



Poo Poh

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The 112 families that came together to make this new community at Poo Poh came from three old squatter areas in the city. After setting up a savings group and registering their multi-community housing cooperative, they searched for new land, negotiated a good low price and bought it themselves, with a loan from CODI, through their cooperative. This project was part of a larger project to find secure land and housing for all the poor families in Pattani, through a citywide process of land readjustment and settlement de-densification, in which some families moved to new land and some upgraded their housing in-situ.

- Project Poo Poh
- Location Pattani, Pattani Province, Thailand
- Size 112 households
- Finished 2007
- Type Relocation of 112 families from three old squatter settlements to a new community the people built themselves, on land they bought and own as a cooperative.

CONTEXT, PROCESS AND PARTNERS

The city:

The provincial capital of Pattani, on the coast of the Gulf of Thailand, has been a trading settlement for more than a thousand years. Until recently, Pattani was the center of an independent Malay principality which included Yala and Narathiwat Provinces. It was one of the earliest kingdoms in Thailand to host international trade, first with the Portuguese in the 16th century, then with the Japanese, Dutch and English in the 17th century. Today, Pattani is a lively small city of ancient mosques, fishermen and rubber traders, with a population of about 45,000 people. Most of the city's population are Malay-speaking Muslims.

The community process:

The housing and community development process in Pattani got a big boost with an intervention by the "Livable Cities" program in 2003, which helped to link all the informal settlements in Pattani into a network, and join with civil society groups and religious organizations to work together to improve various aspects of life in the city, like environment, health and alternative energy. This collaboration led to several interesting projects, including an annual canal-cleaning jamboree. The program also supported the carrying out of the first citywide survey of the urban poor and housing problems in Pattani. They found that about 30% of the city's population (3,895 households, or about 12,500 people) were living in 16 informal communities around the city, in crowded and dilapidated conditions, without secure tenure.

CODI's Baan Mankong housing program, which began in Pattani in 2005, brought another tool to the new community network to solve their housing and environmental problems, to link people together, and to help the government understand that people's participation was not something threatening, but a great asset in the city. This was important, because Pattani is one of the three southernmost provinces of Thailand (along with Yala and Narathiwat) which have for decades been deeply troubled by violence and civil strife, and mistrust between local communities and the government was high. In this way, the issue of housing was a tool for bringing about peace in the city - and the whole southern region.

With support from the Baan Mankong program, the community network looked at the data from their citywide survey and developed plans for developing their first three housing projects. The survey had shown that most of the informal settlements in Pattani were very dense, and many joint-family households were living in extremely crowded and uncomfortable conditions. When the people began to think about upgrading their housing conditions, they agreed that it would be difficult because their settlements were already too crowded. So they decided to start with a few resettlement projects, for those who want to move to new land, in order to de-densify the old communities, and then follow up with on-site upgrading projects in the communities that had *de-densified*. These kinds of land readjustments were possible because at that time, after years of civil strife and economic stagnation, land in Pattani for resettlement was still relatively cheap. Poo Poh was the first of those resettlement projects in the city.

An interesting aspect of the Baan Mankong housing process in Pattani was that the people in three of those early housing resettlement projects were very close and decided to register themselves under a single cooperative, though their projects were in different parts of the city.

The community:

The 112 families that eventually came together to make their new community at Poo Poh came from three old squatter areas in the city. After setting up a savings group and registering their multi-community housing cooperative, they searched for new land, negotiated a good low price and bought it themselves, with a loan from CODI, through their cooperative.

Support groups and partners in the project:

- **Community architects:** A team of three young Thai architects provided technical and design support to this project and several others that happened around the same time, in the three southern provinces. The team was led by Chawanad Luansang, with Wachara Sonjang and Supachai Ngamrojjanaworakul.
- **CODI (Community Organizations Development Institute)** is an independent public organization under the Thai Government's Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. CODI's mission is to support the strengthening of communities and their organizations - in both urban and rural areas - as key agents of change and as central actors in development which affects their lives and communities. Besides budget from the government which supports many of its ongoing programs, CODI's chief financial tool is the CODI revolving fund, which provides soft loans to community cooperatives and community networks to undertake a variety of development initiatives they plan and implement themselves.

