

## **“Klong Ku Muang Derm Sam Praeng Community Development Project ”**

***provided by Klong Ku Muang Derm Sam Praeng Community (the leader is Mr. Chalit Chutong) and Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA)***

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### **Outline of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA):**

- BMA was established in 1985 founded on the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act.
- The highest authority of BMA is the governor directly elected by citizens. Its legislative branch, Bangkok City Council, is consisted of representative elected by citizens also.
- BMA has 14 departments including Policy-planning, Medical Services, Health Services, Education, Finance, Public Utilities, Waste Treatment, Public Space Cleaning, Social Welfare, Regulatory Enforcement, Regional Development, Transportation, Urban Planning, and Secretariat.
- Today, BMA is undertaking its 5<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (1997-2001).
- In review of the 4<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, BMA is allowing the participation of citizens as a partner for development organizations, so citizens have greater and more direct opportunities to decide the future of their own city.
- Major problems BMA is addressing include various issues derived from Bangkok's swollen population, which exceeds eight million, such as the lack of public utility services etc.

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### **Case of a community project in Klong Ku Muang Derm Sam Praeng:**

This project is a unique regional development project planned and executed by the local community itself. Klong Ku Muang Derm Sam Praeng community is in an area close to Royal Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand, and originally the residences of royal family members and high governmental officials. Despite Thailand's economic crisis in 1997, this community sustained less damage from economic crisis as its tight knit community maintained its conservative lifestyle and traditional business customs. Rather, the community has strengthened its union at the time of economic crisis, and there was a stronger call for development with the conservation of Ku Muang Derm Sam Praeng community as historical treasure. In January, 1998, the Community Planning Committee was established and made plans for (i) establishing a developmental vision, (ii) recognizing current trends (historical background, present

ownership and use of lands and buildings, and the economic and social characteristics), (iii) citizens awareness survey (in regards to the issues and potentials of a community), (iv) establishing the basic policies at that point, and (v) future plans. This case of community project is expected to energize other community based development activities in Bangkok.

**(1) Background:**

- (i) Klong Ku Muang Derm Sam Praeng community is adjacent to the Thailand Royal Palace and used to house many royal family members and government's high officials, where Thailand's first opera house was located. Many historically important buildings are situated in an adjacent area, including Emerald Buddha Temple, National Theater, National Museum, and others, attracting many tourists in these areas. The Klong Ku Muang Derm Sam Praeng has commercially important canals and moats, leading to Chao Phraya River. The trees planted along the canal banks give comfortable shade to pedestrians.
- (ii) The area is like an island surrounded by Bangkok's main roads with heavy traffics. Roads circling the area have rows of two-story shops, but seemed to be isolated from the noise of cities. It has excellent access and transportation to other areas. Buildings there are the combination of European and Chinese style and beautifully decorated by stone-carved bricks and sculptured wooden panels.
- (iii) The community has a history of 100 years or longer. Its residents are mostly Chinese Thai immigrated two or three generations ago, and share a strong sense of community companionship.
- (iv) It still maintains conservative lifestyle and keeps old and traditional business management, making the community unique in comparison with other communities.
- (v) Thailand faced the economic crisis in 1997, but the community suffered less damage because of the reason indicated above. Instead, the community became even tighter knit, and raised the call for the conservation of Ku Muang Derm Sam Paeng community as a historical treasure.
- (vi) Especially one of the area in this community, Praeng Nara area declared "historical region" for conservation at the time of 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary festival of Krung Rattanakosin in 1982. In 1996, however, BMA made a plan to destroy older building to expand roadways, and Thailand Red Cross was about to eliminate older shops to construct modern buildings. Unified voice of this community and various private organizations stopped both plans.

**(2) Purpose of the Community Project:**

- (i) Preservation of arts, culture and historical sites of Krung Rattanakosin
- (ii) Conservation and inheritance of community environment (lifestyle, society, and culture)
- (iii) Community development (as a sight-seeing spot)
- (iv) Promotion of community-awareness among residents by their active participation in community activities

**(3) Outcome of the Community Project:**

Since this project is still ongoing, it is not clear what the final outcome is. So far, the project resulted in:

- (i) Residents are increasingly aware of the effects and impacts of unification within a community.
- (ii) They also recognized how outside people and organizations can support their community.

**(4) What we learned:**

- (i) Urban development in the past seemed to create many problems by focusing only to the economic growth, and leaving out environmental and social aspects as well as arts, lifestyles and traditions.
- (ii) The activities at the San Praeng Communicate indicate how much one can achieve by unifying the power of a community.

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