

# Regeneration of Dong Men Market in the Old Hsinchu City through Activity-Based Learning and “Local Linking”

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## Abstract

Old cities tend to deteriorate and face several urban issues over time upon which their former value depreciates, resulting in a decline in patrons. This was the case with Dong Men Market in Hsinchu, Taiwan, which people seldom visit and support as they formerly did. This occurrence is due to rapid global development and rising competition between modern establishments and old existing ones. In response to this, the Ministry of Education of Taiwan introduced University Social Responsibility (USR) to solve community issues with through the concept of “local linking.” USR aims to provide a solution through collaboration between several stakeholders such as store owners, university students, professors, and field experts with assistance from the local government. The program also encourages activity-based learning in students and learning institutions to help invigorate old cities by addressing their economic, environmental, and social challenges. Several methods and stages which includes actual interviews of store owners, seminars, on-site meetings, and renovations were done to achieve the desired outcome within a year.

These resulted in people getting their interest back in the market. The USR also paved the way for opportunities for students to learn from their on-site field experiences while contributing to the city's betterment and beautification.

**Keywords**

University Social Responsibility; Activity-based Learning; Social Practice Activity

## Introduction

### *Origin and purpose*

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of China (Taiwan) launched the University Social Responsibility (USR) practice in 2017. Its purpose is to align universities with the future development directions of higher education with the aim of fostering greater diversity and cultivating high-quality talents through activity-based and participatory learning. Universities are encouraged to serve as basic academic providers that enhance cultural awareness, aid in serving society, and support social development. As of this writing, Taiwan's enrolled college student population is approximately 1.23 million, a significant productive force to facilitate and promulgate sustainable local development through USR projects (MOE-Taiwan 1). The following projects are expected:

1. To encourage universities to meet their social responsibilities by strengthening local connections and cooperation between universities and regional urban and rural development.
2. To motivate regional progress and improvement by implementing interdepartmental, interdisciplinary, inter-team, and inter-university collaborations for a strong connection and cooperation between several stakeholders such as students, professors, field experts, local government, and local communities.
3. To cultivate the new generation of talents' understanding and application of real-world problem solving and enhance their abilities to develop and carry out practical solutions and actions to augment regional identity and encourage local employment and startups. (MOE-Taiwan 2)



Fig. 1. Actual photos of Dongmen Market (East Gate Market); Dongmen Market façade and main entrance (left), traditional Taiwanese store on the ground floor (upper right), and hallway interior from the third floor (lower right)

The Architectural Design Course of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of Chung Hua University (DAUP-CHU) in Hsinchu, Taiwan, was initiated to cultivate students' basic skills in teamwork, active learning, execution of design, and effective communication. To develop university students' interest in the continuous implementation of social practices, the department established a "USR Design Center" concept. At the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, the Ministry of Education promotes the USR project and hopes to increase student awareness and willingness

to participate in sustainability applications by regenerating devalued establishments and focal points, especially in Old Hsinchu City. Such programs prepare students to slowly get exposed to real-world practices and become the seeds for future sustainable development.

DAUP-CHU oriented and encouraged students to participate in the program as part of their curriculum and semestral output from the bachelor's to the master's degree levels. In 2019, as Taiwan's population noticeably began to decrease and become an aging population, the DAUP-CHU considered making universities a means for disseminating and promulgating sustainable development by letting students and university employees participate in USR programs.

The university has transformed from a talent training center to an application-oriented, service-based knowledge model that engages more open and active participation in public issues. Moreover, USR has paved the way for the regeneration of one of Taiwan's oldest and culture-rich traditional markets, the Dongmen Market (East Gate Market) in Old Hsinchu City. Hsinchu City is one of Taiwan's oldest cities. Its name means "bamboo barrier" as it served as a fortress during the Japanese colonization. With the city's rich culture and bamboo, as a local and renewable material, students and professors use bamboo in making spaces and eco-acupuncture. In the school year of 2018-2019, Dongmen Market was selected by Chung Hua University for its USR project as it serves as one of the anchors of Hsinchu, Taiwan's rich culture and traditions.

The project was successful in assembling a group of teachers and students who are dedicated to social participation and making a positive difference in the community. Engaging in local affairs can indeed be difficult for university teachers and students, especially when they are juggling academic responsibilities. They can, however, make a significant difference in addressing local problems and promoting innovation by working together and pooling their resources.

## Chung Hua University – University Social Responsibility Framework

As mandated, USR should be contributing to the betterment of the social, economic, and environmental aspects of society particularly local communities that have been devalued. Chung Hua University considered targeting this aspect using the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 by the United Nations (UNSDG for 2030) and different approaches and methods to complement the entire program. The university formulated its framework from its outcomes and accomplishments in 2017. Several steps, studies, and methods such as collaborations, the involvement of stakeholders, and courses of action were gradually done to achieve sustainable local community development. These gradual steps left great influence.