- **Baan Mankong Program** is one of CODI's main development programs, and was launched in 2003 to address the housing problems of the country's poorest citizens. The program channels government funds, in the form of infrastructure subsidies and soft housing loans, directly to poor communities, which plan and carry out improvements to their housing, environment, basic services and tenure security and manage the budget themselves. Instead of delivering housing units to individual poor families, the Baan Mankong Program (which means "*Secure housing*" in Thai) puts Thailand's informal communities (and their networks) at the center of a people-driven and citywide process of developing long-term, comprehensive solutions to problems of land and housing in Thai cities. By November 2019, the Baan Mankong program had spread to 405 cities, in 76 out of the country's 77 provinces, where community housing cooperatives had designed and built 1,035 housing projects which provide decent, secure, permanent housing to 105,739 urban poor families.
- **The Livable Cities Program** was a three-year program (2003-2005) that was funded by CODI and the Thai Health Promotion Fund. In cities around Thailand, the program promoted a more participatory and more collaborative urban development process, by bringing together all the stakeholders and taking action to tackle citywide problems which make the city livable for everyone in the city - the poor as well as the better-off. The program took advantage of provisions in the Thai government's Ninth National Plan (which covered the period of 2002 to 2007), which emphasized a more participatory urban development processes and "livable cities for all" in the country. The Livable Cities program in the southernmost provinces (Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat) was supported by a local NGO called Kampung Tugwa.
- **Kampong Tugwa** ("*community faith*" in the Malay language) is a local NGO, based in Pattani, which brings together a network of communities, local teachers and local religious leaders in Thailand's three southernmost provinces (Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani). Kampong Tugwa worked with the Livable Cities Program, CODI and the community architects on several community-driven housing and upgrading projects in these provinces, including this project in Kalae Tapae.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT

Legal background and legal status:

The families in the project at Poo Poh had been living in three crowded old squatter settlements for many years. After joining together and forming a large multi-community housing cooperative, they found this inexpensive piece of private land to buy for their new housing project.

Land tenure:

The land the community bought (3.14 hectares) was private land, and is now collectively owned by the registered housing cooperative which also owns the land in two other allied housing projects in Pattani.

PROJECT FINANCING

Project costs and who paid for what?

- **Land:** The new land (3.14 hectares) cost US\$ 147,500 (US\$ 4.70 per m²), and was collectively purchased by the cooperative, with a land loan from CODI.
- **Houses:** Cost about \$4,000 each, paid for by community member savings (about 10%), and the rest by a bulk CODI housing loan, through the cooperative.
- **Infrastructure:** The infrastructure in the project (roads, drains, water supply and public amenities) cost US\$ 208,000, and was paid for by a subsidy (grant) from CODI's Baan Mankong Program.
- **Welfare house in the community** (for elderly community members living alone) was built by the community and paid for by a subsidy from CODI of 200,000 baht (US\$ 5,715).

Financing:

- **Land:** The new land was financed by a 5.57 million baht (US\$ 162,000) land loan from CODI to the cooperative, at 2% interest, repayable in 15 years. Each of the 112 member families had to make a land loan repayments of just \$10 per month for their 160 m² plot, for the 15-year repayment term.
- **Houses:** The house construction costs were paid for partly by community member savings (about \$40,000, total for all 112 families) and partly by a collective housing loan from CODI to the cooperative of 13.88 million baht (US\$ 396,543), at 2% annual interest, repayable in 15 years.
- **Infrastructure** was paid for by a subsidy from the Baan Mankong Program of 7.28 million baht (US\$ 208,000). Another CODI grant of 200,000 baht (US\$ 5,715) was given for the 3-unit welfare house for elderly community members living alone.

Details on the infrastructure subsidy:

The total infrastructure budget for the project was calculated on the basis of CODI's standard 65,000 baht (US\$ 1,857) per family subsidy x 112 families = 7,280,000 baht (US\$ 208,000). This subsidy covered the following:

- Electricity (part of this was supported by local government) 1,200,000 baht (US\$ 34,286)
- Water supply (supported by local government) 800,000 baht (US\$ 22,857)
- Landfill (1.5 meters height) 3,353,850 baht (US\$ 95,824)
- Household water treatment + septic tank: 280,000 baht (US\$ 8,000)
- Drainage: 1,670 meters x 500 baht (US\$ 14) per meter = 835,000 baht (US\$ 23,857)
- Road: 384,000 baht (US\$ 10,971)
- Savings group office and community store: 176,000 baht (US\$ 5,026)
- Community center: 96,000 baht (US\$ 2,743)
- Mosque: 800,000 baht (US\$ 22,857)
- Community school: 445,000 baht (US\$ 12,714)
- Park and vegetable farm (contributed by local community)

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Design process:

The team of three young Thai community architects played a very important part of helping the people at Poo Poh (as well as later projects in the city) to make a beautiful layout plan for their new land. In the plan they developed with the community people, the houses are arranged in clusters around small open spaces, where social structures of friendship and kinship defined the physical plan. At the center of the community are a mosque and big public garden. The housing plots takes up 56% of the land, and a very generous 44% of the land is used for public spaces, roads and community facilities.

