

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

Date: 12th November 2008 (Wednesday)
Time: 6:30p.m. – 8:30p.m.
Venue: 1107, 11/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon
Group: Political groups – District Councils
No. of participants: 19

Representative of A-World Consulting Ltd. briefly introduced the background of URS Review. Ms. S.C. Mak, Sandra, 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 Coordinating Government departments to upgrade the renewal area

1.1.1 Relevant Government departments should be coordinated to upgrade the entire district through urban renewal.

1.2 Providing the option of “flat-for-flat” and “shop-for-shop” to maintain community network where possible

1.2.1 The original community network should be preserved where possible through the “flat-for-flat” and “shop-for-shop” exchange arrangement.

1.3 Providing incentives to encourage private developers’ participation in redevelopment

1.3.1 Incentives should be provided to encourage private developers’ participation in urban renewal projects.

1.3.2 The threshold for compulsory sale of flats should be lowered to 80% so as to speed up urban redevelopment.

2. Principle

2.1 Economic benefits should not be the only concern for urban renewal

2.1.1 At present, urban renewal was just like property projects of which the development plot ratio was too high. Urban renewal projects should focus not only on economic benefits, but also on the upgrading of the entire district.

2.1.2 The vision of urban renewal should be forward-looking with long-term planning for the entire district.

2.2 Transforming old districts through urban renewal

2.2.1 Opportunity should be taken to revitalize and transform old districts through urban renewal in order to create more job opportunities and new business opportunities, for example, the construction of “underground city” linking the new development area in Kai Tak with the Kwun Tong industrial area.

2.3 Considering community needs, coordinating with other districts, strengthening public transport, conserving energy and protecting environment, building barrier-free community

2.3.1 The need for community facilities in the district and the co-ordination with neighbouring areas should be considered in planning urban renewal. Meanwhile, public transport should be strengthened so as not to overload the traffic as a result of redevelopment. Factors concerning energy conservation and environmental protection, and the building of barrier-free community should also be considered in the planning process.

2.4 Implementing "people-centred" approach

2.4.1 “People-centred” approach should be put into action in that :

- (a) the opinions from different residents on redevelopment projects, including those from the whole territory, local districts and sub-area residents, should be listened and coordinated;
- (b) redevelopment projects should be planned according to public aspirations; and
- (c) the interest of the residents in the local district and the entire territory should be fundamental.

2.4.2 Urban Renewal Authority (URA) from time to time would give public an impression of “scrambling” land for property development, which presented a poor public image.

2.4.3 Two-way communication with residents should be enhanced to ascertain the overall development plan of urban renewal projects and the areas under conservation.

2.5 Disclosing the principles of selecting urban renewal areas

2.5.1 Transparency should be increased for residents to understand the principles and criteria adopted by URA in selecting areas for urban renewal.

2.5.2 Private streets with poor environmental conditions and projects with urgent needs in the district should be given the priority as targets of renewal.

2.6 Local characteristics should be considered for urban renewal

2.6.1 Local characteristics should be considered in planning urban renewal. For example, the close proximity between funeral parlours (and related industries) and residential areas should be avoided in planning Hung Hom district.

2.7 Urban renewal should emphasize social impact assessment

2.7.1 Representatives of URA should participate more in residents' meetings and consult the needs of residents in order to fully understand the impacts of the redevelopment projects on the community.

2.8 Allowing private developers to participate in renewal projects

2.8.1 The participation of private developers should be considered in order to enhance the efficiency of urban renewal.

2.9 Enhancing cost effectiveness of renewal projects

2.9.1 As the resources allocated to urban renewal projects were limited, it was necessary to consider how urban renewal should be implemented so as to make it more cost effective.

3. **Execution**

3.1 Shortening the implementation time and speeding up urban renewal

3.1.1 It should be necessary to shorten the implementation time and speed up urban renewal. At present, it took such a long time that some projects had not been completed after implementation for more than 10 years.

3.2 Providing ex-gratia allowance to assist residents in the transitional period and enhance co-operation with social welfare organizations

3.2.1 Ex-gratia allowance and assistance should be provided for the affected shop operators and residents, so that they could be rehoused in the same districts.

3.2.2 URA should enhance co-operation with social welfare organizations to assist the affected residents and shop operators during the transitional period of renewal.

3.3 Sufficient consultation period and information

3.3.1 Sufficient time and information should be given in conducting urban renewal consultation. Information should not be provided in English only which hindered the elderly from participating in the consultation.

3.4 Soliciting residents' support and participation in renewal

3.4.1 URA should share the benefits of urban renewal with the affected residents in order to solicit their support and participation in the renewal.