LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN CHINA, PART II
An Assessment of Urban Residents Committees and Municipal Community Development

Allen C. Choate
Director of Program Development, China
The Asia Foundation

Working Paper #10 • November 1998
The Asia Foundation is a private, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization dedicated to advancing the mutual interests of the United States and the Asia Pacific region. Drawing on four decades of experience in Asia, The Asia Foundation collaborates with partners from the public and private sectors to support leadership and institutional development, exchanges and dialogue, technical assistance, research, and policy engagement related to: governance and law; economic reform and development; women’s political participation; and regional relations.

Through its Working Paper Series, The Asia Foundation presents a range of views on the major political, economic, and security challenges facing the Asia Pacific. The views expressed in this working paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of The Asia Foundation.
“The Residents Committees and Villagers Committees established among urban and rural residents on the basis of their residence are mass organizations of self-management at the grassroots level. The Chairman, Vice Chairman and members of each Residents or Villagers Committee are elected by the residents. The relationship between the Residents Committee and Villagers Committee and the grassroots organs of state power is prescribed by law.

The Residents Committees and Villagers Committees establish committees for people’s mediation, public security, public health, and other matters in order to manage public affairs and social services in their areas, mediate civil disputes, help maintain public order and convey residents’ opinions and demands and make suggestions to the people’s government.”

—Article 111, Section V, 1993 Constitution of the People’s Republic of China

As the above citation from China’s current Constitution makes clear, Villagers Committees in the countryside and Residents Committees (Jumin Weiyuanhui) in the cities are identical in their legal status, structure, basic functions, and relationship to local government. The “grassroots organs of state power” referred to in the Constitution are townships in the rural areas. In the cities, the equivalents are Street Offices (Jiedao Banshichu). The laws which define the relationship between Villagers Committees and township governments and municipal Street Offices are, respectively, the Organic Law on Villagers Committee Organization, as amended and approved by the National People’s Congress in November 1998, and the Organic Law on Organization of Residents Committees of Cities, promulgated by the National People’s Congress in December 1989, and effective January 1, 1990. Except for a more detailed section on how Villagers Committees are to be elected, the contents of the two laws are virtually the same.

Despite the apparent identical character and functions of these rural and urban “mass organizations of self-management,” significantly more international attention and analysis have been directed toward the Villagers Committees. The competitive multicandidate election process and the use of universal suffrage and direct election by secret ballot for choosing Villagers Committees has captured the interest of international observers. It also has stimulated an ongoing debate as to whether or not this process is a harbinger of future democratic reform.

On the other hand, Residents Committees (sometimes translated into English as “Neighborhood Committees”) basically have been ignored, both by the foreign media and the international academy studying social and political dynamics in China. Is this...
because the Residents Committee election process is not as “democratic”? Is it the result of the difference between urban and rural geography, which perforce affords the rural village opportunities for more independent action and places Residents Committees in much greater proximity to formal government agencies? Or is it because Residents Committees themselves are not very meaningful, either in their representation or roles? Perhaps the principal reason why the status and roles of Residents Committees in the cities have not been reported on or studied thus far simply is a case of inattention and lack of awareness by the foreign community. A search of the academic literature over the past several years and initial reviews of English-language newspapers and magazines yields extremely limited results on Residents Committees.

This paper is an attempt to partially fill in that gap of knowledge. It will describe the evolution and role of Residents Committees in contemporary China, and it will place Residents Committees in their contemporary urban environment, especially with respect to their relations with formal municipal government. A central issue to be addressed in this paper is municipal community development and urban social services. Within that context, this paper will discuss the role of the Residents Committees in the management and delivery of those services, and in organizing popular participation and volunteer activities. The paper concludes with an analysis of the problems and prospects for both Residents Committees specifically, and municipal social service organization and community development more generally.
Background

Before discussing the evolution and functions of urban Residents Committees, some facts are needed in order to place those Committees in context. In 1995, China had 640 urban communities bearing the official designation of “city.” Of that total, 32 cities had populations of more than one million people, 235 had populations ranging from just under one million to 200,000 people, and 373 cities had populations of 200,000 or less. Most noteworthy is the rapid rise in the number of small cities (less than 200,000 population), which continues to accelerate. Between 1995 and 1997, about 20 new small-size cities were established. This growth in small cities is due to three factors. First the continuing migration from rural areas; second, urban sprawl, which has necessitated the redrawing of administrative boundaries; and third, the efforts by large and growing towns to be reclassified as cities because of the tax and revenue benefits such designations bring, have all contributed to this trend of small city growth.

Government policy also appears to encourage the establishment of small cities, both to avoid the economic problems of managing large urban population centers (a long-held Chinese government policy) as well as to better cope with social problems stemming from economic reform. As a consequence of this “small cities” trend, today more than 50 percent of China’s Residents Committees are found in the small cities, whereas before economic reform, over half of the urban Residents Committees were located in cities with populations of one million or more.

Three other social trends in Post-Maoist urban China also combine to give greater importance to Residents Committees in providing social services and maintaining public order—two of their constitutionally mandated functions. First, with the Household Registration system either being relaxed or breaking down, there is much more mobility into and out of areas managed by Residents Committees. Today, one in four households located within formal Residents Committee jurisdictions are from “outside,” i.e., relocated from a former Household Registration address. That kind of mobility was extremely rare before economic reform. As a result, Residents Committees have a lot of “paperwork” to do and face more of a challenge in keeping track of those residing in their neighborhood.

Second, the percentage of China’s population that is aging is rising rapidly, and therefore, requires the establishment of new methods of elder care. Government policy is stressing the need to provide this care within the
community, meaning that cities and their subunits have a larger role to play in developing facilities and services to care for the elderly. The primary care facility and first line of service to meet this need is the Residents Committee.

Third, economic reform means that work units (danwei) can no longer provide the social safety net that they once did in a planned and controlled economy. As work units withdraw social welfare and social security benefits from employees, as more workers are laid off, and as more people become either self-employed or unemployed, city governments and their constituent elements must develop alternative social services and social welfare resources.

All of China’s cities have the same three-tier administrative structure: a Municipal Government administration divided into Districts and Street Offices. As of 1997, there were 667 cities including a grand total of 706 Districts. This indicates a large number of small cities where there are no Districts. To indicate the disparity, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Beijing have 14, 13, and 10 Districts, respectively, while hundreds of cities have no Districts. A District is the urban approximation of a rural County. All cities with populations over 100,000 are required to have Street Offices, covering 50,000 to 100,000 persons on average. There are approximately 10,000 urban Street Offices throughout China, which works out to an average of about 15 per urban District. Beneath these Street Offices, which are staffed by anywhere from 30 to 100 cadres, are a grand total of between 90,000 to 100,000 Residents Committees, or roughly 10 to 12 Residents Committees per Street Office. By terms of the Law on Organization of Residents Committees in Cities, a Residents Committee is to be composed of between 100 to 700 households, with a total population of between 1,000 to 4,000 persons (see figure on Page 7). Some Committees, however, have considerably larger populations.

In all, approximately 200 to 300 million of China’s population live within an urban Residents Committee area. It is estimated that such Residents Committees have been established in over 90 percent of China’s urban areas. However, that percentage may be reducing as new property developments and urban growth create new population centers faster than administrators can establish Committees, which takes some time to do. The Basic-Level Organizations Department of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and the Civil Affairs Bureaus at lower levels of government are responsible for developing and overseeing overall policies that strengthen Residents Committees specifically, and enhance the delivery of social welfare services more generally.
Municipal Government
(640 Cities in total)
Population 1 million plus: 32
Population 200,000 to 1 million: 235

Municipal District Governments
(706 Districts, each with populations of 100,000 plus)

Community Development Management Committee

Street Offices
(10,000 Offices, each with populations of 50,000 to 100,000)

Community Development Management Committee

Residents Committees
(100,000 Committees, each with populations of 1,000 to 4,000)
Historical Context

Like rural Villagers Committees, urban Residents Committees have their roots in China’s past. Whether Imperial, Nationalist, or Communist, Chinese governments have always relied on a decentralized system of local organization to help govern, control, and meet societal needs. In the pre-Communist period, the cities were divided into a self-administering and mutual aid and mutual responsibility system known as bao jia. Craft and artisan guilds, mainly found in the cities, also were vehicles for mutual aid and self-help that established a tradition that the Communist authorities could build upon.

The objective of these systems, currently represented in the “mass organization of self-management,” was and is self-sufficiency. This goal is articulated in the “three selves” slogan of the Beijing authorities: “self-education, self-finance, self-management.” That slogan applies both to Villagers and Residents Committees. It means that these committees are supposed to be as self-providing as possible in carrying out the basic tasks mandated to them by law and in the Constitution. This approach relieves municipal governments of financial and service burdens. However, one must note the distinction between self-sufficiency and self-government. Neither villages nor neighborhood committees are formally autonomous as governmental units; any public revenues raised by those committees revert to the next level of government; they cannot choose to disregard or revise official policies. Any local policies or programs they initiate must be financed with their own off-budget resources, and not be in conflict with formal government policies. Also, Villagers and Residents Committees do not have any formal coercive power. They cannot unilaterally tax, fine, or impose any other sanctions on their constituents. That authority resides in the official government offices starting with the townships in the countryside and the Street Offices in the cities.

The municipal administrative structure of today was first put in place in 1949. Residents Committees emerged beginning about 1952. Their primary functions at that time were largely to provide social control, political education, and the “rooting out of class enemies.” Residents Committees as informal voluntary groups were meant to be adjuncts and auxiliaries to the Street Offices, which are the first tier of formal municipal government and to which are attached local police stations. Public safety and security thus were prime concerns and consumed the majority of time and attention of the Residents Committees in the early years following the revolution. The commencement of the Household Registration system in 1958 and the use of ration cards for food
and basic commodities made the Residents Committees more effective since
they served as the first unit for monitoring and registering information.
Consequently, movement of people was very restricted.