A lot of workshops.

The development of the citywide housing strategy and plan for the first new community housing project at Poo Poh took about six months, and there were lots and lots of clamorous workshops. Because the 112 families came from three different squatter settlements, the Poo Poh planning workshops became an important opportunity for the people to get to know each other and build their new community spirit, through the planning process.

An interesting part of the Poo Poh story was the separate women's and men's planning. In traditional Malay Muslim communities like the ones in Pattani, gender roles can be quite rigid: the men usually take charge of things, and women follow whatever the men decide to do. At first, the architects organized the workshops together, but they found that the women would hang around at the back of the room, not saying much and agreeing with whatever the men proposed. When asked for feedback, they'd say something like, *"it's up to my husband."* And the planning the men came up with was just a boring grid of houses all in a line, with very wide roads.

So the architects tried separating the men and women and organizing separate workshops. It was only then that the women started to talk - a lot! Because most of them stayed at home and didn't go out to work, they knew a lot more about the household needs and had a much more nuanced sense of space and interaction with their neighbors. All the ideas that went into the beautiful layout plan for the community came from the women. For example, the men had wanted wide roads and a great big open space at the center of the community, with the mosque and playground together. But the women felt that if there was only one big open space in the community, their children would have to go there to play and the mothers wouldn't be able to keep an eye on them as they cooked or went about their household chores. Why not have smaller "pocket parks" throughout the community, where the children could play in sight of their houses and watchful mothers? That way, the common space at the middle, for the mosque and other functions, wouldn't have to be so big.

That's how the cluster plan emerged, with the houses arranged in groups around small shared open spaces. That idea came from the women, and the architects then drafted it into proper plan. And then the women started to feel confident enough to argue with the men and stand up for their ideas about the new community. So finally, it was the women's plan that everyone agreed to. The planning process encouraged the women to come together and say what was important to them and what they needed. That confidence and leadership from the community women continued later on in the management of the construction phase of the project.

House design and layout plans:

The generous tract of land the people bought had a total area of 3.14 hectares. In the final cluster layout (that the women designed), the land use worked out like this:

- House plots: 160 sq.m. per family x 112 = total 17,920 sq. m. (57% of the total land)
- Roads and footpaths: 6,400 sq.m. (20.35% of the total land)
- Public spaces, community center and mosque: 391 sq.m (1.25% of total land)
- Park, small open spaces, playground and community vegetable garden: 6,701 sq.m. (21.4% of the total land)

Housing construction:

Infrastructure first, and houses after: In several housing projects they had been working on in southern Thailand, the architects had learned that if you start with building the houses, the people will tend to focus all their attention on their houses, and won't bother much about the common infrastructure, and that creates problems. So in Poo Poh, they adapted the same idea of getting as much of the infrastructure finished as possible, before starting work on the houses, and the community people agreed. As things turned out, the infrastructure construction became another important opportunity to build the collective spirit in the community.

The infrastructure work was divided into five sub-contracts, so that as many local people and small local contractors as possible could take part and earn a little income during the construction. The community people provided all the labor, and the architects organized a series of training workshops - in how to build roads and drains properly. This was important because the technical standards for the roads were a bit lower than the normal standard, to save costs, but they were sufficient for the community. The roads and drainage system were built entirely by the people, and the electricity and water supply were done with the local authority.

Then they started to build their houses. The architects built the first house with the people, and they used that process as a "hands on" training in house construction for the whole community. Even the children took joyful part, helping to carry materials and press their feet and hand prints in fresh concrete.

The people all built their houses together, in clusters of six-to-ten households. In each cluster, the families managed the construction and the money together, as a group. And then one representative from each cluster would sit on the community committee. The clusters all worked out their own systems for managing the house construction. In some clusters, where there was nobody who knew much about housing construction, they hired a local contractor. But in others, the people managed the construction process all by themselves. Finally, the houses all looked quite different.