Fig. 2. Chung Hua University Framework for USR application and implementation

### *Collaboration*

The USR program encourages and invites local craftsmen or those from different fields of professional expertise to share their skills and knowledge with students according to each stage of the project's requirements. This program intends to create more learning value and provide students with cross-field professional knowledge. Collaboration is one of the main ingredients of many programs' success as societal issues are approached by experts from various fields for a mix of solutions to target specific problems.

### *Cross-disciplinary*

Cross-disciplinary, or interdisciplinary, is applied to relate to more than one branch of knowledge or discipline. Although the Department of Architecture and Planning hosted the USR program, it needed help from other departments such as Media and Marketing, Industrial Design, and Landscape Design. USR should contribute to the betterment of the social, economic, and environmental facets of society, specifically, in this case, local communities that had been devalued.

### *Cross-level*

Most of the students come from different academic levels, from bachelor's degrees to master's degrees. Student participants are expected to have different levels of skills and capabilities that they can apply and incorporate into the programs of USR. Students who participated in the previous school year's USR implementation were college freshmen. They are then expected to lead the new batch of freshmen in the coming years to help them mature and become more aware of their responsibilities as future professionals.

### *Cross-university*

The cross-university thrust aims to build partnerships between educational institutions since no two or more universities offer the same courses, services, and expertise. Through collaboration with another university, each of them will be able to complement the other.

*Complexity*

USR programs aim to promote sustainable local development not by “helping” alone but by “working together” with several stakeholders, which are the local university, local government, and local community, to promote equal participation and avoid the “Dole-out mentality.” It is advised to use “The Advocacy Hourglass” by Generation Citizen to illustrate how students learn and practice. Certain steps are taken by students starting from determining the broad and relevant issues in the community, narrowing it down to one local issue then identifying the root cause of the prevailing problem. From the preliminary steps taken, students will determine the main target, solve the predicament, come into the details and planning, and choose tactics to address and utilize the program.



Fig. 3. The Advocacy Hourglass by Generation Citizen, United States of America

The project adopted a “bottom-up” development strategy, which emphasizes the perspectives of the people and businesses in the community. By starting with soft activities in the Dongmen Market and promoting the transformation of the physical environment, it was able to build momentum



and make visible progress in revitalizing the area. It is encouraging to see continued efforts in the larger Old Hsinchu City area.

Taking a people-centered approach to development can help build trust and engagement within the community which can, in turn, create a more supportive environment for cooperation with the local government. By demonstrating the positive impact of the project and building relationships with local stakeholders, such an initiative can pave the way for more effective collaboration with the government in the future.

### *Local university*

Universities are expected to be the most involved in carrying out programs starting from planning to implementing the USR. While students are taught knowledge in the four corners of a room, they are tasked to finally apply it in real life through engagement in USR programs. Here they experience problem-based and activity-based learning.

As students, professors, and other employees from the university start to engage with other stakeholders like the local government and community, they gradually (and sometimes instinctively) learn how to value the existing culture present on the site. Individuals from the university are not only able to apply their knowledge to actual practice; they are also able to impart knowledge to the community. The lesson from the activity also benefits them, which makes it a win-win situation.

To support students in this process, society and school teachers must provide appropriate companionship and guidance. These include providing mentorship, resources, and opportunities for students to apply their skills and knowledge in real-world settings. They also mean encouraging students to be proactive in identifying and addressing social issues and providing them with the tools and resources they need to make a meaningful impact.

Since the USR began in 2017, the outcomes have varied depending on the level of students involved in a certain activity. Overall, the University Social Responsibility Program represents an important evolution of the role of universities in society. By promoting social responsibility and engagement, universities can serve as vital resources for communities and

provide students with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in an ever-changing world.

### *Local government unit*

In this study, the local government is involved in the USR program. The university has to present its proposals to the local government since it will be providing the budget for project executions. It is important to recognize that such ambitious goals require effective communication and collaboration with the local government, as well as a sound cooperation framework to ensure that work is promoted smoothly. Administrative operations and regulations in the city can pose obstacles to promoting local affairs, and it is important to have realistic expectations about the timeline for achieving goals. It is also crucial to have a long-term perspective and to work closely with the local government to understand their priorities and how to align them with the goals of the project.

Such proposals must be able to navigate these challenges and continue to make progress in promoting local improvement and innovation. By working collaboratively with the local government and taking a patient and strategic approach, a project can have a significant impact on the community over the long term.