In fact, the early Chinese Communist ideal of self-sufficiency was the urban
enterprise work unit (*danwei*), which was a completely self-contained and self-
managing unit under close party supervision. The goal was to have people live
in the same compound where they worked, to have their children educated, their
health needs provided, the disadvantaged and handicapped attended to, and all
other daily life needs and activities met within that compound. That urban
system served two purposes. First, it reduced the financial burden on the formal
party-state. And second, it compartmentalized China's urban population into
manageably-sized units to monitor and control.

In the minds of a number of observers and specialists, both Chinese and
foreign, the image of the Residents Committee members as police auxiliaries and
as agents of social control is strongly influenced by this earlier monitoring,
information-keeping, political educating, and social mobilizing role of the
Committee. While the maintenance of social order remains a primary task of
Residents Committees, as described below, the Committee's major utility today
is as primary provider of key social services. Some of those community services
such as sanitation, basic welfare for the handicapped and disadvantaged, literacy
education, and mediation of civil disputes have been part of the Committees'
role from the outset in 1952. But residents and observers alike mainly recall the
policing role. Until very recently, Residents Committees were viewed as not
being particularly helpful, since they had so few resources. The Committees
were capable of causing trouble for one, though, since they managed registra-
tion records, kept an eye on the residents, and reported to the local police. As a
consequence, most residents were not actively involved in Committee activities,
and cooperated only to the minimal extent necessary. If one lived in a location
separate from one's work unit, there was even less likelihood one would be
involved with the Committee, since it controlled no benefits.

Both the social control and community service functions outlined above, as
well as the subordinate relationship of the Residents Committee to the Street
Office were codified in the 1954 Regulations on Street Office and Residents
Committee Organization. The local system then remained essentially unchanged
in form and function until the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Unlike
the countryside, where the Cultural Revolution and the preceding Great Leap
Forward resulted in Communes and Production Brigades (collectivized
economic and social units that replaced townships and villages, respectively), attempts to create urban communes failed because production and residence did not overlap enough. In fact, the limitations of the danwei or work unit as both an economic producer and as provider of social welfare and community services result in good part from this lack of geographic and social congruity.

What the turmoil of the 1966 to 1975 period did do was to lessen the independent role of the neighborhood Party secretary, and merge the police, party, and general local population more closely into the Residents Committee. That merger resulted from the Cultural Revolution’s emphasis on breaking up the old Party establishment, and making cadres more answerable to the general public (albeit largely through “struggle” sessions). This development, along with the greater decentralization of administration to municipal governments stemming from the Cultural Revolution, drew the Residents Committees more closely into the municipal administrative structure. The relationship between Street Office and Residents Committee, in particular, became more closely tied together.

The legacies of the 1949 to 1966 period, which combined a “serve the people” attitude by cadres with ongoing class struggle and political education campaigns, and the Cultural Revolution, which bound the Committees more closely to formal municipal government while stressing self-help, both influence the working style of today’s Residents Committees. Those Committees and the municipal administrations are employing both the voluntary, social organization approach while experimenting with more professional primary level cadres—often at the same time. This is in large part a reflection of contemporary realities, but it also is influenced by this modern history.

For a period of some years following the onset of economic reform in 1978, Residents Committees were either avoided by the general public or downplayed by authorities because of their inability to deal with key problems like unemployment and social security. Beginning about 1985 to 1986, however, Party and government leaders began to place greater stress on strengthening and reinvigorating Residents Committees. Official circulars enjoined the public and local governments to pay more attention to the election of Residents Committee members, to participating in Committee programs, and to develop new off-budget funding sources to support Committee services.

Not so coincidentally, this was the same time that Party leadership began to feature the development of Villagers Committees through direct competitive elections. Economic reform had undermined and destabilized the relations
between local cadres and the local population to such an extent that the leadership was concerned about civil disorder. The strengthening of the Villagers Committee election process was seen as a means of enhancing the fading legitimacy of the Party in the countryside by holding local cadres to greater account. In the view of those advocating development of the Villagers Committees system, those Committees were an effective means of filling the power vacuum left by the collapse of the rural communes.

In the cities, the strengthening of Residents Committees was also a means of averting civil disorder, especially as rural “floating population” migrants began to move into the urban areas. But the primary value of reinvigorated Residents Committees were their potential as alternatives to work units in providing social welfare and community services.

As market-oriented economic reform resulted in shrinking government budgets, increased domestic migration, withdrawal of the work unit-based social safety net, and a rapid increase in urban underemployed and unemployed stemming from enterprise restructuring, authorities in the party and the government began to consider how communities themselves could manage the provision of social security and welfare services to replace formerly state-provided or enterprise-provided benefits. Thus, in 1986, the party issued a circular calling for the strengthening of Residents Committees so they could contribute to community construction (shiqu jianshe). This first call for a community services policy that was community-based set the tone and direction for the ensuing period up to the present. The goal and the watchword is Community Construction. The 1989 law on the Organization of Residents Committees of Cities (see Appendix 1) was a further step in intensifying the development of Residents Committees as community service providers rather than primarily as keepers of social order. Article 1 of the law states that the Committees are intended to enable citizens to “arrange public affairs” so as to promote and develop “democratic socialism, socialist materialism, and the socialist spirit in cities.” In other words, the newly emphasized role of Residents Committees was to enhance living conditions and the more active participation of residents in achieving that aim. It is interesting to note that on December 26, 1989, the same day that the Residents Committee Organization Law was passed, the National People’s Congress also promulgated the national Urban Planning Law. Both laws focus on bringing order and comprehensiveness to the material development of urban areas, although neither law refers to the other.

Four years after the Residents Committee Organization law was passed, another landmark was reached when the revised 1993 Constitution contained a
specific provision mandating both Villagers and Residents Committees. This had been preceded the same year by a major policy paper, “Accelerating Community Service Development,” issued jointly by no less than 14 ministries and State Council commissions (see Appendix 2. That joint policy paper, reinforced by a Ministry of Civil Affairs circular in 1994 urging even greater efforts in community construction, forms the basis and provides the impetus and guidance for China’s current push to create community-based social services and social security facilities.

The joint policy paper stressed several themes in urging Community Construction. First, it endorsed the concept of “small government, big society,” shifting the major responsibilities for social welfare and services from work units and the government to residential jurisdictions. In formalizing this shift as a matter of policy, the joint policy document and subsequent circulars recognized the need for flexibility and experimentation by local urban residential jurisdictions in finding ways to provide those services. This has opened the door for a wide variety of innovations in urban community development. Indeed, one of the main roles of supramunicipal government agencies (e.g., provincial governments, functional commissions and ministries, etc.) is to identify new local models that appear to work and bring them to the attention of other municipalities. This is often done through the use of “model” awards and commendations, which seems to resonate in Chinese culture.

Secondly, the current policy as described in the paper and as articulated in current campaigns urges the cultivation of “spiritual civilization” (jingshen wenming) as a goal of community construction. The concept of Spiritual Civilization is an odd mixture of civility in interpersonal relations (“be polite to one another, obey traffic signals, don’t argue with your neighbors, don’t spit, etc.”); and emulation of old selfless “serve the people” socialist heroes. “Learn from Lei Feng!” and similar slogans and pictures of such paragons now are found on posters at bus stops in cities, with the commercial enterprise that paid for the billboards listed as well—an interesting blend of capitalism and socialism. A third element of the concept is volunteerism, and along with that notion a stronger emphasis on finding more participatory mechanisms for Residents Committees and submunicipal units to improve and expand the provision of social services. Increasing volunteer action is seen as a means of community building, and is also strongly endorsed in the current policy.

At the same time, that element of the current community construction policy, which seeks to strengthen Residents Committees as part of the overall
municipal community-building effort, strongly recommends improving the quality of Residents Committee social services by: a) professionalizing Residents Committee staffs through recruiting younger, better educated and trained staff, who would receive a full salary; and b) raising revenues for social services through the establishment of local neighborhood companies and enterprises to be managed by Residents Committee cadres or those in the employ of, or contracted to, Residents Committees. While this attention to professionalization and commercial management at the Residents Committee level can of course coexist with a rise in volunteerism at the local level, as a policy issue there is some contradiction here. The relevant law also requires that Residents Committee members be elected, making professionalization a complex challenge.

Before turning to a detailed examination of how municipalities and their component Districts, Street Offices, and Residents Committees are meeting the challenge of community-based social services and community construction today, a comprehensive review of Residents Committee structure and functions will be presented first. That review will allow one to better gauge the prospects for Residents Committees as providers of social services in the future.
The Structure and Functions of Residents Committees in Contemporary China

Staffing

According to statute, a Residents Committee must have from four to seven directly elected cadres to manage the affairs of the Committee. In fact, in some especially large population Residents Committees, usually in dense inner-city, high-rise compounds, there may be as many as 10 Committee staff. These include a Director, a Deputy Director, and Chairs for committees on mediation, public safety, social welfare, public health/family planning, and what might be called “quality of life” issues and services. Directors and Deputy Directors are full-time positions, and by law, those positions are to be filled through direct competitive elections.

