



Our Ref: ERD/CMA/011/LEGCO
Your Ref: CB1/DC/TW/02

14 March 2003

Secretary General
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building,
8 Jackson Road,
Central, Hong Kong

(Attn: Mrs Mary Tang)

Dear Mrs Tang,

**Meeting-cum-luncheon between Legislative Council Members and
Tsuen Wan District Council Members on 23 January 2003**

Further to my interim reply to your letter of 18 February 2003 regarding a request by members of the Tsuen Wan District Council for redevelopment of the old areas in Tsuen Wan, we would like to provide the following reply in detail.

The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) fully appreciates and shares the concern and anxiety of the Tsuen Wan DC Members about the problem of urban decay in Tsuen Wan. In this respect, Tsuen Wan is no less a priority than all other urban districts suffering from the same problem.

Tsuen Wan DC Members are, of course, aware that both the URA and its predecessor, the Land Development Corporation, have committed themselves substantially to Tsuen Wan's urban renewal through the Tsuen Wan Town Centre project (also known as the "Seven Streets" project.) This multi-billion-dollar project is by far the biggest single renewal endeavour we have undertaken. When completed, we would expect the project to be able to provide a vibrant centre for Tsuen Wan Town which would also have a profound effect on the revitalisation of the surrounding areas as well in time to come.

That said, we are sure that Tsuen Wan DC Members will appreciate that the problem of urban decay is so widespread throughout urban Hong Kong that we must ask, honestly, two crucial questions: can URA do it alone? and is redevelopment by way of demolish-and-build the only effective cure?

The hard fact is that there are at present close to 10,000 buildings in Hong Kong that are over 30 years old. And the number will increase by 50 per cent within the next decade. If we were to demolish and rebuild even a quarter of these buildings, the cost will be astronomical and hopelessly beyond the capability of the URA. Moreover, disruptions and perhaps even upheavals caused to local communities will be enormous and absolutely unacceptable. Clearly, we must not be obsessive with the slash-and-burn method.

The only effective solution, in both near and long terms, is to convince owners of aged buildings and flats that they must look after their own properties by way of timely maintenance and repair. Indeed, we see no lack of examples currently in some districts where flat owners and owners corporations have got together and taken the initiative to rehabilitate their buildings and, we might add, with very impressive results.

This is why the URA has adopted a “4Rs” strategy, namely redevelopment, rehabilitation, revitalisation and preservation. In the foreseeable future, we shall make various efforts to promote buildings rehabilitation and local area revitalization through owners’ initiatives, private sector participation and with the help of government departments and local communities. We hope very much that the Tsuen Wan District Council will render us advice and support. The URA cannot do it alone, we need the whole community to be involved.

Please feel free to contact me at 2588 2328 for any further information or discussion.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Eddie So
Urban Renewal Authority
General Manager (External Relations)