### *Local community*

The local community, the foremost beneficiary of USR programs, is a significant participant. It holds the key for the students and field experts to determine the existing issues and predicaments to be addressed by the USR program.

In this study, Dongmen Market, also known as Hsinchu Market, built by the local gentry in Hsinchu, Taiwan in 1900, was the beneficiary of proposed projects for their regeneration. It was the city's largest public market at the time, with a two-story appearance. However, after being damaged by Allied bombing during World War II, the market was repaired and rebuilt in 1977, becoming Taiwan's first concrete market. It also housed the world's first electric escalator made of brand-new bamboo.



Fig. 4. Dongmen market plan layout, scaled model showing façade and interior plan layout, traditional stores within the market, converted CO-UP studio in the market's third-floor

It is a traditional market promoting and selling locally made products. The ground floor of the market comprises wet and dry goods, rice noodle shops, clothes stores, slipper shops, and restaurants. The second floor is composed of workshops, antique stores, studios, massage and wellness stalls, parlors, and other food and beverages. The rise of new business districts caused the number of shops in Dongmen Market to decline over time, with only a few remaining on the first floor. Some stores even closed and were replaced with a mix of residential and commercial spaces.

However, the Hsinchu City Government has actively promoted market revitalization in recent years. This initiative has attracted local young entrepreneurs to start businesses with low rents, bringing new life to an old market. Dongmen Market's revitalization has made it a popular destination for foreign visitors to Hsinchu due to its unique history, architecture, and charm.

### *Courses of action*

The theories and concepts adopted for this study considered the principles for “Social Innovation.” Social Innovations are activities and services that may be useful solutions to social needs better than current tactics. They are well-founded, well-organized techniques and are directed towards sustainability (James, Deiglmeier, and Dale; Mulgan 146). Courses of action perform a critical role within the program as they determine the effectiveness and success of the USR within a designated period and allotted budget.

### *Public space and eco-acupuncture*

Eco-acupuncture is several small interventions that should be “Permissible, Desirable, and Possible” or PDP. Eco-acupuncture happens with collaborations between academic researchers, professional designers, design masters students, local government, businesses, and the local community. Herein, stakeholders get involved in multi-disciplinary research into an evolving “think-tank” of academics and professionals who engage with the public. Eco-acupuncture consists of “niche” interventions that may serve as tangible demonstrations meant for the general public’s awareness and appreciation. These are tools to activate social actions from the general public as interventions serve as visually communicated ideas and a reminder that everyone has something to share and has to be involved. The logic of thinking “eco” is essentially focused on reducing consumables’ lifecycle to minimize their environmental impact. While most people think social innovations like these are unnecessary and “time-budget consuming,” the fact is more significant risks and irreversible circumstances can still happen if no action is taken. Along with the risk, the effects can be more costly to deal with due to procrastination. Getting the public aware of the advantages they can get from the program is a way to attract their support for ecological changes.

“Public Space Acupuncture” is one of the methods used in social innovation where public space activation and urban life revitalization are the primary purposes. This can be done using alternative urban approaches

based on catalytic interpolations. Several examples of these are Grassscapes from Antwerp, Belgium, the “This is not a vacant lot” project in Saragossa, Spain, and Velluters citizens’ strategy in vacant lots from Valencia, Spain.

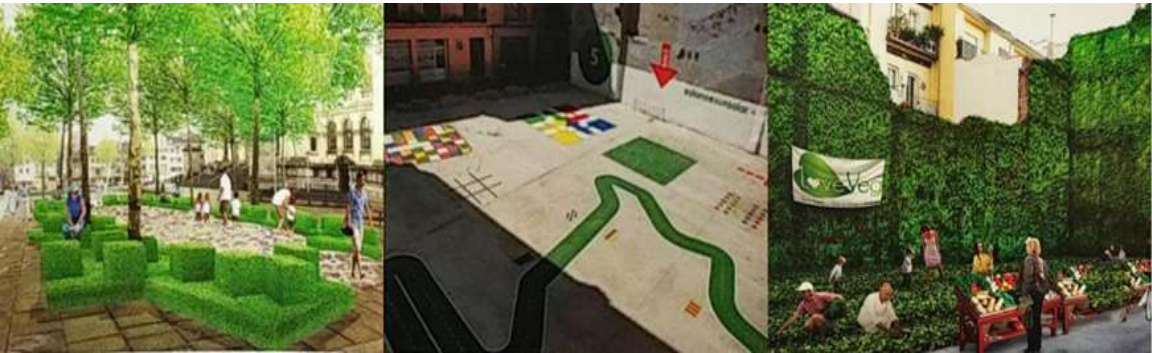


Fig. 5. Grassscapes; “This is not a vacant lot”; and Velluters citizens’ strategy

