

Steering Committee on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy

Notes of the Fourth Meeting

Date: 22 January 2009 (Thursday)

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Venue: Room 822, Central Government Offices (West Wing)

Present

Mrs Carrie LAM	Secretary for Development (Chairperson)
Mr Andrew CHAN	
Professor Stephen CHEUNG	
Mr HO Hei-wah	
Mr KWAN Chuk-fai	
Mr David C LEE	
Mr Vincent NG	
Dr Peter WONG	
Ms Ada WONG	
Mr Laurie LO	Principal Assistant Secretary for Development (Planning & Lands) (Secretary)

In Attendance

Mr Raymond YOUNG	Permanent Secretary for Development (Planning & Lands)
Mr Tommy YUEN	Deputy Secretary for Development (Planning & Lands)
Mr Raymond CHEUNG	Political Assistant to Secretary for Development
Miss Amy CHAN	Administrative Assistant to Secretary for Development
Mrs Ava NG	Director of Planning
Miss Annie TAM	Director of Lands
Mr AU Choi-kai	Director of Buildings
Mr Quinn LAW	Managing Director, Urban Renewal Authority
Ms Iris TAM	Executive Director, Urban Renewal Authority

Ms Miranda YEAP	Assistant Secretary for Development (Urban Renewal)
Miss Jane KWAN	Assistant Secretary for Development (Urban Renewal)
Dr LAW Chi-kwong	Policy study consultant (Research Team, University of Hong Kong)
Ms Lisa HO	Policy study consultant (Research Team, University of Hong Kong)
Mrs Sandra MAK	Public engagement consultant (Chief Executive Officer, A-World Consulting Ltd.)
Ms Anna LEE	Public engagement consultant (Deputy General Manager, A-World Consulting Ltd.)
Mr Benson LUK	Public engagement consultant (Account Executive, A-World Consulting Ltd.)
Ms Angela To	Public engagement consultant (Account Manager, A-World Consulting Ltd.)
Ms Nelly Fu	Public engagement consultant (Account Manager, A-World Consulting Ltd.)
Mr K K Yuen	Public engagement consultant (Director, AWTC Consultants Ltd.)
Ms Jacqueline CHOY	Public engagement consultant (Programme Manager, AWTC Consultants Ltd.)

Absent with apologies

Prof David Lung
Prof Nora TAM

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Item 1: Confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting

1. The meeting confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 October 2008.

Item 2: Progress report on policy study
(SC Paper No. 1/2009)

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2. The policy study consultant (Dr LAW Chi-kwong) gave a powerpoint presentation on his initial observations on lessons learnt in study of six selected Asian cities, namely, Singapore, Seoul, Tokyo, Taipei, Guangzhou and Shanghai. Over 50 informants from government departments and NGOs were interviewed. At least one urban redevelopment project and one preservation project were identified and visited in each selected city, with particular emphases on the issues of institutional framework, models and approaches on urban renewal and community engagement. The consultant made comparisons and contrasts on the mode of redevelopment, conservation, rehabilitation, the role of government, the private sector and the community in these six cities.

3. The consultant summarized that it would be difficult to rely on private sector's redevelopment efforts and noted that whilst the 90% consent level required for privately led redevelopment in Hong Kong was the highest. The community network in Hong Kong was the weakest amongst the cities being studied; the social fabric was emerging as an important aspect in all discussions, with many controversial arguments on the transfer of plot ratio. Rehabilitation was emphasized as the responsibility of private owners. The consultant also highlighted that the differences in the official terms used, institutional framework for urban regeneration, political systems, land policies, culture and customs, and the relationship between the government and developers would all pose limitations on the comparison value of the study.

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4. The Chairperson informed Members that the policy study consultant would produce the last chapter of the study report on lessons learnt with special relevance to Hong Kong after listening to Members' comments on his initial observations and would aim to complete the last chapter by end January 2009. She invited Members' comments on the policy study.

