

Steering Committee on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy

Notes of the Fifth Meeting

Date: 21 April 2009 (Tuesday)

Time: 3:30 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

Professor David LUNG

Mr Vincent NG

Dr Peter WONG

Ms Ada WONG

Absent with apologies

Prof Nora TAM

In Attendance

Mrs Ava NG Permanent Secretary for Development
(Planning & Lands) (Atg)

Mr Raymond CHEUNG Political Assistant to Secretary for
Development

Miss Amy CHAN Administrative Assistant to Secretary for
Development

Mr Terence YU Press Secretary to Secretary for Development

Miss Annie TAM Director of Lands

Mr AU Choi-kai Director of Buildings

Mr Jimmy LEUNG Director of Planning (Atg)

Mr Quinn LAW Managing Director, Urban Renewal Authority

Ms Iris TAM Executive Director, Urban Renewal Authority

Mr Laurie LO	Principal Assistant Secretary (Planning & Lands) (<i>Secretary</i>)
Ms Miranda YEAP	Assistant Secretary (Urban Renewal)
Dr LAW Chi-kwong	Policy study consultant (University of Hong Kong Research Team)
Ms Lisa HO	Policy study consultant (University of Hong Kong Research Team)
Mr K K YUEN	Public engagement consultant (Director, AWTC Consultants Ltd.)
Ms Anna LEE	Public engagement consultant (Deputy General Manager, A-World Consulting Ltd.)

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Item 1: Confirmation of notes of the previous meeting

The meeting confirmed the notes of the previous meeting held on 9 March 2009.

Item 2: Policy Study on Urban Regeneration in other Asian Cities

Progress report and final study report by the Policy Study Consultant (SC Paper No.7/2009)

2. The Chairperson invited members to comment on the final report, in particular the concluding chapters, which contained the conclusions and recommendations of the policy study.

3. The policy study consultant clarified that the term *urban renewal* in the report referred to the overall strategy while the term *urban redevelopment* referred to the reconstruction part in redevelopment projects. The consultant also clarified that the terms *conservation* and *preservation* used in the Policy study report referred to a business strategy of urban renewal in Hong Kong rather than just a component in redevelopment projects.

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4. Director of Buildings pointed out that although the legislation in some foreign countries exempted certain conservation projects from compliance with the building codes, it did not mean allowing a lower safety standard for such projects. The exemption was not to relax the building codes but only aimed to provide flexibility for conservation projects to meet the safety requirements through non-standard solutions.

5. In response to members' comments on the wordings and presentation of the report, the policy study consultant said he would take their comments into account and revise the report accordingly.

Policy study
consultant

6. The Chairperson invited Members to forward any further comments to the policy study consultant before the end of the week for incorporation into the final report. The final version of the report would be uploaded to the URS Review website.

Members
Policy study
consultant

7. The Chairperson said that apart from overseas studies, there should also be more systematic analyses on Hong Kong's urban regeneration experience. The meeting was informed that URA, with assistance from the Buildings Department, was conducting a survey on the physical conditions and social aspects of older buildings in Hong Kong. The first part was a desk-top study on old buildings in URA's target areas and the second part would involve site inspection of the buildings and social surveys on the residents in these buildings.

8. The Chairperson noted the policy study consultant's remark in the concluding chapters that building rehabilitation in Hong Kong was progressing well and was moving ahead of other cities. She suggested a desk-top study to summarise the work of Buildings Department and other public agencies in building maintenance and the proposed legal framework.

DEVB

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9. A member agreed that there should be a study on Hong Kong's experience in building maintenance, in particular what Government could do to encourage owners to maintain their own buildings. URA noted that rehabilitation could not resolve all urban decay problems and their building conditions survey would provide more information for further deliberation on this matter.

10. The Chairperson added that the proposed study on building maintenance should also examine whether the legislative proposals on building inspection and maintenance could help arrest the trend of urban decay.

DEVB

11. The Chairperson also suggested more in-depth studies in the following areas:

- (a) more systematic study of the achievements and problems encountered by urban regeneration projects so far;
- (b) district aspiration studies, e.g. providing support to District Councils in URA's action areas to identify the need for urban regeneration using a district-based approach;
- (c) economic impact assessment of revitalised areas to provide a new assessment framework to replace the traditional direct cost and benefit analysis for individual projects.

DEVB/URA

12. The Chairperson said that we could consider further whether these studies could be carried out in-house or by outside consultants.

13. Members discussed whether the economic impact assessment should be done hand in hand with a social impact assessment. Members generally agreed that the economic

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impact of an urban regeneration project could be assessed by comparing economic activities in the project area before and after the project. URA said that they had done a similar study on the Langham Place project by comparing the rental levels and rateable value of properties in the area.

14. Some members thought that there should also be qualitative studies on the social dimensions, as it might be difficult to quantify them. A member also noted that tracking studies would be a useful tool to find out whether the quality of life of the affected residents was indeed improved through urban regeneration. URA said that they were carrying out a pilot tracking study on one of its redevelopment projects.

15. A member noted that sometimes tenants affected by one URA project might continue to live in other dilapidated buildings in the same district. Some occupants affected by redevelopment projects, though they were eligible for public housing, would opt for cash allowances and stay in the original district because they found it difficult to find another job if they moved to public housing estates away from urban districts.

16. The Chairperson agreed that these were complicated problems relating to social welfare programmes and public housing policies; yet it would be difficult to expand the scope of the URS review at this stage to cover all these issues.

17. A member suggested looking at the impact of urban regeneration on the local economies, especially how small businesses might be affected by gentrification.