### *Placemaking*

One of USR’s principal goals is to enrich and promote local culture. Thus, ethnography is relevant to placemaking as it requires in-depth research and knowledge of a place’s existing culture and history to achieve uniqueness and fit in effectiveness. Visual ethnography is comprised of techniques that involve audio-visual media and procedures during its processes of research, analysis, and depiction (Pink 7). Through audio-visual media, the multi-sensorial experiences can stimulate participants’ interest and create a fresher and richer impression of the local context. It is essential to give due significance to the visual images that could further encourage the imagination of other people’s worlds. It incorporates not only the physical features but the emotional facets as well. Video tours, historical and contemporary photos, town festivals, cultural programs, and leaflet maps are some of the ways to incorporate and strengthen the foundation of placemaking to raise civic awareness and give new meaning to a specific used-to-be meaningless place. Currently, most people concentrate on branding a place to be in line with

globalization, which eventually causes the degradation of the place's original culture. With these attempts, ordinary people and cultural neighborhoods have been set aside. Placemaking is everyone's job - to collaborate and work together to start with simple things that significantly impact sustainable local development (Friedmann 149).

### *Participatory teaching, learning, and design*

Since USR intensively encourages the importance of collaborations, participation is not only relevant but also compulsory. Participatory Design builds into its methodology support for participation, workplace democracy, and fairness. It develops a set of techniques to help equalize power among the stakeholders during the design process, ensuring everyone has equal participation (Borning et al. 3). On the other hand, participatory teaching and learning greatly enhance the student's learning process through active participation and encourage the learning experience systematically (Fernando and Marikar 121). In USR, all stakeholders, especially the students, learn from each other in different ways and levels as they work together towards one goal and put into action whatever they have learned academically.

### *Activity-based learning (ABL)*

Activity-based learning puts students directly in the experience of learning more than a research subject, which tends to be dull and dry (Fallon, Walsh, and Prendergast 28). Using the ABL approach makes learning exciting and meaningful because of tangible experiences that make research easier to remember. In ABL, students learn as they complete tasks, critique each other's outputs, and receive constructive criticism for the improvement of programs and future considerations.

### *Problem-based learning (PBL)*

Knowledge is not transferred but rather a learner makes an effort to master it from prior knowledge and experiences. Problem-based learning is an approach to learning and teaching where students discuss problems in small groups (6 to 10 students) under a tutor's guidance (Schmidt 427). With

that, students are trained to deal with problems, which then activates their available prior knowledge and encourages discussion without reference. Group discussion and elaboration would be the next step after activating the prior knowledge of students. Very much like USR, PBL starts with a question or issue as a learning or program goal and does not limit the students' learning as they acquire new information and understanding from each other during discussions. It has been proven in many studies that PBL has greater chances than traditional lectures for students to retain long-term memory and activates the initiative to enhance problem-solving skills. Problem-based learning was designed to show students the relevance of a subject matter that gives them the initiative to learn since they realize they could use it for future practical applications (Loyens and Paas 3; Yew and Goh 75-79; Yuruker 54-55). Self-Directed Learning (SDL) involves the student's preparedness to engage in learning activities and motivates self-study on students. For USR preparation, PBL and SDL of participants play a vital role in finishing planned programs with quality in a timely manner.



