Co-creating a Better Living Environment

*Consultancy Services for the
Public Engagement
for the Urban Renewal Strategy Review*

Report for the Envisioning Stage

**A-World Consulting Ltd.
April 2009**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1   In 2001, the Urban Renewal Strategy ("URS") was promulgated subsequent to public consultation. It has since been used as the guiding principles for the work of the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA").

1.1.2   With the community's evolving and changing aspirations, the Secretary for Development ("SDEV") announced, on 17 July 2008, a review to update and align the URS with latest developments. The review, comprising an overseas comparable city policy study and a 3-stage public engagement process, is scheduled over two years. A-World Consulting Limited ("AWC") was appointed consultant for the public engagement in late July 2008.

1.1.3   The exercise is promised as a "very open-minded review…. (with) no pre-determined agenda… no conclusion whatsoever on how we are going to do future urban regeneration"[1] and members of the public are genuinely encouraged to speak up. At the Legislative Council Development Panel meeting on 20 January 2009, the Administration, in the paper on the subject, described the approach adopted as a 'root-and-branch one…. Different aspects of urban regeneration, not limited to the current work of URA, will be examined…. Amendments to the URA Ordinance may also be considered, where necessary.'

1.1.4   The engagement process comprises 3 stages: Envisioning (July 2008 through January 2009), Public Engagement (February through December 2009), and Consensus Building (January through April 2010) Stages.

1.1.5   During the Envisioning Stage, efforts were made to set and prioritise the agenda for the ensuing review process and the range of topics and issues for discussion. Stakeholders who are the most involved, interested and/or affected in/by the urban renewal process together with the general public were invited to take part and voice their views and suggestions.

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[1] "SDEV speaks on Urban Renewal Strategy Review", as per government press release issued on 17 July 2008.

1.1.6   In tandem, the Study on Urban Renewal Policies in Asian Cities for the URS Review ("Policy Study")) by the University of Hong Kong research team was conducted. Inputs therefrom will be taken together with the feedback and views collected during the Envisioning Stage to shape the broad areas and issues for the Public Engagement Stage, which will lead to the Consensus Building Stage culminating in a planned workshop to conclude the URS Review exercise.

1.2   Purpose of Report

This report summarises activities conducted during the Envisioning Stage, the public views received as well as an initial analysis of the views so as to identify the key issues and set the agenda for discussion in the Public Engagement Stage. In so doing we have endeavoured to include all the views collected but, as the engagement process is an ongoing phenomenon, there may always be new views received.   These will be considered in the subsequent, continuous process.

2   Envisioning Stage Programmes and Background of Views Collecting Mechanism

2.1   Preamble

2.1.1   The Envisioning Stage is also the preparatory stage for the robust and extensive engagement process to follow, both in terms of core engagement activities and the associated publicity.   To identify the key issues of concern, a vigorous series of focus group discussions were held.   This was a core activity of the Envisioning Stage.   The other core views-collecting activity was the enhancement of the URS Review website.

2.1.2   As detailed in the Inception Report and subsequent Progress Reports, programmes are divided into standard programmes and innovative programmes for planning and reporting purpose.   The following tables provide, at a glance, information on progress made against various programmes in the Envisioning Stage of the engagement process.

2.2 Programmes

	Initiatives	Contents and remarks
**Standard programmes**	
1	Focus group discussion	(a) A total of 20 focus group discussion sessions were held with the following groups: - Academics and professional groups (Science & Works) – architects, planners, engineers, surveyors, etc. - Academics and professional groups (Arts & Humanity) – social workers, arts and culture sector representatives, historians, etc. - Advocacy groups – policy 'think tanks', green groups, conservation groups and community groups - Business groups – developers, retailers, hawkers, transport operators, etc. - Affected groups – owners and tenants / concern groups - Political groups – District Councils - General public - Professional bodies and organisations relevant to the issue of urban renewal, including URA District Advisory Committees, URA Board of Directors and URS Review Committee the Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA), Hong Kong Housing Authority, Hong Kong Housing Society, Land & Building Advisory Committee and Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (HKGCC). (b) The average number of participants was 15 (including observers). Members of the Steering Committee on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy ("SC") and representatives from DEVB, URA, the Policy Study Consultant and AWC were also present at most of the sessions. Besides invited participants, there were also up to 10 'walk-in' participants who dropped by per session. (c) Mr. Peter Lam and Mr. Lee Kam Hung, media hosts, Mrs. Sandra Mak, CEO of AWC, Mr. Kyran Sze from HKGCC, Mr. Ivan Ho from HKIA, Mr. Yuen Kin-kwok, a senior member of the AWC team with rich media experience, and Dr. Joseph Chan, Professor of the University of Hong Kong, had facilitated the discussions. (d) The gist of each focus group discussion was uploaded to the URS Review website shortly after the session.
2	Website revamp	(a) The URS Review website was revamped to be more attractive and user-friendly. It was launched in December 2008. (b) An e-forum, e-blog and e-questionnaire were developed to provide platforms for members of the public to express views. (c) The public could also find updated information and upcoming activities of the URS Review on the website.

	Initiatives	Contents and remarks
		(d) By end of January 2009, 80 valid views were obtained through the website and were analysed alongside others obtained in focus group meetings or received from other channels.
3	Announcement of Public Interest ("API")	(a) The API was considered an effective means to promote the engagement activities, and was launched in early December 2008 on television and radio.
4	"Models and Challenges of Urban Renewal - Sharing of Asian Experience" seminar	(a) URA organised a one-day seminar on Asian experience on urban renewal on 15 December 2008 to enable overseas experts and practitioners to share views with stakeholders in Hong Kong. The experience of six Asian cities, namely Singapore, Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Shanghai and Guangzhou, was noted by an audience of over 300 people. (b) The views expressed by the participants were recorded as views for consideration in the Envisioning Stage.
5	Overseas study visits	(a) Further to the Policy Study of six Asian cities, a couple of study trips were organised to provide the opportunity for key stakeholder groups to gain up-to-date, first-hand information of selected cities: Tokyo and Shanghai. (b) Thestudy trip to Tokyo was led by Mrs. Carrie Lam, Secretary for Development, from 8 to 11 Feb 2009. The delegation met with and attended lectures by Tokyo Municipal Government officials, academics and other parties who are experienced in urban renewal-related issues. (c) A study trip to Shanghai, led by Mr Barry Cheung, Chairman of Urban Renewal Authority, was conducted from 26 to 28 March 2009. The delegation met with and attended lectures by the Shanghai Government officials, academics and representatives from the commercial sector who are experienced in urban renewal-related issues.
6	Publicity	(a) Press releases were issued to call for participation in innovative programmes such as the Partnering Organisation programme and on the study trip to Tokyo. (b) In relation to the Tokyo study trip and in response to media interests, interviews with SC members were arranged and articles printed. Observations of the Tokyo experience were thus publicised. (c) Columnists have been briefed on another innovative programme - the Idea Shop - as well as the URS Review, riding on the opening of the former on 25 March 2009.

2.2.1 Preparations for the following programmes were undertaken during the Envisioning Stage. These programmes include Partnering Organisation Programme, Idea Shop and radio programme, which are to be launched in the Public Engagement Stage.

2.3 Coordination with the Policy Study Consultant

2.3.1 AWC had been working closely with the DEVB, URA and the Policy Study Consultant to ensure that all views and feedbacks are captured and analysed as appropriate. Regular consultant meetings were held to dovetail observations and progress, and to achieve a holistic consideration and presentation of all learnings and relevant feedback in the design of the Public Engagement Stage activities.

3 Public Views Expressed in the Envisioning Stage

3.1 Background of Views-collecting Mechanism

3.1.1 As mentioned above, views from the public were received via channels including but not limited to the URS Review website, directly observed from focus group discussions and various other public activities, and submissions (by email or otherwise) to DEVB, URA and/or AWC. The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong was commissioned to assist in the collation and analysis of the views collected.

3.1.2 Up to end of the "Envisioning Stage" (January 2009), a total of 149 copies of written comments, views and suggestions were collected from the public. After filtering out duplicate submissions and irrelevant documents[2], 127 copies of views were left for further analysis. Among these written suggestions and views, nearly two-third were submitted through the URS Review website, showing the importance of the on-line platform as an effective and convenient engagement tool. 20 transcripts of the focus group discussions were also included in the analysis.

