

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

Date: 8 October 2008 (Wednesday)
Time: 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Venue: Conference Room, A-World Consulting Ltd., Unit 2402, 24/F,
Admiralty Centre II, 18 Harcourt Road, Admiralty, HK
Group: Advocacy groups – community groups
No. of
Participants: 9

Representative of A-World Consulting Ltd. briefly introduced the background of URS Review. Mr. Lam Yuk-wah, Peter, the facilitator, invited participants to express their views on the preliminary issues.

1. Summary of Views

1.1 Respecting the choices of local residents and emphasizing the development after renewal

- 1.1.1 The affected residents should have more choices on resettlement, e.g. the elderly could choose to move to the district where their children lived.
- 1.1.2 Resettlement of the affected elderly should be more flexible. They should be given more choices of resettlement.
- 1.1.3 The affected residents and shop owners should participate in the decision-making of whether to move or to stay in the same district.
- 1.1.4 Consideration should be given to whether the affected elderly could adapt to the new life and establish social network after moving to a new community.

1.2 Local residents' rights of participation and decision-making

- 1.2.1 Local residents should have the rights to participate in and make decisions on urban renewal plans. As some residents wished to stay instead of leaving the district, the engagement of local residents should begin with the discussion on whether the area should undergo renewal, which enabled the residents to build the new community together. This should be the basic starting point of communication with the local residents.

1.3 Providing choices, reaching a consensus, and inviting participation of intermediary organizations and professional bodies

- 1.3.1 In the urban renewal process, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) should not simply carry out top-down planning. They should communicate more with the affected residents on the future development and options with a view to reaching a consensus with them.
- 1.3.2 The only choice for the affected residents at the moment was moving out from the original district.
- 1.3.3 Most local organizations consisted of members from different social strata. They should be able to give representative opinions on local affairs and should be the target groups for urban renewal consultation.
- 1.3.4 The population structure should be carefully studied prior to the implementation of urban renewal projects. The impacts on community network should be minimized.
- 1.3.5 Due consideration should be given to the residents' attachment to the community, the social network they had established, and their adaptability to the new community.
- 1.3.6 Intermediary organizations and professional bodies should be invited to engage in the urban renewal process, and the latter could provide professional advice. Their views should not however override those from the affected residents. The views of local residents should form the basis of urban renewal.
- 1.3.7 Intermediary organizations like 'The Ping Wo Fund' could be called into discussions. They could play an unbiased intermediary role in the communication with the affected residents.

1.4 Effective use of social workers' service, respecting the conduct and principles of collaborative parties and conducting quality communication

- 1.4.1 Urban renewal was a complicated social issue with much conflict of interests. Therefore, the professional services of social workers should be employed effectively so as to enable them to perform their coordinating functions.
- 1.4.2 URA should communicate more with the affected residents to understand their wishes.
- 1.4.3 As some social worker organizations had already been working in the concerned areas before the implementation of the urban renewal project, they had a better understanding on the residents' concerns and had gained their trust. Thus, the authority should collaborate

with these organizations in implementing the projects to ensure quality communication with local residents.

- 1.4.4 As social workers were appointed by both their subvented organizations and the URA in the urban renewal process, there might be a conflict of roles. Under the circumstances, the conduct and work principles of the social workers should be respected.

1.5 Valuing children's opinion

- 1.5.1 A mechanism should be put in place for children to voice opinions in the urban renewal process. It should be considered to collect children's opinion through organizations concerning children rights.

1.6 Developing public space for families

- 1.6.1 Reference could be made from foreign cases to develop family-based community public space for shared-use by different families, thus promoting harmony in individual families and in the community.

1.7 Importance of feasibility and creativity

- 1.7.1 Urban renewal should stress on the feasibility and creativity of the plans, and participation of private organizations should therefore be welcome.

1.8 More civic education and promotion

- 1.8.1 More efforts should be put on civic education and promotion so as to enable related organizations and the general public to gain a more diverse understanding and develop a more balanced perspective on urban renewal.

1.9 Emphasis on policy coordination

- 1.9.1 There should be better policy coordination between URA and different Government departments in the urban renewal process. This could prevent situations where the affected residents received rehabilitation requests on the one hand, and notice of removal on the other.

1.10 Consultation through the incorporated owners or related organizations

- 1.10.1 It was agreed that consultation was an important part of the "people-centred" approach, and it was suggested carrying out more in-depth consultations through the channel of the incorporated owners or other local organizations.

2. The priority of issues

2.1 Participants prioritized the issues discussed as below:

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Respecting the choices of local residents and emphasizing the development after renewal	<u>1</u>
Local residents' rights of participation and decision-making	<u>1</u>
Conducting quality communication on a trust basis	<u>3</u>
Studying the community population structure and valuing community networks	<u>4</u>
Valuing children's opinion	<u>4</u>
Valuing communication	<u>4</u>
Respecting the conduct and principles of collaborative parties	<u>4</u>
Developing public space for families	<u>8</u>
Involvement of unbiased roles such as 'The Ping Wo Fund'	<u>8</u>
Importance of feasibility and creativity	<u>10</u>
More civic education and promotion	<u>11</u>
Effective use of social workers' service	<u>11</u>
Emphasis on policy coordination	<u>13</u>
Consultation through the incorporated owners or related organizations	<u>13</u>
Participation of intermediary organizations and professional bodies	<u>13</u>
Providing more resettlement choices	<u>16</u>
Participation of shop owners and residents	<u>16</u>
Valuing local attachment	<u>16</u>
Providing choices for reaching a consensus	<u>16</u>
Listening to representative opinions	<u>16</u>