违章建筑占道;	门雨房开店;
	乱搭小楼层占通道;	化粪池(下水直接接进院内);			违章建筑占道;	违章建筑占道;	
	空房屋破旧不堪;				违章建筑占道;	违章建筑占道;	
花费很低的整治因素	水沟坡度太高;	公私混合产权不利于实施改造;	高楼遮挡阳光;	花费很低的整治因素	化粪池(下水直接接进院内);	空调机;	没有外来参观者的停车场;
	没有外来参观者的停车场;	公厕内多家混合居住不利于实施改造;	电线、有线电视线路的走线凌乱(室内、室外);		乱在空间堆放;	擅自加高房屋层数;	街道为水池地面;
	东圈门铺地下雨时积水;	东圈门铺地下雨时积水;			没有厨卫空端;	砖的颜色不统一(有红有白);	电线、有线电视线路的走线凌乱;
	东圈门街道铺地有破坏现象;	东圈门街道铺地有破坏现象;			人口居住密度太高;	铝合金门窗;	缺乏老年活动场所;
	违章建筑占道;	违章建筑占道;			东圈门铺地下雨时积水;	擅自加高房屋层数;	空房屋破旧不堪;
	屋面瓦瓦;	屋面瓦瓦;			东圈门街道铺地有破坏现象;	擅自加高房屋层数;	
	人和文化遗迹;	人和文化遗迹;			东圈门街道铺地有破坏现象;	擅自加高房屋层数;	
	入口居住密度太高;	入口居住密度太高;			东圈门街道铺地有破坏现象;	擅自加高房屋层数;	

(b)

### 沿街立面

做什么	谁来做	钱谁出	政策建议
门窗、雨蓬	政府出标准	政府/居民 政府占大比例 (70%/30%)	按户意见设计 价格统一标准 费用所占比例和房子面积、产权有关系 避阳蓬、雨蓬做法要改进 弱势群体有特殊措施 有历史价值的民房准投资准受委
外墙围	政府统一实施	居民希望政府全部出资	外墙颜色不合适 外墙要有不同做法,避免单调 出台技术规范
空调机、太阳能热水器、雨水管	政府统一实施 居民配合 政府负责公共部分 私人负责室内部分	移机、装饰费用由居民支出 政府负责公共部分 私人负责室内部分	不能乱收费(施工费)
店面	政府/个人	政府/个人	税收、管理费要减免 不能商业化运作 流程、施工质量管理合理透明

(c)

Fig.6 Residents and officials discussed and made joint decisions in the participatory workshops  
Source: GTZ Project Team/ iYET (2006)

## ‘Post-CAP’ – After the Workshop

A timeline for implementation of the pilot area was developed by the professional support team. Upgrading Guidelines were proposed and served as the basis for the pilot neighbourhood improvement. The guidelines were further refined and summarized into an easy to understand format (‘Phased Upgrading Decision Matrix’, see Fig. 7) which is intended as the model for the whole old city. The guideline is a simple, visual matrix intended to have clear, transparent models which are understood by residents and professionals alike during an upgrading process. They provide a template for upgrading standards which also determine associated costs. A long-term advantage is that residents will have models to follow as their income circumstances change and their desire and capacity to improve their houses could be met. Wasteful removal of inappropriate improvements is avoided, following the agreed goals expressed in the matrix shared by residents and government alike.

In support of the house upgrading, a ‘Rapid House Assessment’ procedure was followed to provide residents with information of renovation needs and a cost estimation to allow an informed decision. Representatives from each lane were selected as contact persons to assist in the implementation standards as agreed in the workshop.

2 Yangzhou Old City, Phased Upgrading Decision Matrix (PUD Matrix)										
	Wall material	Door	Window	Awning	Air conditioner	Roof	Solar Heater	Rain pipe	Electricity	
Target							no Solar Heater			
				no awning	no AC		Flat-plate solar water heaters			
Transition										
										
Inappropriate										
										

Fig. 7 The ‘Phased Upgrading Decision Matrix’ – Facade Level

Source: GTZ Project Team

## Achievements of the workshop

The “Community Action Planning” approach and the supporting activities in Yangzhou have proved to be successful:

- Communities participated enthusiastically; residents were very active in expressing their opinions and provided a direct reference for community improvement
- Communities became more aware of the issues of planning and implementation and recognized the different improvement issues of the lane, facade and house;
- A common understanding was achieved among the various actors;
- Residents were able to make better informed decisions in choosing among alternatives and structuring ideas;
- Residents prepared an action plan to organize short and medium term improvements in their housing environment, to help organize their scarce resources for maximum benefit.

After the workshop the results were presented to the municipal government. The deputy mayor and the directors of different bureaus as well as other government officials embraced enthusiastically the outcome of the workshops, and praised the contributions of the residents. As a result, the master plan for the pilot area was revised and updated with the desires and suggestions by the residents.



Fig.7 A renovated house with modern kitchen and toilet in the pilot area, before and after renovation, Source: GTZ Project Team



Fig.8 The result: young members of the family will come back to live together with their parents, now that their house is renovated with more living space, toilet and kitchen.

Source: GTZ Project Team



Fig.9 Improved open space: illegal extensions are demolished and space for enhanced community interaction is now available.

Source: GTZ Project Team

## **A ‘Mini-CAP’ for open space improvement**

In the following months after the workshop, about 40 houses have been renovated. A ‘Mini-CAP’ for the improvement of a lane in the neighborhood was carried out. The lane community determined an improvement plan, and selected and located the plants, street furnitures (tables and chairs) and other improvements in their lane. The initial planning and discussions were again in a workshop format on-site in the lane, which was followed by two days of implementation by the lane community.