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[2] Irrelevant documents refer to submissions that lack meaning, or responses that do not contain views or suggestions with regard to urban renewal (e.g., meaningless replies posted onto the website, and inquiries about whether submissions had been received, etc.).

3.2 Overview of Views Collected

3.2.1   In the attached report at Appendix I, various opinions and views collected in the Envisioning Stage are categorised into a classification scheme consisting of eight major issues. This scheme covers all the major opinions collected from the public during the Envisioning Stage of the URS Review. For views that cannot be fitted into this scheme, they are discussed under 'Others'.

3.2.2   As submitted to the SC in January 2009 and shared via the URS Review website, the major issues identified can be briefly described under 9 headings. These issues are summarised as follows:

(a) Vision & Considerations

- Many suggested that the vision of urban renewal depended on the long-term positioning of Hong Kong and should be part of the town planning and economic development strategies. Some suggested that urban renewal should form part of the overall planning of a district, instead of considering urban renewal on a project basis.

- Some expressed more specific concerns about development density, urban design (e.g. building height, local characteristics and public spaces), environmental protection and public transport considerations during the urban regeneration process. Some suggested to conduct more studies on related areas and policies (e.g. local culture, poverty, heritage preservation and the Landlord and Tenant Ordinance) and improve their co-ordination.

- There have been a lot of discussions on the meaning of "people-centred approach", the relation between development and quality of life, and the importance of preserving and revitalising social network, local culture and heritage as well as local economy. Some suggested that improvement of the living conditions of owners and tenants in dilapidated buildings was a welfare issue that should be achieved through social welfare programmes rather than urban redevelopment.

- There were also suggestions to extend urban renewal to cover industrial areas and areas outside the target areas included in the current URS.

(b) Balance & Coordination among 4Rs[3]

- Some called for more emphasis on rehabilitation, preservation and revitalisation to better preserve local character and social network, whilst some supported early redevelopment for buildings with poor safety and environmental hygiene conditions due to poor building management and maintenance.

- Some raised concern about the practicality for URA to undertake 225 projects in 20 years as stated under the current URS, especially under the prevailing self-financing principle.

- Many recommended better co-ordination among the 4Rs (e.g. guidelines on how to decide between redevelopment and rehabilitation).

(c) Role of Stakeholders

- Many emphasized that different stakeholders should play their role in urban renewal. There were diverse views on whether the Government should play a leading role in urban renewal. Some urged the Government to increase investment in public infrastructure (e.g. escalators in Mid-Levels) to encourage organic urban regeneration by the private sector.

- Some suggested that URA should take forward projects independently without cooperating with developers whilst some said that URA was not adequately equipped to implement the other 3Rs besides redevelopment.

- Some suggested a strengthened role of the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) in rehabilitation of buildings, better co-ordination and re-alignment of the urban renewal efforts of URA, HKHS and Buildings Department, and improved collaboration with Hong Kong Housing Authority in rehousing.

- There were also requests for facilitating the role of the private sector in urban redevelopment (e.g. simplifying the requirements for compulsory sale, speeding up the relevant approval procedures, providing concessions in taxation or land premium, or transfer of development rights).

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[3] 4Rs refer to Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, Revitalisation and pReservation.

- There were suggestions to encourage residents to undertake redevelopment by themselves, with assistance from non-government organisations, developers and URA in the form of financial and technical support. Also, there were calls to strengthen the role of owners, such as through owners' participation in redevelopment projects, compulsory maintenance, management and insurance, and compulsory preservation with Government assistance.

(d) Compensation, Rehousing and Resumption

- Regarding the prevailing compensation policy, there were conflicting views on whether the compensation was too generous or insufficient. There were suggestions to offer owners and tenants more options of compensation and rehousing, like "shop for shop" and "flat for flat", rehousing in the same district and relaxing the criteria for rehousing into public housing. Some also suggested providing compensation and re-housing before approval of the statutory plans or development projects.

- Some were concerned with the protection for tenants, noting that some owners terminated their tenancies according to the current Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance after the announcement of redevelopment projects. Some also queried the justification for allowing URA to apply for resumption of land required for urban renewal.

(e) Public Engagement

- There were requests for engaging the affected owners and tenants and the general public in identifying target areas for the implementation of the 4Rs under a district based approach.

- Whilst there were calls for public engagement throughout the policy-making, planning, design and implementation processes, community education on urban renewal, and the establishment of community alliance to monitor urban renewal projects, there were also concerns that the public engagement process might slow down the pace of urban renewal.

(f) Social Impact

- Some suggested expanding the scope of social impact assessments to look at both social benefits and social costs; cover areas outside the project boundaries; integrate the assessments with the public engagement process; and conduct assessments both before and after the redevelopment.

- There were concerns about the current arrangement whereby URA commissioned non-government organisations to set up social service teams for individual projects, as the teams would be accountable to the affected owners and tenants, as well as to the URA. Some suggested establishing an independent mechanism to appoint social service teams.

(g) Financial Arrangement

- There have been mixed views on the current self-financing model of the URA. Some considered that this would mean that URA has to raise the development density of its redevelopment projects and will be reluctant to improve its compensation and re-housing arrangements. Some considered that URA should be listed in the stock exchange to raise fund and that other organisations should be invited to share the burden of implementing those non-profitable urban regeneration initiatives.

- There were different views on URA's role: some suggested the Government to invest more on urban renewal (e.g. link redevelopment sites with new sites, transfer of development right, increase resource allocated to URA); others suggested reducing URA's role in redevelopment and strengthening the role of the private sector.

(h) Urban Renewal Programme

- There were calls to speed up the pace of urban renewal in view of the deteriorating conditions of old urban areas and the limitation of building rehabilitation. Some requested early publication of planned urban renewal programmes so that affected residents might plan early (e.g. whether to rehabilitate their buildings).

(i) Others

- There was a suggestion to turn the URS into a statutory regulation.

- Some suggested URA's urban renewal projects should pursue excellence in architectural design.

4 Public Engagement Stage

4.1 Proposed Issues and Agenda

4.1.1 The public views collected during the Envisioning Stage, together with the findings of the Policy Study Consultant, were discussed at the SC meeting in March 2009. The following key issues have been consolidated to form the agenda for public discussions in the Public Engagement Stage, where public forums, topical discussions, road show exhibitions etc. will be organised. The elaboration under each item is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather it serves to tease out the issue, reflecting the views collected:

Topic 1: Vision and Scope of Urban Regeneration

- Revisit the guiding principles of urban regeneration – quality of life, sustainable development, people-centred approach and harmonious community.

- Revisit and expand the scope of urban regeneration to look at revitalisation from a district basis, instead of focusing on individual dilapidated buildings. Urban regeneration should not be restricted to rejuvenation of residential areas; industrial buildings and harbourfront areas may also be covered, where appropriate.

- Explore the feasibility of developing a district-based urban regeneration strategy for each district, including how to engage the local communities and relevant government agencies in developing such a district-based strategy, what will be the appropriate institutional set-up, and what will be a sustainable implementation model.

Topic 2: Redevelopment vs. Rehabilitation

- Is there an ideal balance of different approaches of urban regeneration for all districts, or the best mix of approaches in a particular district will have to depend on the local characteristics?

- What are the relevant factors that should be considered when we work out an urban regeneration strategy for individual districts? How to define dilapidated buildings? What should be the objective criteria (e.g. building conditions, impact on existing social network, preservation of historical buildings, existing development density) for designating an old urban area for redevelopment or rehabilitation?

- What should be the role of the URA in future, a project implementation agent or just a facilitator?

- How can we encourage private owners to maintain and repair their buildings more actively?

- Does the current Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance (URAO) provide adequate power for the URA to carry out building rehabilitation work for privately owned buildings?

Topic 3: Heritage Preservation and Revitalisation

- Is URA the right implementation agent for heritage preservation? What should be its role vis-à-vis other heritage conservation institutions e.g. the Antiquities Advisory Board, the Advisory Committee on the Revitalisation of Heritage Buildings, the Commissioner for Heritage's Office and the Antiquities and Monuments Officer?

- How to identify intangible heritage and assess their need for preservation?

- Should URA's preservation targets be limited to heritage buildings within its development project areas or should URA take up a more pro-active preservation role?

- How to ensure effective co-ordination between preservation efforts and other urban regeneration programmes?

- Is gentrification an inevitable result of preservation and revitalisation efforts?