Project timeline:

- **Feb 2003:** Pattani becomes one of 12 pilot cities in the new Livable Cities Program
- **May 2004:** First citywide and community-led survey of informal communities in Pattani
- **March 2005:** Baan Mankong process in Pattani starts, survey, citywide planning.
- **May 2005:** Poo Poh community buys land, start project planning
- **Nov 2005:** Housing construction begins.
- **2007:** Poo Poh housing project finished

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

Tapping the rich "social capital" in these southern Thai communities: There is a lot of social capital in these three southern provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. One of the new buzzwords in development, social capital refers to a whole range of valuable human things which different societies possess - things like traditional wisdom, togetherness, faith, cultural identity, political engagement and cultural history. For all three of these provinces, Baan Mankong is an ideal tool, because it gives people complete freedom to plan and to determine the nature of their own development. And so far, all this wealth of culture, history and faith has poured itself into the planning process, resulting in some strikingly beautiful community plans. In a part of Thailand where most government-imposed initiatives are met with some suspicion, the Baan Mankong program has been enthusiastically accepted. City-wide upgrading is also starting in the neighboring provinces of Yala and Narathiwat. In Narathiwat city, about 20 communities are now planning upgrading

projects. There, the people are concentrating more on on-site reblocking and reconstruction, which tends to go a little slower than relocation.

Problems:

In most Baan Mankong housing projects around Thailand, the communities develop one or two basic house models (often rowhouses, to make efficient use of scarce land), which are affordable to everyone, and then build the houses together. For a lot of communities that are transitioning from squalor and insecure shelter into their first proper, legal housing, this sameness-for-everyone is a shining badge of their new legitimacy as a community whose members are all equal, all taken care of, all well-housed. Building together also makes it cheaper, with economies of scale and cutting out developer profits.

But in Poo Poh, although they built their houses together in clusters, each family was free to design its own house, according to its own means and aspirations. Many of the families ended up building very big, fancy houses, following the example of families in the area who get remittances from relatives working abroad. Many of Pattani's younger generation have well-paid jobs in Malaysia and send money home to their family, who show off in their houses. If a family doesn't have that kind of money coming in, but still aspires to show off anyway, they incur debts and have trouble paying back the loans they take to put on that show. That happened a bit in Poo Poh, and that led to lots of loan repayment problems within the cooperative.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

For more information about the Poo Poh housing project, please contact ACHR:

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PHOTOS



Pattani has been a trading city for more than ten centuries, and the city's rich history is still evident in some of the old wooden buildings.



People in Pattani are mostly Malay-speaking Muslims, and there has long been tension in being governed by Thai-speaking Buddhists.



These are what conditions were like in some of the old squatter settlements where the people in the Poo Poh project used to live.



Those old inner-city squatter settlements were often very dense, with large joint families staying together in cramped tin sheet shacks like these.



The "Livable Cities" program in Pattani first brought the poor communities together to understand their problems and form a network.



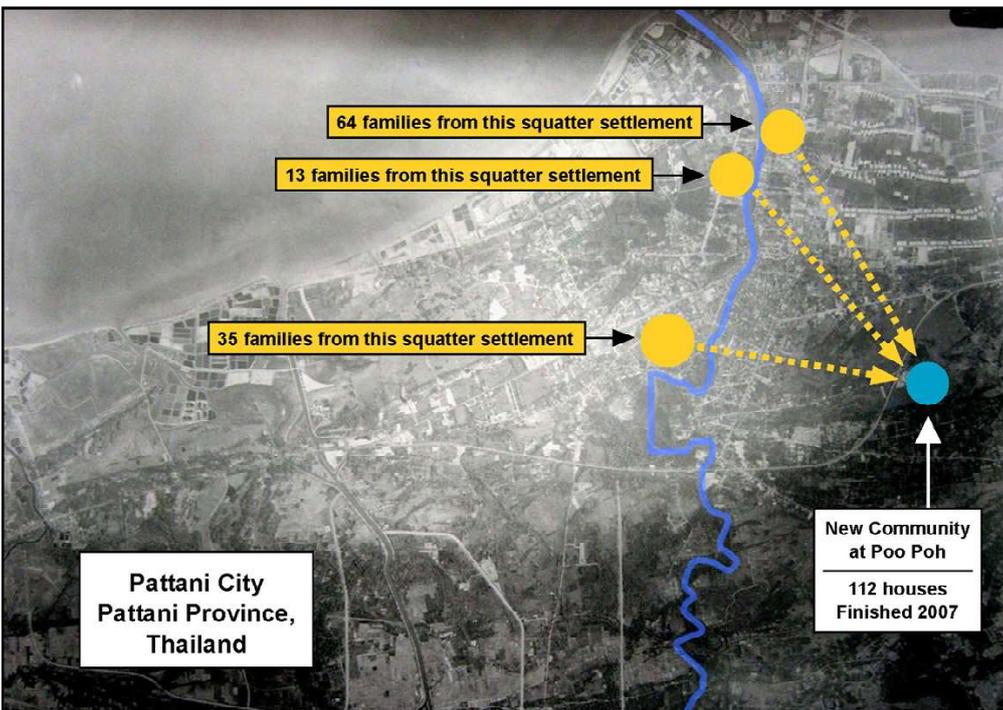
There were lots of meetings and many ideas came out about how to improve various aspects of life in the city by working together.