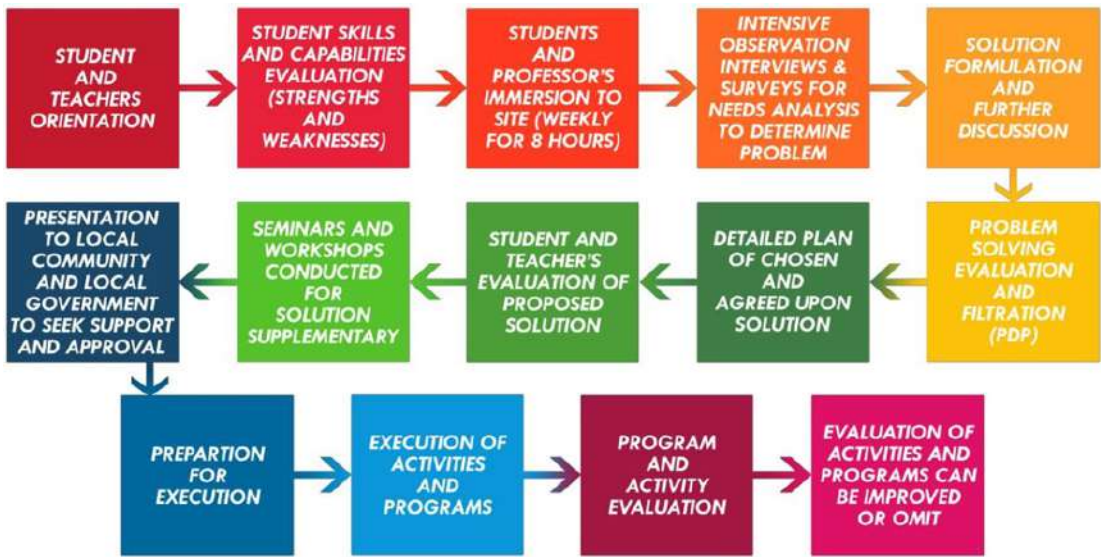


Fig. 6. Chung Hua University – Department of Architecture and Urban Planning hosted the USR program with these steps

### *USR application in Dongmen Market's regeneration*

Taking a reflective approach to the development process and recognizing that there may be room for improvement in terms of the pace and depth of the work can help actualize the proposed regeneration. While there may be pressure to implement plans quickly, taking the time to conduct thorough field investigations and analysis and building strong relationships with local stakeholders can create a solid foundation for long-term development.

Indeed, it is important to acknowledge the efforts and achievements that have been made through the University Social Responsibility Program. The opportunity for different universities and professional fields to exchange and cooperate is a valuable experience that can drive learning and knowledge acquisition through actual social participation. By stepping out of their comfort zones and embracing the spirit of social participation, students can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing their



communities. Their efforts and contributions should be highly affirmed, regardless of the specific outcomes produced.

*Responsibility distribution and organization of stakeholders' interactions*

“Architecture Design” is a compulsory course every semester in the Department of Architecture. The traditional architecture department’s curriculum arrangement for the freshman design class focuses on cultivating the basic concepts of simple architectural aesthetics and spatial cognition, learning the relationship between three-dimensional definitions, and spatial construction, and implementing the combination of experience and hands-on work. In USR, freshmen are guided to study objects’ structure and behavior to gain knowledge and understanding between material properties and processing operations in an actual site.

The user-oriented design thinking mode is also the training focus of the fourth-grade design course. Design is no longer a product of a pure designer alone but a plan that best meets user needs. Students take the initiative to enter the site, investigate its needs, and assist in solving problems from the initial planning and improvement of design proposals to implementing the practice. Additionally, students learn practical operations that cannot be obtained in school. In the initial planning, the team proposes a preliminary improvement design for the buildings on the site, discusses, and communicates closely with the users on the building’s space, function, and façade, to understand the owner’s expectations and reachable goals as well as to start planning specific implementation projects. In the later period, field residence time increases to cultivate students’ ability to face real owners and solve actual problems. In the course, through communication with the owner and field observation, several reconstruction plans for the idle spaces are proposed, and the construction of the substantial space is executed through the guidance of the field professionals and teachers.



**Fig. 7. Chung Hua University – Department of Architecture and Urban Planning master’s students during planning in the actual site (Dongmen Market’s third floor), bachelor’s students renovating and enlightening the escalator**

The lecturer divides the work according to the background of the students. The graduate students with diverse members are responsible for administrative tasks. They carefully consider the project area and use the resident office in Dongmen Market as the working space for planning and implementation. There are cross-grade architectural design courses and cross-field sharing with independently developed implementations of certain activities mentioned in this study under program outcomes. Cross-grade participation pertains to having done activities by students from varying levels, even from bachelor’s degree up to master’s degree whereas cross-field refers to having activities done by students and professionals from different departments, colleges, and allied professionals such as from Architecture, Interior Design, Industrial Design, Urban Planning and the like. These methods continuously guide students’ ongoing immersion and participation in the course without losing interest as they get to experience diversified exposure, awareness, and involvement while actively participating in such undertakings.

Consequently, the cross-grade and cross-field interactions enhanced the skills and capabilities of each participant and helped them reach practical solutions.

### *Class office (CO-UP Studio) basic concepts*

A partnership between working teams is established to allow cross-learning from each other during the social practice project. Therefore, “CO-UP Studio” was used as the communication hub and communication platform for each project, grade, team, and community. This CO-UP includes integrated industry, local government, school, civil cross-sectoral issues, and linked “class studios” to coordinate functions, increase social practice, and promote students’ vernacular creation for local promotion. In the “class firm,” the main promotion work is as follows: internally, it includes playing cross-faculty in universities to find students suitable for training in the firm, introducing cross-disciplinary teachers, arranging professional training courses, and establishing a complete team. The most significant difference with industry firms lies in giving the team more resources and time for team training, combination, and running-in. Industry firms also allow teachers as pilots to intervene in the direction of the team promptly; externally, professional teams are willing to stay in the field to deeply understand the needs of the people.

