

Thoughts on Urban Renewal Action under Policy Guidance

YANG Minhui

(Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang, Jiangxi 330022, China)

Abstract Driven by the rapid development of urbanization in China, a large amount of inefficient land has been generated, and cities need to transform their extensive development methods. To achieve efficient urban development, the relevant departments implement urban renewal actions, and promote sustainable urban development. On the basis of analyzing the concept of urban renewal action, the history and background of urban renewal policies are analyzed, and different levels of policy guidance and priorities are sorted out. Several thoughts are put forward on urban renewal action, aiming to create a beautiful and comfortable urban space. It is hoped that this will have certain guiding significance for urban renewal in China.

Keywords Policy orientation, Urban renewal action, Urban space, Form transformation, Urban functional system, Reflection

DOI 10.16785/j.issn 1943-989x.2024.6.010

The urban renewal action included in the national strategic key deployment plan is no longer a vague term for the old city land transformation, reinvestment, development and reconstruction, and urban demolition and reconstruction at narrow level in the past, but a long-term and continuous improvement and upgrading, and systemic optimization, upgrade, and adjustment activities of the overall spatial form transformation and comprehensive urban functional system for the future entire national urban space^[1]. The basic essence should be to promote a profound transformation in the way and structure of urban development planning and construction, and to quickly shift the overall planning and construction mode of a city from being driven by simple short-term long-term goals in the past to gradually improving and enhancing the city's image.

1 Policy history and background analysis

The First Central and Urban Economic Operation Work Scheduling Conference in 2015 proposed the concept of "respecting the laws of urban development". In the process of urban development, some policies that are conducive to urban development are proposed according to the stage of urban development. The Fifth Central Economic Leadership Work Special Conference in 2019 emphasized for the first time the new concept of "urban renewal". Urban renewal emphasizes the realization of broader value on limited land. In 2021, the proposal for the "urban renewal action" was once again advocated in the government work report of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference^[2].

In China, theoretical knowledge of urban renewal was applied to practice and promoted nationwide. In 2021, it was proposed that China would implement its urban renewal action as a major strategic lever for cities to achieve higher quality.

1.1 Urban double repair: ecological restoration and urban restoration

Urban double repair is a relatively large-scale urban renewal action that was initiated earliest in the China, aiming to restore and transform basic public municipal services and facilities, spatial environment, landscape in cities, and enhance urban characteristics and cultural vitality.

Although China's urban construction has achieved certain achievements, the term "urban disease" has emerged in major cities in recent years due to a relatively one-sided understanding of urban-rural development and long-term strategic goals, as well as insufficient ability to consider urban issues.

Firstly, based on the life cycle law of urbanization and the relevant experience of Western urban development, China's "urban disease" poses a great threat to the ecological environment, functional quality, social life, and urban management of cities. Moreover, China has accumulated many "urban diseases", such as traffic congestion and poor environment, which have a negative impact on people's lives^[3].

Secondly, many small cities of China are also facing policy pressure in upgrading and transformation, and gradually withdrawing from the ranks of the "stock development era". The expansion speed of most big cities has significantly exceeded the overall speed of China's population urbanization process, and has lost the demand for large-scale urban expansion

capacity.

1.2 Urban renewal: renovation of old residential areas

Urban renewal is the process of arranging a set of urban renewal systems through urban design and planning work on the basis of existing rights, achieving property rights reconstruction, functional improvement, and quality enhancement, and promoting regional vitality recovery and improvement.

After nearly 40 years of reform and opening up, China has entered the last half of the urbanization cycle. In the complex economic environment transformation of accelerating industrialization, informatization, urbanization, marketization, and internationalization, many prominent problems such as long-term environmental overdraft, excessive heavy consumption of resource factors, and rapid intensification of social contradictions will also arise^[4]. In December 2019, the Central Economic Work Deployment Conference basically established and clarified the work priorities of China's urban renewal action in 2020.

1.3 Urban renewal action: pilot promotion

With the advancement of regional urbanization in China, urban planning and construction, as well as the scale of land use, are becoming increasingly tight. Urban construction has gradually entered the stock era from the incremental era. The urban government urgently needs to transform the thinking of urban development growth mode and the strategic concept of urbanization development, promote the continuous optimization and improvement of China's urban spatial structure, and enhance the quality of urban areas. How to revitalize idle

and inefficient land and existing land, unleash the potential space for high-quality urban development in small and medium-sized cities, and continuously improve their urban quality image and industrial core competitiveness has gradually become a common social problem for the rapid development of major cities in China.

2 Work focus of policies

2.1 Macro level: renewal actions at national level

From urban double repair to urban renewal, and then to urban renewal actions, relevant national departments have issued many urban renewal policies. The relevant policies in chronological order are sorted out (Table 1).

