

A Planning Monitoring Study on the Community Plan of Seoul

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Summary

The Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) should specify the role of the Community Plan and develop strategies to realize the plan at the district governmental level.

1. Introduction

A bottom-up approach should be taken for developing the Community Plan involving the public authorities, experts, and local residents

SMG is building the Community Plan as a follow-up of its master plan called the “2030 Seoul Plan.” There has been a criticism that the 2030 Seoul Plan, which presents the SMG’s visions for the future, does not work well with the Seoul Management Plan that outlines specific guidelines for the city development. To address such a problem, the SMG has introduced the Community Plan. The Community Plan elaborates on the 2030 Seoul Plan to come up with detailed action plans tailored to each region and sub-region in Seoul. In October 2014, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport has amended guidelines related to urban planning and management, enabling city governments to establish their own Community Plans. SMG has striven to ensure the practicability of the Community Plan by inducing the participation and cooperation of residents. In summary, the Community Plan has been introduced to serve the following three purposes.

First, the Community Plan is to act as a bridge between the 2030 Seoul Plan and the Seoul Management Plan. Other cities in Korea also have their urban planning systems divided into two parts: the urban master plan and the urban management

plan. This kind of planning system is congenial to small and medium cities with relatively small population. Yet it is inappropriate for a large city like Seoul, which is a home to nearly 10 million people with 25 districts.

In fact, the 2030 Seoul Plan and the Seoul Management Plan differ from one another in terms of target years, planning areas, legal binding, and drawing scales. For a large city like Seoul, the urban master plan renders the long-term development directions for the entire city. But the master plan cannot adequately present specific guidelines in the urban management plan, which is implemented at the level of individual land plot. This is why the SMG has introduced the Community Plan as a bridge between the 2030 Seoul Plan and the Seoul Management Plan. The Community Plan elaborates on the former, while presenting detailed guidelines in the latter.

Second, the Community Plan is to reflect the characteristics of an area and demand from its residents in urban planning and management. So far the urban master plan of Seoul has been carried out in a way of supporting or regulating large-scale urban development projects. In other words, it strayed from the role of addressing inconvenience that Seoul citizens feel in their lives. By developing the Community Plan that is carried out at the Sub-Regional levels, the SMG aims to set the development visions and directions of an area with its residents, while connecting the plan with other various projects.

Last, the Community Plan is to be drawn based on the consensus and participation of residents as well as the support from district governments. In other words, the SMG should take a bottom-up approach to develop the plan. Until now, urban planning has been conducted in top-down manner led by government officials and experts. Such a way of urban planning has the merits of enabling the comprehensive and consistent management of the entire city. Yet it is limited in terms of addressing different characteristics and demands of local residents. The Community Plan formed and supported by residents is likely to be executed smoothly.

The Community Plan is divided into two sub-plans: the Regional Plan and the Sub-Regional Plan. SMG categorizes its residential area into five regions and 116

sub-regions. Then, it renders the development visions and directions for each region in the Regional Plan and presents urban management guidelines in the Sub-Regional Plan. The Community Plan is different from previous plans in that it involves cooperation among public authorities (SMG and district governments), experts, and local dwellers in the Sub-Regional Plan.

SMG has never developed such a small-unit spatial plan before. The Community Plan is significant in that it is the first bottom-up, citizen participatory plan. Yet the plan is still imperfect. This research proposes what should be addressed and improved for sustainable development and implementation of the Community Plan. This research is based on the results of monitoring the development process of the Community Plan.

2. Main Findings

Based on the monitoring results of the Community Plan formation process, this study presents herewith the plan's achievements and problems

SMG has been preparing to introduce the Community Plan since 2012, and later in September 2014, it has begun to draw the plan. Until today, over 4,000 residents have participated in developing the plan. The Community Plan has been developed in the order of pre-planning, planning initiation, and the establishment of the Regional and Sub-Regional Plans with local residents.

At the stage of pre-planning, the SMG forged a consensus with local residents. It then formed a task force for the development and implementation of the Community Plan at the planning initiation stage

At the stage of pre-planning, which took place from April 2012 to November 2013, the SMG and the Seoul Institute laid the ground for introducing the Community Plan, emphasizing its necessity. They also drew a road map for the

development and implementation of the Community Plan. Next, the SMG organized an expert advisory conference and gave a presentation to local residents, trying to forge a consensus.

At the stage of planning initiation occurred between December 2013 and July 2014, the SMG established the Community Plan and developed detailed actions plans for it. In the process, it designated Urban Planning Experts in each region. It also appointed four Master Planners and formed the Community Plan Task Force.

District governments also organized special teams and budgets for the Community Plan upon the request of the SMG: 13 district governments formed a task force team dedicated to the implementation the Community Plan in their office.