The USR’s plan is used for learning exchanges with architectural design courses. The plan is implemented in a public space/urban/local direction and is close to social needs. By participating in USR, the university establishes a “class studio / CO-UP studio” to introduce cross-school/sector planning and cross-disciplinary implementation and recruited students from the school of architecture to enter the execution phase under professional guidance teachers. In the course study, class studios look for opportunities where students can suitably practice what they learned in their specific discipline. The teams communicate and use exchange opportunities to establish a platform mechanism for multi-directional communication. In the initial stage of the plan, the team enters the site, become close to the residents, and start caring for local needs. Field partnerships can also be slowly established with the local people. By assisting in the overall planning of existing space transformation of idle industries, sustainable local creation and eventual regional innovation of the USR social practice can be achieved.

### *Course features and specific implementation content*

The USR Design Center of the Department of Architecture executes its plan in a “project mode,” following the core training focus of each grade of the architectural design course and the background and level of students. Participants work like they are in a professional firm where they formulate work items, schedule work, establish organizational structures for members, and perform work divisions.

In addition to establishing a project team internally, it also arranges relevant courses and workshops for non-architectural professional skills. These include the “bamboo weaving workshop” that promotes traditional local craftsmanship, a Dynamic Video Recording Course, a Story Integration and Media Marketing Workshop, a Service Design Workshop on social field practice, Local Creative Students’ Special Topics currently facing cities in Taiwan, and other seminar-type activities. They also ensure the employability of students after graduation by cultivating their abilities for them to enter the workplace early.

### *Hsinchu Old Town Project Design Course Planning*

The design course for the Old Town in Hsinchu City is the implementation of the “Sustainable City Creation Plan for Local Lives” hosted by the Department of Architecture of Chung Hua University and the Institute of Architecture of Jiaotong University. The goal of the plan is to help with local care. Hsinchu City faces the challenge of revitalizing the old city and hopes to understand the needs and experiences of the local people. Through professors who teach and lead students to apply the various course outcomes into the experimental field, urban regeneration, and activation result in creative actions and publicity. With the same goals in mind, the USR firm recruits students who are interested in this engagement across grades. These students cooperate with the teaching core of each grade’s architectural design courses, organize a team to execute the project, enter the project site, and use production, sales, people, and undertake development. The strategic framework of financial management and the analysis of pros

and cons are used to carry out field observation, problem definition, and potential and opportunity discovery. The project recruits freshmen, fourth-year students with a full three-year architectural design training, and students of architectural design, urban planning, industrial design, interior design (industry), art education (industry), physical education (industry) and other disciplines.

### *USR program outcomes*

The expected outcomes from the Ministry of Education of Taiwan are as follows:

1. Encourage teachers and students to engage in social innovation practices by assisting in solving regional problems with humanistic concerns.
2. Promote regional prosperity and development through a focus on local needs to develop regional future visions.
3. Assist in urban and rural education development by actively integrating regional university resources.
4. Enhance universities' regional contributions and care through promoting talent cultivation and employment in terms of local industry and cultural development. (MOE-Taiwan 3)

### *Course outcomes for service planning and design of existing urban space communication marketing programs*

1. Establishing and operating social media

Students enter the Dongmen Market regularly weekly, immersing with people and things in the market through interviews and surveys, records, and retelling of the market story with the establishment and utilization of social media. The institute's course is to establish a social media platform to disseminate and market the space and activities practiced by other project members. At the same time, training courses (such as service accounting workshops), curatorial activities, keynote speeches, symposiums, and international forums are planned. Cooperating with the planning field also assists the team in performing the integration of local network resources

and shares the design thinking mode of being in harmony with users and integrating the base field.

## 2. Reconstruction of escalator public space

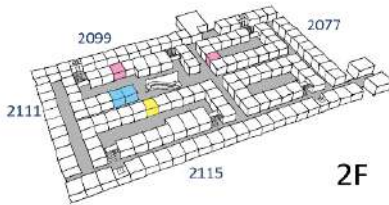
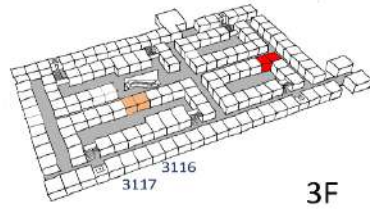
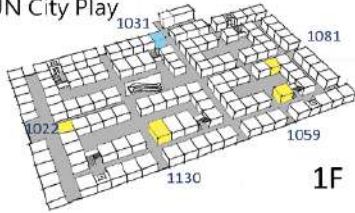
Dongmen Market was the largest market in Taiwan forty years ago. It also has the first escalator in the new “Bamboo City.” However, due to years of disrepair, only the staircase function is left. It is the main vertical moving line in the entire building. The arrangement of the environmental space around the escalator is the beginning. Through the transformation of the shared space with the stores, proponents of the project are encouraged to participate in the improvement of the environment, unite the market stores, and create an index market environment to attract foreign consumers.

