

Future Working Relationship between the Urban Renewal Authority and the Government

Purpose

This paper sets out the future working relationship between the Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau (PELB) and concerned government departments, and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA).

Background

2. In his 1999 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that a new statutory body, the URA, will be established in 2000 to implement the Government's urban renewal strategy in the 21st century. The URA will replace the existing Land Development Corporation (LDC) and take over all the assets and liabilities of the LDC, including redevelopment projects in progress, when the URA is set up.

3. The LDC was set up in January 1988 as a statutory body to carry out urban renewal projects. A well-established working relationship between PELB, the Planning Department (PlanD) and the Lands Department (LandsD) has developed over the years to facilitate and speed up LDC's redevelopment projects.

4. Dedicated urban renewal teams have been set up in PELB (7 posts), PlanD (21 posts) and LandsD (30 posts) to facilitate the work of the LDC and coordinate the duties and responsibilities between the concerned departments.

Future Working Relationship

5. The existing structure and working relationship will continue after the establishment of the URA. The dedicated teams will remain in PELB, PlanD and LandsD to facilitate the work of the URA.

6. The main tasks of the URA will be:

(a) redevelopment of dilapidated buildings (a 20-year urban renewal programme, including 200 priority projects concentrating in 9 urban renewal target areas)(a map showing the 9 target areas is at the Annex);

(b) rehabilitation of older buildings within the 9 target areas; and

(c) preservation of buildings of historical, cultural or architectural interest in the 9 target areas and other urban redevelopment sites.

7. With the expanded ambit of the URA, the following Government bureaux and departments will have a close working relationship with the URA:

(a) PELB;

(b) PlanD;

(c) LandsD;

(d) Buildings Department (BD);

- (e) Home Affairs Bureau (HAB); and
- (f) Housing Department (HD).

Responsibilities of PELB, PlanD and LandsD

8. PELB will mainly be responsible for:
- (a) overseeing the establishment of the Provisional URA (June 2000) and the URA (November 2000);
 - (b) formulating Government's policy on urban renewal;
 - (c) preparing draft legislation, introducing new legislation and amending existing legislation relating to urban renewal and urban rehabilitation;
 - (d) formulating an Urban Renewal Strategy and preparing an Urban Renewal Strategy Statement;
 - (e) overseeing and monitoring the urban renewal programme of the URA;
 - (f) approving the development projects of the URA;
 - (g) processing URA's 5-year corporate plans and annual business plans; and
 - (h) recommending URA's requests for land resumption to the Chief Executive in Council.

9. PELB will also deal with any policy issues concerning the URA. PELB will coordinate the work of concerned departments in respect of the URA and resolve any policy issues with other Policy Bureaux and departments.

10. PlanD will mainly be responsible for:

- (a) conducting studies which will form the basis for the formulation of the Government's Urban Renewal Strategy;
- (b) ensuring that territorial and sub-regional planning objectives have been incorporated into urban renewal proposals;
- (c) devising planning mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the redevelopment projects of the URA within the statutory planning framework and relevant legislation;
- (d) processing URA's development scheme plan submissions to the Town Planning Board (TPB) under the planning procedure of the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131), including Master Layout Plans and "section 16" submissions to the TPB;
- (e) advising the URA on the acceptability of planning parameters, including assessment of planning gains in respect of URA projects;
- (f) resolving land use and design problems arising from URA's

projects with other government departments;

- (g) coordinating the provision of infrastructure and Government/institution/community facilities and public open space in URA's projects.
- (h) identifying adequate rehousing resources (including rehousing sites) for URA's redevelopment projects; and
- (i) providing professional advice to PELB in processing URA's 5-year corporate plans and annual business plans.

11. LandsD will mainly be responsible for:

- (a) formulating, monitoring and reviewing the land resumption programme of URA projects in consultation with PELB and the URA;
- (b) formulating, administering and reviewing the resumption, compensation and clearance policies and strategies related to URA projects;
- (c) carrying out resumption of private land required for URA's redevelopment projects, including any subsequent land clearances;
- (d) monitoring the expenditure of land resumption funds;

- (e) approving the release of ex-gratia allowances, including home purchase allowance, and provisional compensation payments to owners affected by the resumption and executing compensation agreements; and
- (f) providing professional advice to PELB on land aspects of urban renewal policies.

Rehabilitation

12. Under the new urban renewal strategy, we will also focus on the proper maintenance of buildings. We will announce early next year a proposal for a statutory scheme of preventive maintenance of buildings for public consultation. If this proposal is supported, a statutory scheme will be introduced to require owners of older buildings which are not properly maintained to carry out preventive maintenance of their buildings. The task of implementing this scheme will be shared between BD and the URA.

13. The URA will be tasked with the implementation of the preventive maintenance of buildings scheme within its 9 urban renewal target areas. BD and the URA will work closely in implementing this scheme. The demarcation of duties and responsibilities between BD and the URA will be clearly set out.

Heritage Conservation

14. The Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) advises the Government on sites, buildings and structures which merit protection through declaration as

monuments. HAB is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53).

15. The URA will be tasked with the preservation of buildings of historical, cultural or architectural interest in the 9 urban renewal target areas and other urban redevelopment sites. The URA will work closely with the HAB and the executive arm of the AAB, the Antiquities and Monuments Office, in implementing these projects.

Rehousing Arrangements

16. The URA's urban renewal programme is estimated to affect 37,000 households (105,000 persons). 16,000 rehousing units will be required to rehouse the affected tenants. On average, the URA will require about 1,000 rehousing units a year.

17. The Housing Society (HS) currently provides assistance to the LDC by rehousing tenants who are affected by LDC projects. We propose that, with the establishment of the URA, both the Housing Authority (HA) and the HS should assist the URA in this regard. We are now discussing with the HA and the HS on future rehousing arrangements.

18. If an agreement is reached with the HA, the URA will have to work closely with HD on the allocation of flats to affected tenants. The demarcation of responsibilities between the URA and HD will be clearly set out.

The Way Forward

19. We plan to upgrade the existing working relationship between the LDC and the Government when the URA is established to ensure that the urban renewal projects of the URA are carried out efficiently and expeditiously. In this new working relationship, the PELB will act as the coordinator and facilitator.

Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau

26 November 1999