# Re: Urban Planning Domain Working Group Charter Comments

The SMART Infrastructure Facility (SMART) and Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN) welcome the opportunity to provide input to the Urban Planning Domain Working Group Charter, released for comment in June 2014.

SMART and AURIN each has extensive experience in specific urban planning domains, including a significant focus on interoperability.

We are pleased to see a working group formed around Urban Planning, and feel that this addresses a current gap in appropriate understanding of urban data, standards and data interoperability. Increase in the density and diversity of tools, utilities and software applications applied in the urban planning landscape has clearly contributed to a growth in the number of formats, data models and processing models used. This undoubtedly calls for standards that would ensure data and processing interoperability between disparate systems for smart urban planning.

The Draft Charter provides a positive start towards improving the management and sharing of planning related information. We do feel that there is some scope for development in this charter though, through both minor structural changes and additions to the content. Comments on each of the section of the document can be found below for consideration:

## Introduction

* Focus could expand to include the monitoring urban environment and civic co-management of urban space and infrastructure through ICT. Civic co-management has been identified as an important factor in section 2, but it is worth giving it a brief citing in the introduction.
* Focus should include assessment of urban planning ICT systems to assess effectiveness

### Purpose of the Urban Planning DWG

* The purpose is not clearly stated in this section – it covers why Urban Planning itself is important, not why a WG is required in the OGC
* This purpose could easily be brought in through the discussion of “location” and “time” being the linking factors between various aspects of Urban Planning.

A practical example of this could be where a planner want to coordinate planned horizontal infrastructure repair and built environment construction work by location and time, to reduce costs and minimise disruption, particularly when multiple agencies are using the same physical space as in the case of utility operators.

* Further the purpose could be broadened to encompass better understanding of how planning information, particularly location and time, is used to facilitate outcomes and communicate with public.
* The statement “the future of Urban Planning will depend on “crowd sourcing” decisions and plans” feels a little overstated. While we recognise that Crowd Sourcing is a potentially very important resource, planning could still be effective without crowd sourcing, though it will be influenced by, and benefit from, crowd sourced information.

Nevertheless, we laud the authors for recognizing the importance of public involvement beyond the status of traditional passive information recipients when it comes to urban planning. Urban landscapes are complex in terms of inhabitants, physical space and interactions between these two; regulations alone are insufficient to keep these landscapes in expected pathways. Civic co-management has gained recognition as both complementary and essential practice in modern urban planning. SMART’s PetaJakarta project in particular looks at promoting civic co-management of urban infrastructure to improve resilience of Jakarta city to flooding, mainly using social media and crowd sourcing.

* We believe the focus should more be on the communication elements of this section.
* Some of the information from the “Problem Statement” section would be more appropriate here.

## Problem Statement

* As above, some of the information from the “Purpose” section should be moved here.
* As with the “Purpose” section, there is no clear definition of the problem, more of a general description of some broad issues in planning, not in planning in OGC context.
* While the rest of the Charter is focused on interoperability, the problem statement makes no mention of why this is a problem currently. Why is interoperability a problem for urban planning and why is that important? This should be a relatively simple, but very beneficial addition to this section.
* What work is being done on interoperability right now (INSPIRE, AURIN, Smart Cities Dashboard, CUSP…)
* What kinds of decisions are being inhibited? This will allow a clear definition of the problem, and good focus for the next steps.
* Enabling transparent communication is key to civic co-management of urban infrastructure and space. Safeguarding privacy of citizens while promoting transparent communication is critical in the era of social media and crowd sourcing. This is an important issue that needs to be addressed in modern urban planning.
* We believe ‘big data’ (mainly semi-structured and unstructured data) provide both opportunities and challenges for urban planning. It is important to harvest, analyze and visualize most of these data in real-time, yet technology is still not fully matured to do so efficiently. Also, useful information in big data is often buried in largely noisy data. New methods are required to retrieve such useful content from noisy big data. This is worth mentioning in the problem statement.

## Charter

* The Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network and the SMART Infrastructure Facility would like to be Charter Members of this WG, sharing extensive domain expertise from the Australian and international contexts.
* This activities section should also include information on outreach, education, implementation and review.
* This outreach would benefit from links to other international initiatives, such as the Research Data Alliance, and the recently formed Urban Quality of Life working group.
* Activities could include task to identify barriers to interoperability changes and take up, defining standards recommendations, and engaging potential sponsors
* Business case could benefit from expanding to data presentation/visualisation, and fundamental planning data framework/standards. Real time mapping of big data is an unresolved challenge that should feature as a business case.

AURIN and SMART can help defining several business cases based on applied research work these two institutes have undertaken in the Asia-Pacific region.

* Another fundamental GIS problem often found in the urban space is inconsistent definitions and symbology for common planning zones
* The case has not been made clear that a new markup language is needed, as opposed to modifying or combining existing MLs

## Organizational Approach and Scope of Work

* In general, the business goals are clear and cover good aims
* However, the need for these goals has not been clearly stated in the previous sections. The goals are good, but the support material should reflect why
* For example, goal 2 to "minimise the technical distinction between Urban planning data processing systems that use geography” is clearly important, but has not been established as a problem in section 3
* The mission should be more specific than “focus on system interoperability”. The group could aim to "make recommendations on” these issues instead, thus cementing a practical output for the group

As a whole the document develops some good aims, tasks and reasons for the Urban Planning DWG. We thank the document authors for their hard work, and hope that these comments will be helpful in revising the charter. We are all available to further discuss any of the points raised in this letter.

Regards,

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