

Steering Committee on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy

Summary of Findings of District Aspiration Studies

Purpose

This short paper provides a summary of the views collected by the 7 District Councils (DCs) through the District Urban Renewal Aspiration Studies (DAS) conducted in late 2009. The studies set out to help the districts articulate their aspirations in shaping a longer term vision for urban regeneration in their respective district. During the course of the process, the districts have also articulated their views on the seven major topics of urban renewal identified during Phase I of the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) Review process.

Background

2. During the Urban Renewal Strategy Review, views have been expressed that there is a need to balance the general concerns over urban renewal at the territory wide level with the specific concerns and priorities of those most affected at the district level. In order to systematically gauge the individual district's aspirations and views on the need for urban renewal, the seven DCs in URA's nine Action Areas have been invited to conduct their respective district aspirations study on urban renewal in July 2009. Consultancy teams were engaged by the URA to support the DCs' work and a total sum of \$2.1 million has been incurred.

3. The agreed common objectives of the DAS are:

- (a) To assist in the identification of a broader and longer term vision for urban renewal in URA's nine target action areas, under a "district-based approach";
- (b) To target specific areas within URA's nine Action Areas for the implementation of the 4Rs (Preservation, Redevelopment, Rehabilitation and Revitalisation), under a district based approach;
- (c) To collect views from the districts concerned on the seven major issues of urban renewal identified during Phase I of the URS Review.

4. A DC District Aspirations Study Forum was organised in January, 2010 to enable the districts to meet to share their interim findings with each other and to have a formal exchange. Final reports of the DASs as endorsed by the DCs were submitted to the Urban Renewal Authority and the Development Bureau in April 2010. Copies of those reports can be found in the URS Review dedicated website.

Overview of Findings in the DASs on the Seven Major Topics of Urban Renewal

5. The DASs have revealed broadly common views on the seven major topics of urban renewal as set out below –

(a) Vision and Scope of Urban Regeneration

- (i) Strong support for a district-based and bottom up approach in urban regeneration.
- (ii) The reports agreed that the existing “putting people first” approach should continue to be the underlying principle in urban regeneration.

(b) Balance of 4Rs Strategy in Urban Regeneration

The right balance for the 4Rs is one that is based on the needs of individual district.

Redevelopment

- Kowloon City (KC), Yau Tsim Mong (YTM) and Tsuen Wan (TW) placed stronger emphasis on redevelopment. Sham Shui Po (SSP) highlighted redevelopment needs for some areas inside its districts.
- Wan Chai (WC) and SSP gave priority to rehabilitation.
- Central & Western (C & W) saw preservation as their priority.
- Kwun Tong (KT) and Tsuen Wan focused on revitalising their harbourfront and industrial areas.

Rehabilitation

- All seven reports called for a strengthened role for the Government, URA and other agents in rehabilitation.
- The reports pointed out that the lack of owner-corporations in old buildings and the limited financial capability of owners were major hurdles for an effective rehabilitation programme.

Preservation

- All reports recognised the need for preservation of tangible as well as intangible heritage such as the “Evil-beating” rituals in Wan Chai, and the Hakka culture in Tsuen Wan.
- The reports also pointed out that preservation should be district-based, rather than project-based. Some reports advocated establishing heritage trails to connect various cultural spots in a district.

Revitalisation

- All the reports pointed out that having a number of revitalisation projects will enhance the vibrancy of the districts and should be part of the district planning.
- These projects would involve the collective efforts of the Government, urban renewal agencies, NGOs, residents, professionals, local businessmen and private developers.
- The establishment of a local platform to allow for better coordination of local needs and consultation would be a natural requirement, before the proposals can be taken forward.

(c) The Role of Stakeholders in Redevelopment

- (i) On the whole, the reports agreed that the role of private developers in redevelopment should be strengthened.
- (ii) C&W said that redevelopment should be handled by URA as it is difficult to monitor private developers in redevelopment.
- (iii) WC wished to strengthen public-private partnership in redevelopment as it would facilitate greater flexibility in design.