When the housing planning began, there were many discussions about who wants to stay in the same place and upgrade their housing and who wants to move to new land.



The members of the new Poo Poh community search for new land in the city, and measure the land they finally decide to buy.



This map shows the new land for the Poo Poh housing project, and the three squatter areas where the people moved from. Nobody had to move very far from their old settlements.



Once they had their new land and had measured it, they could begin their planning, with the architects facilitating the process, using lots of participatory planning techniques.



The yellow papers are scaled representations of the individual 160 square meter housing plots, and that made it easy for people to push around the plots and try out different layouts.



At first, the men dominated the planning process, and they produced this boring grid of lanes and houses, which nobody liked much.



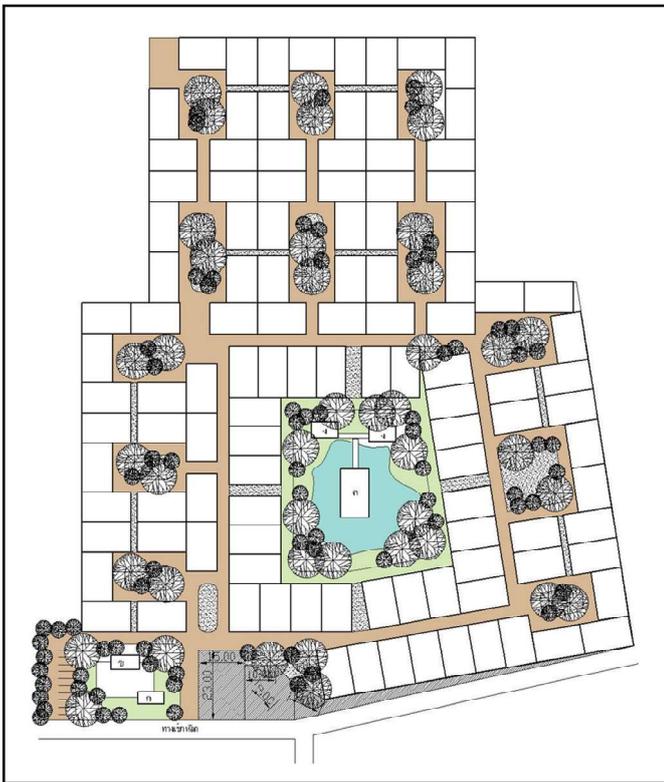
Later, when the architects organized separate design workshops for men and women, the women started speaking up and giving ideas.



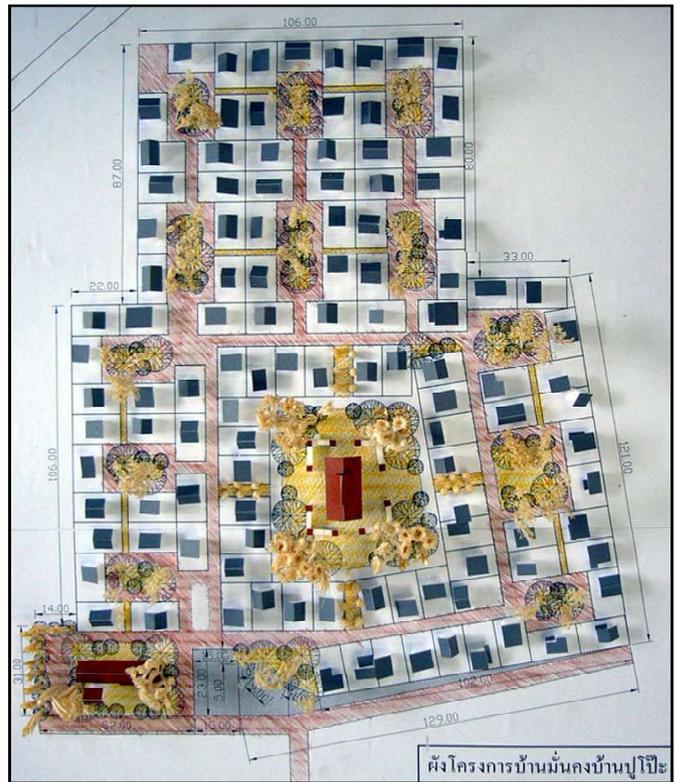
A lot of different qualities came into the planning done by the women, with lots of delicate understanding about how the community works.