### *Store experience design*

Through the history of Dongmen Market and the local people, the resident office invited local stores and residents to use games to tell stories and use experience and participation to allow people to experience interaction, sharing, and communion to understand the market together. With the design of the event, the public’s sense of identity with Hsinchu City is united, and the value of USR is further reflected. The series of activities includes “Hsinchu FUN City Play- Fighting Stories.” Dongmen Market is a place with rich historical resources. Through games and interaction with shopkeepers and local workers, residents and foreigners can understand the experience and background of the place by. Another activity aims to promote the old bamboo weaving technology of Hsinchu by using bamboo to form a lampshade and making the lampshade under the escalator. In addition, the “FUN Succulent” is conducted in cooperation with the third-floor new venture store for DIY planting activities. These endeavors bring a new breath of life to the Dongmen Market.



FUN City Play



Game time: 2 hours

Number of players: up to 10 people, in groups of 2

Players must follow the . Complete the store missions on the map in the order above, and you can get a stamp after completing the mission. You can collect 4 different types of stamps within the time limit, and you win.

Fig. 8. Course outcome invitation cards and actual implementation of activities, bamboo lamp making, DIY planting, and Amazing Race through different shops within the market

*Course outcomes for event planning – urban space planning, design, and construction*

1. Cross-sector, cross-industry professional course learning activities

The advantage of combining the structure of a similar firm with USR planning and architectural design courses lies in the effective sharing of resources. Problems in the real field require more knowledge and skills from students. Activities are vehicles for teaching and learning. It plays an integrated role in response to field problems, planning courses, and activities,

providing students with a more comprehensive cross-field competence. At the same time, it strengthens students' learning motivation and identification with the plan goals in a variety of learning methods.

## 2. Urban-scale space construction

According to the project's goals, the old city, Hsinchu, will be "activated" with visible changes in the appearance of a pedestrianized Bamboo City. The field emphasizes the construction of the main axis with "Hsinchu's wind (yang) + Longenzhen's water (flow) + base field (dome)." Through the medium of bamboo, a dome—"yangliu" or a tension curve is created by the toughness of bamboo itself. The activity increases how people imagine this urban space while thinking about the possibility of bamboo construction. Following the core teaching goals of the freshman design course, the activity is a challenge to harness bamboo's material characteristics. In the process, the team tests the whole bamboo's toughness (laurel bamboo) and the tension of its structure. The bamboo components are arranged to gather points of pedestrian paths between Longenzhen, Central Park, and Dongda Road, breaking the original stiff moving line and letting the line flow. Surrounded by curves, the surrounding fields are connected in series; the bamboo bow's tension curve cooperates with the horizontal bamboo weaving to visually shape the rhythmic and flowing urban public space.

## 3. Community participation in urban space construction design

Combined with the concept of co-construction of community and education, students take this opportunity to experience the interactive relationship between an art installation and the old city residents and explain the residents' proposed ideas. Installation art is a practice for designers to construct aesthetics and have a dialogue with environmental users. It also considers safety and subsequent use and maintenance. Through formulated design lessons together with varying professional and higher-year students, even freshman students are exposed to the design of communities and activities.





**Fig. 9.** The actual implementation of bamboo structures as part of course outcomes under the USR program for place-making

It is worth noting that the bamboo structure was created as a temporary structure for a city festival in Hsinchu to increase citizen participation in city activities and raise awareness of different city spaces. Given Hsinchu’s reputation for strong winds, it stands to reason that the primary concern in designing the bamboo structure is structural strength and wind protection, rather than fire protection. Creative solutions being used to increase community engagement and awareness in the city is spectacular.

*Course outcomes for space implementation – transformation of existing shop spaces*

Taking the resident office in Dongmen Market as the working space, the team inspected the place to inventory market stores. The team surveyed and analyzed the stores’ needs following the production, sales, human, and financial strategy structure of similar firms expected to assist in solving the problem. After entering the field for more than a month of market cultural history inventory, students visited each store one by one. In addition to feeling that they were given the responsibility for the store’s needs, students also learned about practical operations that are not taught in school.

