

Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) Review

Gist of Envisioning Stage Focus Group Discussion

Date: 17 September 2008 (Wednesday)
Time: 6:30pm to 9:30pm
Venue: Conference Room, A-World Consulting Ltd., Unit 2402, 24/F, Admiralty Centre II, 18 Harcourt Road, Admiralty, HK
Group: Academics and professional groups (Science & Works) – architects, planners, engineers, surveyors etc.
No. of Participants: 19

1 Issues Identified

- 1.1 Nature of URS should be more strategic
- 1.2 Scale and implementation of redevelopment projects
- 1.3 Implementation of rehabilitation and co-ordination with redevelopment
- 1.4 Balance and coordination among 4Rs
- 1.5 Pace and programme of urban renewal
- 1.6 Role of Urban Renewal Authority (URA), Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) and other undertakers of urban renewal, their coordination and resource allocation of urban renewal
- 1.7 Public consultation process
- 1.8 Rehousing entitlements
- 1.9 Maintenance responsibility
- 1.10 Relationship between URS and social policy

2 Summary of Views

2.1 Key Considerations of Urban Renewal

- 2.1.1 The current URS was not strategic enough and was too financially-driven. It should be part of an overall town planning strategy and economic development strategy.
- 2.1.2 Urban renewal work should be more analysis-based.
- 2.1.3 Social considerations should be more emphasized in urban renewal. Social benefits should also be quantified.
- 2.1.4 The planning intention of individual urban renewal projects should be better promoted.
- 2.1.5 The URS should take into consideration changes in our population structure e.g. ageing.
- 2.1.6 Urban renewal should take into consideration its impact on rent

level and the affordability of the low-income class.

- 2.1.7 Requirements for sustainable development (e.g. green procurement) should be included in the URS.

2.2 Key Components of Urban Renewal

General

- 2.2.1 4Rs were supported.

Scale and Implementation of Redevelopment

- 2.2.2 URS should cover private sector redevelopment role. It should simplify the requirements for compulsory sale.
- 2.2.3 Redevelopment projects should be bigger in scale to achieve more holistic planning objectives.

Implementation of rehabilitation

- 2.2.4 Compulsory rehabilitation and assistance by agencies such as URA and HKHS were supported.
- 2.2.5 Compulsory management and compulsory insurance should be considered.
- 2.2.6 Approval procedures for building conversion should be streamlined.
- 2.2.7 Alternative approach to solve overcrowding problem (e.g. thinning out) should be considered.

Balance and Co-ordination among 4Rs

- 2.2.8 The current URAO was redevelopment-oriented.
- 2.2.9 Rehabilitation should be strengthened.
- 2.2.10 Among the 4Rs, rehabilitation, preservation and revitalization should be more emphasized.
- 2.2.11 There should be guidelines to determine the application of redevelopment or rehabilitation approaches (e.g. in terms of building age, building condition and planning intention for a district). Those affected should also be consulted on individual projects.
- 2.2.12 There were different views regarding whether wastage in rehabilitation before redevelopment could be minimized. Some considered that it could be achieved through better programming. Others considered it difficult as redevelopment was often market-driven.

2.3 Pace and Programme of Urban Renewal

2.3.1 Urban renewal should be speeded up.

2.3.2 Clearer programme of urban renewal was necessary and should be made known to the public so that owners, for example, could determine whether to rehabilitate their buildings or not.

2.3.3 Urban renewal should feature in the long-term development plans of the Government.

2.4 Undertakers of Urban Renewal and Its Business Model

2.4.1 The role of URA and HKHS (e.g. as planner, developer or facilitator) and their co-ordination should be reviewed.

2.4.2 URA is not adequately empowered to implement the other 3Rs.

2.4.3 The role of HS in rehabilitation should be strengthened.

2.4.4 There should be better cooperation between URA and Housing Authority, in terms of planning, design and rehousing.

2.4.5 There were overseas experiences where resources were allocated to local districts which could line up stakeholders in urban renewal projects. Such experiences should be considered.

2.5 People-centred Approach

General

2.5.1 Some were satisfied with the people-centred approach of the current urban renewal practices. Others saw room for improvement.

Public Consultation

2.5.2 Public consultation was necessary in determining the target area/buildings for redevelopment, rehabilitation etc.

2.5.3 Many current urban renewal policies were top-down and outside-in.

2.5.4 Legitimacy of the planning process (including the public consultation process) should be enhanced.

Rehousing

2.5.5 Other non-cash compensation options like on-site resettlement should be considered.

2.5.6 Rehousing for poor flat owners should be considered.

Maintenance Responsibility

2.5.7 Maintenance responsibility should be rested with the owners and should not be heavily subsidized by the general public.

2.6 Relationship between URS and Social Policy

2.6.1 Displacement of low-rent private flats for the low-income group entailed by urban renewal was basically a poverty issue and should be addressed through poverty policy.

2.6.2 There should be better co-ordination with other policies like human resources policy.