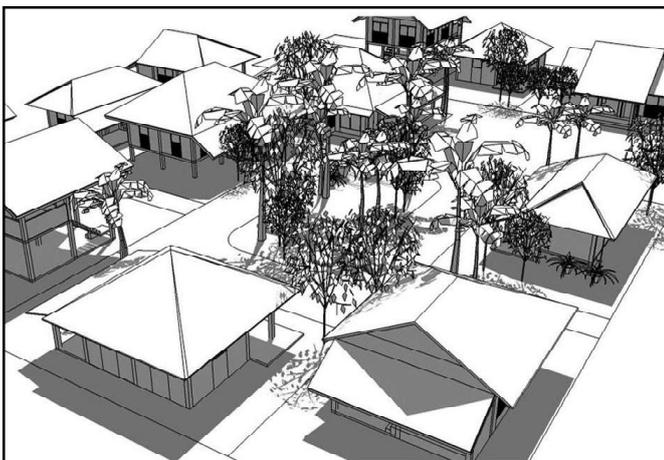
Finally, it was the women's plan, with the houses arranged in clusters around small courtyards, that everyone liked the best.



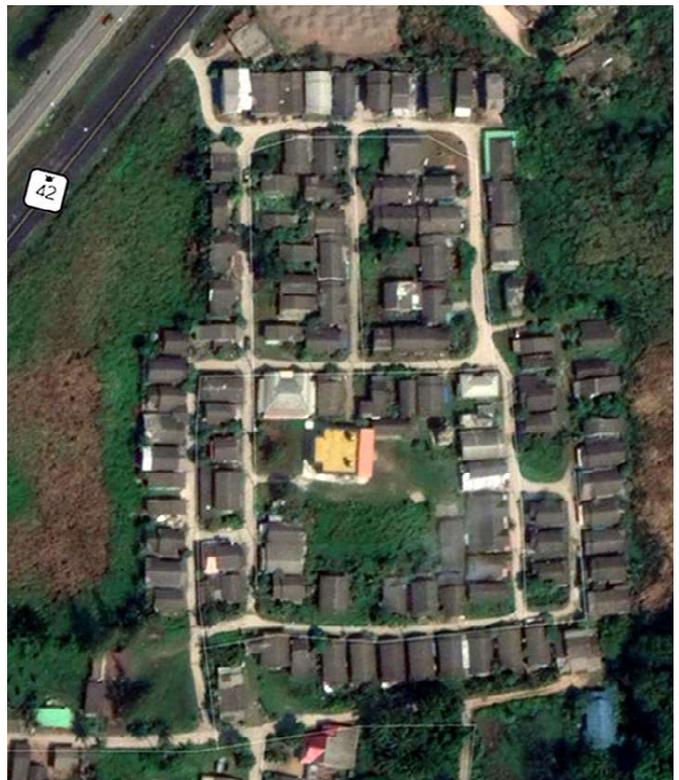
Then the architects helped to draft the women's layout plan into a proper measured drawing, for getting municipal building approvals.



The architects also made this model of the final layout plan, to explore how the houses could be arranged on the plots, to make room for trees.



These are some jazzy computer-generated drawings the architects made to give the people an idea how things might look when the project was finished.



That's an aerial view of the Poo Poh community in April 2020, 13 years after the project was completed. The women's layout plan is still more-less in place, with a little filling in, and some great big houses filling up their plots to the boundaries.



▲ *That's the Poo Poh community in April 2020, in a photo sent to the architect Chawanad by one of his old friends in the community.*



▲ *That's one of the small courtyards that were part of the women's original cluster plan. And sure enough, the children are playing there, and sure enough, the mothers in those houses can all look out the window and keep an eye on them.*



▲ *There's an important metric of success in a community plan: kids playing everywhere.*



▲ *That's the community center in Poo Poh, which the architects designed with the community people, where they hold all sorts of meetings and programs and celebrations.*