- What should be the role of owners of heritage buildings in their preservation? How can private owners be encouraged to take up a more active role in preservation?

Topic 4: Private vs. Public Sector Participation in Redevelopment

- What is the right balance of public and private sector participation in urban regeneration? The Government is facilitating private redevelopment of dilapidated buildings in urban areas through the Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) Ordinance (LCSRO). Is URA competing with the private sector in redevelopment of dilapidated buildings?

- Should the URA play a facilitator's role in the assembly of ownership for existing owners so that they may put their old buildings to public auction for redevelopment purpose under the LCSRO?

- Should URA be allowed to acquire properties and pay compensation before announcement of development plans or completion of detailed project planning?

- How may we promote more organic urban regeneration through market forces, i.e. a gradual, evolutionary process rather than a big-bang approach (e.g. Soho in Mid-Levels)?

- When a high-rise building has come to the end of its physical or economic life, is it the responsibility of the private owners or the public sector to redevelop it? What would happen if there is no unrealised development potential in the lot?

Topic 5: Compensation and Rehousing Policies

- Is the current compensation formula of a "notional 7-year old replacement flat" sustainable, especially in the light of the public aspirations for lower building heights and lower development density in redevelopment projects? If it is not sustainable in the long term, what is the alternative?

- Should URA introduce more compensation options, such as "flat for flat" and "shop for shop" after completion of the regeneration projects to help conserve the existing social network? Should there be rental subsidies and disturbance allowances for owners during the construction period and who should be responsible for them?

- But exchanging an old flat with a new flat (plus rental subsidies in the interim years, if any) would mean a new and higher compensation standard. Should we extend the same standard to those who opt for cash compensation? Are the public prepared to shoulder the implied higher urban regeneration cost, if it is to be financed by public resources?

- Should there be different rates of compensation for owner-occupied properties, tenanted properties and vacant properties?

- Should households who move into an already commenced urban redevelopment project area be entitled to rehousing allowances or public housing units?

- Should URA adopt an "in-situ" resettlement policy? Does it mean resettlement within the same district or within the same project area?

Topic 6: Owners Participation in Redevelopment

- Should we adopt a policy advocating more owner participation in urban redevelopment? Would there be problems if there is not much room for further increases in development density within the project area, or if community facilities have to be provided as part of the redevelopment?

- Redevelopment in Hong Kong typically involves multi-storey buildings under multiple owners. Would that present special difficulties for owner participation in redevelopment?

- Should the owners be required to share the financial risks of redevelopment? Can all existing owners understand the risks involved and whether they can handle them, particularly when redevelopment projects usually take five to six years to complete?

- In view of the long time span for each project, should there be any exit arrangement for participating owners before completion of the redevelopment projects?

- In view of the long time span for redevelopment project, when and how should the participating owners be paid?

- At present, government is supporting URA's projects by granting government land in a project area and charging only nominal premium on any gains in development potential. Should such benefits be retained by URA for pursuing other urban regeneration initiatives, instead of being shared with participating private owners?

Topic 7: Public Engagement

- Should the public and local communities be engaged throughout the urban regeneration process, from site identification, planning to implementation?

- To avoid market speculation and ensure proper use of public resources, projects under the URAO are kept confidential before formal commencement. How can we resolve the potential conflicts between prevention of speculation and public engagement?

- Shall we require consent of the majority of existing owners before a redevelopment project is allowed to proceed? How should we deal with the minority owners who object to the redevelopment project?

- Should URA only go to areas where the existing residents agree with the needs for urban regeneration and the proposed regeneration plans?

- If we are going to develop a district-based urban regeneration strategy for each district, how should the public engagement process be designed to ensure that it is representative of the aspirations of various stakeholders in the district? What would be the appropriate mechanism to balance the differences in views and resolve the potential conflicts among stakeholders?

- How to strike a balance between community engagement and the pace of implementation.

Topic 8: Social Impact Assessment and Social Service Team

- Should social impact assessments be integrated with the public engagement process to strengthen its role in the decision making process, in addition to its role as a tool to identify implementation problems and recommend mitigation measures?

- Should social impact assessment be district-based instead of project-led to enable a more macro approach to allow better planning for the entire neighbourhood?

- Should tracking studies be conducted to assess the longer term effects of urban regeneration on the affected owners and residents?

- What should the role of social service teams be under a district-based planning approach?

- Is there a potential role conflict if the social service teams continue to be appointed using URA's resources?

Topic 9: Financing Urban Renewal

- Should we continue to set a target of self-financing in the long run for the urban regeneration programme?

- How can we ensure the sustainability of our urban regeneration programme, noting that rehabilitation, preservation and revitalisation normally do not generate any useful revenue to sustain the programme?

- How should we look at the question of financial sustainability, e.g. whether we should count just the financial return to a project, or we should look at the economic returns of a project to the larger area, e.g. the escalators in Mid-levels.

- Should transfer of development rights be an alternative method to facilitate redevelopment?

4.1.2   The agenda will apply to all Public Engagement Stage initiatives but may not be all applied each time.   For instance, in topical discussions, each agenda item will be taken on its own for detailed examination.   At public forums, on the contrary, these may be taken more broadly and generally to facilitate the participants' sharing of further views on the issues.

4.2 *Proposed Programmes*

4.2.1 Again, apart from the 'standard programmes' for the Public Engagement Stage, a number of 'innovative programmes' will be undertaken to maximise public awareness and participation.

	Initiatives	Contents and remarks
Standard programmes		
1	Public Forum	(a) Five half-day public forums, each may accommodate up to 200 participants, will be organised. Care will be taken to spread out participants of different background to ensure balanced opportunities for all to voice their views. (b) Each public forum will be held in tandem with 2 road shows on a district basis in Kowloon West, Hong Kong Island, Kowloon East, and Tsuen Wan respectively. A concluding public forum is planned on Hong Kong Island. The relevant District Councils concerned have been invited as co-organisers. (c) Moderators with relevant knowledge and standing would be invited to lead the public forums.
2	URS Review Road Shows & face-to-face interviews	(a) A total of 8 road shows will be staged to lead in to the public forums. (b) At least 800 face-to-face interviews, with the aid of a question guide derived from the agenda for engagement, are expected to be conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK team), AWC's partner on public feedback and analysis, in situ. The road shows would be rotated roughly at the same time as the public forums and topical discussion sessions.
3	Topical discussion sessions	Up to 10 half-day topical discussion sessions will be carried out. The topics will dovetail the agenda for this Stage of public engagement and any other topics having regard to the latest public sentiment and feedback of the public as the exercise evolves.
4	Structured telephone interviews	Besides picking up feedbacks via the web, at meetings and the face-to-face interviews conducted at the road show exhibitions, etc., a questionnaire , will be designed for a telephone survey of 1,000 successful random samples for good statistical confidence to gauge random public views. The survey will be undertaken by the CUHK team of researchers towards the end of the Public Engagement Stage for quantitative findings, if any.

5	Booklet	(a) A booklet will be published, providing information and outlining the agenda gleaned from feedback obtained in the Envisioning Stage and learning from the Policy Study on the six Asian comparable cities, etc.
		(b) Partnering Organisations, District Council(s) and District Offices etc. will help to distribute this booklet and to encourage participation in engagement activities and feedback. The booklet would also be distributed at the road show exhibitions, public forums and topical discussion sessions.
6	Announcement of Public Interest ("API")	The API produced in the Envisioning Stage would be modified for the Public Engagement Stage.
7	Newspaper ads	Newspaper ads will be considered to announce and recruit for the range of public engagement activities.
8	Publicity	An overall advertising / publicity plan (media relations) will be launched with a view to optimising participation of the wider community and to increasing knowledge and interest in the Public Engagement Stage.
9	Website maintenance	(a) The e-forum, e-questionnaire and e-blog will continue to provide platforms for members of the public to voice their views and suggestions.
		(b) Updated details of the Idea Shop and Partnering Organisation activities, as well as other activities, will be uploaded to the website for public information.
Innovative Programmes		
1	Partnering Organisations	(a) The Partnering Organisation programme was designed to broaden the reach of and promote active public participation in the Review. Run in two phases, the programme encourages and facilitates the organisation of various activities related to the URS Review by schools, professional bodies and organisations registered under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance.
		(b) Organisations divided into 2 groups (Group 1: District Councils, schools, professional bodies, etc.; Group 2: other community groups and non-government organisations) - were invited to propose and organise events related to the subject of the URS Review.