**Get ready**

- Agree with residents and lane and neighborhood leaders on workshop. Decide date and time.
- Spread the word among the lane community. Prepare 'flyer' to hand out as reminder. Do this 2-3 days before. Make a banner!
- Decide who will be moderator - the person who would be responsible for managing the workshop. Make a general plan of the activities.
- Prepare a very big base plan that can be taped to the wall for everyone to see. This can be used to write on, and to help consider placement of the various plants, tables and chairs, and so on. Bring markers to write on the plan.
- Find some way to mark the ground to locate the plants - a paint brush and different colored paint would be good!
- Make arrangements for community members to bring tea and snacks. What about lunch?

**Day 1: Decide What To Do**

**WELCOME!**

- Formally start the activities, so everyone knows to pay attention and listen. It is best to have a community leader introduce you.
- First welcome the community members and introduce the leaders.
- Explain what will happen, so everyone is clear on the activities and what is expected. Be sure to tell them how long it will take, and when you expect to finish.

**Discuss Your GOALS**

- Discuss what you want to do.
- Think about general criteria for selection, whether plants, tables and chairs, or other things.
- Think about costs and where the funds will come from.

**Think About OPTIONS**

- It is useful to use a chart on the wall with headings of the various things you want to do, for example, 'trees', 'flowers', 'table', and so on. Then order each discuss the choices.
- A long list is OK - it is best to get many different choices.

**Decide what you want: PRIORITIZE!**

- Think about cost, maintenance, where to get, and how to transport the plants to the lane (if big).
- Sometimes a matrix helps to decide: 5 levels of costs down the side, and maybe size or type or maintenance across the top, or even all of them.

**Decide LOCATION**

- After everyone decided what to do, you need to locate where it will go.
- It may be useful to use bricks - or anything else - as markers to locate things so everyone can better visualize the location.

**Consider MAINTENANCE**

- Who will water the plants and take care of the trees?
- Who will keep the area clean?
- Consider: What needs to be done, how often, and who will do.

**Decide Next STEPS**

- Consider what needs to be done, and who will do it. Perhaps a simple chart with 'What' 'Who' and 'When' as headings across the top.
- Usually the tasks include going to buy the plants, deciding on which ones, and arranging for transport to the site.
- Decide who would be responsible. **IMPORTANT!** Agree when to meet to finish the project.

**Day 2+3: Prepare for Implementation**

- Make sure it is clear who is responsible to pick up the materials. It is best have several people, perhaps a couple from the community, and someone from the support team.
- The main thing is to get the materials: plants, trees, tables, and so on. Who has the funds to pay for it? How will it be transported?
- Gather any equipment that would be needed: for example, shovels for planting, something to carry water in for the 'first drink' of the plants, a wheelbarrow. Be sure that the equipment is brought to the site - who will do that?

**Day 4: Carry Out the Projects**

- Set a time to start. An announcement put up the day before is helpful. Remind the leaders to keep the community informed.
- Have someone who understands plants help. It is best if the person lives in the community, but anyone willing to help would be welcome.
- In Wenhua Li Dong Lane, wall murals were painted by a local artist. He brought his own paints and equipment, and spent the whole day making his works of art.
- Try to finish quickly - a half day would be ideal.

**Celebrate Success!**

- A ribbon cutting has to be. Invite representatives from everyone! Make it festive!
- And keep it going....and help it grow!
- Periodically visit the lane and see how it is going. Are the plants being watered? Is the area taken care of? Talk to the leaders and the abutters to see if they have any suggestions.
- Maybe a nice concert in the lane garden? Or an Art exhibition!

**Management Notice:** 注意管理 我们有义务 住户认领保管门前三包

**Logo:** 福 州 市 城 市 管 理 局 城 市 管 理 科 城 市 管 理 科 城 市 管 理 科

Fig.10 Poster summarizing steps of the 'Mini-CAP' for open space improvement  
Source: Reinhard Goethert (2007)

## **Major achievements and further development**

The upgrading of the pilot neighborhood is in progress. The infrastructure and open space of the other lanes have been also improved. It is hoped that the majority of the original residents will now stay within this neighborhood, now that their living conditions are being improved.

With the successful test of neighborhood improvement with community participation, a participatory model has been developed of the rehabilitation of the traditional neighborhoods in Yangzhou. The model is now becoming further detailed, computerized and will be disseminated throughout the Old City. Community Action Planning will continue to play a very important role in the mobilization and information exchange between the government and residents in urban conservation.

The Mayor of Yangzhou and the directors from the different bureaus have accepted the concept of participation. They have argued for its further development and application through the entire Old City, and potentially as a model for all China. A five-year extension of the programme is being discussed, after which the approach could be incorporated into standard government planning policies.

Many local and national newspapers reported on the neighborhood upgrading activities and the workshops in the Old City of Yangzhou. This widespread publicity has led to a discussion about participation in old city conservation in other cities in China, as they are faced with similar issues of balancing development with their historic legacy.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The average monthly income per capita is 821RMB based on “Yangzhou Statistic Yearbook of 2004”. But according to a sample survey by GTZ and the Yangzhou Urban Planning & Design Research Institute, over 50% families in this area have a lower average income.

<sup>2</sup> GTZ/Yangzhou Municipality (2005), “Sustainable Urban Conservation in Yangzhou”, p. 25.

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