

# TG26 - Open Building Implementation



The future of Task Group TG26 already looks bright and this optimism stems in no small measure from the enthusiasm and industry shown right from the start by Joint Coordinator Assoc.Prof. Stephen Kendall, AIA.

He has been kind enough to provide the following report of the first official meeting of TG26 and interesting reading it certainly makes.

## Background

The first official meeting of the new Task Group 26: Open Building Implementation took place from 12 to 14 May 1997 and was hosted by the Department of Architecture of the Technical University of Delft in the Netherlands. The meeting attracted 30 participants from China, Taiwan, Japan, the United States, Canada, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France.

A day of tourist excursions preceded the two day formal session, which was then followed by further excursions to projects related to the Task Group's mission. One such visit was to a newly developing area of Rotterdam including the complete revitalisation of Vrij Entrepot, a large warehouse being converted to mixed use. This visit was hosted by Mr. Fritz Scheublin of HBM B.V., one of the largest general contractors in the Netherlands. Another visit was to the pioneering Open Building multifamily rehabilitation project in Voorburg, hosted by the Housing Association Patrimoniums Woningen, and led by Karel Dekker of TNO and Joint Coordinator of TG26. An informal reception hosted by the Dutch Open Building Foundation concluded the second day of the Task Group's meeting.

## Status Reports from Members

Many participants took the opportunity to give a brief update on activities in their country since the exploratory Tokyo meeting which took place in November 1996 (see Information Nr. 1/97 pages 4 and 5). Of particular note were the following:

- In Japan, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation is reorganising and will focus almost exclusively on refurbishment of its stock of apartment buildings. A new phase of Open Building project design and construction at the Ministry of Construction's Building Research Institute in Tsukuba is starting. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry has announced a new Support/Infill initiative to stimulate new Open Building products and projects. Finally, the Association of Medium Size General Contractors has initiated a new programme in Open Building research and development. Information on some of these initiatives was distributed.

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- In Finland, developments toward Open Building implementation include recent competitions and an emphasis on refurbishment of existing residential projects. An illustrated report was distributed showing many projects with open building related features.
- From the United Kingdom, a report was presented on recent missions to the Netherlands and Finland organised by the Department of Trade and Industry to study developments toward Open

Building. General contractors were members of the study missions and several have committed themselves to take part in demonstration projects in the UK, in both new residential projects and refurbishment of existing stock.

- From the United States there was a report outlining the commitment of a leading timber frame house builder to an Open Building Initiative for its next generation of detached houses, including the development of advanced infill technology. Other work was described related to advances in fit-out technology for non-residential office buildings.
- From the Netherlands came a report on the pioneering rehabilitation project in Voorburg (visited by all participants on 14 May) in which Open Building is now the norm in the refurbishment of dwelling units on a one-at-a-time basis, following the complete refurbishment of the base building. It was also announced that in Amsterdam a housing corporation has initiated an Open Building process in managing its financing operations. Further, the Ministry of Economic Affairs has contracted a study of the demand for Open Building and Open Industrialisation internationally to be completed by August 1997.
- From Denmark came a report on the strong emphasis on housing production and refurbishment, including a widespread commitment to industrialised processes. The belief is that it must be possible to build individual and varied buildings with identical building components.
- Updates were provided from China and Taiwan in written form and will become part of the Task Group's status report.

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Stephen Kendall with his wife Yoshiko

### **Progress on Five Action Items**

At the exploratory meeting in Tokyo in November 1996 five action items had been outlined. The Delft meeting was an opportunity for progress updates on each:

#### **1. International Status Report on Open Building Implementation**

(Stephen Kendall, USA)

Principal investigators from each country volunteered to supply information on developments toward Open Building covering the past five years of activity. The status report will be edited by Dr. Kendall and Prof. Jonathan Teicher from the United States, and should be available by Fall 1998. It will include chapters outlining the technical and organisational principles, trends in the building industry which align with the adoption of Open Building, and case studies of developments toward Open Building by country.

#### **2. Development of an Information Infrastructure**

(Karel Dekker, The Netherlands)

This project is now operational in the form of a dedicated document server to which TG members are automatically subscribed, and through which members can communicate directly. Existing and new web sites on Open Building will be linked.