In many Residents Committees that have been designated as models and in other Residents Committees as well, care is taken to ensure that the forms of the election procedure are properly carried out, with secret voting, review and retention of ballots, and reporting to higher authorities. At least in some of the model Residents Committees there is normally one more candidate than positions available, to ensure some competition. But generally it would appear that not much meaning or importance is attached to the election of Residents Committee Directors and Deputy Directors. Candidates often are identified by the Street Office and local party branch, and recommended to the incumbent Residents Committee and or other leading figures in the neighborhood. These candidates, more often than not, are not party members, nor are they selected on the basis of any particular ideological correctness. Instead, they are recommended and urged to run on the basis of their demonstrated civic-mindedness. Voter turnout for these Residents Committee elections appear to be quite high, but one does not detect a great deal of enthusiasm. The major reason for this fairly lukewarm attitude is probably due to the fact that not much is at stake in terms of power or resources. This is in contrast to successful village elections, where Villagers Committees have significant economic assets, such as collective enterprises and land, to manage, and where interest and feelings run high.

Until very recently, Residents Committee staff were predominantly female. The current estimate is that more than 90 percent of China’s Residents Committees are directed by women. Predominantly, they have been retirees over the age of 50 with quite limited education, usually only through primary school. In the majority of cities, the Residents Committee Director and Deputy Director receive a monthly stipend from the Street Office according to a city-
wide minimum. They may also receive bonuses derived from the earnings and profits of the Residents Committee’s collective enterprises. But these usually have been very modest and limited amounts. Traditionally, Residents Committee staff were expected to rely on their pensions as their main income, since most of those staff were retirees.

The new policy of community-based social welfare and community development is starting to alter this profile, though. To improve and expand municipal social services, various layers of government from the center down have been urging the elevation of the quality of Resident Committee staff, as well as the accelerated development of community networks of volunteer groups and associations, or what is sometimes awkwardly referred to as the “socialization” of social welfare organization (i.e., community-basing of such services). This new effort to professionalize Residents Committee staffs—especially when the law requires those staffs to be elected—is being addressed in a variety of creative ways by different municipalities.

In Shanghai and Tianjin, for example, recent college graduates are being hired by Street Offices and assigned to serve as “assistants” to Residents Committee Directors on one- and two-year contracts as experiments. In Shenyang, as in many other cities, the municipal administration is setting new minimum educational levels and maximum age limits for candidates for Residents Committee cadres positions. At the same time, the city governments have become more active in identifying suitable candidates by screening the now-larger pool of available candidates from those who recently have been laid off or released from government service as a result of public sector downsizing. These individuals are then “invited” by the Residents Committee in the locality in which they live to run for a Committee position.

Qingdao and Dalian are also hiring new college graduates to work as full-time assistants to Residents Committee Directors, but they are also experimenting with other methods of improving community social services. In Qingdao, the District level government has deployed 100 of its professional employees to Residents Committees. The city’s education department has also assigned teachers to Street Offices for two-year periods to provide extension and adult education at the Residents Committee level. These are in addition to the full-time Committee assistants paid for by the city. In some higher-income Residents Committees in Guangzhou, professional social workers and other needed professional services, such as lawyers, have been hired directly by those Committees.
The Committee assistant, as a means of professionalizing and improving Residents Committee-level social services, appears to be gaining in popularity across China’s cities. But the cities must allocate the funds necessary to provide full-time salaries for those assistants, who are not Committee-employed but city government-employed. This represents a departure from past practice where the Residents Committee was expected to be almost completely self-sufficient. Cities across China are also raising the minimum level of stipend for Residents Committee Directors, from 75 or 100 Yuan a month to as much as 300 Yuan a month, plus bonuses derived from Residents Committee enterprise earnings. This stipend increase allows municipalities to take advantage of and absorb as Residents Committee cadres more of the younger, more highly educated labor force recently laid off. The problem here is that only those municipalities with larger budgets can afford these new positions.

Services

A Residents Committee seems to have an impossibly long list of responsibilities to take care of, both on behalf of the neighborhood residents and at the request of higher levels of government. The most noteworthy point is that so many Committees seem to carry out their responsibilities fairly conscientiously and completely. However, in discussing the range and quality of services of Residents Committees, it is critical to bear in mind that in many cities of China, many Residents Committees have either faded into the background or apparently almost ceased to function. The material prosperity that economic reform has brought to many urban dwellers has enabled them to seek out optional service providers in the private sector, and given those residents the means to pay for those services. For an increasing number of urban dwellers, then, the Residents Committee has become less relevant. The activities and services outlined below occur in well-functioning Residents Committees. There are many urban areas, however, where the Committees simply are not functioning beyond the minimal requirements. Where Residents Committees are successful, their functions include any or all of the following:

1. Information and Record-Keeping: One of the most impressive images of a Residents Committee office is the wall poster listing all of the vital statistics and data for every household within that Committee’s locality. Committee staff are responsible for keeping track of all births, deaths, and transfers in and out of the neighborhood, and do so on a regular basis. In addition, the wall poster shows the number of persons, ages, occupations, educational levels, marital status, number of children, etc.,
of every resident household. That information is kept current. Also posted are the various subcommittees and names and specialities of volunteers, as well as key referral telephone numbers and contacts. The office wall of a well-run Residents Committee is a rich source of information.

Committee staff must also complete and return any number of informational forms sent down by health, education, sanitation, and other functional municipal units. For Residents Committee staff who are not particularly well-educated, this is an onerous chore. Like lower-level administrators everywhere, these Committee staff complain about all of the “paperwork” which they claim prevents them from getting out of the Committee office and “serving the people.” In fact, one of the primary roles that the new Committee Assistants have assumed in those cities experimenting with them, is handling all of the paperwork.

The record-keeping function of a Residents Committee probably is its greatest source of power, odd as that may sound. While Residents Committees do not have the authority to marry, divorce, permit relocations, obtain official approval to have a child, seek school placement, or gain unemployment or poverty relief subsidies, a resident needs to have a certificate from the Residents Committee proving he/she is a legal resident in good standing in that particular neighborhood. The resident then presents that certificate to the formal municipal agency in question to initiate the process for whatever is sought.

2. Public Safety and Security

In an earlier period, this function meant keeping an eye on suspicious characters and watching for political deviation. There is less evidence of that now, although Committees do still keep an eye on “suspicious” characters, and monitor juvenile delinquent and parolee behavior, much like a parole officer would. With the large numbers of “floating population” migrants and the general rise in street crime that has occurred in recent years, the emphasis is now on crime prevention. The forms that prevention take vary often according to the physical environment. In high-rise block compounds with their own inner lanes and alleys, the Residents Committee may install gates rigged with an alarm system to keep out intruders, such as one sees in Harbin. In one particularly high-density, blue-collar neighborhood in Fuzhou, the Residents Committee not only installed gates, but hired a number of private security guards and installed a closed circuit
television-monitoring system in hallways, all controlled at the Committee office. These security measures were paid for by Residents Committee funds, through donations and from Committee enterprise earnings. The decision to take such costly and serious measures came after a series of thefts and assaults about which the residents demanded action from the Committee Director.

Residents Committees organize volunteer neighborhood watches and evening patrols to keep an eye on the area. They will also assist police in carrying out investigations of crimes committed in the neighborhood. While relations with the police vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, there are usually one to three officers who are assigned a neighborhood “beat” by the Street Office-level police station, and who are well-known to the Residents Committee staff and residents. Whether or not they are trusted or respected depends, of course, on the caliber of the officers themselves. In the Fuzhou example given above, the Residents Committee actually petitioned the Street Office police station to set up a permanent police kiosk within the Committee area (the police agreed). Residents Committees will also assist police in investigating crimes in their neighborhood.

Because a Residents Committee population is relatively small (1,000 to 4,000 people at most; usually less than 2,000) the Residents Committee staff normally are acquainted with most of the residents. The Committee’s record-keeping function also allows them to keep watch on movements in and out of the neighborhood. While one no longer needs to seek permission from the Residents Committee to leave or enter it, most cities require that a person staying temporarily in a Committee area must make him/herself known to that Committee after a specified period, say one to two weeks of temporary residence.

3. People’s Mediation

One to three members of the elected Residents Committee cadres are designated as People’s Mediators, and are responsible for resolving civil and domestic disputes in the neighborhood under the Committee’s jurisdiction. Those selected for this task are supposed to be (and often are) considered to be respected, usually elderly, and hopefully have some skill or experience in human relations. Those who carry out their responsibilities too zealously—by listening for domestic arguments or knocking on doors to inquire of the family or hallway’s relations—are the ones who have given Residents
Committees in the past the bad image of “nosy aunties” or “bound foot police.” Most of the disputes are usually family arguments, which have become so out of hand that part of the neighborhood is disrupted, or arguments among neighbors over such things as the use of common facilities, like water taps. However, as the Chinese economy has reformed, more of the disputes are now economically based—for example, an alleged breech of contract over services and wages, or a dispute over the rental of land. An increasing number of these disputes are between a Committee collective enterprise and an individual, which puts the Committee mediator in a compromised position.

This last kind of dispute, in particular, but also the growing number of economic-related disputes in general, raise serious questions about the ability of Residents Committee mediators to resolve such disputes. Previously, those mediators would receive a few hours of training a year from the local Justice Bureau. The content of that training would be less on skills and more informational about new laws. Committee mediators normal do not fully understand the mediating ethic of not taking sides and of exercising no coercion. Instead, these mediators place a premium on bringing peace to the neighborhood and restoring social order or “harmony.” The content of economic disputes simply has gone beyond them, requiring the disputants to seek redress through the courts.

The Ministry of Justice, as one part of the new national community development movement, is seeking to revamp the existing People’s Mediation Law and to develop new methods and materials for training Residents Committee mediators. In all likelihood, such reforms would be more successful if the educational level and quality of the Residents Committee staff themselves continue to be upgraded.