		(c) A maximum of a total of some 20 programmes would be approved for the two phases, with each approved programme receiving up to HK$10,000 of sponsorship on average. The programme implementation would also be facilitated, e.g. by the provision of the Idea Shop as venue, speakers from DEVB and/or URA, etc. (d) A total of 9 proposals were approved by an assessment panel comprising SC members, representatives of DEVB and AWC for implementation as the first phase Partnering Organisation programme. Their planned activities are being rolled out from March to June 2009. (e) The promotion of phase 2 will start in April, whilst applications will be accepted commencing in May. Again, an assessment panel formed by SC members, representatives from the DEVB and AWC would be responsible for selecting and approving the applications.
2	The mass media – radio	(a) The radio is considered an effective means to promote the engagement activities to the mass public. (b) Commercial Radio 1 was selected to broadcast publicity and educational, promotional segments (90 seconds each) and 30-minute radio programmes in the Public Engagement Stage. (c) The entire programme straddles the public forums, road show exhibitions and topical discussions between end of March and mid-July 2009.
3	Alternative for internet game - inter-school activities / competitions	(a) Work was done to compile a suitable tender brief for the internet game. Given the cost effectiveness, it was agreed that the internet game idea would not be pursued. (b) Alternative activities to the internet game have been proposed, such as debating competitions, 1-min. video competition, etc., to entice the interest of and call for active participation by the younger generation on urban renewal. (c) These activities will be launched after mid-2009.
4	Idea Shop	(a) A pilot of this novel idea to facilitate more public participation was undertaken, with the first Idea Shop created and opened on 25 Mar 2009 in Tai Yuen Street, Wan Chai. (b) The Idea Shop serves as a community-based hub for idea sharing and exchange. The aim is to enhance visibility and provide a longer-term location for the public to participate in the URS Review. (c) The Idea Shop also serves as a venue for Partnering Organisations to hold events while other organisations can apply for use as well, subject to availability and approval by URA and DEVB.

		(d) Active usage of the facility will also be considered eg activities may be organised with NGOs to fully utilise the venue and maximise its reach.

5   Conclusion & Remarks

The Envisioning Stage of the URS Review raised the curtain of public engagement, the activities of which will follow till the end of 2009.   In the Budget 2009 - 10, The Financial Secretary encouraged various sectors of the community to participate in the review of the Urban Renewal Strategy.   Indeed an initial sense of openness and transparency has been cultivated in the exercise.   We expect participation to be active and discussions genuine going forward in the Public Engagement Stage.

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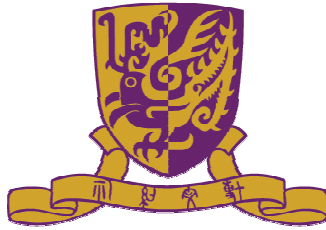
Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Urban Renewal Strategy Review

Public Views Expressed and Collected in
the Envisioning Stage

March 2009

This study was commissioned by
A-World Consulting Ltd.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In accordance with the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) Ordinance, the Government launched a large-scale, community-wide consultation campaign on the review of the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) in July 2008.   The review is structured in three stages, namely 'Stage 1 – Envisioning' (July 2008 to January 2009), 'Stage 2 – Public Engagement' (February to December 2009) and 'Stage 3 – Consensus Building' (January to April 2010). The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies (HKIAPS) of the Chinese University of Hong Kong was commissioned by A-World Consulting Limited (AWC), the public engagement consultant appointed by the Development Bureau for this review, with the objective of gauging and analysing the views and comments about the URS submitted by the public throughout all the three stages.

1.2 Overview of Views Collected

1.2.1   Number of Views Collected

During the Envisioning Stage, a total of 149 written comments, views or suggestions were collected from the public.   After filtering out duplicate submissions and irrelevant documents[4], 127 were left for further analysis. Among these written suggestions or views, nearly two-third were submitted through the website set up by the Government to solicit views from the public, indicating that online platform has already become an important, effective and convenient channel for the public to communicate with the Government and to air their opinions (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of the Sources of Views Collected

Sources	Number	Percentage
Pamphlets[5] with questionnaires attached	16	12.6
Position papers or proposals	8	6.3
Website (e-blog, e-forum & e-questionnaire)	80	63.0
Telephone inquiries to DEVB	1	0.8
Mails / E-mails	22	17.3
Total	127	100.0

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[4] Irrelevant documents refer to submissions that lack meaning, or responses that do not contain views or suggestions with regard to urban renewal (e.g., meaningless replies posted onto the website, and inquiries about whether submissions had been received, etc.).
[5] These are designed, produced and distributed before AWC was commissioned.

20 focus group discussion sessions have been organized to solicit key concerns of nearly all relevant stakeholder groups in the Envisioning Stage. The views gathered have also been included in the present analysis.

In summary, documents passed by the A-World to the HKIAPS for analysis in the Envisioning Stage included:

(a) 127 written views collected from the general public through various sources, such as website and mails; and

(b) 20 transcripts of the focus group discussion sessions.

1.2.2 Classification of Views

In this report, all opinions and views collected in the Envisioning Stage of the URS Review will be categorized into a classification scheme consisting of eight major issues, namely:

(a) Visions and Considerations

(b) Balance and Co-ordination of 4Rs[6]

(c) Role of Stakeholders

(d) Compensation / Re-housing / Resumption

(e) Public Engagement

(f) Social Impact

(g) Financial Arrangement

(h) Schedule of Urban Renewal

The advantage of this scheme is that not only does it nearly cover all major opinions collected from the public, but it also corresponds to the questionnaire embedded in the pamphlet published by the Government upon the launch of the URS Review. For those views that cannot be fitted into this scheme, they will be discussed in the section of 'Others' below.

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[6] 4Rs refer to Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, Revitalization and pReservation.

1.2.3 Issues of Most Concern

Among the above-listed eight major issues, the one that got the most attention was "Visions and Considerations" of urban renewal. This might be partly due to the fact that the approach of the URS Review was designed to be a root-and-branch one, with no pre-determined agenda and no consultation paper was issued based on which the public could discuss. Hence people tended to express broad and unspecific ideas of what the Government should do when they were solicited to give their opinions. Other issues that also attracted a lot of suggestions were the "Role of Stakeholders", "Compensation / Re-housing / Resumption" and "Public Engagement". Public concerns on "Balance and Coordination of 4Rs" were only average. Issues that drew the least attention were "Financial Arrangement", "Social Impact" and "Schedule of Urban Renewal".

The sub-topics that brought about the most concern under each issue are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Sub-topics with the Most Concern under Each Issue

Issues	Sub-topics with the most concern
Visions and Considerations	Specific Concerns
Emphasis and Co-ordination of 4Rs	Emphasis / Priority among 4Rs
Role of Other Stakeholders	Role of the URA
Compensation / Re-housing / Resumption	Cash Compensation
Public Engagement	Consultation Process
Social Impact	Scope of Social Impact Assessment; Conflict of Interests of the Social Service Teams
Financial Arrangement	Self-financing of the URA
Schedule of Urban Renewal	Pace of Urban Renewal

Details of opinions on these issues will be further discussed and elaborated in the following sections.

2 Key Findings

This section summarizes the key findings of the written views and focus group discussion sessions. Major views as well as other diverse suggestions collected in the Envisioning Stage are also presented below.

2.1 Vision and Considerations

2.1.1 Objective, Vision & Mission

While there was no agreement as to which objective, vision and mission were the most important, many agreed that there were some general principles that needed to be followed. For example, in terms of objectives, suggestions were made as follows:

(a) Urban renewal should bring about enhancement of living quality and enjoyment of life as well as community-wide benefits;

(b) URS should be provided with a clear vision of Hong Kong's needs in the future and what the city and its districts should be like.

(c) The vision of urban renewal depends on the long-term positioning of Hong Kong and should be part of the town planning and economic development strategies.

In addition, there were also more specific concerns regarding various objectives and visions:

(a) Government should not address the issue of poverty with the redevelopment approach, and urban renewal should not be treated as social welfare or a method of resources redistribution;

(b) Urban regeneration should have the principles of urbanism at its heart.