#### **3. State of the Art Report: Capacity Analysis Methodology**

(Ype Cuperus, The Netherlands)

This study is continuing and a status report will be offered at the November meeting in the US. It will include discussion of the problems of assessing capacity for change in both residential and non-residential architecture, provide a compendium of existing methods, exemplary case studies, and an outline of future tool development needs. The key question is how professionals steering the design and

construction of buildings can work "not to forecast what will happen, but to try to make provision for what cannot be foreseen" (N.J. Habraken).

#### **4. Supply/Demand Study for Open Building**

(Nils Larsson, Canada)

This study is continuing and awaits more detailed information from the Status Report study. The report is based on the question "what would an investor need to or want to know about the market potential, environmental and financial opportunities of adopting Open Building principles in a project or in an organisation's processes?" This report will eventually provide a catalogue of experts identified as to country and skills related to Open Building design, construction and management, as well as product manufacturing companies manufacturing systems meeting Open Building criteria.

#### **5. Long Range Strategy for the Task Group**

(Seiji Sawada, Japan)

This project is continuing and includes the possibility of the formation of subgroups within the Task Group on specific topics, and planning for the structure of the Task Group as membership increases. It includes issues of publicity, improvements of methods and strengthening the Task Group by initiation of regional seminars on Open Building practices and other support for local work.

#### **General Discussion Topics**

Two broad discussions took place during the meeting. They included:

##### **1. Broadening industry participation in TG26**

Given the key role of product manufacturers and construction companies in implementing of Open Building projects, discussion centered on increasing their participation in the TG. Roles are changing as industry adjusts to new market and technical pressures, and as the nature of building procurement and particularly building refurbishment changes. The TG expects to attract members who recognise these shifts. Participants are also sought from organisations outside "normal" building industry activity, those not constrained by traditional methods and attitudes, but ready to deliver new products and services attuned to the realities of housing and non-residential supply and demand patterns.

Many technical, coordination and product development issues remain to be solved in the now routine separation of base building and fit-out in office and retail construction. Progress is needed in streamlining the work of separate trades by using multi-skilled "fit-out installers". Advances in new base building design and construction are needed and for refurbishing office base buildings constructed within the past 30 years, with particular emphasis on facades and mechanical systems. New interior fit-out technology is needed to speed installation and reconfiguration of spaces without disturbing adjacent occupants or the base building architecture. Advances in non-residential construction need to be transferred to residential construction when they make sense.

The Task Group seeks participation from those in the building industry for whom these issues represent problems, and from those who deliver products and design and construction services offering advanced solutions.

##### **2. Development of "tool boxes" to support members in advancing OB implementation in their own area**

One of the key purposes of the TG is to support each member in developing the resources and tools needed to advance implementation of open building in each region or country. In that sense, TG26 will

act as a clearinghouse of resources - both human and printed - and as a meeting "place" in support of local endeavours. Funds must be raised to develop an active repository of information, methods, case studies and product information.

The journal Open House International, already published for 20 years, edited by Nicholas Wilkinson, and the only international peer review journal focused on housing and the general principles of open building, is one possible method of dissemination of information as part of the Open Building toolbox. Other publications such as Advanced Buildings Newsletter, published by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada in partnership with CANMET, Natural Resources Canada, also has offered to publish articles and information on Open Building. In addition, use of Internet and World Wide Web Sites is another possibility being developed by the Task Group.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of TG26 will take place in Washington, DC in November, organised by Dr. Kendall. It will have paper sessions, a hands-on "Open Building Design Exercise" as well as a session open to design, product manufacturing and construction industry professionals and researchers from North American who are interested in Open Building.

### **Special Thanks**

- TNO Building and Construction Research for their support of the meeting and to Loes van der Heijden for her work preparing for and supporting the meeting.
- Ype Cuperus, OBOM Research Group for preparatory work and the TU Delft Department of Architecture and for providing space and lunches for the meeting.
- The Open Building Foundation, Delft, for hosting the reception and the dinner.

### **Stephen Kendall**

More about Stephen Kendall and how he sees the future of TG26 plus details of plans for Washington in the next issue.