

Steering Committee on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy

District Aspirations Study on Urban Renewal

Purpose

This paper sets out for Members' consideration a proposal to invite and support the 7 district councils (DCs) in the Urban Renewal Authority (URA)'s 9 action areas to each conduct a District Aspirations Study (DAS) to identify the respective district's views on urban renewal.

2. The paper also proposes funding and project management support from the URA, outlines the proposed implementation arrangements and the proposed deliverables of the study.

Objectives of DAS

3. Apart from the ongoing programmes under the 'Public Engagement' phase of the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) Review, in order to better engage the local communities in the URA's 9 action areas, it is considered pertinent that the 7 concerned DCs should be more actively engaged to help identify and articulate the local communities' views on the need for urban regeneration in their district, in line with the spirit of a more district-based approach to urban regeneration.

4. The 7 DCs will be invited to assist in shaping a longer term vision for urban regeneration in their respective district having regard to the specific characteristics of their own district, including the relevance of each of the URA's current 4Rs strategy, namely, "pReservation, Redevelopment, Rehabilitation and Revitalisation" in their district. Where applicable, the DCs will help articulate their local communities' aspirations on the revitalization of the harbourfront and the revitalization of industrial buildings in any non-industrial areas in their districts, as these aspirations will all help to shape an integrated vision for a district-based urban regeneration programme in their district.

Background

5. The three-stage URS Review was commenced in July 2008. During the first stage, the “Envisioning Stage”, some 20 focus group discussions were held to involve major stakeholders in the discussion, including the DCs. A list of the key issues identified during the Envisioning Stage for further in-depth discussion has been summarized in the booklet - “Public Engagement” Stage Consultation Summary. While the DCs have already been invited to be co-organisers of the 5 public forums to be organized during the “Public Engagement” stage of the Review, for such an important agenda as urban renewal, it is considered pertinent that the concerned DCs could have a more active role to play in the review process.

District-based Approach to Urban Regeneration

6. While urban decay and the need to arrest it through urban regeneration is an urban area wide issue, there is a need to balance the general concerns at the territory wide level with the specific concerns and priorities of those most affected at the district level. As the 7 districts in which the URA’s 9 action areas are located have widely different heritage features, harbourfront features and local economic characteristics (such as the presence or otherwise of opportunities for the adaptive re-use of under-utilised factory buildings in non-industrial zones in the district), the districts will likely have different aspirations for urban regeneration unique from the other districts.

7. A more systematic way to help the DCs articulate their aspirations for urban regeneration in their respective districts will make the URS Review process more broad-based, credible and responsive to the vision of the local communities who are most affected by any urban renewal actions contemplated in their own districts. The proposed DAS exercise should enable the DCs to be more systematically and actively engaged so that their local communities’ views can in turn be better collated and reflected.

8. To ensure consistency in the study parameters and the study approach, the URA will provide funding as well as a prototype study framework to the DCs as they commission project consultants to proceed with the exercise. To facilitate the work of the DCs, the URA will provide a short list of consultants experienced in the field for the DCs’ reference. It is not compulsory that the DCs must choose from the list but the commissioned consultant must have proven expertise by objective standards to be discussed later in this paper. In turn, the DCs will be asked to appoint a DAS Task Force to oversee the study in their district. Notwithstanding that there are 6 District Advisory Committees (DACs) appointed by the URA in their 9 action areas, given that the DAS’s will be driven by the DCs themselves, it is not proposed

that the URA-appointed DACs will have any designated role in the exercise. It will be up to the DCs to involve the DACs in their respective districts in the process.

Proposed Scope for the DAS

9. The DAS will first articulate the concerned district's overall vision for urban regeneration in the district. It should focus on the district's views on how the 4Rs strategy should best be implemented in their district. The following key issues under each of the 4Rs will be explored –

pReservation

10. In addition to heritage buildings graded by the Antiquities Advisory Board, where applicable, the DAS may identify other forms of local culture and/or heritage (e.g. built environment) worth preserving in the district, with justifications. Priorities should be indicated wherever possible. The DAS may also make suggestions on ways to achieve preservation, including proposals on adaptive re-use.

Redevelopment

11. The DAS may identify areas/buildings in the district that are considered to have potential for redevelopment in the next five to ten years taking into account factors of building dilapidation, residents' poor living conditions, social and economic impact on the district, financial viability etc. In respect of these cases, if there are local culture and/or heritage elements identified in the areas concerned, the DAS may also propose preservation and/or revitalisation alternatives. The DAS may also consider whether rehabilitation is an option for those areas/buildings identified if redevelopment is not feasible in the short term.