2.1.2 District-based Planning for Urban Renewal Initiatives

Some suggested that urban renewal should form part of the overall planning of a district, instead of considering urban renewal on the basis of individual projects. They felt that the planning of projects should commence with a macro perspective covering wider geographical areas as well as considering neighborhoods as a whole, rather than focusing on a specific, bounded physical site. In addition, overall district planning should form the basis for urban renewal site selection, the selection among 4Rs and infrastructure planning, amongst other elements.

2.1.3 Specific Concerns

The majority regarded preserving the characteristics and networks of the neighborhood as well as attending to the actual needs and services of the local district to be of prime importance. Specifically, the suggestions included:

(a)   Respecting the local historical and cultural characteristics of the neighborhood;

(b)   Preserving existing social networks and the sense of safety and familiarity they generate;

(c)   Preserving diversified local business networks, and encouraging mutual competition among big enterprises and small shops;

(d)   Thoroughly comprehending the needs of the affected community prior to proceeding with the redevelopment project;

(e)   Preserving the original transportation network, and providing spaces for building comprehensive transportation facilities;

(f)   Improving neighborhood economy through programs that stress local cultural characteristics.

Diverse views were proposed by the public on other factors and issues that the Government should consider in formulating the vision and strategy of urban renewal, which included:

(a)   Government should consider factors of sustainable development, environmental effects of redevelopment, and increasing green and open spaces;

(b)   Minimizing 'wall effects' and building density;

(c)   Making sure the redeveloped buildings were in harmony with surrounding ones;

(d)   The URA should ensure its redevelopment plans are in harmony with the overall development of Hong Kong in the next 5 to 10 years.

2.1.4 Meaning of 'People-centered Approach'

Though there has been a lot of discussion on the 'people-centered approach', no consensus was reached on what this term really means.   Many believed that the Government should listen to the voice of the people, particularly the affected owners and tenants, and allow the general public to participate in the urban renewal planning process, if this principle were to be applied.   Some suggested that improvement of the livelihood of residents in old areas is a welfare issue that is to be achieved through social welfare programs and policies, in addition to urban renewal.   Others proposed that the 'people-centered approach' should be changed to 'Affected people-centered' approach instead.

2.1.5 Coverage of Urban Renewal

Diverse views were expressed regarding the coverage of urban renewal.   Some recommended the URA to expand its target areas to spur the growth of tourism industry and the economy as well as to allow private developers to choose which areas to redevelop and not be limited to the existing nine areas.   Other suggested extension of the 4Rs to New Towns, industrial zones and rural areas.

2.1.6 Criteria for the Selection of Projects

Many advocate for a set of open and transparent selection criteria as well as listening to the concerns of the affected communities when selecting appropriate redevelopment projects.   However, there were diverse views on the specific selection approach and selection criteria.   On the approach aspect, suggestions include maintaining the existing selection procedures, selection based on expert analysis, adopting a bottom-up and district-based approach and conducting regular selection reviews.   On the selection criteria, suggestions include:

(a)   Simultaneously announcing multiple projects, and whichever project that was agreed by the affected community for redevelopment first would become the priority;

(b)   Considering poverty-stricken areas as targets for redevelopment;

(c)   Buildings with 'One Floor, Two Flats' (一梯兩契) and those that are in a state of disrepair for a considerable period of time should be the priorities for redevelopment;

(d)   Taking into account the age and other conditions of buildings;

(e)   Selecting land/sites for redevelopment that could generate economic benefits;

(f)   Redeveloping single residential blocks rather than the current large-scale redevelopment plans, which attracted a large number of complaints;

(g)   Redeveloping large areas to achieve comprehensive planning.

2.1.7 Relationship with Other Policies

Views collected generally support the notion that urban renewal must be in harmony with the overall city development strategy as well as other public policies. For example, there was a suggestion to conjugate education and social policies with the URS.

2.2 Balance and Coordination of 4Rs

Currently, the URA has adopted a 4Rs strategy to regenerate our urban areas. Of the opinions advanced, the majority of them focused on the issues of the priority (weighting) and balance of 4Rs. Other key concerns were about the criteria of or guidelines on determining the priority of adopting the 4Rs.

2.2.1 Emphasis / Priority among 4Rs

Most of those who were concerned about the balance of the 4Rs tended to believe that the weightings of each of them should be reviewed or modified.

Among those opinions that requested for the review of the weightings, many argued that the current strategy stressed too much on redevelopment and called for more emphasis on rehabilitation, revitalization and preservation because the latter three could help preserve local characteristics, social networks and the environment. Some demanded to adopt a conservation-led approach in lieu of the present development-led approach. Others said redevelopment should be regarded as the last resort only after the other 3Rs have been exhausted. Still others suggested putting more emphasis on rehabilitation whilst some even proposed to cease redevelopment altogether.

While many proposed placing more emphasis on the other 3Rs, some criticized that current resources allocating to them were insufficient. There was a specific suggestion to publicize the rehabilitation schemes more widely. Some pointed out that the unclear property rights of some old buildings would lead to difficulties in rehabilitation. Hence, there were recommendations that financial assistance without means test requirement could be provided to elderly homeowners to repair and maintain their buildings. Some also argued that the current preservation policy was piecemeal and fragmented, and no mechanism was in place to encourage private owners to preserve their own buildings.

However, there were also a few who felt that more emphasis on redevelopment would be essential. They supported early redevelopment of buildings with poor safety and environmental hygiene conditions. There were also suggestions on the need to educate the public that old buildings lacking of historical and cultural values should be demolished, and society should be renewed when the time has come. There was however concern on the practicality for URA to undertake 225 projects in 20 years as stated under the current URS, especially under the prevailing self-financing principle.

2.2.2 Co-ordination among 4Rs

Some requested the authority concerned to set clear definitions, criteria and guidelines to determine the choices among the 4Rs; for example, a clear definition of dilapidated buildings was needed to decide if buildings should be redeveloped or rehabilitated. Some proposed that such definition should be released to the public for open discussion.

A few had given concrete views on the definitions, criteria and guidelines as follows:

(a) Only dilapidated buildings constructed in the 1950's and 1960's should be redeveloped first;

(b) Industrial areas should be redeveloped or rebuilt while residential areas rehabilitated;

(c) Single residential blocks should be prioritized for rehabilitation;

(d) The affected communities should have the rights to decide on the priority of the 4Rs;

(e) Dilapidated buildings with poor maintenance and management should be given higher priority for redevelopment.

2.3 Roles of Stakeholders

Among all the stakeholders of the urban renewal exercise, the role of the URA received the most attention.

2.3.1 Role of the URA

Many expressed concerns about the role of the URA, and their main arguments included:

(a) The URA should work more on fulfilling its social responsibility rather than profit-making;

(b) On the one hand, some people suggested the URA to tune down its role in redevelopment while strengthening that in the other 3Rs. On the other hand, some urged the URA to speed up its redevelopment programs and expand its geographical coverage. Some, however, suggested that the URA was not adequately equipped to implement the other 3Rs in terms of the URA Ordinance and URS;

(c) Queries were raised about the relationship between the URA and the developers by claiming that the former was an agent of the latter. It was suggested that owners be allowed to participate in redevelopment, and the URA to implement projects independently;

(d)   Alternatively, some suggested the URA to act as a facilitator to assist owners in undertaking redevelopment by themselves, or to cooperate with the developers.   Some also suggested URA to assist in urban renewal planning at a district level.

(e)   Some claimed that since owners should be responsible for the maintenance of their own flats and the Buildings Department for structural safety and maintenance inspections, the URA should not be accountable for either of these roles;

(f)   The URA's unified role of being both the developer (corporate role) and the planner (administrative role) should be reviewed.   Some argued that such conflicting roles could not fulfill society's expectations, but instead created disagreements.   In order to prevent wasting public funds, the URA should be abolished.

Other comments on the URA included:

(a)   The URA's redevelopment plans often resulted intentionally or accidentally in increasing urban density;

(b)   There was a comment that the URA had a tendency to implement the 'easy' projects first and procrastinate on the 'hard and complex' ones;

(c)   One observation indicated that URA's projects usually resulted in a district being 'tidied up', but that was not necessarily better than before.

2.3.2 Role of Other Public Agents

To properly adjust the relationship and better the coordination between the URA and some of the public agents was public expectation.   Put it more specifically, some reiterated the importance of the role of the Housing Society as a strategic partner of the URA and advocated to strengthen its rehabilitation role.   However, some criticisms indicated that the policies of the URA and the Buildings Department were unaligned.   Some pointed out that the power of the Antiquities Advisory Board, to a certain extent, overlaps with that of the URA, as the former is responsible to decide which buildings are declared monuments and the latter also has similar authorities as to select which buildings could be preserved.