4. Public Health/Family Planning
A large number of the country’s urban Residents Committees maintain a very small and modest one-room “clinic.” If the Residents Committee’s population includes those with medical training, their voluntary service will be sought for such limited tasks as routine checkups, blood pressure, temperature and pulse-taking, and the administering of simple medicines, like aspirin. If no such volunteers reside within the neighborhood, many Residents Committees will solicit volunteer services from hospitals, either directly or through the Street Office.
Perhaps the most important public health function the Residents Committee plays is an educational and preventive one. With materials provided by the city health bureau, and with a few hours of training through booklets and lectures, the Residents Committee staff will distribute information and hold discussions on disease control and prevention, first aid, and similar basic health education. The Residents Committees also will organize campaigns among the residents to clean up stagnant water in dengue fever and malaria areas, or use insecticide sprays or smokes to deinfest apartment buildings.

Family planning education and the distribution of contraceptives are also managed by Residents Committees, either as part of the public health function or through a separate family planning and women’s issues committee. Residents Committees also issue certificates, much as they do for marriage, divorce, and relocations, that confirms to municipal agencies that the couple is eligible to have a child. However, Residents Committee cadres do not have the authority to fine or sanction violators of the one-child-per-family policy. Instead, their role is one of educating, monitoring, and reporting.

5. Environment and Sanitation: One of the more evident displays of a Residents Committee at work is a neighborhood “clean-up day.” Committee cadres will talk with residents in order to set a date, and then pass out notices, post a bulletin, and make calls on various subneighborhood leaders to get resident volunteers to turn out for a day of sweeping, trash collection, pest spraying, perhaps some common facility painting or white washing, and the like. Residents Committees are the units responsible for keeping up the neighborhood’s appearance, and for basic services such as garbage collection, which the Committee must arrange with the city. Residents Committees will also arrange for tree-plantings by residents and for physical improvements like clearing a green space for a garden and recreation. On many occasions, the Residents Committee will lobby the municipal urban planning department and/or the Street Office for helping with developing a small park, installing street lighting, or stopping a local polluting business from spoiling the environment. Residents Committees probably are most active on this subject as advocates and activists.
Legal Education and Protection

The 1989 law mandates Residents Committees “to propagandize the constitution, laws, statutes, and state policies; to safeguard the lawful rights of residents...” In pre-reform China, this was political education, pure and simple. In contemporary China, it is very much changed and much more complicated. With help and materials from the Street and District offices and from the local Justice Bureaus and Civil Affairs bureaus, Residents Committees seem to be very busily engaged in popular legal education activities. These have two sides to them. First, there are political study sessions, open to all residents but usually consisting of a core group and local party members. These study sessions are means by which the latest policy lines and party/government positions on various issues are relayed to the general population in the cities. While many outside observers point to the growing weakness of the Communist Party, visits to urban Residents Committees from Harbin to Fuzhou and from Shanghai to Chengdu still give ample and impressive evidence of the party’s ability to get its messages across and into the smallest lane and alley in China. The consistency across localities is stunning.

That said, the content of those messages and the way in which they are interpreted by Residents Committee cadres and the general public are what make changes possible. The party messages, based on feedback from Residents Committee cadres, now emphasize community construction and spiritual civilization goals, and stress making sure cadres stay honest and become more accountable. Those messages also urge communities to innovate and experiment in finding ways to realize these goals.

Legal education now includes not simply political education and reading about new laws, but discussing what those laws mean and what an individual or group’s rights as well as obligations are under those laws and regulations. In fact, the legal education sessions conducted by the Residents Committees and the legal services offered under Residents Committee auspices now are among the most popular and best attended of all organized Committee activities.

For example, a Residents Committee in a middle-income professional neighborhood of Guangzhou carries out an active popular legal education program through wall posters, street meetings, and videotapes. These activities both inform the residents about laws but
also interpret the laws as well, instructing the citizens in their rights under the laws and how to seek redress. Another Residents Committee in the same district of Guangzhou operates a full-time Legal Aid Service staffed by three lawyers and seven law students. This legal services office provides notary-types services, regular private attorney services, and professional mediation and arbitration services. Fees are charged on a sliding scale depending on income and whether or not the client is a resident of the neighborhood. All civil disputes for mediation are referred to this office by the Residents Committee, rather than handled by the Committee itself.

At the other end of the spectrum, a Residents Committee on the outskirts of Shanghai and a similar Committee in Wuhan hire graduate law students for a half-day to come and instruct the residents on how to use new laws and regulations to protect themselves. It is not surprising to see young graduate law student volunteers instructing old folks in the Residents Committee’s public recreation space on how to use the law on the rights of the elderly to make sure they are not abused. In Fuzhou, an inner-city Residents Committee believes its most important fulfillment of the legal education mandate is to hire a graduate law student to sit just outside the police kiosk in the building compound plaza to resolve on-the-spot any run-ins or disputes that seem to pop up frequently between the worker-residents and the local police.

Popular legal education and legal aid and legal service in Post-Mao China has become one of the more popular and growing activities of Residents Committees, when they can afford them or when they can tap volunteer services of lawyers and law students. These legal activities are both services wanted by the residents and income generators for the Residents Committees. Almost all of these legal services have some kind of fee schedule attached to them, with only nominal charges for residents and none for the disadvantaged. The Ministry of Justice’s new National Legal Aid program, which is establishing a network of legal aid centers at the city and urban district levels, hopes to link up with those services at some point.

7. Daily Life Convenience Services: Of all the roles played by Residents Committees in contemporary China, none has become more deeply ingrained and more widely requested and required than the provision of facilities that make the life of the residents a little easier. These functions
sometimes are referred to as “daily life services.” Included are the following Committee-operated services: a) neighborhood takeaway and delivery “fast food” restaurants; b) public telephone counter (in Shanghai, some better-off Committees have installed computers for residents’ use); c) temporary domestic help, such as daily apartment cleaners or cooks; d) various forms of shuttle transport, such as minivan rental, either to take residents to bus lines or to escort children to school; e) bicycle and auto parking areas; f) a range of neighborhood shops such as hairdressers, bicycle repair, electrician and plumbing repair, grocery stores, and other specific retail services requested by residents.

These retail services are responses to changed living conditions in a more market-oriented Chinese economy. With married couples both working and with smaller nuclear families, these “convenience services” have become much more in demand and are central features of contemporary Residents Committees. In addition, these services are key income generators for the Residents Committees. The Committees either hire staff directly to manage and operate these services, or contract and rent out space to individuals to run those enterprises. The enterprises then remit a portion of earnings back to the Residents Committees according to an agreed-upon formula. This off-budget enterprise revenue then is used to pay bonuses to Committee cadres and to subsidize various Committee social welfare services.

8. Social Welfare Services
Residents Committees as basic social welfare providers are important to that marginalized and disadvantaged portion of the population that have neither work unit nor family to fall back on for social protection and security. There is a core cluster of social welfare services that all Residents Committees are expected to administer on a front-line, primary care basis for these persons who run the risk of falling between the cracks.

According to interviewed Committee cadres, the most pressing welfare need is improved and expanded care for the elderly, who represent a growing percentage of urban populations, especially in older neighborhoods. The services which a Residents Committee can provide are limited, but they do offer the following: a) annual, free health check-up at the local clinic; b) a resident volunteer system to make calls on and look in on housebound frail elderly; c) the installation of a buzzer
or bell system that connects the apartments of the elderly to the Committee office, which the aged can use to summon assistance; d) food and other delivery services, provided by Committee cadres and volunteers; e) recreation services, such as outings, games, crafts, and the like; f) other special services as circumstances dictate and resources allow. For example, in hilly Dalian, one Residents Committee is trying to build a bathing facility close by an apartment building which is home to a number of infirm elderly, since the current bathhouse is at some distance and uphill. Many Committees attempt to keep one room available for the use of its elderly population for congregating, recreating, and exercising (local companies sometimes donate exercise equipment for old folks’ use). Finally, in larger and better-off Committees, an “old folks home” is maintained—usually a dormitory-type arrangement for 12 to 14 old persons who have no support. All of the elder care services are provided either free-of-charge or on a means-based sliding scale.

Services for the residents’ school children include cadres or volunteers escorting the children to and from school, a small children’s lunchroom (of growing importance with both parents out working), and a small facility for study and game-playing.

Residents Committees are also expected to provide care for the physically and mentally handicapped. Usually, this takes the form of small “factories” in the neighborhood where the handicapped who are able to do so are taught a basic skill and produce a product for sale at one or more of the Committee’s enterprises. The Committee pays the handicapped workers according to production or sales. Occasionally, the Committee will arrange for a professional therapist to visit, although normally more severe cases have to be referred upward.

Charity and relief cases, i.e., those officially declared to be living below the poverty line, do not receive any cash subsidy from the Residents Committee. Such cash benefits come from the municipal government itself. Instead, the poor within a Committee area are visited and provided with the available volunteer services. Military dependents and families of “revolutionary martyrs” are to receive special attention by the Residents Committees cadres, according to policy guidelines, although this does not appear to make all that much practical difference.

The most rapidly growing social security task for Residents Committees today is reemployment and job placement. With the large-
scale layoffs resulting from state enterprise restructuring and the
growing number of former civil service employees now idle as a result
of government agency downsizing, finding alternative employment for
newly-unemployed residents has become the number one priority for a
large number of Residents Committees, especially in the cities of
northeast and central interior China. It appears that most Residents
Committees are not in a position to conduct skills training programs,
and that their exclusive focus is on finding other income-earning
options for their unemployed residents. Finding jobs for the
unemployed and unsupported has always been a role of the Residents
Committees. But in the past, that was fairly limited to waiting-for-work
youth.