Rehabilitation

12. The DAS may identify buildings in the district that are over 30 years of age which need special attention for rehabilitation in the coming five to ten years. The DAS may also explore how, in those residential buildings where no owners' corporations have been set up, the DCs may help organize the flat owners together to undertake rehabilitation work for the buildings concerned.

Revitalisation

13. The DAS may identify representative areas in the districts which, with suitable revitalization initiatives, will help rejuvenate not only the areas concerned but also the district as a whole. The DAS may also explore what concrete revitalization proposals can be undertaken for these areas and how the proposed measures will have the positive multiplier effect on the district as a whole.

Proposals on Revitalisation of the Harbourfront and Revitalisation of Factory Buildings in Non-industrial Areas in the Districts

14. Where applicable, the DAS could articulate the local communities' views on how the harbourfront and the under-utilised factory buildings in non-industrial areas in the district should be revitalized.

15. The 7 DCs will be invited to launch the DAS as soon as possible within their district after the commissioning of the consultant. The 7 DCs will be asked to participate in a cross-district discussion forum in late October/early November 2009 to share their interim reports on the DAS with the other 6 districts. The DCs are expected to furnish the URA with their final DAS reports by January 2010 to tie in with the timetable of the URS Review which will have proceeded into the "Consensus Building" stage by then.

Funding and Other Arrangements

16. The URA will provide funding support at \$300,000 per district. As this is a DC-driven study, apart from the design of a common study framework with draft parameters as set out above, the URA will not be involved in the selection of consultant. To facilitate the work of the DCs, once the DC has committed to conducting the study, the URA will make available information on consultants experienced in the field to the DCs. If the DCs decide to engage other consultants from the list, they will have to be satisfied that the consultants meet the following basic qualification criteria—

- The team leader of the project consultant should have a doctorate degree in urban regeneration related disciplines, such as city planning, architecture, sociology, social work etc
- The project consultant should have proven track record in conducting district based research and community engagement exercises for a minimum of three years

- The project consultant should have at least two full-time staff members supporting the study

17. The URA reserves the right to reject funding the engagement of any consultant who fails to meet the abovementioned qualification criteria to ensure the professional quality of the study.

18. The DCs will be asked to set up a DAS Special Task Force under the respective DC to steer and monitor the progress of the study. Once the DC has identified and contracted with their project consultant, within two weeks, the project consultant is required to submit a work plan to the DC, the broad parameters of the scope of which are described above. The work plan should also set out the timetable of the study, the methodology proposed including the district engagement activities proposed in support of the study. The URA will arrange to release the first tranche quarterly payment to the consultant upon confirmation by the concerned DC that the progress of work by the consultant is satisfactory. The other quarterly payments will be tied to the submission of the interim report (at about the same time as the presentation of the interim report to the other 6 DCs at a public forum to be organized by the URA), the submission of the draft final report and the the submission of final report each to the satisfaction of the DC.

19. Further, the project consultant of each DC will be asked to help the concerned district to present their interim report at an open forum to be held in late October/early November, 2009. Upon the submission of the final DAS report to the satisfaction of the concerned DC, the project consultant may be asked to help the concerned DC present their report at other forums during the “Consensus Building” stage of the URS Review.

Financial Implications

20. The URA will set aside \$2.5 million to support the launch of the DAS's of the 7 districts. A 15% contingency will be set aside on top of the \$300,000 funding for each of the 7 districts.

Way Forward

21. Subject to Members' views, the URA will, with the support of the Development Bureau, approach the Chairmen of the 7 DCs, namely, the Yau Tsim Mong DC, the Shamshuipo DC, the Kwun Tong DC, the Kowloon City DC, the Tsuen Wan DC, the Central and Western DC and the Wan Chai DC to take them through the proposal and to solicit their support.

22. As the URS Review is launched by the Development Bureau, the Secretary for Development will make a personal appeal to the 7 DCs. The URA will present the project proposal to the DCs or their subcommittees at the earliest opportunity so as to enable the DAS's to be commenced as soon as possible. The URA has, over the past month, informally sounded out some of the concerned DC Chairmen. They are generally receptive to the proposal.

23. Meanwhile, the URA will also draw up a consultant shortlist for easy reference of the DCs and proceed to work out the necessary draft documents to be signed with the DCs and/or the project consultants on the funding support for the exercise.

24. So as not to pre-empt the DCs before they formally consider the DAS proposal, the URA proposes that the paper be temporarily classified as confidential and will only be uploaded onto the URS Review website until after the URA has approached all the 7 DC Chairmen. As the confidential grading of the paper is based on public relations concerns, we do not propose removing the discussion of the paper from the agenda of the current meeting. If asked, the Development Bureau and the URA will explain that a draft proposal on the subject is being presented to the Steering Committee for consideration with details to follow.

Urban Renewal Authority
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