(d) Compensation and Rehousing Policy

- (i) All seven reports supported the provision of more compensation options to domestic residents and shop operators.
- (ii) The reports suggested providing a flat-for-flat option and they pointed out that the tenants' interests should be protected during the redevelopment process.

(e) Public Engagement

Most of the reports advocated the establishment of a district-based platform so as to involve more stakeholders and to encourage them to participate in the regeneration process.

(f) Social Impact Assessment and Social Service Teams

Only SSP offered views on this topic. Its report suggested conducting studies before redevelopment to identify the needs of the community, and for future planning and design reference. The report also stated that the social service teams should be independent from URA.

(g) Financial Arrangements

Only WC considered financial arrangements in its report. The report questioned the self-financing model of the URA and challenged that the model might fail to balance its mission as well as its books.

Specific Views in the DASs on the Seven Major Topics of Urban Renewal

Vision and Scope of Urban Regeneration

6. All the seven reports favoured a *district-based and bottom-up approach* in urban regeneration. The reports all started with analyses of the respective districts' population profile, history and socio-economical characteristics. Recommendations on approaches and projects of urban regeneration were made in consultation with the local community and DCs.

7. All seven reports indicated that future urban regeneration strategies should take into account the local characteristics of the districts. For districts

such as C & W, KT, TW and KC, all of which have a water-front or harbourfront, revitalisation was a key focus. The two industrial districts, KT and TW, explored the feasibility of revitalising their old industrial areas. SSP called for the preservation of social networks and focused on the need of the masses, while KC and C&W called for a better articulation of the characteristics of the districts' heritage elements.

8. The reports also highlighted the need to connect regeneration projects that exist within a district and sometimes across districts. A stand-alone approach in the design and planning of projects was not favoured. KT wished to link its KT Town Centre redevelopment, harbourfront and industrial district revitalisation programmes to the development of Kai Tak, while YTM stressed the need to connect projects via better design of traffic and transportation facilities.

9. The reports also indicated that the “putting people first” approach should continue to guide urban regeneration. The WC, SSP and YTM reports mentioned the need for such an approach. The WC DAS report said that “putting people first” meant giving priority to dealing with the issues of compensation and rehousing. The SSP report said that urban regeneration should not affect the residents' way of living and doing business, and the public's wish to enhance the community's environment should be met. The C&W DAS report said urban regeneration should meet the needs of the elderly, and provide a better housing mix.

Balance of 4Rs Strategy in Urban Regeneration

10. The views of the seven DAS reports were mixed. The right balance for the 4Rs is based on the needs of the individual district.

11. In short, the KC and YTM reports reflected a strong demand for redevelopment in the district. SSP also highlighted redevelopment needs for some areas inside the districts, but said that affected residents' wish should be considered before commencing 4R projects. WC saw rehabilitation as its first priority, while KT and TW placed more emphasis on revitalisation. C&W's priorities were preservation and revitalization.

Redevelopment

12. All seven reports tended to agree on a district-based approach as offering the right balance, with some variation on priorities. The detailed views of the seven reports on balancing of the 4Rs strategy are as follows:

(a) KC

(i) The report pointed out that there was strong demand for the

redevelopment of areas such as 13-street and street blocks nearby.

- (ii) The report said that the tragedy of Ma Tau Wai should never happen again. The report also called for a better understanding of the whereabouts of residents affected by redevelopment projects, so that the effectiveness of redevelopment could be evaluated.

(b) YTM

- (i) The YTM report highlighted the need for the redevelopment of blocks along Sai Yee Street, Temple Street, as well as the fruit market and blocks in Taikoktsui.
- (ii) The report called for a macro-approach to be adopted in the regeneration of the district, so that adverse impacts on residents and nearby areas can be minimised. YTM believed that redevelopment and rehabilitation should have a higher priority than preservation. The report also mentioned owners' difficulties with redevelopment, such as the lack of capital, title problems and compensation for tenants.

