

Abstract

One of the causes of the decline of inner city area is the relocation of existing job sources or economic base. In Bangkok, an historic area namely Mansri is facing such decline due to the moving out of the headquarters of Metropolitan Water Works Authority (MWWA), resulting in the economic and physical deterioration of relevant commercial and service establishments in the neighbourhoods. There is, therefore a need to revitalize the area in order to bring back livelihood and economic viability to the area. In general, there are two dimensions of revitalization approach, which are a) the urban design dimension which emphasizes on physical improvement, and b) the socioeconomic dimension. This research focuses on the search of appropriate approach for revitalization by identifying three objectives, which are 1) to assess cultural heritage value to seek for preservation potential; 2) to find out socioeconomic and residents' attitudes towards revitalization, and 3) to propose practical revitalization approach. Methodologies used in this research are survey and assessment of built heritage value, household interview, and questionnaire survey. Data derived from the field survey will be processed and analyzed through mapping techniques and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

It is found from the building survey that most of the buildings are shophouses that have heritage value and high degree of authenticity which could be preserved to be another cultural tourism area in Bangkok. There are two landlords, the Crown Property Bureau (CPB) and Sra Ket Temple, which rent out to individual tenants for more than 50 years. The tenants have moderate income and realize that the area is in decline due to the relocation of MWWA. Apart from physical deterioration, traffic congestion and lack of parking space are major problems. The tenants would like to take part in the revitalization programme particularly in the repair of old shophouses. Possible incentives are matching fund for restoration, repair grant for the lower income tenants, provision of experts and building materials, and façade easement.

It is also found that there is no single revitalization approach to be applied in the area because there are many factors involved. The case study area can be divided into 3 sub-areas, having different approach. The first sub-area is the heritage shophouses along Bamrung Muang, Chakkrapaddipong, and Boribhat roads that have complicated land tenure, and declined economy. Since the tenants want to participate in the area improvement, revitalization approach should be based on socioeconomic dimension via adaptive re-use and mixed finance/mixed development from both landlords and tenants. Shophouses should be restored to their original character and style. The second sub-area is the former headquarters of MWWA which is currently left abandoned. Revitalization approach should be based on urban design dimension to attract investment from private developers. The third sub-area is the two lengthily established communities of Baan Baat and Wat Sra Ket that maintain local economic activities of Buddhist alms bowl manufacturing and carpentry. Tenants in the communities do not want to move out of the area, hence, socioeconomic approach through participative community development scheme should be applied to this sub-area.

It is learned from the study that even a small area in inner city, the treatment of revitalization should be different due to different needs and constraints. And the combination of urban design approach and socioeconomic approach could be mutually applied to other sites in the inner city of Bangkok as well.