

Steering Committee on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy

**A Study on the Achievements and Challenges
of Urban Renewal in Hong Kong**

Background

1. The current Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) was published in November 2001. It spells out the principles, objectives of urban renewal, and the targets, the role of Urban Renewal Authority (URA), the land assembly process, the processing of projects including the social impact assessment, financial arrangement, parameters and guidelines. The URS was issued to the Urban Renewal Authority¹, i.e. The URA is the implementation agency of the URS.

Objective of study

2. The objective of the proposed study is to analyse and consolidate our local experience in urban renewal as we proceed with the URS review.

Scope of study

3. While there are diverse views on what urban renewal should be, to take stock of the achievements and challenges in urban renewal since the formation of the URA, the most appropriate yardstick and framework would be the relevant provisions in the URS.
4. The following table spells out the various provisions in the URS that would be relevant in this study and the possible methodology. While an overall stocktaking of the work done by the URA since its formation will be made, owing to the enormous amount of documentations involved, most of the detailed analyses will be performed on a number of selected cases.

¹ Quoted indirectly from the Preface of the URS.

Paragraph	Provisions in the URS	Possible methodology
5	Objectives of urban renewal	
(a)	Restructuring and replanning designated target areas;	Document review of planning/study done in the target areas.
(b)	Designing more effective and environmentally-friendly local transport and road networks;	Documentary review on relevant transport impact study. Interviews with relevant officials in the Transport Department.
(c)	Rationalizing land uses;	Documentary review of changes in land uses
(d)	Redeveloping dilapidated buildings into new buildings of modern standard and environmentally-friendly design;	1) Dilapidation: Documentary review on conditions of buildings redeveloped (process of assessment, assessment data if any, evidence from Building Department) 2) Modern standard: presumed to be achieved 3) Environmentally-friendly design: Documentary review (process of assessment, assessment data if any)
(e)	Promoting sustainable development in the urban area;	Documentary review and chart the efforts made.
(f)	Promoting the rehabilitation of buildings in need of repair;	Documentary review and chart the efforts made and output produced and interview stakeholders
(g)	Preserving buildings, sites and structures of historical, cultural or architectural interest;	Documentary review and if necessary interview experts and stakeholders
(h)	Preserving as far as practicable local characteristics;	Documentary review on the preservation/changes in local characteristics

(i)	Preserving the social networks of the local community;	Documentary review and make use of initial results of tracking study
(j)	Providing purpose-built housing for groups with special needs, such as the elderly and the disabled;	Documentary review
(k)	Providing more open space and community/welfare facilities; and	(part of the review in (c))
(l)	Enhancing the townscape with attractive landscape and urban design.	Documentary review on some “redevelopment” and “revitalization” projects and interview stakeholders
6	The Government aims to achieve the following targets through a 20-year urban renewal programme	
(a)	Redevelopment of some 2 000 ageing or dilapidated buildings;	Documentary review
(b)	Improvement of the environmental quality of 67 hectares of old and run-down urban areas;	
(c)	Rehousing of some 27 000 tenant households;	
(d)	Provision of around 60 000 m ² of open space;	
(e)	Provision of about 90 000 m ² of floor space for use as community/welfare facilities; and	
(f)	Provision of seven new schools.	
8	The URA is tasked to implement an urban renewal programme consisting of 200 new projects and 25 uncompleted projects of the Land Development Corporation (LDC) in 20 years.	Documentary review
10	To increase its public	

	accountability and transparency	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The URA should issue guidelines on the declaration of interests to its Board directors. ● The URA Board should consider opening its meetings to the public as far as practicable. ● The URA should also consider setting up an independent audit team. 	Documentary review
13	Determination of priority	
(a)	Whether the proposed project area is old and dilapidated and requires urgent redevelopment;	Documentary review on the evidence of these factors have been considered and the available evidence of such factors.
(b)	Whether the buildings lack basic sanitation facilities or are exposed to potential fire risks;	
(c)	Whether the living conditions of the residents in the proposed project area are satisfactory;	
(d)	Whether the proposed project will improve the area by replanning and restructuring;	
(e)	Whether the proposed project area will achieve a better utilization of land after redevelopment; and	
(f)	Whether the rehabilitation of buildings in the proposed project area is a practicable and viable option.	
15	Maintenance costs reimbursement scheme	Documentary review of the scheme and the extent of use of such scheme with regard to the maintenance or repair works required by the Buildings Department (under

