

Soho Residents Committee
GPO 1173
Central, Hong Kong

January 13, 2008

Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

To Whom It May Concern:

As you review the current process by which the URA imposes their vision for urban renewal, I would like to impress upon you how the current system is failing the people who are supposed to benefit from their actions and in the process failing Hong Kong at large.

With the current system in place, the URA is allowed to create a future for Hong Kong which packs even more buildings into already densely populated areas with buildings that compromise on the local, and in some cases historic, character of the area. Their designs are bland, boring and clearly flawed. Whatever impact studies that they claim to have conducted are not released to the public so we cannot even be sure they are real or credible.

What is needed is more control over the whole process with more representation from people outside the URA. This will bring a more balanced discussion to the debate. The URA is now given too much control over the whole process and ultimately has the power to say whether their own plan is going to proceed or not. This is clearly not a fair practice and sets the wrong precedent for urban planning. The people have rights. The owners of private property have rights. The URA should not have the right to overrule these two.

In the case of Staunton Street, we have already demonstrated that there is no need for further building in this area. There is no hint of urban decay here which would necessitate the kind of renewal the URA is proposing even in its scaled back form. Private home owners, like me, are already bringing life back to the area with our own funds and making the neighborhood a very pleasant environment in which many want to live while retaining the original character of the area. If the URA does allow itself to proceed, what we will have lost is irreplaceable and what we will end up with yet even more nondescript high and low rise buildings bringing more traffic, more noise and a reduced quality of life for all who live in the area. We, the owners in this area, have tried to communicate this to URA but they do not listen...they don't have to listen as

there is no system in place to check their actions. They proceed with no accountability.

Further, some of the other arguments put forth by the URA for proceeding with their plans are just not valid but it is impossible to get them to listen.

The older buildings here are not in any danger of falling down. They are currently withstanding the daily pounding from the pile driving going on at the Hendersen development site.

The older residents do have alternatives to these conditions. If they were able to sell their homes without the black cloud of the URA hanging over their heads, making the market prices of their homes less than what they should be, they would be able to sell to others who see the beauty of the homes and want to fix them up. There are plenty of people eager to buy these flats at above market rates but will not do so until the URA is removed from the consideration.

In conclusion, we are not against the idea of renewal or redevelopment. We just want to be included in the debate on how we create the future of Hong Kong. What the URA has been allowed to do to date has not set a good precedent for their ability to create the kind of city we can truly call an international city. We would like to save Hong Kong from the URA before it is too late.

I have attached my previous letter which outlines in more detail the issues we have raised related to our homes on Staunton Street. The URA continues to ignore our concerns and proceed. Even with their scaled back plan their obvious ambivalence towards those they want to resume homes from is quite disconcerting. It is amazing that they have continued to push for this revised plan without even having an open discussion with those of us directly affected by their plans. We obviously do not matter to them. As noted by Carrie Lam in the last LegCo discussion related to historic preservation when specifically asked whether they should allow private home owners to be exempt from this development, Ms. Lam said, *"there will always be obstacles to the URA's renewal plans. We must not let them interfere with the bigger picture."* If we are an obstacle, so be it. We are fighting for our rights to private property ownership and what we see as a brighter, more interesting place to live.

Regards,


Dare Koslow

Soho Residents Committee

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GPO 1173
Central, Hong Kong

December 15, 2008

Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

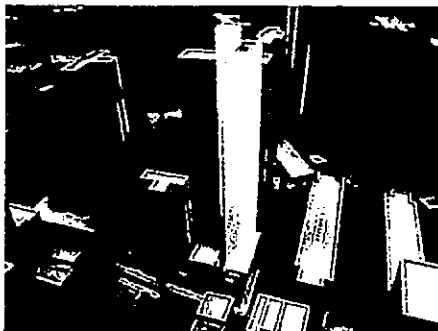
To Whom It May Concern:

This is a letter from the residents of the Soho area who are directly affected by the H19 proposal and represent a majority interest in the area defined by the following addresses:

60 Staunton Street (multiple floors)
62 Staunton Street (multiple floors)
64 Staunton Street (whole block)
66 Staunton Street (whole block)

We wish to express our view that even with the revised proposal we are all strongly opposed to the plan and will not sell at any price. These are our homes. This is our neighborhood. They are not for sale.

As seen in the picture below, the revised proposal will still overwhelm the neighborhood. We believe that the plan, even in its revised form, is not appropriate for the area and the increased housing density will compromise on what we have come to enjoy living here with the low rise buildings. We are already preserving some of Hong Kong's most treasured old buildings and will continue to do so with our own money if given the chance. We urge you not to destroy what makes this neighborhood so special. It would be a big loss for the area and for Hong Kong in general.



We, the undersigned, are in regular communication and are committed to keeping our homes.

The objective of the URA is to stop urban decay. However, this is not an area suffering from decay. It is suffering from URA interference that is preventing the natural processes of gentrification from taking place. This gentrification of the neighborhood by private owners of their own homes will only continue if the URA is removed from the consideration. Only then will others like us who appreciate the beauty of the old buildings and understand how to bring them back to life, continue to invest in the area.

If the URA is worried about losses due to their scaled back plans, the simple solution is to sell the properties they own at market rates and allow the renewal process to continue as it has already begun to do. They will certainly make a profit on the sales of these flats as they have been able to buy the properties at below market rates due to the fear their presence casts over any neighborhood in which they identify for "renewal".

Those copied here are all owners in the buildings directly affected by the URA plans and we do not want to sell our homes. We are all committed to fighting even the revised proposal. We look to our government to understand what we are saying and consider how the URA's plans for the area will destroy, not renew, the area.

Regards,

Dare Koslow

David Tam

Helen Arne

Juliette Chow

KB Elliget