2.3.3 Role of Private Developers

Some opinions proposed that urban renewal should be undertaken by the private sector on a market-driven basis under the monitoring of the Government. Others expressed that the Government should reduce the developers' costs in redevelopment by reviewing the high land price policy, providing concessions in taxation/land premium or for the transfer of development rights. Some suggested lowering the threshold of 90% of all property rights for compulsory sale, and speeding up relevant approval procedures for private developers. Some suggested that there was a need to create a closer cooperation between the private sector and the Government. In addition, the private developers could be invited to participate in more preservation works. However, some expressed reservations about the role of the private sector in urban renewal as it aimed at profit-making, and some even thought it should not be classified as one of the stakeholders of urban renewal.

2.3.4 Role of Owners and Tenants

Most of the views about the role of the affected communities supported the idea of more participation in urban renewal by owners and tenants who are affected, such as by allowing them to participate in the decision-making process of redevelopment. There were a lot of discussions on encouraging residents to undertake redevelopment by themselves, with assistance from non-government organizations (NGOs), developers and the URA in the form of financial and technical support. There was however concern that the affected owners would be at risk if they held the shares from future redevelopment projects in view of the unstable property market.

Moreover, some urged the strengthening of owners' role in maintenance and management of their own flats. They insisted that it was the owners' responsibility and so the Government should not provide any subsidy. There were suggestions to implement mandatory building inspections and corresponding insurance plans by the owners. However, some also recommended devising a preservation mechanism that could induce the owners to preserve their own buildings with Government's assistance.

2.3.5 Role of Other Agents

It was generally agreed that the URA should consider seeking more strategic partners for urban renewal. Some felt that intermediaries, like academics, district councilors, legislators and professionals, could play a more active role in the consultation process. Some considered that the Tourism Board should be involved in urban renewal since the rehabilitated and preserved buildings with historical values would become significant resources to local tourism. Others advocated for a 'social innovation' approach to empower the communities and NGOs in organizing residents to work with the Government for redevelopment.

2.3.6 Role of the Government

Diverse views were received regarding the role of the Government. Some urged the Government (or the Development Bureau) to take a more active role in urban renewal. Others requested the Development Bureau to implement its monitoring role of the URA to address the problem of accountability. Some proposed the Government to strengthen its supervision on relevant construction projects and the private developers involved. Others recommended that it should coordinate all relevant public bodies, e.g., the URA, Hong Kong Housing Society, and Hong Kong Housing Authority, together with government departments, e.g., Buildings Department, to jointly resolve urban renewal issues. Better co-ordination and re-alignment of services among them was also suggested. Further, the Government was urged to increase investments in public infrastructure to encourage 'organic regeneration', e.g., the Mid-levels escalators. On the other hand, some suggested that the Government should be responsible for undertaking arts and culture-related projects in the redeveloped areas.

2.4 Compensation / Re-housing / Resumption

The issue of compensation, re-housing and resumption was one of the main concerns of the public during the Envisioning Stage. Of the opinions put forth, more views were on 'cash compensation', followed by 'non-cash compensation', 're-housing arrangement' and lastly 'resumption'. A general impression was that the affected owners and tenants should be offered more options of compensation and re-housing, like cash compensation, 'flat for flat', 'shop for shop' or re-housing into public housing. But with regard to the calculation and criteria of compensation, the opinions were rather scattered, diverse, and even conflicting.

2.4.1 Cash Compensation

There were relatively more but diverse views involving the issue of cash compensation. Concerning the prevailing compensation policy (e.g., assessing the unit rate of a notional replacement flat of seven years old; calculation of the market value of a property is based on the saleable area), there were conflicting views on whether cash compensations were too generous or insufficient. Those who claimed the cash compensations being too generous tended to propose that the 7-year flat standard should be tightened up. Those who felt the cash compensations to be insufficient were more likely to request for more or other subsides. On the other hand, while some demanded to review the existing cash compensation policy, others expressed that it should not be changed.

Other opinions included:

(a)   Compensation should be more or less equivalent to the market price;
(b)   No matter the flat was empty, rented out or owner-occupied, owners should receive the same amount of compensation without any differences among these three scenarios;
(c)   It is unfair that full compensation can only be offered to owners who could prove sole residence at the flat in question;
(d)   Shops that were moved out of the redevelopment areas should be granted additional subsidies to compensate for the possible increase in rent.

Some suggested providing compensation and re-housing before approval of the statutory plans or development projects. Some were also concerned with the protection for tenants, noting that some owners terminated their tenancies according to the current Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance after the announcement of redevelopment projects.

2.4.2 Non-cash Compensation

Despite the minority, dissenting views against the 'Flat for Flat' arrangement, the idea of using 'Flat for Flat, Shop for Shop' as non-cash compensation was the most frequently mentioned. Some believed that it could reduce problems and obstacles encountered in resumption and could help to preserve the existing social network.

2.4.3 Re-housing Arrangement

Among the views on re-housing arrangement, many tended to agree that the URA should give the chance to affected residents for re-housing within the same district. Some supported this suggestion because it might speed up land resumption and maintain the original social networks. But some argued that re-housing in the same district did not necessarily mean that original social networks could be preserved. Some doubted if there would be an enough supply of residential buildings for re-housing in the same district.

Nevertheless, more opinions accepted that the elderly and tenants should be given higher priorities for re-housing.

Other recommendations related to re-housing were as follows:

(a)   Assisting affected residents to resettle in neighboring areas;
(b)   Allowing affected residents a higher chance to conditionally return to the redeveloped areas;
(c)   Re-housing should not be limited to proper tenants alone. Those residing in cage-housing, illegal structures and roof-top housing should also be considered.

2.4.4 Resumption

Some expressed their dissatisfaction with the current land/building resumption arrangement that gave the URA too much power. They complained that, agreed or not, the affected occupants living in the redeveloped areas would be forced to leave in the end. They considered the appeal mechanism for resumption (e.g., via the Land Tribunal) ineffective in helping the affected owners and tenants. Some regarded the compulsory land/building resumption as actually violating private property rights, and requested to review the existing policy / arrangements as well as the Lands Resumption Ordinance. Further, some even queried the justifications for allowing the URA to apply for the resumption of land required for urban renewal. On the contrary, some held an opposite view that the threshold of applying for land resumption should be relaxed so that redevelopment could be expedited.

Other opinions included:

(a)   the URA should establish a professional team for land resumption;
(b)   the URA should provide the public with a simple and clear explanation about the process of land resumption.

2.4.5 Other Views on Resumption and Compensation

(a)   While the assessment of the value of affected buildings was being conducted, the URA should not openly discuss items that can interfere with the valuation;
(b)   The prevailing compensation was geared towards removing owners for redevelopment rather than offering them means for maintenance and renovation of their buildings.

2.5 Public Engagement

2.5.1 Consultation Process

The public generally agreed that consultation was not only important, but necessary, in urban renewal. Many demanded a better way to implement the consultation process and their arguments were:

(a) During the consultation process, more communications between the URA and community members were necessary. The URA should try its very best to introduce and explain all relevant ordinances and regulations to affected residents in a simple manner;

(b) The URA should adopt a 'First consult, then redevelop' (先諮詢，後重建) approach;

(c) The general public has the right to participate in redevelopment planning;

(d) A better and more comprehensive consultation method, such as opinion survey, should be adopted;

(e) To improve the communications between the URA and the affected residents, regular meetings should be held;

(f) Public participation should be undertaken during the policy-making, planning and design phases;

(g) Definition of an affected community should include residents of areas neighboring the redevelopment areas, who should also be consulted;

(h) URA should discuss its redevelopment plans with the District Councils and should not transfer its duties of consultation to the Town Planning Board.

Some however raised concern that public participation might slow down the pace of redevelopment and attract speculators.

2.5.2 Selection of Urban Renewal Projects

Some participants insisted that the order of priority for urban renewal should be decided in an interactive process with affected residents, and who have the right to make such decisions was crucial and thus needed further consideration. Others suggested the Government to provide various urban renewal proposals to be voted on by the public.