The job placement of the newly unemployed has become an urgent
matter for most municipal governments in the less economically
competitive parts of China. Residents Committees are being urged by
city governments to help out in this reemployment program. The
Committees respond in several ways. First, the Committees may arrange
for jobs in the Committee-sponsored or operated retail services and
enterprises. Many Committees have between 30 to 50 employees either
working directly for Committee-run collective enterprises or as
individual entrepreneurs renting space in Committee-managed property
and dividing earnings with the Committee. Second, the Residents
Committee maintains a job referral listing composed of positions open
in local firms or wanted by individual residents. Domestic helpers, for
example, are always in demand and information about them is available
at the Committee office. Third, depending upon qualifications and
municipal policy, some of the newly unemployed, particularly former
public sector employees, are being absorbed directly into the Residents
Committees as cadres and specialized staff, as described earlier.
Municipal governments are urging this last approach in particular, as
one means of turning crisis into an opportunity for upgrading the
quality of Residents Committees.

Assessing and Financing Neighborhood Needs and Services
Residents Committees as self-managing and basically self-financing units are
encouraged by higher levels of government to be as responsive as possible in
meeting the range of needs of its community. Since the new community-based
social services was adopted in 1994, submunicipal units also are being urged to
be innovative and creative in organizing and managing social service programs. To further encourage this, civil affairs bureaus seek out models and offer a range of commendations and awards for innovations and effectiveness, especially in meeting goals suggested by the government.

Residents Committees thus have a lot of latitude and room for experimentation in planning and managing programs. That space, however, does have some parameters around it. Residents Committee planning and management of social services is, of course, restricted by the limited access to and availability of financial and material resources. The content and priority of Residents Committees community services is guided and overseen by the party, horizontally at the Residents Committee level, and vertically by the Street Office and civil affairs bureaus. The latter agencies, in particular, promote certain kinds of programs to which Residents Committees are responsive, because they bring commendations and awards. A current example is the “3-in-1” campaign, a part of the Spiritual Civilization drive. Residents Committees organize and assist households in their neighborhood to have “1 hanging plant, 1 bookshelf, and 10 books.” Plaques are posted outside the door of household apartments achieving this goal. Many similar promotions are launched by civil affairs bureaus.

Residents Committees do appear to make continuing and conscientious efforts to get feedback and ideas from the neighborhood on what is needed and on the effectiveness of current social service programs. Small group consultations are conducted frequently. In high-rises, floor leaders are recruited to obtain opinions from households on that apartment building floor, which are funneled to the Committee staff. Also, Residents Committees have been making more frequent use of survey forms to elicit resident views. In almost all of the more functional Residents Committees, written surveys are distributed to all households, and the completed forms returned to the Residents Committees for review.

The Street Office cadres have assisted Residents Committees in designing these survey forms, and assist in their assessment. In some cities, the civil affairs bureaus have prepared preprinted forms for the use of those Residents Committees who wish to use them. In addition to public opinion surveys of Residents Committee performance and neighborhood program needs, the public opinion survey method now is being experimented with in some cities to assess municipal government performance overall. In Shenyang, for example, the municipal government recently has informed the Residents Committees that they can and should organize ways of publicly evaluating the performance and behavior of cadres at the Street Office and District level. The city has prepared
special survey forms for this purpose, and has used the Residents Committee network to get them distributed and obtain feedback. Reinforcing this feedback mechanism is the growing popularity of telephone hotlines at the Residents Committee, Street Office, and District levels. Hotlines are used both to get information on needed social services but also to register complaints for “whistle blowing.”

Beyond these means of obtaining feedback on cadres performance, there is little evidence to suggest that bottom-up input has been used to any effective degree in planning social services and social welfare programs citywide. These appear to still be largely done through top-down planning. However, as discussed below, the new community construction policy has brought into being new structures and processes that carry considerable potential to obtain just such grassroots input.

Of a Residents Committee’s total budget for services and operations, a reasonable estimate is that 70 percent of the funds comes from the Residents Committee’s own off-budget sources, and 30 percent from Street Office budgets, mainly to pay the modest stipends of Committee Directors and Deputy Directors. The Committee’s own off-budget funds come mainly from the earnings of the small neighborhood enterprises, which are Committee collective ventures, or from rents paid to the Committee by entrepreneurs and commercial enterprises leasing space within the Committee area.

The city government also provides other forms of in-kind support in the form of telephone and power line installation and various kinds of social services materials (manuals, simple first-aid equipment, etc.). All municipal governments have ordinances requiring any property developer—private or collective—to build into the apartment complex design a minimum area of office space for use by the Residents Committee, recreational space, and perhaps other common facilities such as day care centers for children or the elderly. Some municipal ordinances are more generous than others in this regard, and the degree to which property developers actually adhere to those regulations is also variable.

Rules on taxes and fees of Residents Committee enterprise vary across cities. Generally municipal governments provide tax and fee exemptions for Residents Committees’ collective enterprise of certain kinds that benefit the neighborhood as a convenience, but assess taxes for other forms of business that are regarded simply as income generators. In almost all cases, such taxes and fees assessed remit to the Street Office, not to the Residents Committee. Those taxes make their way back down in the form of Committee staff subsidies. Finally, municipal
regulations allow, even encourage, Committee cadres to receive bonuses from local collective enterprises to augment the cadres’ income.

While this income earning option is intended to promote a local neighborhood’s economic development and social welfare by providing incentives to cadres to generate funds, it also runs the risk of cadres paying more attention to commerce than social welfare. And it is an inducement to corruption. Field observation suggests, however, that this may not be as significant problem in the cities as it is in the rural villages. In the latter, Committee cadres normally do not have the pensions and size of subsidies that Residents Committees cadres receive, are more tempted by business development opportunities, and have fixed assets, particularly land, to trade in often too-cozy business deals. In general, the rural dynamic is very different from the urban at the Committee level.

Based on the author’s informal observations and interviews of Residents Committee staffs and residents in 14 cities over a three-year period, it appears as though the work of Residents Committees is reasonably well-regarded by the relevant populations themselves. But this must be tempered by the fact that the majority of the Residents Committees visited were considered models. That public may not be especially enthusiastic about Committee work, but it seems that the apprehension and avoidance behavior of former years is diminishing. In the eyes of many residents, the Committees nowadays are trying to be helpful and useful in meeting local community needs, even if they are not particularly effective. They do seem to be considered as much less threatening than in the past. There are some functions, like law education and job placement, that residents consider distinctive. But both Committee cadres and residents themselves recognize that as self-managing units, the Committees are materially limited in what they can do. As noted earlier, a significant trend, running alongside the community construction efforts, is the decline and fading away of many Residents Committees. This is especially so in newer, higher-income neighborhoods, where social networks are less well-established and where residents have the resources to meet their needs in the market.

Evidently, the government itself has recognized this fact in its new community construction policy. Under that policy, more municipal resources, both financial and professional, are being channeled to the Residents Committees for social service and social welfare work. The committees themselves are being more integrated into the social service programs of the cities. In order to gain a fuller appreciation of the role and future of Residents Committees, it is necessary to turn to an overview of how new community construction efforts are being launched in China’s cities.
New Municipal Community Development Organization

Since the advent of the new community construction policy in 1994, several distinct trends have emerged in municipalities. Taken together, they indicate new ways of managing community-based social services and point to new opportunities for both society-government and foreign aid cooperation. Most noteworthy are the following five new developments:

Building Municipal Economies of Scale to Improve Social Services

While the Chinese government has been urging the strengthening of Residents Committees for some years, that does not mean increasing the number of Residents Committees. In fact, a clear pattern of reducing the number of Residents Committees in China’s cities is emerging. Committees are being reduced through merger. In a similar pattern, the number of Street Offices in the larger cities of China are being reduced through merger. The purpose of such mergers is to produce economies of scale, or overcome the developmental “scaling up” problem which the self-managing character of the Residents Committees present. Larger Street Offices with fewer but more largely populated Residents Committees means larger tax bases and larger public revenues available for expenditures on social services.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs has recently put forward an unofficial and informal definition of “community” (shiqu) that is basically identical with the Street Office-size population of about 50,000 to 100,000 persons. Residents Committees within those Street Offices thus become what are termed “micro-communities.” The thrust here obviously is to establish a more effective vehicle and geographical basis for organizing and managing social services and social welfare delivery. Municipal governments have authority to pass local laws and regulations which adapt national law to local circumstances. Already, many municipal governments, among them Shanghai, Harbin, Shenyang, Qingdao, Dalian, Wuhan, and Tianjin, are exercising that authority to change municipal regulations to allow for these reductions and mergers. In the major cities of northeast China, for example, and in Shanghai, the number of Residents Committees have been reduced by fully one-third in the past two to three years.

Developing New Large-Scale Street Office and District Community Centers

Closely related to this scaling up exercise has been the very recent establishment of new and ambitious full-service Community Centers at the Street Office and especially the District level. City governments, at the urging of higher levels, are investing considerable resources in the founding of these centers, which are new
phenomena in China. In cities like Harbin, completely new multistoried buildings have been completed. The Harbin District Center provides full-service, one-stop-shopping for virtually every need of a District resident. All departments of government have public offices in the Center. One unit has a 15-window section to allow for one-stop licensing of small businesses. Another floor allows for job retraining and placement. A major medical clinic takes up another wing, and there are housing and care facilities for the elderly, day-care center for children, welfare payment offices, legal consultation services, cultural center and library/reading room, recreational facilities, and so on.