*Reconstruction of existing store space in the market*

After the overall inventory adjustment, the team grouped and proposed different retrofit solutions for the existing store space of the two markets —

Hao Porridge Station and Zero Hot Press Toast. The student team of “Good Congee Stack” worked on-site and repainted and installed the facade grille on the site. The student team of “Zero Hot Press Toast” included the MENU installation, the floor renovation, and the glass wall demolition in their construction. The team also did glass wall structure reinforcement, store wall paints stucco, and folding window placement. There were new lighting installations and menu designs that hung on the porridge stack logo. After entering the space, one can feel the broad and bright market pattern. The result of the reuse of materials, repainting the earth-colored wall, and the yellow light design narrow the distance between the shop owner and the customer, creating a space with the warm aroma of fragrant toast, which encourages people to stay and converge in this place.



Fig. 10. The actual implementation of Dongmen Market’s chosen store renovation

### Conclusion and recommendation

According to the driving experience of the USR curriculum, it is believed that the field design and practical operation of architectural design courses can gradually train students to experience practical problem-solving. In the hope that the course can train college students interested in the continuous implementation of social practice, the department established a USR design

office. Should the USR plan of the Ministry of Education grow and continue to operate inter-school or interdisciplinary programs, the integration of resources and flexible learning of campus education organizations may have more room for improvement in the future.

The University Social Responsibility Program can break through the limitations of the traditional education system and provide students with valuable real-world experience and insights. By interacting with residents and communities in the field, students can gain a deeper understanding of the environment and problems they may face in the future, as well as receive multi-professional inspiration.

Furthermore, the program can help students develop important skills such as collaboration, communication, and problem-solving, which are essential for success in the digital age. It also promotes more effective and efficient integration of educational resources, enabling students to explore independent learning goals that are more meaningful and relevant to their future careers and aspirations.

The USR program courses entering the community field have enlivened the teachers' and students' knowledge of professional architectural education. They have given some inspiration to the next generation of professional architectural learning. Hence, there is a need to integrate education resources more closely, more comprehensively, and more efficiently, and let students step out of their academic comfort zone to explore more realistic and meaningful autonomous learning goals. Moreover, higher education serves as a core element of service and knowledge dissemination and becomes the life wisdom of the field promoters. After participating in the USR practice, the university helps local communities move towards more diverse development through social practice issues.

The university has also become a place of hope. Its key elements include talent cultivation, regional connection, social innovation, local retention talents, and teacher and student executive offices. It invites the local government, local people, industry, and other civic organizations to participate in design cases, plan cases undertaken by the studio, and jointly

find the most suitable local solution while providing local opportunities for sustainable social development.

The project has used the power of the university to solve local problems and improve the community. Tangible change to the local area has been achieved through visible results in a short planning period. This study hopes the project continues to have a positive impact and inspires others to become involved in community service.

Every region has its unique development context and challenges, which require tailored and creative solutions. The University Social Responsibility Program can play a critical role in addressing these challenges, as it brings together the expertise of universities, the needs of the community, and the motivation of students to create innovative and sustainable solutions.

By sharing experiences and insights, universities, teachers, students, and other stakeholders can inspire and trigger new ideas for other places and communities facing similar challenges. This can lead to a more dynamic and collaborative approach to regional revitalization and development, where universities can catalyze positive change and social impact.

The USR program in Hsinchu, Taiwan is an excellent example of how universities can actively participate in addressing community issues and promoting sustainable development. By linking local stakeholders and involving university students and experts, the program was able to revitalize the Dong Men Market and bring back the community's interest in the area. This program's success is due to its collaborative approach, which prioritizes communication, consultation, and cooperation with all parties involved.

Additionally, the program's focus on activity-based learning provided students with an opportunity to gain practical field experience while contributing to the community's betterment. This type of learning promotes a holistic and hands-on approach to education, creating a thoughtful understanding of social responsibility and sustainable development.

Overall, the Hsinchu Dong Men Market USR program serves as an inspiration for other universities and communities to engage in similar initiatives, promoting cooperation and partnership towards sustainable and inclusive development.

To conclude, there is neither a single method nor a template for a place's development and regeneration. These processes weigh in many variables and considerations. But it is always and equally important to bear in mind the identity and history of each place. It is also evident that each stakeholder, especially the government and the local initiatives, has a critical role as each determines the project's success.

A place cannot only be defined as a physical area confined by walls and barriers. It also stands for the feelings of attachment and belonging that users experience in that place that shape their image and character. USR is never the same for every project since its approaches and methods vary as cultures and historical backgrounds differ from one place to another. On the brighter side, USR is found to be influential in its movement. It encourages aspirants and professionals to collaborate with local government and local communities to achieve sustainable development in places and countries in the future.

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