SMG is still developing the Regional and Sub-Regional Plans: The former focuses on addressing regional issues, while the latter concentrates on Sub-Regional spatial management

SMG started to develop the Regional and Sub-Regional Plans in August 2014. Planning is still afoot. For the Regional Plan, the SMG focuses on specifying details of the 2030 Seoul Plan with the Master Planners, urban planners from various fields, and technical experts. In the Regional Plan, the SMG has presented visions and addressed issues as to employment, industry, urban spatial management, transportation, and environment (local parks and green spaces) with goals and strategies.

SMG has structured the Sub-Regional Plan into four parts: downtown areas, special zones, landscapes, and living infrastructures. The government initially planned to propose consistent urban management standards for the entire Seoul, but it has encountered difficulty in elaborating on the plan as different interests of multiple stakeholders are intertwined. Moreover, regions and sub-regions all vary in their conditions. Nor has it been easy to forge a consensus with residents for the implementation method.

The Sub-Regional Plan is different from the Regional Plan in that it involves

local residents. For each sub-region, local participants were recruited and workshops were organized. At the workshops, selected residents shared their thoughts about the visions for their towns and discussed how to utilize available resources to overcome challenges in developing their areas. SMG initially planned to assign district governments the job of developing the Sub-Regional Plan, but later it has decided to take the responsibility by itself. District governments have taken the job of recruiting local participants and running the workshop instead.

To involve local residents in the planning of the Sub-Regional Plan, district governments recruited a group of 30-50 local participants in each sub-region and organized a workshop

For the Sub-Regional Plan, district governments recruited a group of local participants with 10 residents for each administrative Dong¹⁹ and 30-50 residents for each sub-region. SMG has ensured the representativeness of local participant groups by mandating that each group has a 5:5 ratio between “resident councilors” recommended by community centers and local residents recruited by district governments. It also has made sure that the members represent both genders across various age groups and occupations. In compliance with such mandates, district governments recruited local participants with the help of community centers.

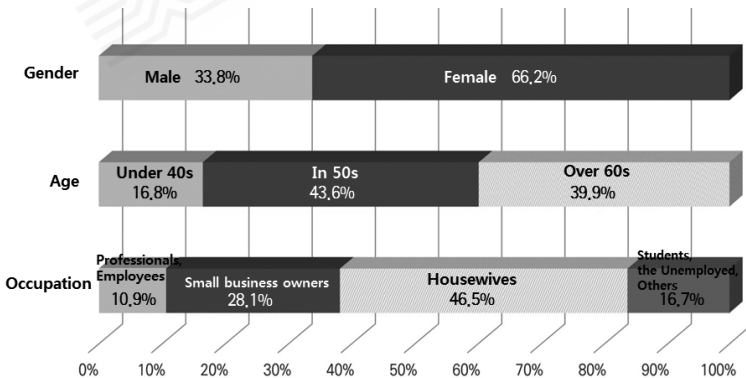
District governments organized two four-hour workshops for the local participant group in each residential area. A designated workshop facilitator led the session. The first workshop explained the Community Plan and the role of local participants. Residents in turn shared information on the current condition of their towns and ideas on what would be the desirable future for all of them. In the second workshop, they discussed challenges to overcome and development directions.

¹⁹ An administrative ‘Dong’ is the primary division of districts (Gu), representing the smallest level of urban government to have its own office and staff.

Some district governments organized additional programs for themselves, such as a representative meeting at each Dong, field trips, and expert sessions.

Local participant groups lack representativeness and self-motivation, yet the members are highly satisfied with the participatory workshops and willing to take a part in the programs again

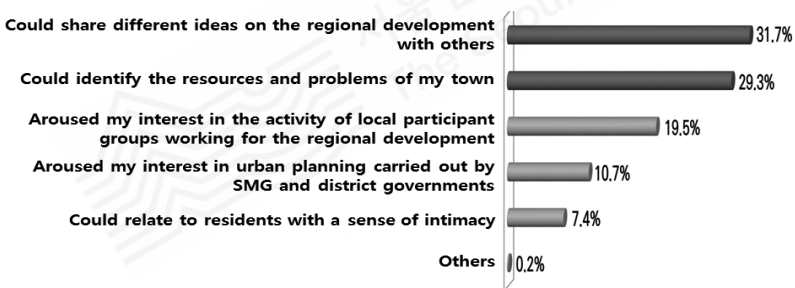
According to the survey of local participants (535 members), the large majority (84 percent) were consisted of residents in their 50s and 60s. Most of them had past experience in regional activities. Of the total respondents, women accounted for 66 percent. The survey shows that local participants were mostly short of younger generations in 20s-40s. Meanwhile, housewives comprised 47 percent of total respondents, representing the biggest occupation group. It was followed by small business owners (28 percent). There were not many employees and students. The vast majority of respondents (91 percent) had past experience in regional activities such as voluntary work at community centers. Last, 61 percent of respondents had lived in their areas for over 20 years.



