

Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) Review Gist of Envisioning Stage Focus Group Discussion

Date: 30 October 2008 (Thursday)
Time: 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Venue: 1107, 11/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Scout Path, Austin Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon
Group: Affected Groups — Property owners and tenants
No. of participants: 23 (3 observers)

The representative of A-World Consulting Ltd. briefly introduced the background of URS Review. Mr. Lee Kam-hung, the facilitator, invited participants to express their opinions. Key points were as follows:

1 Speeding up redevelopment

- 1.1 Old buildings of over 40 or even 60 years old should be demolished and rebuilt as soon as possible so as not to affect the cityscape.
- 1.2 The current conditions of some relatively old buildings were very poor with problems like water leakage. These old buildings should be redeveloped as soon as possible so that the residents would not suffer.
- 1.3 In some districts, the works did not start even after 7 to 8 years from the date of announcement of redevelopment. As the conditions of the buildings were already very poor, redevelopment works should be carried out as soon as possible.
- 1.4 The slow redevelopment progress at present might be related to policies and procedures. It was suggested that more projects should be publicized and that the concerned buildings could be acquired for redevelopment with the agreement of over 80% of the local residents.
- 1.5 Some old buildings were left unoccupied for long periods, resulting in serious problems on hygiene and public order. These buildings should be rebuilt as soon as possible.
- 1.6 If redevelopment could not be speeded up, the affected tenants of the ground floor shops should be given subsidies to rent other places to continue their business.

2 Priorities and principles of redevelopment

- 2.1 Urban renewal should have a comprehensive planning on the renewal and development of the whole district. The old and dilapidated buildings

remained next to the new buildings should be avoided.

- 2.2 The current 'Urban Renewal Strategy' listed 9 target areas. Some participants worried that redevelopment works falling outside the target areas would never be commenced.
- 2.3 The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) should enhance efficiency and adopt a two-pronged approach, i.e. to carry out building maintenance works pending the actual implementation of the redevelopment works, thus improving the residents' living standard.
- 2.4 URA should not carry out assets vetting in assisting property owners in the building maintenance works.
- 2.5 At present, it was difficult to recover certain building maintenance costs. URA should assist in recovering the related costs from individual owners.
- 2.6 Some residents doubted and felt unfair about URA's acquisition standard and priorities. Some considered that the current acquisition hinged on the coordination with other large-scale infrastructure (such as MTR construction works). Some participants indicated that consideration of renewal priority should be given to: (1) the building age (Buildings aged over 50 years should be given the priority); (2) the hygienic condition; (3) coordination with the overall district planning; and (4) the cost effectiveness of renewal projects.

3 **Compensation**

- 3.1 The amount of compensation arising from redevelopment projects should be calculated based on a fair set of criteria.
- 3.2 Property owners needed not only to purchase the property, but also to pay for the building maintenance. Therefore, they should receive more compensation than tenants.
- 3.3 The current calculation method of compensation, which was based on "7-year building age", was unreasonable. Since the percentage of usable floor area in old buildings is rather high, it would not be adequate if the amount of compensation only equalled to the value of the an existing 7-year old flat of similar size.
- 3.4 Compensation should be calculated based on the saleable area of a flat supposed to be resettled, as the percentage of usable floor area in the relatively new buildings was not high.
- 3.5 "Flat-for-flat" exchange arrangement should be considered to replace cash compensation in compensating the affected residents with flats of similar floor areas in the district.

4 Preserve history, promote greenery, reduce buildings with wall effect

- 4.1 The construction of buildings with wall effect should be avoided in urban planning in order to maintain the quality of life of the local residents.
- 4.2 Some old buildings, for example, Nga Tsin Wai village, had the history of more than a hundred years. URA should emphasize conservation and consult local residents on the preservation of these historical buildings.
- 4.3 The park facilities were too scarce in many old areas. URA should increase the green area and other public facilities in the district through redevelopment.

5 More consultation in the district

- 5.1 Many local residents hope to have redevelopment instead of rehabilitation. URA should conduct more consultations with the local residents.