Through the analysis of relevant policies, the key policy work priorities at the national level are as follows.

(1) Strengthening ecological space restoration. The government planning department emphasizes the need to actively and effectively protect the natural and original architectural styles such as the mountainous areas within the urban area according to local conditions, improve the functions of the urban ecosystem, restore nature and maintain the level of urban ecological environment, strengthen and optimize the ecological service functions within the urban area. Some existing wetlands, rivers and lakes in the old town area should be repaired, and some greenways, green spaces, wetlands and green

parks should be planned properly and reasonably.

(2) Increasing public activity spaces and venues. The relevant departments emphasize the need to continue to focus on optimizing and improving the various public products and services, and their functional connotations and values, and social environmental quality of China's modern and large, medium, and high-end urban construction system. They should optimize the layout of supporting facilities for modern public life services in urban and rural areas, actively promote the integration of urban and rural areas to expand various urban environmental greening and develop public spaces, and increase the supply of various social, cultural, and sports space resources and facilities in urban areas^[5].

(3) Implementing urban renewal and renovation. Considering the current situation, China still needs to continuously promote the renovation and transformation of old urban residential areas and urban villages, advance the construction of urban infrastructure, and strengthen the transformation and utilization of historical buildings and historic districts.

(4) Promoting the protection of historical culture and the construction of cultural cities. The key work, new major mission, responsibility and task of urban and rural construction in the city is protecting, developing, utilizing and managing the precious historical and cultural heritage resources of the city.

2.2 Median level: renewal actions at the provincial and municipal levels

(1) Promoting the construction of residential communities and accelerating the transformation of new urbanization. Relevant departments should optimize and enhance the layout of ecological green networks and greenways connecting various building areas, and set up public places for emergency evacuation, disaster rescue, and disaster relief in community areas. According to the overall principle of fully utilizing regional functions, optimizing and updating functions, it plans to create a green urban development structure that is ecological, balanced, and clustered.

(2) Building beautiful and livable cities. Taking engineering projects in Jiangsu Province as an example, the focus is on promoting the development of supporting facilities for ecologically livable cities, further improving the urban housing system, enhancing the level of urban public service facilities, and creating a beautiful landscape; implementing large-scale construction and renovation of beautiful rural areas and characteristic regions.

(3) Strengthening the shaping of urban characteristic style. The environment of key areas should be connected. The unique features of the city could be effectively showcased through spatial repair, functional connectivity, and quality creation, a network of urban unique features could be built, and a distinctive, rich,

Table 1 National urban renewal policies

Release time	Release department	Policy name	Interpretation of key content
2016	Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development	<i>Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Ecological Restoration and Urban Remediation Work</i>	Effectively improve the regional ecological environment and air quality, and make up for the infrastructure shortcomings of weak cities
September 2018	Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development	<i>Notice on Further Improving the Preservation, Utilization, and Renovation of Existing Urban Buildings</i>	Attach great importance to the utilization and development of the overall preservation of existing old buildings in urban history, as well as the renewal and renovation of buildings, and actively promote the promotion, dissemination, popularization, and inheritance of the historical context of Chinese cities
February 2019	Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development	<i>Guiding Opinions on Jointly Creating a Beautiful Environment and a Happy Life in the Construction and Improvement of Urban and Rural Living Environment</i>	Reasonably determine the time focus of promoting the planning, construction, renovation, and centralized improvement of the living environment according to local conditions
March 2019	The State Council	<i>2019 State Council Government Work Report</i>	Need to vigorously promote the environmental renovation of old urban residential areas, support urban and rural residents to install supporting living facilities such as elevators and heating, continue to steadily promote the renovation of rural shantytowns, and vigorously develop public elderly care services of new rural community
August 2020	Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development	<i>Notice on Issuing the Action Plan for Creating Green Communities</i>	Actively renovate and enhance community infrastructure such as water supply, drainage, power supply, fire protection, and household waste sorting by combining urban renewal and upgrading of existing housing
March 2021	The State Council	<i>2021 State Council Government Work Report</i>	The government's investment plan for social infrastructure should allocate as much funds as possible towards urgent and difficult issues that benefit the most deeply, widely, and greatly, and focus on improving social and livelihood projects. A total of 53,000 new urban residential buildings and old residential areas should be designed, started, renovated, maintained, and constructed
March 2022	National Development and Reform Commission	<i>Key Tasks for New Urbanization and Urban-rural Integration Development in 2022</i>	Accelerate the renovation of old residential areas in cities and towns, and adapt to local conditions to transform a number of large old historical blocks and urban villages
July 2022	Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development	<i>Notice on Carrying out Urban Physical Examination Work in 2022</i>	Establish a city health examination index system from 8 aspects including ecological livability, health and comfort

comfortable and pleasant urban spatial system could be created.