[Figure 1] Genders, Ages, and Occupations of Survey Respondents

To the question about the channels of participation, 75 percent of respondents answered that they were recommended by community centers. A mere 11 percent said that they applied for the participation after they found the recruitment notice. Moreover, 52 percent of respondents were not aware of the Community Plan before they joined local participant groups.

Despite the respondents' low awareness of the Community Plan and lack of self-motivation to participate in the program, their satisfaction of local participatory workshops was found to be high. Of total respondents, 90 percent answered that the workshop was organized and proceeded smoothly, while 96 percent claimed that they actively participated in the workshops. Besides other merits, 32 percent of respondents said that they found the workshop helpful as venues to share different ideas, while 29 percent pointed to the benefit that they could identify available resources and problems of their towns through the workshops.



[Figure 2] Responses to “What Did You Like the Most About the Workshop?”
(multiple responses were allowed)

In the survey, 30 percent of respondents were interested in “managing and improving their living conditions,” while 15 percent showed their interest in “improving transportation and mobility environment.” Their expectation for the Community Plan was found to be high: 98 percent believed that the plan will make a substantial contribution to regional development and living condition improvement. Meanwhile, 93 percent of respondents expressed their willingness to work in the local participant groups and take a part in the local participatory workshop if possible.

The Community Plan has set a turning point for urban planning of Seoul in terms of content, style, and planning process

As a “bridge plan,” it has specified the details for the 2030 Seoul Plan, which is quite abstract. As a “bottom-up plan,” it has proposed visions for each residential area and directions for the improvement of living conditions with residents.

So far development plans and projects for each field of housing, landscape, and transportation have been developed and implemented separately. The Community Plan has put them together. Moreover, it has paved the way to including opinions of district governments, such as district development plans and pledges made by district chiefs.

The Community Plan is most significant in that it is a bottom-up plan involving local residents in setting the development directions for each region. In the past, there were some cases in which residents participated in planning a development project at the neighborhood level. However, the Community Plan has provided residents with an opportunity to take a part in mid-to-long-term urban development planning for the first time.

The status and role of the Community Plan as an intermediate plan are vague, while local participant groups lack representativeness

Unfortunately, the following issues have come to the fore as the Community Plan is being developed for the first time.

The Community Plan is meaningful in that it serves as a bridge between the 2030 Seoul Plan and the Seoul Management Plan. Yet a consensus on the status and role of the Community Plan are not fully forged among the stakeholders, including the Master Planners, the SMG, and district governments.

Meanwhile, concern grows over the uniformity of the Sub-Regional Plan, which may work as an obstacle to developing a tailored plan for over 100 sub-regions.

While the plan is developed based on regional issues, some of sub-regions had no particular issues to address, making it difficult to derive the plan.

SMG plans to elicit the full participation of district governments and experts in developing the Community Plan, yet it has not been easy. District governments only recruited local participant groups and remained passive in other areas of planning. The role of the Master Planners designated for each region is also rather vague.

SMG is taking a bottom-up approach to develop the Community Plan by involving over 4,000 local dwellers in the planning. However, there are some criticisms that local participants are less representative of general residents and the local participatory workshops are organized as a mere formality.

Last, there arose difficulty in ensuring consistency in the Community Plan. Although the SMG and district governments have their own task forces for the Community Plan, public officials in charge were replaced in the middle of developing the plan, making it difficult to ensure consistency in the plan.

3. Conclusions & Policy Recommendations

This research proposes herewith the five directions for improving the Community Plan.

First, the SMG should redefine the role of the Community Plan and devise strategies for the implementation.

While the Community Plan is divided into the Regional Plan and the Sub-Regional Plan, the latter is the key. SMG should redefine the status and role of the Sub-Regional Plan as an intermediate plan that links the 2030 Seoul Plan and the Seoul Management Plan. It needs to fill the plan with detailed contents, methods, and utilization methods.

For the long-term, the SMG ought to amend its ordinance to define the role of the Community Plan as an intermediate plan. At the same time, it needs to specify the

procedure and legal grounds for the Community Plan development.

Upon the completion of planning, it is important to ensure that the Community Plan is implemented accordingly. SMG should devise strategies as to how to carry out various projects and policies proposed in the Community Plan.

In particular, the SMG should ensure that it takes the priority to review and implement plans or projects proceeded by district governments that are in line with the Community Plan.