(c) SSP

- (i) Instead of giving priority to the 4Rs, the report pointed out that affected residents should be consulted first. The report favoured a community-based approach in the regeneration of the older parts of the district.
- (ii) The report tended to agree that the redevelopment of blocks along Po On Road should be explored. It pointed out that the lack of property management and residents' lack of financial capability were key factors that had created the need for redevelopment.
- (iii) In the future, the needs of the community and the preservation of the community network should be considered in any redevelopment initiative.

(d) WC

- (i) WC placed rehabilitation first, followed by preservation, revitalisation and redevelopment.
- (ii) Their report supported a bottom-up approach in redevelopment and said the URA should consider taking up the role of facilitator, in addition to its current implementer role. The report also pointed

out that an exit mechanism on redevelopment should be developed so that the URA and affected residents could have a way out if a project could not proceed for whatever reason.

(e) C&W

Their report focused on preservation and revitalisation. On redevelopment, the report called for more communication and organic development so that local characteristics could be preserved. The report also cautioned that future redevelopment should be mindful of development density.

(f) KT

(i) Their report suggested two core redevelopment zones in the western and eastern parts of KT.

(ii) The report said that the 4Rs strategy should connect Kwun Tong residents to the redeveloped town centre, and the redeveloped town centre to the harbour-front, as well as to Kai Tak.

(g) TW

(i) Their report suggested controlling future development density so that redevelopment projects could still preserve the old urban areas in grids (陂仿). Redevelopment should not eliminate street shops, so as to minimize the impact of gentrification.

(ii) TW prefers a balance between redevelopment and rehabilitation. The cultural characteristics of the districts' markets should be factored into future planning for 4Rs projects.

Rehabilitation

13. All the reports called for an enhanced role for the URA with regard to rehabilitation, and they pointed out that the lack of owners' corporations for old buildings, and the limited financial capability of owners as major hurdles in any effective rehabilitation programme.

(a) KC

(i) Rehabilitation efforts should not only cover public areas inside a building as this cannot improve the structure of buildings.

(ii) Dilapidation inside residential flats and unauthorised building works

are concerns.

- (iii) Should speed up the legislation process of Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS).
- (iv) Establish a mechanism that gets the Government and owners involved, in terms of assisting in and supervising rehabilitation works.
- (v) The Government to establish an office to oversee and co-ordinate all rehabilitation works.

(b) YTM

- (i) Their report highlighted a number of areas, such as Nathan Road, Canton Road, Tung Choi Street, Fa Yuen Street and Shanghai Street as areas which required rehabilitation, and as soon as possible.
- (ii) It pointed out that the lack of consensus among owners, as well as the lack of capital, as the most significant hurdles in implementing any effective rehabilitation programme.

(c) SSP

- (i) To convert URA acquired flats into rehabilitation resource centres for residents to meet.
- (ii) Internet platform should be created to facilitate communication and discussion regarding rehabilitation.
- (iii) URA should also provide assistance to buildings that do not have owners' corporations, so that they can co-ordinate better among themselves.

(d) WC

Provide more assistance to residents in the formation of owners' corporations, so that property management can be enhanced.

(e) C&W

Work with owners of tenement blocks and assist them on improving the buildings' facilities and structures, so as to better preserve the characteristics of lanes and terraces in the district.

- (f) KT
 - (i) All buildings over 40 years, and that have not been regularly maintained, should have priority in rehabilitation.
 - (ii) Buildings that will enter into the above-mentioned category in the coming decade, and that are without owners' corporations, should be considered in future rehabilitation plans.
 - (iii) Future rehabilitation plans should take into account the cost factor and willingness of owners.
- (g) TW
 - (i) Similar to KT. All buildings over 40 years, and that have not been regularly maintained, should have priority in rehabilitation.
 - (ii) Buildings that will enter into the above-mentioned category in the coming decade, and that are without owners' corporations, should be considered in future rehabilitation plans.
 - (iii) Future rehabilitation plans should take into account the cost factor and willingness of owners.

Preservation

14. All seven reports recognised the need for the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, and pointed out that preservation should be district-based, rather than project-based.