Policy study
consultant

5. In response to the Chairperson's enquiry, the consultant clarified that in the case of Singapore, whilst private property owners were responsible for maintaining their own buildings, the government was actively providing financial assistance and pushing the private sector to beautify the outlook of the city.

6. A Member requested the consultant to elaborate on the following aspects: (a) the physical aspect i.e. planning and design of redevelopment, e.g. land use mix and the use of design to revitalize old areas; (b) conservation of heritage during the urban redevelopment process; (c) coordination of various authorities in the institutional framework e.g. planning authority, heritage conservation authority; and (d) the land bank concept.

Policy study
consultant

7. A Member suggested the consultant to elaborate on the reconciliation of different views amongst the owners, various stakeholders and the community at large. The consultant said they noted diverse consensus building processes in the cities they studied. The Chairperson noted that the degree of owners' participation in redevelopment projects was often affected by the financial prospect of the projects. If the potential gains vis-à-vis the risks were low, more owners would go for cash compensation.

Policy study
consultant

8. Another Member asked for elaboration on government policies in preserving the community network in these Asian cities and assessment of changes in the original

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community network after completion of the redevelopment projects. The consultant said that the ratio of owner-occupiers to residents in other cities was quite different from that in Hong Kong (properly due to the predominance of houses and low-rise buildings in redevelopment areas) and tenants had been a major source of conflicts in redevelopment projects.

9. The consultant added that in the cities they studied there was not a legal requirement for social impact assessments and, with the exception of Seoul, tracking studies on the original residents in a redevelopment area were seldom conducted, so he could not draw any conclusion on the differences in the proportion of residents moving back after completion of redevelopment.

10. A member suggested that the consultant should start from the major issues usually involved in Hong Kong's urban regeneration process e.g. compensation, preservation of social fabrics, preservation of heritage. Another member noted that planning and heritage conservation were inseparable and asked whether the consultant had identified any urban regeneration model that would be suitable for Hong Kong. The consultant replied that all cities had to face similar problems in their redevelopment process but as each city had its own background, a model worked well in one city might not be repeated in another city. He thought it was more important for Hong Kong to learn from the experience of other cities through this study than to identify an example that could readily be transferred to Hong Kong. He noted as an example that Singapore, due to its uniquely stable government and political system, had been able to implement very detailed and impressive long term urban planning, but this would be difficult for other cities to copy.

11. A member believed that if financial return was an important consideration in urban regeneration, it would

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inevitably affect the existing community network and social fabrics in old urban areas. The Chairperson added that the demand on public resources should also be a key consideration in the development of a sustainable urban regeneration solution.

12. A Member commented that the study did not pay adequate attention to the business backdrops in the cities being studied. He suggested that the URS Review should take a business approach, rather than just a planning or financial approach. He believed it would be useful for the consultants to talk to developers in the respective cities to understand their business environment. An urban regeneration model would work only when it could create value. The member further commented that it would be difficult to preserve social fabrics as they could not last forever. He believed preservation of heritage should be selective and the contents of preservation should be determined through a public engagement process.

Policy study
consultant

13. The consultant responded that some hypotheses about the underlying relationship between the government and property developers were difficult to prove. On social fabrics, he noted that the current trend in other cities was for the governments to promote organic development.

14. A Member requested the consultant to pick a couple of redevelopment projects as examples and list out the compensation options offered to the affected residents and retail shops, as well as the mechanism for community participation. The consultant responded that as the study covered mainly urban regeneration projects that had been completed, it would be difficult for them to locate those residents who had moved out. Nevertheless, the consultant undertook to provide some supplementary information, e.g. case studies, for members' reference.

Policy study
consultant

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Secretary &
policy study
consultant

15. The consultant would submit a complete final draft report with an executive summary to the Secretariat. The Secretary said that all reports and papers presented to the Steering Committee would be uploaded to the URS Review website after obtaining members' agreement.

Item 3: Progress report on public engagement
(SC Paper No. 2/2009)

16. The Meeting noted the report submitted by the public engagement consultant on the latest progress of public engagement, including focus group discussions, Announcement of Public Interest (API), website revamp, partnering organizations, radio programme, etc.

