

2000

A COMMERCIAL-LED URBAN RENEWAL AT THE CITY CBD AS AN ENGINE OF CITY REDEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF THE CITY OF CALAPAN

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April 2000

Abstract:

The paper "A Commercial Led Urban Renewal at the City CBD as an Engine of City Redevelopment: The Case of the City of Calapan" aims to apply the principles of urban renewal at the central business district (CBD) of Calapan City, which will serve as an engine of growth for city redevelopment through improving its environmental condition and economic activities and proposing a conceptual urban renewal scheme.

Calapan City, being the capital of Oriental Mindoro, is the center of trade, commerce, industry, education, and religious activities of the province. Its CBD is characterized by low to medium intensity development. At present, the study area is experiencing presence of urban blights. The roads are narrow and have minimal options for expansion. Traffic congestion is common especially during peak hours. The drainage facilities are also poor, which result in flooding during heavy rains. The city is also experiencing frequent power failure. Furthermore, the water supply system is inadequate in terms of both coverage and quality of service. Also, the public market in the area is in a dilapidated condition. There are also informal settlers in the CBD located near the riverbanks. In addition, the area also lacks open spaces and greeneries for parks, playgrounds, parking spaces, and other recreation purposes.

Many cities, local and international, have attempted to address the problems of urban blight through urban renewal. The different experiences showed that war-damaged areas were revitalized, old buildings and structures were enhanced, and buildings used as industrial factories were turned into commercial and shopping malls. The economies of such cities were also improved and revitalized, and the character of the place was restored or established. In the long run, the effects of urban renewal also led to the redevelopment of the fringe areas of those cities.

The study defined commercial led urban renewal as a process of gradually changing the character of the urban proportion of a city, particularly its present CBD, through enhancing its commercial activities and structures, and at the same time ensuring that these changes will cater to the needs of its population. Such commercial activities include retailing and service-provider establishments placed in an improved shopping center and commercial complex. In addition, an improved condition of residential spaces and support facilities are likewise available in the area. The application of the approach to the city CBD of Calapan considered the city's political and legal framework, administrative aspect, financial context, and planning and design perspectives.

The study also used both the descriptive and historical methods of research. The former involved data gathering of the present condition of the City of Calapan, while the latter involved an organized examination of the past events and activities. The gathered data were evaluated through situational analysis, and demand and supply analysis of the present economy of the study area. The demand for urban renewal considered in the study was the

population that would be affected, targeted, and catered by a renewed Calapan CBD. This population is the constant users and periodic users of the area. The study revealed that the demand for the commercial establishments still depend on the agricultural economy of the city, as well as of the whole province. On the other hand, the different supplies considered in the study were the existing activities, land and building structures, urban facilities and financial resources.

The study also attempted to propose an urban renewal scheme for the city CBD, wherein the study area was divided into four related sub-areas, namely the Plaza Complex Area, the Marketplace Area, the Riverfront Area, and the CBD Gridiron Area. These areas were determined based on the results of the analysis, and from the views of the stakeholders in the area. An urban renewal criterion was also used in delineating the appropriate urban renewal approach for the different sub-areas of the CBD. Such criteria are accessibility and circulation, compatible land uses, existing structures and facilities, and surrounding environment. Different implementing mechanisms are likewise presented to carry out the different components of the projects' different schemes.

However, the urban renewal approach to the city CBD will not materialize if the private sector and the community will not be involved in the whole process by the city government. They should know their different roles and responsibilities – the government as the policy maker and implementer, while the private sector as the investment provider and employment generator.