18. The Chairperson said that we needed to collect more information on how life might have improved for those affected owners who received compensation and moved. URA said that it was difficult to collect such information

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because satisfied owners usually would not leave their contact details after they moved out of the project areas. Hence, the more vocal owners were usually unsatisfied owners. The affected tenants were more prepared to stay in touch with the social service teams though, so it would be easier to collect information on them even after they had moved out.

19. A member suggested that we might use a similar methodology as that in the consultancy study on overseas policies and practices to study the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches of urban regeneration adopted in Hong Kong before. Other members commented that it was a matter of choice of research methods. They noted that whilst the findings of a case study might be less representative, it could provide useful insights on impact of the urban regeneration programme on the quality of life of people affected and help draw up lessons to learn.

20. The policy study consultant said that members had identified the need for more information on the achievements and problems of Hong Kong's urban regeneration programme. A study would be useful, though there would be limitations to its conclusions. He noted the change in social values during the past few years and considered that a case study approach would help identify the factors contributing to the successes or failures of projects which were similar in nature. But he cautioned that the findings would not be conclusive because the study could probably not provide the necessary level of scientific evidence for such purpose. He pointed out that it would be easier to assess the social impact of projects completed a while ago than on-going projects. He agreed to discuss with URA further how to take the study forward.

Policy study
consultant

Item 3: Public Engagement Programme

21. The Chairperson suggested to handle the discussion

of the papers in the following order:

Report on the Envisioning Stage by the Public Engagement Consultant

(SC Paper No.9/2009)

22. Members endorsed the Report on the Envisioning Stage prepared by the public engagement consultant and noted that the report would be uploaded onto the website on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy.

Agenda for the Public Engagement Stage

(SC Paper No.10/2009)

23. The Chairperson said that the Public Engagement Stage would be a time for wider public involvement and it would be essential to attract the right level of attention, views and recognition in the community. The Secretary explained that the list of questions tabled at the meeting was developed based on members' discussions at the special meeting held on 9 March. Subject to members' comments, these questions would be presented at the road show exhibitions and in the booklet prepared for distribution at the public engagement stage. He added that the exhibition panels and the booklet would also contain information on the current URS, relevant overseas practices, and the public views expressed on these topics during the Envisioning Stage.

Members

24. The Secretary said that members' suggestion of developing a district-based urban regeneration strategy would be discussed with the public from different angles. The Chairperson asked Members whether they thought the list had covered all topics to be raised for discussion with the public and whether the presentation could be improved.

25. Some members said that the questions as drafted were not interesting enough to stimulate active public participation. The Chairperson agreed that the questions

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should be presented in a more interesting way to help generate more heated discussions during the Public Engagement Stage.

26. A member suggested to include true stories to make the issues more personal and appealing to the general public. Another member said that there should be more visual images to attract people's attention. Another member suggested to include URA's experience in various projects in the past.

27. The meeting agreed to proceed with the questions proposed for the roadshows, as they were for educational purpose. The questions to be included in the booklet would be further revised to reflect Members' comments.

Secretary

28. The Chairperson invited members to give further thoughts to the questions and suggest how they could be further improved before the end of the week.

Members

Progress report by the Public Engagement Consultant (SC Paper No.8/2009)

29. The public engagement consultant presented progress of the public engagement programme and briefed members on the publicity plan during the Public Engagement Stage.

30. The public engagement consultant informed the meeting that the first roadshow would start on 7 May. The public could express their views at the Discussion Corner at the roadshow and record their views by video. The Chinese University research team would also conduct structured interviews to collect visitors' opinions.

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31. The public forums would be co-organised with the relevant District Councils and would dovetail with topical discussions on individual topics. The first topical discussion would be held on 16 May, and the first public forum would be held on 30 May. Advertisement would be placed on various Chinese and English newspapers before 7 May to inform the public of the planned public engagement activities.

32. In response to a member's question, the Secretary said that there would be eight topical discussions, each on one specific topic. There would be opportunities for individual participants to make presentations to all at the beginning of the sessions. Participants would then be divided into smaller groups for more thorough discussions before a reporting back and general discussion session involving all participants.

33. In response to the Chairperson, the public engagement consultant explained that participants at the topical discussion sessions would include public enrolment and invited guests. Professionals and experts in the relevant topics would be invited to give presentations and serve as facilitators. There would also be government officials and URA staff to provide background information and respond to comments on the spot.

34. A member noted that whether the topical discussions would achieve their objectives would sometimes depend on the nature of associations invited, as some were less accommodating to different views and would be less conducive to forging of consensus.

35. The Chairperson said that there would be continuous refinement to the public engagement programme. She asked for a session with the District Council chairmen be arranged during summer. Members of the Steering Committee were welcomed to join.

Secretary

***Report of the Tokyo study visit (for information)
(SC Paper No.11/2009)***

36. The report of the Tokyo study visit prepared by the public engagement consultant would be uploaded to the URS Review website for public information. The Development Bureau and the URA would meanwhile comment on the draft report of the Shanghai study visit which would also be uploaded onto the URS Review website when it was ready.

Item 4: Any Other Business

37. The Chairperson informed Members that progress of the URS Review had been reported to the LegCo Development Panel three times since launching of the review in July 2008. She said the LegCo Development Panel held a special meeting on 15 April to hear the views of deputations on the URS review, and the Panel would consider whether to set up a subcommittee to monitor the Administration's work on the URS Review at its next meeting on 28 April. The Development Bureau stood ready to co-operate with this subcommittee if the Panel decided to establish it. The Bureau would also arrange for members of the Steering Committee to meet with this subcommittee.

Secretary

[Post-meeting note: the LegCo Development Panel on 28 April voted against the setting up of a subcommittee on URS review.]

38. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:45 p.m.

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