17. The Chairperson informed the Meeting that she would lead a delegation to Tokyo in early February. The delegation would include four Steering Committee Members, six URA's URS Review Committee members and eight District Council Members who were also members of URA's District Advisory Committees. URA staff, consultants and staff from the Development Bureau would also join the delegation. The visit itinerary would include meetings with government officials responsible for urban regeneration and academics knowledgeable on this subject, and site visits to selected urban regeneration projects. The URA Chairman would lead another delegation to Shanghai in late March 2009.

Item 4: Key Issues identified at the Envisioning Stage
(SC Paper No. 3/2009)

18. The Chairperson said that the Review was now at an important juncture and she was looking forward to advice from the Steering Committee on the topics and issues identified at the Envisioning Stage that should be critically discussed with the general public at the Public Engagement

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Members

Secretary

Stage. She invited Members to give more thoughts to the key issues outlined in the paper and send in written comments to the Secretary. The Secretary would gather Members' views and submit another paper for discussion at a special Steering Committee meeting to be held in March 2009.

[Post-meeting note: the special Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for 9 March 2009.]

Item 5: Publicity plan for the Public Engagement Stage (SC Paper No. 4/2009)

19. The Public Engagement Consultant said that the next Public Engagement Stage would be a time for wider public involvement and a strong publicity programme would be essential to capture the right level of visibility, views and recognition in the community.

20. The consultant briefed Members on the publicity plan for the Public Engagement Stage, including the launch of the Idea Shop in Wan Chai, sponsored radio programmes, road show exhibitions, topical discussion sessions, public forums, computer game, Announcement of Public Interest, general media strategy, etc.

21. The Consultant also informed Members that the first idea shop would be set up in Tai Yuen Street in Wan Chai and would be officially opened in February 2009. The partnering organizations and other interested parties would be allowed to use the idea shop for organizing URS Review-related public engagement activities.

Item 6: Partnering Organizations Programme (SC Paper No.5/2009)

22. The Public Engagement Consultant introduced the paper and invite Members' views.

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23. A Member commented that there was not enough publicity for the Programme as invitations were not sent to individual NGOs. The Chairperson appealed to Members to help publicize the programme to their contacts.

24. The Consultant pointed out that the Programme was open to all District Councils, schools and non-profit making organisations. A press release was issued when the Programme was launched and information about the Programme was uploaded to the URS Review website. All interest groups who had attended a focus group session and left their contact information were followed up with e-mails. The consultant had also sent information about the Programme to District Councils and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and asked for their assistance to disseminate the information to local district organisations and NGOs.

Public
engagement
consultant

25. The Consultant undertook to apply flexibility to the 30 January application deadline.

26. The Chairperson said that due to the present economic situation, the URS strategy had to compete with many social and economic issues for press coverage and public attention. The Consultant invited Members to refer to them organisations that might be interested in this Programme and they would proactively approach them and invited them to submit applications.

Public
engagement
consultant

27. A member suggested the Consultant to consider producing a comic book to promote the younger generation's awareness of the Review. The consultant agreed to follow up on other innovative publicity possibilities as they communicated with students of the partnering organizations.

Public
engagement
consultant

28. The Chairperson said that the URS Review was a

Chairperson

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unique public engagement exercise as it included an envisioning stage and allowed six to seven months for the public to contribute to the setting of agenda for the Review. She would also discuss with the 18 District Council Chairmen in the near future when she met them. The Chairperson appealed to Members' suggestions and new ideas to strengthen the reaching out effort of the Review.

29. A Member suggested to give more thoughts on the format of the public forums. The Consultant agreed to make reference to public forums held on other topics when it considered the format of the public forums and topical discussion sessions.

Public
Engagement
Consultant

[The consultants left the meeting at this juncture.]

Item 7: Any other business

30. The meeting ended at 5:00p.m.

**Secretariat, Steering Committee on Review of the URS
February 2009**