

Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) Review Gist of Envisioning Stage Focus Group Discussion

Date: 27th November 2008 (Thursday)
Time: 6:30p.m. – 8:30p.m.
Venue: 1107, 11/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Road,
Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon
Group: Business groups – retailers, hawkers and transport operators,
etc.
No. of participants: 11 (3 observers)

Representative of A-World Consulting Ltd. briefly introduced the background of URS Review. Mr. Yuen Kin-kwok, the facilitator, invited participants to express their opinions. After discussion, the opinions were grouped into three parts – ‘Policy’, ‘Principle’ and ‘Execution’. The key points were as follows:

1 Policy

1.1 Balance between conservation and renewal

1.1.1 Conservation was supported, but not to the extreme. It was necessary to strike a balance between conservation and renewal. The society would make no progress if all old buildings were to be preserved. Buildings without historical value should be reconstructed to improve the environment.

1.2 Urban Renewal Authority (URA) to be self-financed

1.2.1 URA should be self-financing and should not use taxpayers’ money. It should also increase transparency in its financial status.

1.2.2 URA could consider raising funds through listing and avoid using government funds.

1.3 Extending the target areas of urban renewal

1.3.1 The nine target areas in the current URS should be extended, for example, the inclusion of North District, so that renewal would no longer be limited to urban areas.

1.4 Speeding up urban renewal

1.4.1 URA should announce a list of acquisition projects every year with schedule to facilitate supervision on the progress of the concerned works.

1.5 Reviewing URA's role

1.5.1 URA played both the administrative and commercial roles. Division of work and role of URA were unclear, which should be reviewed.

1.6 Reviewing the 'Lands Resumption Ordinance'

1.6.1 The Lands Resumption Ordinance should be reviewed together in the course of URS Review.

2 **Principle**

2.1 Urban renewal projects to coordinate with the peripheral environment, facilities and overall planning

2.1.1 Urban renewal projects must coordinate with the peripheral environment and buildings. They should not neglect the surroundings and simply focus on the construction of tall buildings.

2.1.2 More social welfare facilities should be provided through urban renewal.

2.1.3 Urban renewal should have an overall planning and ancillary items such as community facilities should be constructed.

2.2 Renewal priority given to areas with poor environment

2.2.1 The progress of urban renewal should not be slowed down by the recent economic tsunami. Areas with poor environment should be given the priority for renewal.

2.3 Transport network and business environment of the transport industry

2.3.1 Attention should be paid to the transport network in the district when carrying out urban renewal. Areas should be reserved for the construction of transport-related ancillary facilities.

2.3.2 Urban renewal should take into account the business environment of the transport industry to avoid a huge loss of customers after renewal.

2.4 Rehousing within the same district

2.4.1 Rehousing within the same district should be provided to affected residents, especially the elderly. Old people would usually find it difficult to adapt to a new community life and therefore, they should be given priority for rehousing within the same district.

2.4.2 It was always the biggest obstacle to remove residents in implementing urban renewal. Rehousing within the same district

could speed up the progress of urban renewal.

2.5 Preserving thematic streets and buildings

2.5.1 Thematic streets and buildings with features should be preserved and developed so as to bring the economic benefits into play.

2.5.2 Conservation should include the preservation and revitalization of old districts. Both the building and culture should be preserved, which could also serve to educate the next generation.

2.6 Preserving featured shops and stalls

2.6.1 Some featured shops and fixed stalls should be re-arranged and preserved in implementing renewal, for example, the shops and stalls on Shanghai Street.

2.7 Adding green elements

2.7.1 Environmental protection and energy saving elements should be added to urban renewal to avoid polluting the environment.

3 **Execution**

3.1 Rehabilitation or redevelopment

3.1.1 Some urban renewal projects were suitable for either redevelopment or rehabilitation. In that case, the actual circumstances of the land owners concerned should be considered when deciding whether to carry out redevelopment or rehabilitation. Land owners might also be required to carry out rehabilitation by themselves.

3.2 Different organizations to participate in renewal

3.2.1 Different organizations (including private developers) should be invited to participate in urban renewal, thus making progress through competition.

3.3 Early consultation with non-government organizations, local community and stakeholders

3.3.1 Prior to urban renewal, the Government should consult non-government organizations, local community and other stakeholders such as district councilors, owners' committees etc., as soon as possible to understand the needs of the residents.

3.3.2 Before implementing large-scale urban renewal projects, the Government should consult transport service providers as soon as possible to facilitate coordination.