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Hong Kong, 10 July 2010

Panel on Development
Legislative Council

Re: Urban Renewal Strategy Review

Honorable Chairman and Members,

We welcome the URS conclusion to plan the city from the bottom up. But have the following questions:

1. Why set up a separate DURF? Why not empower the District Councils?
Can the Secretary empower each DC with resources to convene an Annual District Development Forum with district councilors, professionals, community groups and which is responsible for producing an Annual District Development Plan including identifying dilapidated structures?
2. Does the URA have the tools to respond to the 200 district aspirations? If not, which organization will in the future respond to district development plans?
3. For H18, Graham Street, URA promises to maintain the street market fabric. But can they guarantee a pedestrian precinct and occupancy of the hawker pitches? If their capability is limited then who can respond to these aspirations?
4. If compulsory sale and resumption of private property rights is the cause of all problems – then why can the Secretary not commit today that she will use resumption only as a means of last resort, after all other planning and development tools have been exhausted?
5. Does the current compensation reward owners to wait for the URA? If resumption is a last resort measure, can the administration remove the current incentive for failing to up keep properties? Can owners and residents who are badly affected be supported through Welfare and Public Housing based on normal means testing?
6. If URA remains empowered to buy up property with force, people will want to see compensation for grief caused – and political pressure will lead to an unsustainable renewal and development model?

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