- (a) KC
 - (i) A KC Heritage Trail is needed.
 - (ii) Sea traffic connecting the district to other areas should be enhanced so as to maximize public use of such a preserved heritage.
 - (iii) The Cattle Depot should be preserved and revitalised.
- (b) YTM
 - (i) Both tangible and intangible heritage should be preserved.
 - (ii) Priority in preservation should be based on historical value, to be

followed by cultural value, collective memory and economic impacts as a result of tourism.

(iii) The biggest hurdle with regard to preservation is the divided views among different groups, the lack of coordination and professional/technical support.

(c) SSP

(i) A SSP Development Cultural Trail is required.

(ii) To modify public facilities and inject arts elements into these facilities.

(iii) Areas covering Yam Chau Street, Yee Kuk Street, Nam Cheong Street and Yuen Chau Street have graded buildings. Future planning for these areas should be preservation driven.

(iv) Public open spaces should be created in the above-mentioned areas.

(d) WC

(i) The heritage trails in Wanchai should be actively promoted.

(ii) Local characteristics and traditional culture, such as the “Evil Beating” (打小人) ceremony and local snacks stalls should be promoted.

(iii) Public consultation and participation are required in order to determine what to preserve in the district.

(e) C&W

(i) Tenement buildings, ambience of lane and terrace in the district should be preserved.

(ii) Markets, such as Graham Street market and Bridges Street market, should be preserved.

(iii) The Central Market building should be preserved and revitalised.

(iv) A heritage trail with special focus on local political and historical development is suggested.

(v) The report also highlighted a number of projects that the C&W DC has required. These need further studies and consultations with the DC.

(f) KT

A museum should be established at the former Royal Air Force base.

(g) TW

(i) Intangible heritage, such as the history of Hakka people, should be preserved.

(ii) Directional signages are recommended so as to facilitate tourists' visits.

(iii) Regular maintenance of heritage elements, and the promotion of traditional festivals, are recommended.

Revitalisation

15. All the reports pointed out that having a number of revitalisation projects would enhance the vibrancy of the districts and should be part of the planning process in regeneration. These projects would involve the collective efforts of the Government, urban renewal agencies, NGOs, residents, professionals, local businessmen and private developers.

16. The establishment of a local platform to allow for better coordination of local needs would be a natural requirement, before the proposals can be taken forward.

(a) KC

(i) The Cattle Depot should be preserved and revitalized. Its nearby public open space should be revitalized and turned into a public open space or Café.

(ii) A community hall is required.

(iii) More greenery, public open spaces and a harbour front walkway with sea traffic access were suggested.

(b) YTM

- (i) Sneaker street; women's street (Nelson Street) and Temple Street top the list of revitalisation calls for the district.
 - (ii) Revitalisation does not only refer to the beautification of streets -- transportation, hygiene and security should also be factored into the planning process.
 - (iii) Arts elements and social enterprises should be considered.
- (c) SSP
- (i) A detailed study on revitalising the harbourfront area should be conducted.
 - (ii) Industrial buildings in non-industrial areas should be revitalised. A web site should be created to publicise these buildings' rental information.
 - (iii) Better connect Lai Chi Kok Road to the reclaimed area so as to ensure better integration of the two areas (old and new).
- (d) WC
- (i) Pedestrian walkways should be improved - build under-ground pedestrian networks near Hopewell Centre.
 - (ii) Tai Yuen Street market should be further enhanced by improving its hygiene.
 - (iii) More greenery is required on Johnston Road, especially near Wo Cheong and the former Dragon Gate Restaurant.
- (e) C&W
- (i) Harbourfront needs further revitalisation - connect the split areas along the waterfront.
 - (ii) An additional escalator connecting the harbour-front and the areas along the hill side may be worth exploring.
- (f) TW
- (i) Areas such as Dun Dee Fong, Lady Trench Clinic, Tai Bo Fong, Yee

Bo Fong, Luen Yan Street eateries centre and Lu Tak Wai are given priority in revitalisation.