In Shenyang’s new District Community Centers, “life services,” like wedding and funeral ceremonies, are very popular. Fees are charged for these “life services,” which are featured in other such centers around China as well. Those fees, coupled with subsidies from local public health bureaus, help to maintain a new, physically separate home and care facility for the aged in the same District of Shenyang. In similar centers in Shanghai and Dalian, computer information services are used extensively for a wide range of services and informational purposes. Services and facilities for the mentally and physically handicapped, for family planning and related welfare services all are located within the new Community Center.

To adequately staff these centers, city governments have assigned staff from various relevant municipal departments to work at the centers (so virtually every department from police to education to urban planning has an office open to the public at the center), while the centers have rehired as Center employees laid-off public sector employees. The Centers themselves, because they charge fees and generate income in other ways, are to be registered with municipal governments as nonprofit income earners (shiye danwe), rather than be considered as government facilities.

As part of this program, Street Offices are also establishing their own Community Centers, although not as large-scale as the District Centers. Since this is a new development, teething problems seem greater at the Street Office level where finances are smaller, and where staff are not fully trained in full-service community-based social services. Physical constraints are another problem for Street Office centers, especially in the older cities. Street Offices are forced to convert properties previously used for income-generating commercial purposes into social service centers, since they do not have the option of constructing entirely new facilities as some Districts are doing. While the Centers do charge fees on a sliding scale, the return is nowhere near the
amounts earned through the previous businesses. The push on Community Centers and the large construction and development costs show the seriousness of purpose, but there are a number of financial ramifications that need to be sorted out.

Creation of Community Construction Management Committees

The third leg in this new policy triangle is the recent establishment of community development management committees (shequ jianshe guanli weiyuanhui) as the executive overseers of social services and community development at the Street Office and especially the District level. The committees function as “boards” governing the newly created Community Centers, and also are responsible for setting priorities and making decisions about expenditure of municipal funds for social service and community development. These committees are also charged with mobilizing additional funds from other sources. Apparently, the membership and composition of these management committees is decided on a top-down basis, with senior District officials identifying and requesting individuals to serve for fixed terms.

Policy directives and statements by senior officials suggest that these community development management committees are to be the key program developers and decisionmakers in future community construction efforts. Few cities appear to have established citywide committees yet, but the majority of at least the larger cities have set up committees at the District and sometimes Street Office level. A district management committee will have anywhere from 15 to 30 members, including senior representatives of every involved district government agency, mass organizations (Youth League, Women’s Federation, etc.), and the party. In some cities, committee composition is limited to these public sector, mass organization, and party representatives. In other cities, committee membership at the district level has been broadened to include local teachers, media, social organizations, and especially local business enterprises. These committees seem to meet at respectably frequent intervals (every other month), and most appear to be chaired by the District Chief or District Party Secretary.

It must be stressed that these community development management committees are new and still evolving. The charge of these committees is to develop programs, resources, and management ideas to make community-based social services work. The committees have also been given real executive authority as seen from the committee’s ability to make decisions about spending municipal funds. They carry great potential for developing real community-government partnerships and encouraging meaningful grassroots participation. But that potential must first be developed.
Volunteer Associations Expansion

Volunteers to conduct social welfare work and offer community service have always been a socialist ideal of selfless serving the people. The new community development policy stresses volunteer development and encouragement, but does so in new organizational ways. Specifically, it promotes the more structured organization of volunteers into formal and officially registered social organizations (shehui tuanti) at the Street Office but especially the District level civil affairs bureaus. These organizations are the Chinese approximation of non-governmental organizations. The volunteer and social welfare and service volunteer associations have seen a rapid growth in the past several years. In one district in Dalian alone, there are 13 of these associations registered. One of the most well-established Volunteer Associations is in Heping District in Tianjin. In order to retain membership in the Tianjin association, a person must provide volunteer service at least once in a two-month period.

Thus far, these associations are not advocacy groups but service providers. Whether or not they will define their mandate of community development to include such representational functions remains to be seen. The relationship of the associations with the local government will be a key factor in their evolution. In a number of instances, the District Chief of Civil Affairs Director is the Association head. But pending new rules may prohibit such dual functions by officials in the future.

Supporting these volunteer associations and the new community construction programs are a host of new municipal charity, community development, and social welfare foundations. These are neither private endowed foundations nor are they American style-community foundations. These city-level foundations are registered as private and tax exempt even though the staffing for these foundations often comes from the municipal government itself. In effect, the city government subsidizes the municipal foundation by providing the physical plant and the staff, or all of the overhead. The foundations then solicit donations and contributions from the private sector and general public for charitable and social welfare purposes. Here, too, the governing board of the municipal charity foundation is the key to its future prospects as a value-adding provider of social services and source of ideas, representing the entire community. In Guangzhou and Shanghai, municipal charity foundation boards have strong cross-sectoral representation and suitable commercial and community members.
Professionalization and Upgrading of Social Service Staffing

As described earlier, a great deal of attention by civil affairs and municipal officials is being given to improving the quality of staffing at all levels of social service management. This is the last element in the new policy that is unfolding. At the Residents Committee level, city governments are issuing new regulations setting higher-education levels and lower-aged maximums for cadres. Innovations, such as hiring new municipally funded Committee assistants—all of whom are recent college graduates; as assigning teachers and health professionals to Residents Committees by municipal departments; and seconding excess Street Office personnel to fixed-term Residents Committee work, are all ways in which the city governments are trying to enhance basic-level social services. These reforms have the benefit of absorbing new surplus public sector labor.

The continued development of this professionalization will require the establishment of community development and social service training facilities at the municipal level. That training goal now is being expressed repeatedly by municipal officials. Thus far, social work and community development education and training have been largely conspicuous in China by their absence. In fact, such disciplines were considered too “bourgeois” to be politically correct. But that is changing.

The kind of training which Residents Committee cadres have received is compartmentalized by departments, very limited in duration (a few hours a year or half year), and largely top-down informational in character. There appear to be no opportunities to date for Residents Committee cadres to exchange experiences across neighborhoods, or even for Street Office personnel to do the same horizontal linking for educational purposes. However, the city of Quingdao did convene a citywide community construction workshop in June 1998 at which there was attendance from a number of levels.
Implications and Conclusions — Issues for the Future

There are three possible future courses which China’s urban Residents Committees might take, each of which could be the basis for official policy and international development assistance. The first policy option is a form of “benign neglect.” Economic reform and market forces have marginalized the Residents Committees in many urban locations already. That trend could be encouraged simply by municipal governments doing nothing more to help Residents Committees and by enhancing municipal social welfare facilities, and by allowing the market to provide the needed services. The problem with this option, however, is that it does not answer the question of how those most in need of Residents Committee support and services, limited though they might be, obtain alternative support. The most marginalized and at-risk segments of China’s urban populations—those who fall between the cracks—are exactly the ones who make the most use of and have the greatest need for the Residents Committee. The elderly without family, the poor just above the official poverty line, the unemployed young, or those who have had run-ins with the law—all of these and others like them benefit most from whatever social services Residents Committees can offer.

A policy of allowing the natural atrophying of Residents Committees will only work if significant investments are made in a new municipal low-level and localized alternative social welfare network. That network will be much costlier. In addition, this option assumes that the information and registration functions carried out by Residents Committees would be allowed to be transferred to the next level. This would mean the Street Office instead of the Residents Committee would be the start of the paper chase for China’s urban dwellers. Given Beijing’s current concerns about maintaining order and avoiding instability, this seems highly unlikely anytime in the foreseeable future.

The second scenario is one in which Residents Committees are strengthened so that they become more self-reliant, self-governing, and generally more independent. As a concept, this notion of increased decentralized power is attractive. It means that Residents Committee elections become more significant because genuine power and resources are at stake. It also means that municipal governments have actually transferred material resources to the Residents Committees. As a reality, this policy option is the least feasible, enticing as the prospect might seem at first glance. A Residents Committee simply is too small a unit to command a revenue base that would generate enough income to fulfill its mandated functions and pay its cadres, who now receive municipal subsidies.
The ability to professionalize staff and enhance social services is diminished as a consequence. It would be necessary for municipal governments to make substantially larger cash transfers to Residents Committees, while ceding to those Committees’ decisionmaking authority over the expenditure of those transfers—a development that seems highly unlikely.

Finally, this policy option assumes a change in national law and municipal regulation that fundamentally changes the status of Residents Committees (and Villagers Committees, as well). For this option to even be considered, it will be necessary to convert the Committees from “mass organizations” into formal and official units of local government. The political, legal, and fiscal agenda, which would need to be pursued to achieve the still-uncertain aim of self-reliance, is a formidable one. But even if that goal is held out as a long-term one, it will be necessary to draw those Committees more closely into the official local government system in order for them to stake out later a self-governing role within that system.

This conclusion leads to the third option for the future of the Residents Committees, and that is their increased and more effective integration into the new community development programs now being launched. This option enables Residents Committees to be a more useful first rung on a ladder of social services, and enhances the Residents Committee’s informational and facilitative role on behalf of its residents. This is the chosen policy option of the Chinese government, and is probably the best one to follow for the immediate future. It will be even more significant because through this integration, Residents Committees are better able to articulate and represent their constituents’ concerns and requests to authority. Such representation is codified in the national laws mandating these Committees. Thus far, no specific structures and processes for fulfilling that role have been created. Community construction policies and mechanisms now offer that potential for the first time. The political reform implications under this policy orbit around questions of participatory democracy, not electoral. To ultimately get to the latter requires first developing the former. Achieving more participatory democracy will require more effective integration of Residents Committees into the new community construction programs.