Second, the SMG should establish the Sub-Regional Plan by factoring in the characteristics of each sub-region

In order to minimize the uniformity and strengthen the connection between regions and sub-regions, the SMG should set the Sub-Regional Plan at the district unit level. In other words, the SMG should identify the issues of each sub-region, and then establish a balanced Sub-Regional Plan pursuant to the development directions of districts. For the long term, the SMG needs to consider setting the Sub-Regional Plan as a part of the district plan.

In addition, the SMG ought to take the characteristics of each sub-region into account. Instead of focusing on dealing with civil complaints made by residents, SMG should focus on suggesting differentiated development plans for each region by comprehensively weighing the conditions and characteristics of each region.

Third, the SMG needs to clearly assign district governments responsibility to take the lead in developing the Sub-Regional Plan. It should also empower Master Planners to develop the Community Plan

SMG originally planned to develop the Regional Plan by itself, while letting district governments to establish the Sub-Regional Plan. However, in actual planning process, the SMG played the leading role in establishing the both plans.

Yet the Sub-Regional Plan should be developed by allowing for the characteristics of each sub-region and the opinions of its residents. In this regard, it is desirable for district governments that understand the conditions of their district better than the SMG should take the lead in setting the Sub-Regional Plan. District governments needs to establish the Sub-Regional Plan with residents, while the SMG revises and approves the plan.

Meanwhile, the SMG should promote the Community Plan to the city and district councils as well as residents in pursuit of forging a consensus among them. It would help secure the budget for the plan and enhance its practicability.

At the same time, the SMG needs to assign Master Planners authority commensurate with their roles. While SMG should take the responsibility for supervising the whole planning process, the Master Planners need to establish the Community Plan by factoring in the characteristics of each region. They should also be given the power to coordinate the opinions of the SMG, district governments, and residents from the perspective of experts.

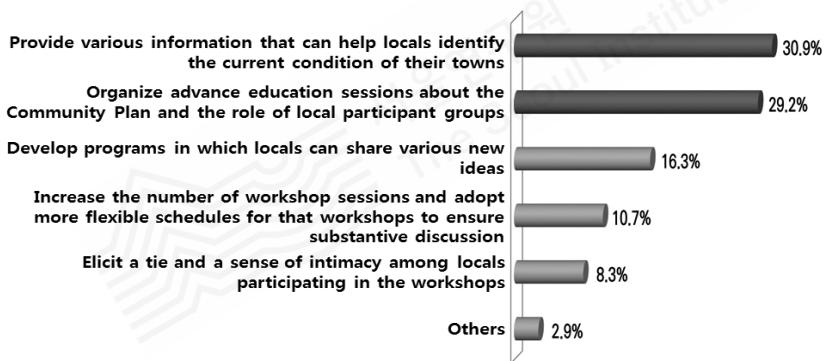
Fourth, the SMG ought to increase the number of workshop sessions, and strengthen the resident education programs and a feedback process

Local residents were highly satisfied with the residents participatory workshops. The issue was that they were held as one-time event and therefore had some limitations in collecting substantive opinions from locals that can be used in actual planning. It is necessary to organize the workshops more often in order to elicit more practical ideas from residents, while giving them the opportunity to participate in planning of the Sub-Regional Plan on a regular basis.

In addition, the SMG should raise the residents' understanding of the Community Plan and local participant groups through education. It needs to disclose a wide range of information, such as regional information and survey results, so that residents can identify the current conditions and problems of their

towns with objectivity. Moreover, the SMG must undertake a feedback process like a presentation session on draft plans to increase the practicability of the Community Plan. This would also help residents accumulate positive experiences of participating in the planning process.

Another issue raised regarding to local participatory workshops was that they were organized in the afternoon on weekdays, making it hard for employees to take a part. This resulted in hurting the representativeness of local participant groups. In order to give residents more chances to participate in drawing the Community Plan and induce their voluntary engagement in the process, the SMG should organize various events and run necessary education programs. If possible, it needs to devise an ordinance that regulate the operation of local participant groups.



[Figure 3] Responses to “What should be improved in the local participatory workshops?”

Last but not least, the SMG should keep the consistency of planning mechanism by enhancing its role of supervising the entire planning process

It is essential to enhance the “supervisory role” of the SMG given that the Community Plan covers a wide range of spatial units and development programs. At the same time, the SMG needs to form a consulting group for the Community Plan and support their works in setting and implementing the plan. Furthermore, it

ought to consider invigorating discussions by establishing a council between the districts in each region.

To ensure consistent planning, replacing public officials in charge of the Community Plan at both SMG and district governments should be avoided until the plan is established. Last, the SMG should lay the foundation for carrying out the projects of each development area according to the Community Plan. It is to be done by invigorating the department responsible for the Community Plan at each district government.