2.5.3 From Design to Implementation of Projects

Many also expressed their concerns in respect of the design and implementation of urban redevelopment projects, which concentrated on two dimensions, namely 'how' (how to design and carry out the projects properly), and 'who' (who should be involved in the process). For example, some argued that:

(a) During the planning process, the URA should concentrate on consulting those affected;

(b) Private developers should also be given the chance to participate in the planning process.

2.5.4 Other Concerns and Suggestions

(a) Establish a Community Planning Center as a platform for community education and public participation;

(b) The Government should provide the community with more resources for the purpose of community empowerment.

2.6 Social Impact

2.6.1 Social Impact Assessment

(a) There were suggestions concerning the scope of assessment, which centered around the review and investigation process of affected residents. Some proposed URA to conduct follow-up investigations after redevelopment was completed, in order to determine who benefited or suffered. Some suggested conducting social impact assessment on the redevelopment projects of the former Land Development Corporation. Others proposed to extend the scope of social impact assessment to cover residents in neighboring areas of redevelopment sites. While some suggested that the overall societal impacts of redevelopment rather than those of individual projects should be reviewed, others recommended professionals and NGOs be appointed to assess the social costs of these projects;

(b) Some concurred with the idea that social impact assessment should be conducted prior to redevelopment in order to gauge owners' willingness to leave;

(c) Some urged the URA to learn from previous redevelopment experiences in conducting social assessment. For example, the redevelopment of Kwun Tong should make reference to the Wan Chai experience. Others expressed the view that social impact assessment should be conducted in accordance with 'international standards';

(d) A range of other suggestions were made, including the need to pay attention to how the affected community's rights were impacted by the redevelopment process, the assessment should be conducted by independent intermediaries, and a criticism that social impact assessment reports did not reflect the 'real situation'.

2.6.2 Social Service Teams

(a) Some suggested providing medical services for the elderly who reside in the redeveloped areas. Others recommended reviewing the services that social workers currently provide;

(b) Many supported the view that the social service teams were perceived as not being impartial and independent. They opined that conflicts of interests existed in social service teams' role, as the teams were funded by the URA, thus leading people to believe that they were only there to assist affected residents to move out. There was a suggestion that the teams' independence could be maintained by establishing an independent trust for funding purpose. Others recommended to allocate independent intermediaries, e.g., Hong Kong Council of Social Services, to hire social service teams;

(c) Other varied views regarding the social service teams included requesting academics to be included in the teams as well as criticisms that such teams lack resources and manpower to provide the services desired by residents in time of their needs.

2.7 Financial Arrangement

There were diverse views on the financial arrangement for urban renewal. While some supported the current self-financing model, others believed that the existing arrangement had to be reviewed. The latter expressed their concerns on the feasibility and sustainability of such arrangements due to the rising demand of compensation, and diverse issues to be considered in urban renewal projects, such as preservation and environmental protection. There was also a critique that the current financing arrangement, which aimed at achieving self-financing, would, to a certain extent, give rise to high building density of redevelopment projects.

Differing views were also suggested with regard to what financing approach urban renewal should take. Some recommended the URA to adopt a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model while others opted for a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) model. Suggestions were also made as to learning from joint public-private ventures in other countries, with Holland as an example of enforced building maintenance and Singapore for beautification. Some also opined that the Government should allocate more resources for urban renewal, e.g., annual resources allocated to the URA to subsidize rehabilitation and preservation, or to use the transfer of development rights or land swap to preserve buildings of historical and cultural values or to subsidise other financially non-feasible projects, e.g. King Yin Lei Mansion.

Other recommendations included:

(a) Having the URA listed in the stock market or establishing special funds for urban renewal;
(b) Retaining a certain portion of the redeveloped buildings for rental to increase the revenue of the URA;
(c) Identifying profitable sites for the URA to develop / redevelop in order to cover the losses incurred by the practice of 4Rs in other sites;
(d) The URA should disclose relevant financial information to the public.

2.8 Schedule of Urban Renewal

2.8.1 Pace of Urban Renewal

Many suggestions also pointed to the need of stepping up urban redevelopment. Some complained that the slow pace of resumption in some redevelopment sites had caused a state of disrepair and poor hygienic conditions in buildings after residents left. Others urged that the URA should speedily decide on which buildings were to be redeveloped to relieve worries of residents living in the nine target areas. However, a few also claimed that URA's goal to complete 200 projects within 20 years was too aggressive and advocated for redevelopment at a slower pace in view of some buildings being demolished immaturely.

2.8.2 Early Consultation

Besides, some opined that the URA should consult the affected groups or people at an early phase, and adequate information should be released prior to consultation. Before deciding on redevelopment, the URA should consult the owners first, rather than the district councilors, and the consultation process should be as accessible and transparent as possible. Furthermore, some suggested the URA to disclose the redevelopment timetable and progress in a regular manner, to speed up redevelopment, and to call for more public monitoring.

2.9 Others

Other opinions could be roughly categorized into two main topics, namely the comments on the URS Review and individual projects.

2.9.1 Comments on the URS Review

Regarding the current URS Review, preponderant views were raised on the inadequate information provided prior to the Review about URA's work and urban renewal in general. Some urged the uploading of Legco meeting minutes and voice recordings of the focus group discussion sessions to the URS Review website.

Other views on the URS Review were as follows:

(a)   It was advocated that more publicity activities of the URS Review should be organized;
(b)   Some suggested that projects that had already been completed by the URA should also be covered in the URS Review. Some felt that the policy study which covered Asian cities, but not Western ones, was limiting and superficial;
(c)   Some requested for the suspension of current or new redevelopment projects until the completion of the URS Review or when the new URS was finalised.

2.9.2 Individual Projects

The Kwun Tong redevelopment project was mentioned the most. Quite a lot questioned about the high offering price of the said project, mostly through the online forum, and believed that the project should be terminated. However, there were also a few who opined that the offering price was unreasonably low. Besides, some were worried about the gentrification of Kwun Tong and regarded the current plan as only a middle class-oriented project, which had neglected the problems of the aging and low-income population in the community.

Individual suggestions on other projects included:

(a)   To develop Lantau Island as a residential area and leave Central totally for commercial use, in order to alleviate pressure to redevelop old areas in the future;

(b)   The Shanghai Street preservation project should include an 'acquisition before preservation' (先收購，後保育) arrangement, and the URA might consider redeveloping the street into a unique 'Food Street'.

Other suggestions that worth mentioning were as follows:

(a)   'Opportunities for Design Excellence' should be included in the URS;

(b)   Turning the URS into a statutory regulation;

(c)   Land grant documents should clearly state the relevant information (i.e., the redevelopment model and years required to be considered for redevelopment) to reduce problems encountered during redevelopment;

(d)   Establishing a mechanism to review those projects that were initiated by the Land Development Corporation.

2.10 Summary of Views Collected

Although some were well aware that public engagement might slow down urban renewal, the public in general agreed that consultation was essential. On the whole, the issue that got the most public attention in the Envisioning Stage was the 'Vision and Considerations' of the URS. Although there was no agreement as to which objective, vision and mission were the most important, many believed that urban renewal should bring about enhancement of the quality of life and community-wide benefits. The majority of views also regarded preserving the characteristics and networks of the neighbourhoods to be of prime importance.

Issues about the 'Role of Stakeholders', 'Compensation / Re-housing / Resumption' and 'Public Engagement' also attracted a lot of discussions and suggestions. Among all the stakeholders concerned, the role of the URA was in the spotlight. While some people suggested that the URA should tune down its role in redevelopment, many complained about the slow pace of resumption and urged that the process be speeded up and the geographical coverage of urban renewal expanded. Many agreed that the affected owners and tenants should be offered more options of compensation and re-housing.

Regarding the 4Rs, public concerns about 'Balance and Coordination of 4Rs' were only average. Of the opinions advanced, many argued that the current strategy stressed too much on redevelopment and called for more emphasis on the other 3Rs.

Issues that attracted the least discussions were 'Financial Arrangement', 'Social Impact' and 'Schedule of Urban Renewal'. While some supported the current self-financing model of the URA, others doubted its feasibility and sustainability. Many agreed to conduct follow-up investigations after redevelopment projects were completed and to extend the scope of social impact assessment. Since the social service teams were funded by the URA, some queried their independence and impartiality.