		the Buildings Ordinance (Chapter 123)), the provision or improvement of fire service installations or equipment required by the Fire Services Department (under the Fire Safety (Commercial Premises) Ordinance (Chapter 502)), and the lift works or escalator works required by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (under the Lifts and Escalators (Safety) Ordinance (Chapter 327))
16	Preservation should include	
(a)	Preservation and restoration of buildings, sites and structures of historical, cultural or architectural interest; and	Documentary review and interviews of experts whenever necessary.
(b)	Retention of the local colour of the community and the historical characteristics of different districts.	
17	As far as practicable, the preserved heritage buildings should be put to proper community, public or other beneficial use.	Documentary review
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The URA should consider setting up an advisory committee under its Board to advise on preservation work. ● The URA should also ensure proper interface with the relevant authorities, such as the Culture and Heritage Commission, the Antiquities Advisory Board, the Home Affairs Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services 	Documentary review

	Department.	
21	Although the URA may request resumption of land for redevelopment under the Ordinance, it should consider acquiring land by agreement before making such a request to SPL.	Documentary review
26	The URA should establish a district advisory committee in each of the nine target areas to give advice and assistance to the URA. Representatives of owners, tenants, District Councils and local non-governmental organizations with an interest in urban renewal should be appointed.	Documentary review
27	Consultation on development projects and development schemes	Documentary review
28-31	Social Impact Assessment	Documentary review of the relevant SIA reports
32	Setting up of Social Service Teams	Documentary review, and making use of the workshop report with Social Service Teams conducted by HKU research team

5. It has been frequently commented that community expectations and aspirations have been changing and this has created substantial challenges to the work of the URA. This aspect of changing expectations and aspirations would be examined in this study.
6. Similar to the study of urban renewal experience in the six Asian Cities, this study will also select a number of urban renewal projects implemented by the URA. The proposed projects include:
 - Redevelopment projects - H16 (Johnston Road, having a preservation element); K7 (Kwun Tong Town Centre); K13 (Tsuen Wan Town Centre);

- Rehabilitation projects/initiatives - Chung Sing Mansion (the first one in the rehabilitation programme); Tai Kok Tsui cluster; Rehabilitation Material Incentive Scheme, and Loan Scheme.
 - Preservation projects/initiatives: Mallory Street/Burrows Street project
 - Revitalisation projects/initiatives: Tai Kok Tsui street beautification
7. While the proposed study would be focused on the existing URS and the work done by the URA, a review of urban renewal would be incomplete without stock-taking the efforts in the private sector.
 8. The redevelopment work of the Housing Authority and Housing Society would not be included in this study.

Methodology

9. Documentary review forms the major part of the study. Most of the relevant documents would be supplied by the URA. Only non-confidential documents will be sought. Subject to the confirmation of the selection of case studies, a list of required documents, such as submissions to Town Planning Board, District Councils, District Advisory Committees of the URA, will be compiled.
10. Assistance from the Buildings Department, Lands Department, Transport Department, Fire Services Department and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department would also be needed to obtain the necessary information.
11. There are two alternatives of capturing the views of the general public, particularly, those living or conducting business adjacent to urban renewal projects. One is to conduct a secondary analysis of studies done by the URA and other organizations in the past 8 years, and two is to conduct representative sample surveys in selected areas chosen for the case studies mentioned above:
 - There are already quite a number of studies that had been conducted by the URA in many of its target areas (including Wanchai, Sheung Wan, Shamshuipo, and Kwun Tong). Many other organizations including district councils and community groups have also been conducted studies related to urban renewal in the past few years. A documentary review and secondary analysis could be conducted to fully utilize the data collected so far.

- Alternatively, a representative sample surveys can be conducted in the selected areas chosen for the case studies with an emphasis on the residents living and operators conducting business in the vicinity of redevelopment projects. This type of sample survey in three different areas would take about 30 weeks to be completed.
12. Supplementary, interviews and focus groups will be conducted, whenever necessary, with stakeholders including affected individuals (residents and shop operators); professional groups, community and concern groups, staff of URA, government officials, etc.

Duration

13. The project can start in August, 2009. If the method of secondary data analysis is adopted, the study can be completed in 5 months, otherwise if sample surveys are to be conducted in the selected areas of case studies, the study will take approximately 8 months to be completed.

C.K. Law, Associated Professor
Department of Social Work and Social Administration, University of Hong
Kong
4 July 2009.