

The Best Antidote to Housing Problem in Hong Kong

It is universally acknowledged that housing prices have long been high in the past decade, exceeding the ability of most citizens. Teenagers, especially, fail to catch up to the skyrocketed growth in residential cost. In view of this, the government has proposed the idea of occupation of Green Belt Land so as to increase the supply of land resources.



Despite the urgency of dealing with housing problems, development on Green Belt Land is never a first-priority solution. In order to satisfy the demand for land resources, a gigantic amount of rural area would be converted to urban areas, greatly reducing the green area, which may be the habitat of some wild animals. Not only does the destruction of the living environment of animals possibly lead to a sharp drop in numbers, the situation of competing for living space between humans and animals may also be intensified. It is predictable that wild boars will be attacking nearby residents more frequently with the expansion of urban areas. In fact, deforestation is inevitable while construction is carried out in rural areas, resulting in an elimination of plants and trees. Without photosynthesis effects associated with plants, the emission of greenhouse gases will rise up. In view of the environmental consequences and unsustainability, the government may face resistance from citizens and NGO, possibly reducing the administrative efficiency, not to mention the degradation of image due to the sacrifice of environmental interest.

In fact, there are still a number of ways which can effectively provide land resources. Numerous research have pointed out that there exists a large amount of brownfield area in Hong Kong, with the figure showing an increasing trend. These lands were once farming areas, abandoned or converted to other uses like parking areas, garage, etc. These lands usually feature single-storey buildings, failing to maximize the

land efficiency with low production rate or limited usage. By reclaiming brownfield sites, the government can have better urban planning over them. It can, for example, construct high-rise commercial buildings so as to relocate the economic activities found on brownfield sites with wiser use of land. It is, in fact, only opposed by a minority of owners of land, showing solid evidence to the high feasibility of the solution.

The government should also consider redefining housing as resources rather than a good available for investment. Poor management of housing resources, apart from limited land supply, accounts for another major cause of costly housing. It is common that people are treating housing as an investment, increasing the demand for it. As the demand exceeds the supply, the price of property goes up. The social issue of a M-shaped society is deteriorating due to the fact that the expense in satisfying the residential need rises with housing prices, where investors are making significant profit from the housing market competing for even more houses as a consequence. The government should, therefore, greatly increase the proportion of public housing or Home Ownership Scheme so as to gain control of the housing market. Stricter policy and regulation can be effectively implemented so as to ensure a fair allocation and distribution of housing resources. Moreover, the vacancy in housing resources can also be minimized as most of them are for residential use rather than for trading.

Housing is of utmost importance affecting our quality of life. Thus, it is crucial for us to carry out investigations carefully so as to figure out a solution satisfying the current needs and sustainability simultaneously.

(575 words)