- Ends -

APPENDIX II

INDEX OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

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07 August 2008	--	ATV	B011
21 November 2008	--	觀塘市中心區重建業主立案法團大聯盟	B012-018
10 December 2008	--	China Business Centre, Hong Kong Polytechnic University	B019-048
21 December 2008	Edmond	--	B049
19 January 2009	--	香港社會服務聯會	B050-051
29 January 2009	Mee Kam Ng	--	B052-060
29 January 2009	--	舊區住屋權益社工聯席	B061-062
Website (e-forum)			
19 October 2008	小 Q	--	C001
21 October 2008	Cheers	--	C002
25 October 2008	Denny	--	C003
26 October 2008	Daisy Chan	--	C004

27 October 2008	Yhlui	--	C005
02 November 2008	Cherry	--	C006
04 November 2008	Yllui	--	C007
06 November 2008	Vanillcoke	--	C008
08 November 2008	Hang	--	C009
08 November 2008	Cy	--	C010
10 November 2008	RL	--	C011
15 November 2008	Sam	--	C012
15 November 2008	Wendy Shum	--	C013
16 November 2008	A	--	C014
16 November 2008	Veron	--	C015
16 November 2008	Fan	--	C016
16 November 2008	View	--	C017
22 November 2008	Eric	--	C018
22 November 2008	Carrie41	--	C019
23 November 2008	Sun	--	C020
23 November 2008	Joey	--	C021
11 December 2008	Angela Wong	--	C022
11 December 2008	PANG	--	C023
11 December 2008	kenneth	--	C024
11 December 2008	特首	--	C025
12 December 2008	Kin Kin	--	C026
17 December 2008	Patrick	--	C027
17 December 2008	Wai	--	C028
24 December 2008	Ada Wong	--	C029-030
26 December 2008	小 Q	--	C031
27 December 2008	停上收購	--	C032
28 December 2008	Joseph Lai	--	C033
28 December 2008	Kevin Lam	--	C034
28 December 2008	James	--	C035
28 December 2008	Ada Wong	--	C036-040
28 December 2008	Max	--	C041
28 December 2008	Ricky Mak	--	C042
29 December 2008	Jessica	--	C043
29 December 2008	Jessica	--	C044
29 December 2008	Peg	--	C045
30 December 2008	skychan	--	C046

30 December 2008	Miss. Fan	--	C047
30 December 2008	Peg	--	C048
30 December 2008	Fayefaye	--	C049
30 December 2008	Mandy	--	C050
01 January 2009	ORCA	--	C051
01 January 2009	DY	--	C052
02 January 2009	David	--	C053
02 January 2009	Sea Wong	--	C054
03 January 2009	DY	--	C055
03 January 2009	ABC	--	C056
03 January 2009	David	--	C057-058
03 January 2009	Bill	--	C059-060
03 January 2009	Johnny	--	C061
06 January 2009	MK Chan	--	C062
17 January 2009	Wright Fu	--	C063
17 January 2009	Beary Pang	--	C064
22 January 2009	Yllui	--	C065
23 January 2009	隆志安	--	C066-067
26 January 2009	Sea	--	C068
27 January 2009	Wright Fu	--	C069
29 January 2009	賴建國	--	C070-074
Website (e-blog)			
12 December 2008	Nick Tye	--	D001
12 December 2008	Nick Tye	--	D002
15 January 2009	lamchunhung	--	D003
16 January 2009	MK Chan	--	D004
19 January 2009	Wang	--	D005
20 January 2009	TTS	--	D006
21 January 2009	阿苦	--	D007
Website (e-questionnaire)			
10 December 2008	--	--	E001
12 December 2008	--	--	E002
12 December 2008	--	--	E003
17 December 2008	--	--	E004
05 January 2009	Kobe Ho	--	E005
05 January 2009	Camille Keung	--	E006
09 January 2009	Ian Nock	--	E007

10 January 2009	Sam Yip	--	E008
11 January 2009	梁小姐	--	E009
29 January 2009	賴建國	--	E010
30 January 2009	Calvin	--	E011
Telephone enquiries to DEVB			
05 August 2008	Mr. Cham	--	F001-002
Mails / E-mails			
07 August 2008	湛淦樞	K28 波鞋街關注組	G001-020
07 August 2008	盧如卿	--	G021-023
--	楊國榮	--	G024-030
07 August 2008	K28 波鞋街葉主	--	G031-054
08 August 2008	Sze To	--	G055
11 August 2008	Paul Zimmerman	--	G056
19 August 2008	Edward Logsdail	--	G057
29 August 2008	張先生	--	G058
1 September 2008	老堂佳	K28 波鞋街關注組業主- 文明體育用品有限公司	G059-79
10 September 2008	Dr. Dennis H F Mui	--	G080-087
24 September 2008	江洪	--	G088-091
03 October 2008	--	H15 關注組	G092
20 October 2008	--	--	G093
17 November 2008	任國棟	--	G094-095
28 November 2008	David Lai	--	G096-097
--	Unknown	--	G098-099
12 December 2008	yy yip	--	G100
30 December 2008	Terence Cheung	--	G101
30 December 2008	Andy Lam	--	G102
01 January 2009	yy yip	--	G103
06 January 2009	--	Hong Kong Housing Society	G104-106
14 January 2009	Daniel King Him Fung		G107-110
21 January 2009	市民阿苦		G111-112

Remarks: Members of the public can view the above submissions at the Urban Renewal Idea Shop.

Address: No. 38, Tai Yuen Street, Wanchai.

Tel: 3109-7302

Opening Hours: Tuesday to Sunday (including public holiday): 11:00am to 9:00pm; Closed on Monday

APPENDIX III

LIST OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

	Date	Time	Venue	Group	
1	17 September 2008	6:30pm – 9:30pm	Conference Room, A-World Consulting Ltd.	Academics & professional groups (Science & Works) – architects, planners, engineers, surveyors, etc.	
2	24 September 2008	6:30pm – 9:30pm	Conference Room, A-World Consulting Ltd.	Academics & professional groups (Arts & Humanities) – social workers, artists, representatives from the art and culture sector, and historians	
3	2 October 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	Conference Room, A-World Consulting Ltd.	Advocacy groups – policy "think tanks", green groups, conservation groups	
4	8 October 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	Conference Room, A-World Consulting Ltd.	Advocacy groups – community groups	
5	15 October 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	Conference Room, A-World Consulting Ltd.	Commercial organisations – property developers, etc.	
6	21 October 2008	6:30pm – 8:00pm	Activity room 2, Hong Kong Central Library	Affected groups – landlords and tenants / concerned organisations	
7	30 October 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	1107, 11/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui	Affected groups – Property owners and tenants	
8	5 November 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	1107, 11/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui	Advocacy groups – Community groups	

	Date	Time	Venue	Group	
9	12 November 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	1107, 11/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui	Political groups – District Councils	
10	18 November 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	Activity Room 2, Hong Kong Central Library	General Public / Advocacy Groups	
11	25 November 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	Activity Room 1, Hong Kong Central Library	URA District Advisory Committees	
12	27 November 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	1107, 11/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui	Business groups – retailers, hawkers and transport operators, etc.	
13	3 December 2008	6:30pm – 8:30pm	901, 9/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui	Advocacy groups	
14	8 December 2008	6:30pm – 8:10pm	HKIA Conference Room, 19/F, One Hysan Avenue, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong	Professional bodies - The Hong Kong Institute of Architects	
15	9 December 2008	6:30pm – 8:25pm	1104, 11/F, Hong Kong Scout Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui	Political groups – District Councils	
16	17 December 2008	9:301m – 11:30am	Conference Room, Hong Kong Housing Authority,	Public bodies - Hong Kong Housing Authority	

	Date	Time	Venue	Group	
			33 Fat Kwong Street, Ho Man Tin, Kowloon		
17	18 December 2008	2:30pm – 3:40pm	Conference Room, 12/F, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong	Public bodies - Land and Building Advisory Committee	
18	18 December 2008	4:30pm – 5:35pm	Conference Room, 30/F, World Trade Centre, 280 Gloucester Road, Causeway, Hong Kong	Public bodies - Hong Kong Housing Society	
19	14 January 2009	2:30pm – 4:30pm	10/F, Low Block, Grand Millennium Plaza, 181 Queen's Road Central, Hong Kong	Board of Directors and Urban Renewal Strategy Review Committee, Urban Renewal Authority	
20	15 January 2009	4:00pm – 5:45pm	Theatre, HKGCC, 22/F, United Centre, 95 Queensway, Admiralty, Hong Kong	Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce members	