Community-based social services in China’s cities are a new priority, and offer a range of new challenges and opportunities for all of the parties involved—local communities, governments, and aid organizations, both domestic and foreign. There are a number of policy and program implications that stem from these new developments.
The preceding review of Residents Committees suggests that it would be a mistake to consider their future promise and contribution in terms of enhanced self-contained management. While policy and circumstances indicate that Residents Committees will be around for the foreseeable future, and will continue to provide the kind of basic, first-line services outlined above, their organizational future appears to be that of a first link in a new chain of service delivery managed by municipal governments. The efforts at establishing economies of scale and professionalizing the staffing of Residents Committees makes sense in terms of improved social welfare practices. Integrating Residents Committees into a more coherent and participatory network of services should be the goal—not the further isolation of these units.

Consequently, less emphasis and support should be placed by outside observers on Residents Committees electoral improvements and autonomy, and more stress on ensuring that Residents Committees can fulfill their constitutional role “to convey residents’ opinions and demands and make suggestions to the people’s government.” The new approach now being used in community development makes such representational and bottom-up input more possible than in the past.

The new submunicipal community development management committees are potential vehicles for such “participation with power” by grassroots representatives. But these need to be experimented with first to see how the mechanisms and procedures might best work. New volunteer associations and especially community charity foundations also carry the same potential for ensuring that social service and community development programs are effective because they are truly responsive, if means are found to have Residents Committee representation in these institutions.

A distinctive new problem to which Residents Committees need to develop a response is their relationship to commercial property development and property management companies. In China’s market-oriented economy, commercial property management firms have become very conspicuous in almost all of the new housing developments in urban China. As managers who charge fees for their services, they provide many of the services to tenants, whether owners or renters, that Residents Committees were responsible for in the past, at least as far as physical maintenance is concerned. How Committees relate to these management firms has yet to be defined officially. In the absence of any legal rules, some property companies ignore the request of Residents Committees (many, however, are conscientious). The main point here is that a redefinition of
urban Residents Committees as tenants associations, representing the tenants’ interests to property management companies, and with legal standing to do so, may be one realistic and needed transformation.

Any effective community development program needs to have both the empowered participation of the general public, as referred to above, as well as a comprehensive and integrated approach to municipal development. The committees and foundations that are developing are one means by which the traditional cellular and compartmentalized fashion of managing public programs can be overcome. Another means is to ensure that the physical aspects of community development, namely urban planning and infrastructure development, are more integrated into community construction. At present, it is not, except on a piece-meal, ad hoc basis. Transparency in physical planning decisionmaking, as well as bottom-up feedback to avoid problems and get grassroots ideas, can be achieved in several ways. First, urban planners and city developers need to be included on empowered community development management committees. Second, social welfare and social service projects, like the new community centers, require not just the approval, but the active support of urban planning departments. This entails prioritization that only higher levels of municipal governance can provide. Finally, while urban planners now use surveys and expert consultations to obtain public opinion, it could enhance that function through public hearings, perhaps conducted through the community development management committees.

Finally, the goal of professionalizing the management and organization of community development and social services at every level of municipal administration is going to require an ambitious and imaginative program of staff training and public education. That effort may be most cost effective and have the highest impact if it is conducted in a cross-sectoral and linked fashion. Such training will be enriched if various functional departments (e.g., health, education, urban planning, culture, civil affairs) participated in the same training together, and if there were representation up the municipal administrative hierarchy and across the city’s Districts or Street Offices.

The future of China’s Residents Committees and the prospects for a successful community-based social services program are stimulating new developments. They hold the promise of an improved quality of life and the alleviation of humanitarian concerns for China’s urban population. For that reason alone, the new community construction policy is worth supporting. Just as significantly, though, are the consequences for evolving state-government relations. Building
a “community” means finding ways to balance the scales of societal and governmental power. Such a partnership is possible through the kinds of meaningful participation outlined above. China’s new community construction program has the potential to contribute to turning China’s masses or the “people” (renmin) into citizens (gongmin) by giving them both more power and more responsibility. Historically, China’s millions have been passive receivers of public benefits and have been mobilized as participants in campaigns. As citizens, the Chinese population will be better able to achieve on their own and in cooperation with authority both their material and psychic well-being. That objective should be shared by both China and the international policy and assistance community.

Allen C. Choate is the Director of Program Development for The Asia Foundation in China.
Appendix 1

LAW OF THE PRC GOVERNING ORGANIZATION OF RESIDENTS COMMITTEES OF CITIES

Promulgated on 26 December 1989
Effective from 1 January 1990

Article 1
The present Law is formulated on the basis of the Constitution with a view to intensifying the effort at organizing Residents Committees of cities, enabling residents of cities to arrange public affairs in accordance with the law and promoting the development of democratic socialism, socialist materialism, and the socialist spirit in cities.

Article 2
Residents Committees are autonomous mass organizations at the grassroots level wherein residents manage, educate, and serve themselves.

People’s governments of cities without districts and of districts under cities, or representative organizations of the said people’s governments shall provide guidance and support to Residents Committees. Residents Committees shall be expected to offer reciprocal cooperation.

Article 3
The tasks of Residents Committees are as follows:

(i) to propagandize the Constitution, laws, statutes, and state policies; to safeguard the lawful rights of residents; to educate residents on fulfillment of obligations and cherishing public properties; to initiate construction of socialist spiritual civilization;
(ii) to manage public affairs and organize public benefit functions in respective residential districts;
(iii) to arbitrate disputes among the people;
(iv) to assist the maintenance of social order;
(v) to assist in work of people’s governments or their representative organizations concerning public sanitation, birth control, allowance to needy people, education for the youth, etc.; and
(vi) to reflect opinions and demands of the people together with their suggestions to people’s governments or their representative organizations.
Article 4  Residents Committees shall launch activities which may benefit the people and operate relevant service units.

Residents Committees shall manage their own properties. No departments and units shall infringe the property rights of Residents Committees.

Article 5  Residents Committees of regions inhabited by different national groups shall educate people under mutual assistance and with mutual respect to help strengthen national unity.

Article 6  Residents Committees shall generally be formed within a familial unit of 100 to 700 families in accordance with the living conditions of residents and principle of autonomy of residents.

People’s governments of cities without districts and of districts under cities shall approve and decide on the establishment, cancellation, and restructuring of Residents Committees.

Article 7  A Residents Committee shall be formed by a team of five to nine persons which includes a chairman, a vice-chairman and committee members. Residents Committee of regions inhabited by different national groups shall be represented by members from small minority groups.

Article 8  The chairman, vice-chairman, and committee members of a Residents Committee shall be either elected by residents or household representatives of the locality concerned or, in accordance with the wishes of the people, from two to three nominated members of residents’ teams. The terms of office of each Residents Committee shall be three years; the members of a Residents Committee may serve consecutive terms.

Residents of a certain locality who have reached the age of 18, except those being ripped of political rights in accordance with the law, shall be endowed with the right to vote and the right to be voted. With regard to the aforesaid matters, no discrimination shall be made against residents on the grounds of racial identity, sex, occupation, family background, religion, educational level, state of wealth, and period of residence.

Article 9  The residents conference shall be hosted by residents over 18 years of age.

Residents over 18 years of age or representatives of household units shall participate in the residents conference. Residents teams may each elect two to three representatives to the residents conference. Quorum of a residents conferen-
ence shall comprise more than half of residents over 18 years of age, or representatives of household units, or representatives elected by residents teams. Decisions of the residents conference shall be considered adopted had the majority of those present in the conference vote in favour.

Article 10   The Residents Committee shall submit work reports to the residents conference.

The Residents Committee shall convocate and host the residents conference. The residents conference shall be called into session should over one-fifth of residents over 18 years of age, or over one-fifth of household units, or over one-third of residents teams so propose. The Residents Committee shall put significant problems which affect residents interests before the residents conference for discussion and decision.

The residents conference shall be authorized to replace and re-elect members of the Residents Committee.

Article 11   The minority opinion shall be subordinate to the majority opinion in decisionmaking in Residents Committees.

Work of the Residents Committee shall be conducted through democratic means. No coercive enforcement shall be adopted.

Article 12   Members of Residents Committees shall adhere to the Constitution, laws, statutes and state policies, justly handle all businesses, and enthusiastically serve the people.

Article 13   Residents Committees shall establish subordinate committees responsible for arbitration among people, maintenance of law and order, public sanitation, etc. Members of Residents Committees shall be concurrent members of subordinate committees. Residents Committees of regions with small population may not set up subordinate committees; members of Residents Committees in these regions shall divide work of subordinate committees among themselves.

Article 14   Residents Committees shall form residents teams. Team leaders shall be nominated collectively by residents teams.

Article 15   Residents conventions shall be discussed and formulated by Residents Committees and reported for record to people’s governments of cities without districts or of districts under cities, or their representative organizations. Residents Committees shall supervise the implementation of residents conven-
tions. Residents shall adhere to decisions of residents conferences and residents conventions.

The contents of residents conventions shall not contravene the Constitution, laws, statutes, and state policies.

**Article 16** Project expenses of Residents Committees which benefit the public shall be raised from citizens upon approval of residents conferences after discussion, or from units which would be benefited from the approval. The balance of funds raised shall be announced promptly. The use of funds shall be under public supervision.

**Article 17** People’s governments of cities without districts and of districts under cities, or higher people’s governments shall set up fund allotment standard for Residents Committees, and stipulate sources of allowances for members of Residents Committees and the standard and scope of allowance payment. The revenue of Residents Committees shall be used as allowances upon the approval of residents conferences.

People’s governments shall be responsible for arranging office spaces for Residents Committees.