(ii) Industrial buildings in non-industrial areas, as well as the water-front areas should be revitalised.

(g) KT

(i) Harbourfront remains a focus. The area should be revitalised and a bicycle trail and harbour-front park should be created.

(ii) Industrial buildings adjacent to the new town centre should be revitalized, and more quality business facilities should be provided.

(iii) The exposed drain should be beautified

The Role of Stakeholders in Redevelopment

17. Only five reports touched on URA's role in more details. C&W said that redevelopment should be handled by URA as it was difficult to monitor private developers in redevelopment projects. WC wished to strengthen public-private partnership in redevelopment as that would allow for more flexible design.

Compensation and Rehousing Policy

18. All the reports supported providing more compensation options for domestic residents and shop operators. The reports suggest providing a flat-for-flat option and pointed out that tenants' interests should be protected during the redevelopment process.

(a) KC

Residents should be rehoused in situ and options should be provided for residents to purchase a flat in the redeveloped area. Tenants' interests should be protected during the redevelopment process.

(b) YTM

Impact on shop operators and residents should be carefully assessed as both groups are close to each other.

(c) SSP

Compensation for non owner-occupiers should not be lower than that for owner-occupiers. SSP advocated a flat-for-flat option and said that flats in different sizes should be provided in the redeveloped area, for sale or for rental, so that residents could move back. SSP also said tenants' interests should be protected during redevelopment.

(d) WC

Compensation for non owner-occupiers should be the same as that for owner-occupiers. The report suggests providing flat-for-flat and shop-for-shop as options in compensating residents and shop operators.

(e) C&W

Residents should be able to move back to the redeveloped area through a flat-for-flat arrangement. The redevelopment agent should keep track of the displaced residents and see what can be done to assist them.

(f) KT

The report did not mention compensation in detail.

(g) TW

Should prevent special interest groups from exploiting the minority's interests during the regeneration process.

Public Engagement

19. Most reports advocated a district-based platform that could involve more local stakeholders in the regeneration process.

(a) KC

A consultation body that consists of representatives from Government, academia, NGOs, and District Councils should be established. URA and the Government should be the executive arm of the body and private developers should be involved.

(b) YTM

An open platform should be established for affected tenants and owners, to allow for the exchange of views with relevant Government departments.

(c) SSP

Shop operators, owners and residents should be able to participate in the planning and decision making process of regeneration. An independent mechanism should be established for the settlement of disputes during regeneration. Residents should be able to participate in such a mechanism.

(d) WC

More regeneration issues should be tabled for discussion by the public. A mechanism that facilitates stronger public private partnership should be explored. Communication and education on regeneration should be strengthened.

(e) C&W

A mechanism to monitor urban regeneration, and that involves residents, local organisations and District Councils should be explored.

(f) KT

The issue was not discussed in detail.

(g) TW

Channels to strengthen participation by residents in the planning of the district, and that ensure support from the local community network during regeneration, should be explored.

Social Impact Assessment and Social Service Teams

20. Among the seven reports, only SSP and WC offered views on the topic of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and Social Service Teams (SSTs).

(a) SSP

Their report suggested conducting studies before redevelopment to identify the needs of the community, and for future planning and design reference. The report also suggested that the SSTs should be independent of URA and should follow up the cases of all the affected residents. The District Councils should act as a platform of communication between URA and the residents, and should consult the residents on various details of the urban renewal.

(b) WC

- (i) Some respondents commented that since URA conducted SIA only after it had decided to take forward the redevelopment project so as to avoid speculation among the public, this would make SIA become meaningless as the redevelopment would proceed anyway even though it was found to have a great impact on the community.
- (ii) Since SSTs are employed by the URA, there are potential conflicts in the role of SSTs who act as the representative of the affected residents. Some social workers said that the residents had less trust in them due to their conflicting role. It is suggested that a dedicated non-governmental and non profit-making organisation be set up to address the needs of the affected residents.

Financial Arrangements

21. Only WC touched on financial arrangements. The report questioned the self-financing model of URA and challenged that the model might not be able to balance its mission and its books.

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