2.3 Micro level: renewal actions at the community level

(1) Building a “pocket park”. The municipal department has stated that it will do everything possible to provide more and larger high-quality urban “pocket parks” and ecological public activity spaces for the daily lives of urban residents. It will integrate urban and rural ecological space resources with high-quality urban and public service living spaces, thereby promoting the rapid development of high-quality urban living ecology, and enabling urban and rural residents to enjoy a livable and comfortable life.

(2) Rectifying the urban environment. The relevant departments also need to analyze and clarify the need to fill in the shortcomings in urban regional health construction in the ecological spatial pattern of urban living in specific regions. For example, it should strengthen the special renovation plan for the living environment in important areas such as urban and rural streets and alleys, and urban-rural integration zones, and improve the level of public health environment. It should strengthen the investigation of urban hardware facilities and security risks, and effectively prevent and eliminate major security risks in various commercial service network facilities.

3 Thoughts on urban renewal actions

3.1 Respecting nature

Relevant departments should adhere to stand at the era height of harmonious interaction, coexistence, and unity between urban culture and social natural civilization, to design, plan, and guide urban development. This is actually an important internal objective requirement for promoting the high-quality and harmonious development process of cities in the new era. The relevant departments should first stand at a scientific height of maintaining the harmonious coexistence and symbiosis between humans and the natural ecology of society, and design and plan to guide urban development. This is also an objective internal development requirement to adapt to the high-quality coordinated develop-

ment strategy of cities in the new era.

Good urban renewal can definitely stimulate the self growth and self repair ability of cities, just like living organisms. Healthy cities should have the ability to “self heal” and “grow”. Urban renewal should conform to the natural development laws and have good urban resilience.

3.2 Based on local realities

Every city needs to objectively analyze the problems in its development, recognize the development stage it is in, meet the people’s demand for high-quality urban space, and plan and build a modern city that truly meets the people’s needs for a better life^[6]. As a fundamental task, “urban physical examination” can help identify and address the problems and shortcomings in urban development, and promote the high-quality development of urban living environment.

The economic, social, and cultural conditions vary greatly in each place, so it is necessary to comprehensively understand the actual situation of the place before carrying out urban renewal. Only by starting from reality can it accurately carry out urban renewal actions in local areas and improve people’s happiness index.

With the development of urbanization across China entering a new stage of comprehensive and high-quality urban-rural development, preserving China’s historical and cultural memory, strengthening cultural confidence, building a socialist cultural power, enhancing socialist patriotism, and enabling future generations to always remember traditional nostalgia have become the most important guidance for promoting the transformation and development of modern urban construction in the new development era.

3.3 Emphasizing overall planning

Urban renewal shapes high-quality urban spaces, while also promoting the construction of resilient cities, healthy cities, low-carbon cities, and green cities.

For cities, urban renewal is not only about creating a livable urban space, but also about enriching the “connotation” of urban space^[7]. A green and healthy space must have industries and vitality. Urban space is not only a “space”, but also a “productivity”. Resilient urban space

has the ability to defend, resist, and repair in the face of natural disaster risks, which is conducive to the sustainable development of space and the creation of high-quality spaces.

3.4 Emphasis on implementation

The experimental projects of urban renewal action will gradually take the lead in the future. When some work experience is accumulated, it will gradually form an innovative path framework and ideological approach for the research and practice of national urban renewal action that can be referenced, demonstrated and promoted^[8].

Public participation is the core essence of modern urban governance and community governance. Relevant departments must vigorously promote and practice “public participatory planning” and “democratic participation”, actively promote work such as “community co-governance” and “joint participation”.

References

- [1] Chen, Y. (2023). Thoughts on urban renewal action under policy guidance. *Real Estate World*, (5), 54-57.
- [2] Liu, C., Dai, Y. Y. (2023). Reflection and exploration on implementing urban renewal action. *Beijing Planning Review*, (2), 130-132.
- [3] Yan, S. X., Wan, Z. Y. & Li, J. N. (2023). Urban renewal action: Connotation, logic, and systematic framework. *Urban Planning Forum*, (1), 62-68.
- [4] Wang, K. (2023). Implement urban renewal action to create high-quality space. *China Ancient City*, 37(1), 3-9.
- [5] Zhou, L., Ding, Z. G. (2022). Thoughts on urban regeneration action to meet the real social needs. *City Planning Review*, 46(10), 39-45.
- [6] You, H., Wang, C. L. & Chen, S. J. et al. (2022). Institutional challenge and optimization strategy of urban regeneration in Beijing. *Planners*, 38(9), 22-30.
- [7] Wang, F. H., Yang, J. Q. & Wang, S. F. et al. (2022). How to understand promoting the urban renewal action. *City Planning Review*, 46(2), 20-24.
- [8] Wang, M. H. (2021). Implement urban renewal actions. *Urban Development*, (17), 1.