**Article 18** Residents Committees shall supervise and educate members of residents teams who have been deprived of political rights in accordance with the law.

**Article 19** Personnel of the following units shall not join Residents Committees as members but shall support the works of Residents Committees: institutions, organizations, armed forces, and business enterprises. Representatives of the above units shall participate in discussions of Residents Committees which concern them and abide by decisions of Residents Committees and residents conventions.

Personnel and soldiers and their families of the above units shall join Residents Committees of localities in which they reside. The above families may also form families committees to take up part of the work burden of Residents Committees under the guidance of people’s governments of cities without districts and of districts under cities, or their representative organizations. Relevant units shall be responsible for allotting funds, allowances, and office spaces to families committees and their members.
**Article 20** People’s governments of cities and of districts under cities, or their representative organizations shall approve request for assistance given to Residents Committees or their subordinate committees from relevant departments and make the necessary arrangements. Relevant departments of people’s governments of cities and of districts under cities shall guide the activities of subordinate committees or Residents Committees.

**Article 21** The present Law is applicable to Residents Committees formed in localities where people’s governments of villages, minority villages, and towns are situated.

**Article 22** The standing committees of provincial, autonomous regional, and municipal people’s congresses shall formulate implementation procedures for the present Law.

**Article 23** The present Law shall become effective on 1 January 1990. The “Regulations Governing the Organization of Residents Committees of Cities,” adopted by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress on 31 December 1954, shall simultaneously be repealed.
Appendix 2

*Unofficial Translation*

- Ministry of Civil Affairs
- State Planning Commission
- State Commission for the Restructuring of the Economic Systems
- State Education Commission
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Personnel
- Ministry of Labor
- Ministry of Construction
- Ministry of Health
- State Sports Commission
- State Family Planning Commission
- People's Bank of China
- State Taxation Bureau
- China Commission for the Aged

**Document on Accelerating Community Service Development 1993**

In order to carry out the spirit of the 14th Party's Conference and the State Council's document on accelerating the development of the third industry development, community services shall be developed in speed and scope. The objective for community development is to meet the needs of socialist market economy, to promote the construction of the social security system and the development of social service system. This document shall be carried out in-line with the above spirit.

1. Community service is a new type of social service evolved since China initiated opening-up policy. Initiated by the government, community services meet various needs of the social members. Community service is a social welfare-oriented service with its bases at the street, township, and the neighborhood committee levels. Community service should be composed of community social welfare, residents' convenience service, and employees' social insurance management. Community service is an important sector linked with social security reform and socialization of services.
Community service is characterized by its nature of welfare orientation, mass participation, service delivery, and community bases. Beginning from 1987 when the Ministry of Civil Affairs made its first initiative, community service has developed in many big and medium-sized cities in China. Until 1992, there were 112,000 various community service facilities. A community service system has been established with community service centers as the mainstay and other services to the aged, the disabled, the veterans, and all residents as supplementary functions.

Community service has created a new approach for the development of socialization of social welfare. It supports the government’s reform and the state-owned enterprise reform. It will be helpful to China’s economic development, social stability and the improvement of people’s livelihood, and the construction of spiritual civilization. Such an establishment has won great support from the public.

2. Community services should be given greater attention. With the development of a socialist market economy, the society is characterized by smaller families and aging population. At the same time, people’s livelihood has been improved and people’s consumption has become pluralized. People’s demand in services is higher than before. Because of these changes, governments of all levels should incorporate community services with programs that are aimed at improving people’s livelihood and enhancing the quality of the citizens. The development of community services should be included into the overall planning for the development of the third industry and other related social systems. This new creation requires a new way of thinking and greater openness. Community service should be actively promoted to meet the needs of China’s social development, urban construction, and industrial structural reform. The objective of encouraging community services is to enhance the socialization, industrialization, and legalization of social services. Assistance and solutions shall be provided to community services when problems and issues happen during the process of development.

3. The goal of the community service development is: until the end of this century, a social service network shall be established with diversified economic ownership, variety of services, and good quality and management standards. The output value of community services should rise at an annual rate of 13.6 percent. The number of service facilities per thousand residents should increase dramatically with a total number of 260,000. Eight-four percent of the streets
should have community service centers, homes for the elderly, and facilities for the handicapped; one of each shall be set up at the street level.

4. The basic task of the community service is to bring the efforts of the government, the collective, and individuals into full play; rely on the input of all parties of the society to accelerate the construction of the community service centers; establish all kinds of services including domestic service, marriage and funeral service, preliminary medical care, sports and entertainment, children's education, care for the handicapped and the aged, family planning consultation, psychological consultation, and others. Establishment of community businesses and training for volunteers and social workers shall be encouraged. The focus of the service is the scope of the civil affairs, at the same time the services open to the whole society, particularly to the elderly, the handicapped, and the veterans and households, etc. Cooperation in services with organizations and enterprises in the community shall be encouraged.

5. Make an overall plan for community service development. In 1992, the State Planning Commission brought in community service development planning. For the new development and the old community renovation, space for community service centers shall be included into the construction plan. This rule shall be strictly implemented. Facilities purchased or rented for social welfare purposes shall be given preferential treatment. Houses and space in the residential areas used for profitable purposes shall be charged relevant fees.

6. Give support to community services. The financial departments of all levels should recognize community services as social welfare programs and shall grant subsidy. For social welfare facilities, local governments should give financial assistance. To facilitate the implementation of such a policy, the itemized “social welfare organization finance” shall include the subsidy for community services. “Implementing Regulations for the Collection of Fund for Key Energy and Transportation Projects” and the “Additional Explanation of Exemption of State Budget Adjustment Fund,” issued by the Ministry of Finance, iterated that “the social welfare facilities run by the civil affairs departments shall be exempt from state energy and transportation key projects fees,” and the “social welfare enterprises for the handicapped shall be exempt from state budget adjustment fees.” Policies, such as exemption of energy and transportation fees and budget adjustment fees for the initial two years of community welfare programs for the handicapped, the elderly, and the veterans, shall be continued.
For child care, health care, marriage introduction, and funeral service, the income tax shall follow the national regulation on tax exemption. For care for the elderly, the blind, massage clinics, deaf-mute schools (training centers), and schools and facilities for the mentally retarded, handicapped children, vocational schools, activity and rehabilitation centers for the handicapped, shops run by the handicapped, and nursing homes run by the departments of civil affairs, the fixed asset investment adjustment tax can be guided by [1993] 057 Circular issued by the State Taxation Bureau and State Planning Commission. As for other programs in community service centers, relevant regulations, which encourage the development of the third industry issued by the State Taxation Bureau and the Central Party Committee, can be implemented.

For those profitable community enterprises and will be able to return, the banks shall provide loans as encouragement for the services.

To those without conditions for legal person status, business licenses shall be granted. Those with conditions for legal person status should be registered as corporations.

The health departments of all levels shall pay attention to health care and preventive medicine and community health rehabilitation. They shall do public health education and mobilize people’s participation. For community health centers, which meet the national law for public health, clinic license shall be granted and medical guidance should be provided.

The sports departments should pay attention to the promotion of community sports. They should give support to community public sports activities.

7. Collect fund for community development from all aspects of the society. Government of all levels should give more input to community services. Resources from various channels in China and abroad shall be mobilized for the use of community services. Civil affairs departments of different levels shall appropriate more input from the charitable lottery to community services in order to enhance the infrastructure building and the investment for the renovation of facilities.

State-owned enterprises and other organizations, TVEs, private enterprises, as well as individuals can join the community service projects in ways of providing financial support, housing, equipment, technique, information, labor, and so on. Overseas Chinese in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, as well as
foreign individuals, groups, and corporations, shall be encouraged to give support to community service development in China.

Community service development fund shall be established. Funds can come from the government of different levels, social welfare lottery, overseas donations, and income from community service centers. Funds can be used as revolving fund and shall be increased with users' compensation. Stable sources of funding shall be sustained for the development of community services.

8. Establish community service price system. Based on the logic of socialist market economy, for different target groups and different programs, community services can combine free services with low fees and market fees. For the paid services, there shall be standards based on the services and programs. The original low fee and heavy government subsidy shall be changed. For the old, the sick, and the handicapped prices shall be lower. For community residents, except the groups enjoying government favorite treatment, prices for community services shall be open and regulated by the market. Social benefit shall be combined with economic efficiency.

9. Establish vigorous operating mechanism for community services. The government shall be separated from social services. Community services shall be more independent. Different kinds of management can be experimented with on the condition that community service is oriented at providing social welfare. Community service organizations shall be given enough autonomy in operation, staffing, and income distribution. Community service organizations can conduct needed programs and services not necessarily limited to certain sectors. The enterprises without government input can have autonomy in employment and staffing. They can hire and dismiss, and have a two-way selection process. Staff salary shall be linked with the economic efficiency and the quality of services. Community service organizations have the power to decide the salary rate of the staff based on profit. The professional staff working in the community service organizations shall enjoy the standard professional recognition set by the state. Their positions shall be determined by the community service organizations. Community service organizations shall provide employment to the unemployed and retired, and the unemployed young people.

10. Enhance community service management. Civil affairs departments of all levels shall make community service plans, exercise macromanagement, and provide guidance and assistance. To guarantee the sound development of
community services, departments of civil affairs shall strengthen management, implementing Regulation of Social Service Key Issues. Active efforts shall be made to set up accounting, statistics, as well as the evaluation system. Laws and regulations concerning socialization of community services shall be enacted. These efforts will be beneficial to the regularization and industrialization of community services.
Suggested Reading


The Asia Foundation Working Paper Series

The following Working Papers are available by request through the Foundation's Web site at: www.asiafoundation.org: