

**Legislative Council  
of the  
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**

**Panel on Development**

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**Report on duty visit in March 2008  
to study the experiences of Amsterdam and Prague  
in town planning and urban renewal**

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## **General**

1.1 In the light of growing public concern over ongoing and planned urban development projects and urban renewal projects, the Panel has actively monitored the work of the Government and relevant public bodies on town planning and urban renewal.

### Town planning

1.2 Since the 2006-2007 legislative session, the Panel has monitored the progress of certain major development proposals. These development proposals include the Kai Tak Development, the Wan Chai Development Phase II, the Concept Plan for Lantau, and the new Central harbourfront. In the 2007 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced the Hong Kong-Shenzhen joint development of the Lok Ma Chau Loop and the revival of the planning work on New Development Areas (NDAs). Moreover, the Administration has proposed to reduce the Frontier Closed Area from about 2 800 to about 400 hectares, thereby releasing substantial amount of land with development potential. At such, it is envisaged that a number of new developments will take place in the coming 10 to 20 years, both in the metro areas and in the New Territories and they will have important economic, social and environmental impacts on the city.

1.3 While the Panel continues to monitor the planning of the above development projects, the Panel has started to consolidate previous deliberations on the planning of urban development projects and to examine ways to address public concerns expressed on the city's town planning. In this regard, the Panel has identified the following issues which require more detailed examination --

- (a) There are growing sentiments within the community towards conservation of historical buildings/sites and the unique characteristics of different developed areas; hence there is a need to undertake a critical review of territory-wide and district-based planning strategies with a view to striking the right balance between development and conservation;
- (b) The public's aspirations for quality living space have been rising with crucial changes in priorities and emphases; as such, it is imperative for the Government and relevant agencies to articulate

and translate the present-day public aspirations into concrete planning strategies and implementation measures;

- (c) The present planning control and building approval mechanisms appear to be inadequate to ensure that important planning intentions can be effectively implemented; and
- (d) Effective mechanisms for public engagement in the planning process are yet to be established, notwithstanding that there is growing enthusiasm among Hong Kong people in town planning matters. Such mechanisms are important for harnessing the wisdom and enthusiasm of the civic society and for building up community consensus in planning matters.

### Urban renewal

1.4 The Panel notes that there is growing public concern over urban renewal in the community. The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) has launched a number of urban renewal projects since its establishment in May 2001 and various problems have come to light during the implementation process. These problems relate to the approaches adopted by URA for urban renewal; the compensation policies of URA; the outturn built environment of completed redevelopment projects; and its ways of gauging stakeholders' views and conciliating conflicting demands in the project planning and acquisition processes.

1.5 As the Government provides policy guidelines on urban renewal for URA through the Urban Renewal Strategy, which was promulgated in November 2001, members consider it high time to undertake a comprehensive review of the Urban Renewal Strategy. The Panel has decided that it would closely monitor the work of URA and its future plans, and review the relevant policies and strategies with the Administration and URA.

### **Objectives of the overseas duty visit**

1.6 In view of the importance and complexity of the issues pertinent to urban planning and urban renewal, the Panel decided at its meeting on

24 July 2007 to study relevant overseas experiences to shed lights on the relevant world trends and alternative strategies and approaches adopted by other places to tackle problems and confront challenges that are similar to those faced in Hong Kong. The objectives of the duty visit is to obtain first-hand information on how the relevant government and quasi-government agencies --

- (a) initiate and manage changes in the townscape of their cities through town planning to meet prevailing and long-term social, economic and environmental needs and how they strive to build up community consensus in the planning process; and
- (b) formulate and update their urban renewal strategies and how they deliver the urban renewal projects to enhance the physical living environment of old districts and at the same time preserve the uniqueness and community networks of the localities concerned.

### **Places visited**

1.7 Having considered the findings of the background research conducted by the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat, the Panel agreed at the meeting on 27 November 2007 that it would be worthwhile for the Panel to undertake a duty visit to Amsterdam and Prague to obtain first-hand information on their experiences in town planning and urban renewal. The Panel's proposal to visit the two cities in March 2008 was endorsed by the House Committee on 14 December 2007.

1.8 The delegation of the Panel visited Amsterdam and Prague from 14 to 20 March 2008.

### **The delegation**

1.9 As findings in the duty visit would serve as useful references for Members in their consideration of future town planning and urban renewal issues in Hong Kong, which have territory-wide impacts and often involve legislative and funding proposals, the Panel has proposed and the House Committee agreed that the visit should be open to all non-Panel members. The delegation of the

Panel comprises a total of eight Members and two staff members of the LegCo Secretariat. The membership list is in **Appendix I**.

### **Visit programme**

1.10 During the visit, the delegation met with members of the national legislatures and city councils, senior civil servants, and representatives of relevant quasi-government and private organizations, and toured urban development and regeneration sites in Amsterdam and Prague. The programme of the visit is in **Appendix II**.

### **Report of the delegation**

1.11 This report outlines the experience of Hong Kong in town planning and urban renewal, summarizes the findings of the delegation on the experiences of Amsterdam and Prague, and set out the observations of the delegation.

## **General**

2.1 Hong Kong's population was approximately 6.92 million in 2007 and the population density is 6 410 people per square kilometre (km<sup>2</sup>). With a total area of 1 130 km<sup>2</sup>, the urbanized areas of Hong Kong have so far taken up slightly more than one-fifth of the land area, while over 40% is designated as country parks and nature reserves.

2.2 Between 1950s and 1980s, the urban districts in Hong Kong tripled in size through extensive reclamation. The proportion of industrial and commercial land progressively increased, while agricultural land and swamps correspondingly reduced. Since the late 1970s, the Government started planning for a new airport at Chek Lap Kok and formulated the Airport Core Programme. The programme mapped out the growth strategy for Hong Kong for the next two decades. Town planning of the 1980s focused on land utilization in districts such as the north western part of the Hong Kong Island, West Kowloon, Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung, and the replanning of urban transport and environment. Reclamation was the means employed to produce the required land. Large-scale reclamations included the land formed for Chek Lap Kok Airport, the North Lantau Expressway project, West Kowloon Reclamation and the northwest Stonecutters Island works.

2.3 In the 1980s, the Government developed the New Territories with the construction of new towns located at Sha Tin, Tai Po, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, Fanling, Sheung Shui, Tseung Kwan O and Tung Chung. The new towns encompass a whole range of residential dwellings, commercial developments and industrial facilities. Their emergence reshaped the population distribution in the territory. From the early 1990s up to today, reclamation projects have been taking place in the old city core and they included the 35-hectare project for the expansion of the Kowloon-Canton Railway terminus at Hung Hom, the development at Aldrich Bay on Hong Kong Island East and some 40 hectares of land reclaimed in Central for various road and railway infrastructure facilities.

## **Planning authorities in Hong Kong**

2.4 The Development Bureau is in charge of the policy portfolios of planning, land use, buildings, urban renewal and heritage conservation in Hong

Kong. Taking directives from the Development Bureau, the Planning Department (PlanD) is responsible for formulating, monitoring and reviewing land use at the territorial level. PlanD also prepares district/local plans, area improvement plans, the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) as well as undertakes actions against unauthorized land uses.

2.5 The principal body responsible for statutory planning in Hong Kong is the Town Planning Board (TPB), which is formed under the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131) and serviced by PlanD. TPB oversees the preparation of draft statutory plans, considers representations to such draft plans and considers applications for planning permission and amendments to plans. The following bodies also play a role in the land use planning in Hong Kong --

- (a) The Country and Marine Parks Authority (the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation) prepares and enforces statutory country park and marine park plans under the Country Parks Ordinance (Cap. 476) and Marine Parks Ordinance (Cap. 208).
- (b) The Housing Authority is the lands, planning and building authority of lands obtained through the Lands Department. It prepares planning briefs and architectural designs for public housing estates.

## **Planning System**

2.6 Hong Kong's planning system comprises development strategies at the territorial level, and various types of Statutory and Departmental Plans at the district/local level. HKPSG provides the guidelines for the preparation of these plans.

### Territorial development strategy

2.7 In October 2007, the Government released the Final Report of Hong Kong 2030 Study (HK2030 Study), which is a comprehensive review of Hong Kong's territorial development strategy, aiming to formulate a broad planning framework to guide the future development of Hong Kong up to year 2030.

The Government's planning strategy follows three broad directions, namely, providing a quality living environment, enhancing economic competitiveness, and strengthening links with Mainland China. As an overarching goal, the HK2030 Study aims to adhere to the principles of sustainable development to balance social, economic and environmental needs as well as to take on good resource management.

2.8 The HK2030 Study anticipates that the existing urban areas including the existing new towns can accommodate some 70% of Hong Kong's future additional population up to 2030. Based on this assumption, the Government needs only to develop about 2% more of Hong Kong's land area to cater for approximately another 20% of the population growth, with the remaining 10% scattered across the rural areas.

2.9 The Study recommends to adopt the planning concept of prudent use of land resources by planning for more development around mass transit railway stations to facilitate fast and mass movement of people in an environmentally-friendly mode of transport. This would help reduce reliance on the use of private cars and curb carbon emissions, and make better use of development opportunities in the existing developed areas where infrastructure capacities permit.

2.10 To upgrade the rural environment, the Study recommends government-initiated new town developments and the adoption of a rehabilitation approach with emphasis on remedial measures and measures to facilitate the beneficial use of rural land, such as alternative tourism (e.g. ecotourism, cultural tourism) and organic farming.

#### Various types of town plans

2.11 At the district level, statutory plans in the form of Outline Zoning Plans (OZP) and Development Permission Area Plans are prepared and gazetted under the Town Planning Ordinance. These plans --

- (a) regulate development through specifying the types of permitted land-uses and in some cases development parameters on individual parcels of land within Hong Kong;

- (b) reserve land for various types of uses; and
- (c) help monitor the implementation of land-use proposals.

Departmental plans, which are not statutory in nature, in the form of Outline Development Plans and Layout Plans are also prepared for more detailed planning.

### Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines

2.12 The HKPSG is a reference manual setting out the scale, location and site requirements of various land-uses and facilities. It also encompasses guidelines on nature conservation and urban design. It is used in the preparation of town plans, planning briefs and the scrutiny of development proposals.

### **Major development projects under planning**

#### New Development Areas

2.13 One of the recommendations in the HK2030 Study mentioned above is the implementation of New Development Areas (NDAs), which are small-scale new towns to provide housing land and to meet other land use requirements in the future. They also offer an alternative choice of living through the development of lower-density buildings in a quality living environment, with convenient access to mass transportation and community facilities. The objective is to provide land for a mixture of uses, emphasizing the creation of a quality living and working environment. The HK2030 Study recommends proceeding with Kwu Tung North, Fanling North and Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling NDAs (the Three-in-One Scheme) and the Hung Shui Kiu NDA to address the long-term housing demand and provide employment.

2.14 The lead time for implementing the NDAs will take at least 12 to 13 years. The Government has identified the following key issues relating to the planning, design and implementation of the NDAs, which would be addressed in the NDA Planning and Engineering Study scheduled for commencement in June 2008 and completion in June 2011 --

- (a) Development intensity and population capacity;
- (b) Balanced housing mix;
- (c) Provision of supporting facilities;
- (d) Provision of employment opportunities;
- (e) Land resumption and clearance;
- (f) Private sector participation;
- (g) Heritage and ecological conservation; and
- (h) Environmentally friendly communities.

#### Development of the Lok Ma Chau Loop

2.15 In his 2007-2008 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced the partnership with Shenzhen to jointly establish a high level coordinating mechanism to explore the feasibility of developing the Loop to the mutual benefits of both sides, and steer further research and planning work on other cross-boundary issues. A Hong Kong-Shenzhen Joint Task Force on Boundary District Development has been set up to co-ordinate, liaise and steer work on the studies in relation to the planning and development of land in the boundary district.

2.16 With an area of about 100 hectares, the Loop is situated in the upstream of Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site. The wetland around the Loop has very high ecological value. The Hong Kong Government will conduct a joint study with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to explore the feasibility of developing the Lok Ma Chau Loop and Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai control point on the basis of mutual benefit.

### Development of the Closed Area

2.17 When the new Closed Area boundary is put in place in late - 2010, the land area of the Closed Area will be reduced from about 2 800 hectares to 400 hectares. To examine the future use of the areas to be released from the Closed Area and put them under planning control, PlanD has embarked on a planning study titled "Land Use Planning for the Closed Area", to examine the development potential and constraints of these areas. Following completion of the study, which includes a public engagement exercise, statutory town plans will be prepared for the released areas.

2.18 The Stage 1 Community Engagement for the Land Use Planning for the Closed Area has been launched on 16 May 2008 and will last until 8 August 2008. The focus is on seeking public views on the draft Concept Plan for the area to be released from the Closed Area. Public views and suggestions received during this period will provide inputs for refining the study proposals in a draft Concept Plan.

### The new Central harbourfront

2.19 There is about 30 hectares of land, mostly arising from reclamation in recent years, available for new development at the new Central harbourfront. How this stretch of new land is to be developed has drawn wide public concern. The Panel has been closely monitoring the relevant planning issues including the types of land uses, the intensity and the building form of the future developments and infrastructures in the area. The Administration is drawing up comprehensive design frameworks for the new harbourfront area and the public is engaged at different stages of the planning process.

2.20 The second stage public engagement exercise was launched in April 2008. The purpose is to seek public views on the refined overall urban design framework, different design concepts for the key sites, and the design concepts in different locations for re-assembling the Queen's Pier and reconstructing the old Star Ferry Clock Tower. Based on the public views gathered, recommendations and proposals of the Study will be finalized for the consideration of TPB.

### Reduction of development intensities

2.21 Hong Kong is a highly compact city and it has resorted to a compact form of development to cater for the housing and social needs of its population and economic growth in the past. However, in recent years, the community has become more aware of Hong Kong's cityscape and the effect of high-rise and high-density development. The community is particularly concerned about the design, layout, massing, permeability and connectivity of developments as well as provision of open space. The Panel has received views from deputations and conducted discussions with the Administration on various possible measures to prevent new developments and redevelopment projects from creating a "wall effect"<sup>1</sup>.

2.22 Pursuant to the Chief Executive's 2007-2008 Policy Address, the Administration is taking various steps to lower the development density of the city with a view to upgrading urban design, enhancing the vista of buildings, and improving air ventilation to provide a better living environment. The Administration is also progressively reviewing existing OZPs with a view to stipulating clear development restrictions, where justified, for all concerned parties to follow. Priority is given to reviewing building heights in areas subject to high development/redevelopment pressures, waterfront areas along Victoria Harbour and congested built-up areas. The whole exercise involves about 40 OZPs.

## **Urban Renewal**

### New approach to urban renewal announced in 1999

2.23 The Land Development Corporation (LDC) was set up in 1988 as a statutory body to carry out urban renewal projects. Under the Land Development Corporation Ordinance (repealed) (Cap. 15), LDC had to "conduct its business according to prudent commercial principles". In view of the difficulties encountered by LDC in pursuing its redevelopment programme and following the completion of an urban renewal strategy study conducted by PlanD

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<sup>1</sup> A term generally referring to high density and compact building bulk affecting ventilation to residents living in the vicinity.

that identified some 200 projects for priority redevelopment, the Administration announced in October 1999 that it would adopt a new approach and a new institutional framework for urban renewal.

2.24 Under the new approach, the Government would plan urban redevelopment and rehabilitation more rigorously and comprehensively for larger areas, with a view to restructuring and replanning more effectively the older built-up areas, redesigning more effective and environmentally-friendly transport and road networks, replacing incompatible land uses, providing more open space and community facilities, and designing buildings which meet the demands of modern living. The Government would also plan for the rehabilitation of buildings not in good repair and the preservation of buildings of historical, cultural or architectural interest in the project areas. Under-utilized industrial areas should also be included in the urban renewal programme so as to rationalize incompatible land uses and re-vitalize economic activities within these areas.

#### Urban Renewal Authority

2.25 The major institutional change that followed is that the establishment of URA in May 2001 upon the enactment of the URA Ordinance (Cap. 563) in July 2000. Henceforth, URA became the Government's principal agent for urban renewal. URA adopts a holistic "4Rs" strategy to address the problem of urban decay and to improve the living conditions of the residents. The "4Rs" include the **redevelopment** of dilapidated buildings, **rehabilitation** of buildings in need of repair, **revitalization** of the economic and environmental fabric of old districts and **preservation** of buildings with historical, cultural or architectural value within its urban renewal project areas.

2.26 Since its establishment, URA has commenced 35 redevelopment projects, assisted in the rehabilitation of about 400 buildings, and revitalized and preserved over 25 pre-war buildings.

#### Changing community sentiments

2.27 In recent years, the public has expressed a stronger interest in participating in the planning of urban renewal projects. At the same time, there are growing community sentiments towards heritage conservation, including

preserving buildings, collective memories and the characteristics of certain areas or districts. There are strong calls both from LegCo and the Administration for URA to devote greater efforts in the community engagement process, particularly at the planning stage of its projects.

2.28 According to the Administration, in gauging the views of the stakeholders, URA works closely with its District Advisory Committees, the District Councils and the affected owners and tenants. It also conducts surveys from time to time to seek the views of the public and those being directly affected. During the project implementation stage, the URA staff and its social service teams offer assistance to the affected owners and tenants over compensation and rehousing matters, as well as their settling into the new environment after relocation. With regard to heritage conservation, URA observes the Government's built heritage conservation policy and works closely with the Antiquities and Monuments Office, the Antiquities Advisory Board, the District Councils and the affected owners and tenants on the preservation aspects of its projects.

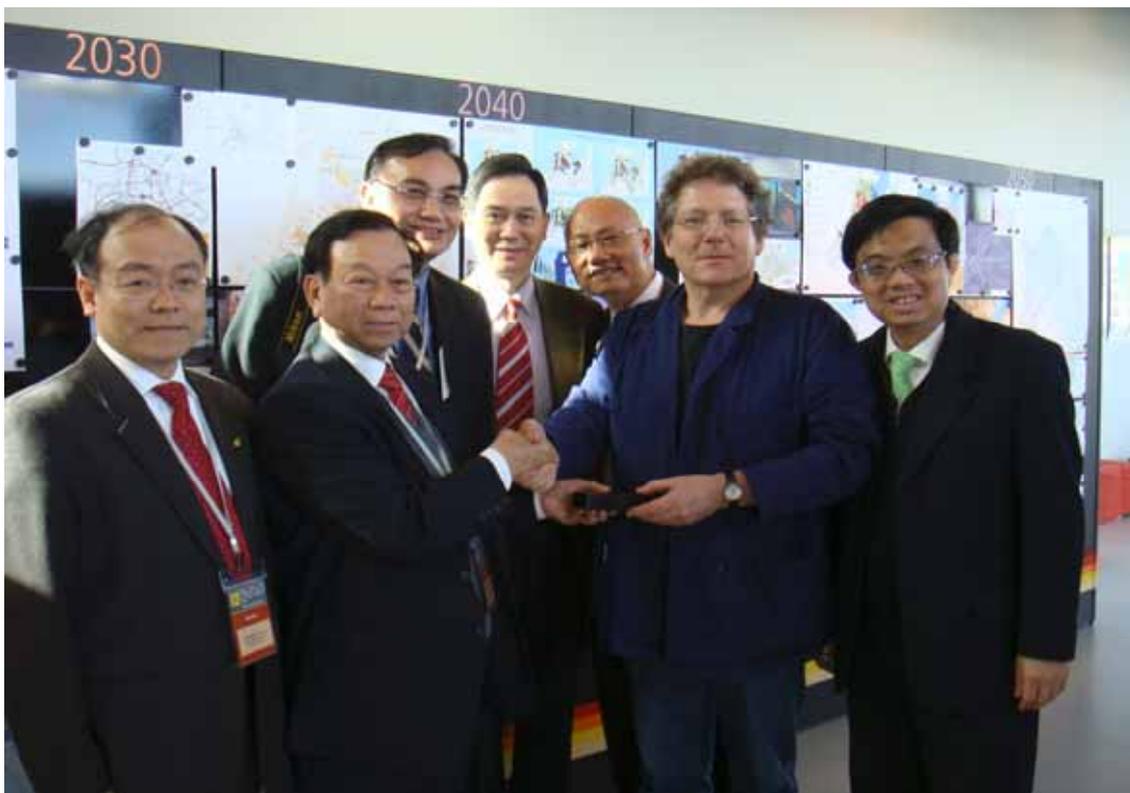
2.29 The Panel appreciates that urban renewal is a complex subject involving the interests (often conflicting) of many different stakeholders. As a statutory body tasked to undertake urban renewal, URA is facing increasing challenges in meeting the demands and aspirations of the different stakeholders. In reviewing the work of URA, the Panel notes that while URA claims to adopt a holistic "4Rs" strategy to address the problem of urban decay and to improve the living conditions of the residents, members in general have observed that in the past, the main approach adopted by URA is to "evacuate, demolish and redevelop", and not much attention had been given to conservation and revitalization. This approach fell short of meeting public aspirations of bringing vibrancy and quality living space to old districts in a sustainable manner.

2.30 Moreover, the Panel notes that the land resumption process of URA's redevelopment projects often gives rise to lots of grievances. Affected property owners and tenants often complain that their interests are not adequately protected under the relevant legislation and URA's compensation policy. Members have also pointed out that the present mode of operation of URA cannot effectively cater for a collaborative approach whereby the affected residents and business operators can play an active role in the planning process or opt to have a stake in the redevelopment projects.

2.31 In recent months, the Panel notes that there have been some changes in URA's implementation approaches in taking forward its redevelopment projects. These include conducting more extensive consultation to gauge the views of the affected localities on the planning aspects; expediting the acquisition process so that affected owners and tenants can obtain compensation at an earlier timing; heeding the community's demand for preservation of local characteristics such as open street markets; and lowering the intensity of the redevelopments while enhancing the provision of open space and communal facilities.

### Urban Renewal Strategy

2.32 The Government provides policy guidelines on urban renewal for URA through the Urban Renewal Strategy, which was promulgated in November 2001. With the public attaching greater importance in recent years to heritage conservation, community networks, lower development intensities and provision of public open space, the Administration concurs with the Panel's view that it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive review of the Urban Renewal Strategy. In his 2008-2009 Budget Speech delivered on 27 February 2008, the Financial Secretary announced that the Development Bureau and URA would conduct a review of the Urban Renewal Strategy in the following months.



*The delegation met with Ir Maarten Kloos, Director of Amsterdam Architecture Centre and was briefed on the history and possible future scenarios of the urban development in Amsterdam*



*The delegation at the south bank of Amsterdam's IJ*

## **A general profile of Amsterdam**

3.1 Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands, and is located at the southern part of the Province of North Holland. With an area of 166 km<sup>2</sup>, Amsterdam is the largest city in the Netherlands and has a population of about 745 000.

3.2 Amsterdam is the financial and business capital of the Netherlands. Many large Dutch corporations and banks have their headquarters based in Amsterdam. The Amsterdam Stock Exchange is the world's oldest stock exchange. Trade, exports and distribution are very important in the Netherlands, as the country occupies a strategic location on the North Sea and the Rhine. The ports and airports of Amsterdam have outstanding infrastructure and logistics services, and they function as international hubs in Europe. The telecommunications facilities and the broadband Internet connections are among the best in the world.

## **Characteristics of the spatial structure of Amsterdam**

3.3 Amsterdam is often described as a "lobate" city, a core with extensions like outspread fingers, with radial roads held together by a ring road. The historical inner city enjoys the monument status and is distinctive for its semicircular layout of concentric canals. These concentric canals and the interconnecting canals were planned and built in the 17th century for defence, water management and the transport of goods.

3.4 During the 1960s, Amsterdam was faced with some difficult decisions. As economic activities in the historical city centre grew, more space was needed. One option was to extend the economic activities from the inner city into the so-called 19th-century quarters, where both housing and living conditions were relatively undesirable. This option of adopting the concept of concentric development was eventually discarded and Amsterdam opted for the model of "clustered deconcentration" of economic activities.

3.5 New economic development zones were planned along the western and southern sections of Amsterdam's ring roads and later also along the eastern line

of the metro train. This development model has prevailed, although new developments reflect the demand for a better mix of economic activities and other functions, such as housing and public amenities.

3.6 Amsterdam is regarded a green city. A great deal of attention has been given to greenery in urban planning since the early 20th century. In the north, there is a sharply defined boundary between the city and Waterland, which is a centuries-old tract of reclaimed peat meadows. In the west, south and southeast, built-up areas protrude into the green areas with an outline resembling the extended fingers of a hand surrounded by wedges of greenery.

### **Institutional framework for the city's town planning and urban renewal**

3.7 Amsterdam is governed by the Mayor, the College of Aldermen and the City Council. The Mayor chairs the City Council and the College of Alderman. He is appointed by the Monarch. The College of Aldermen runs the day-to-day operation of Amsterdam. It comprises the Mayor and six Aldermen. The Aldermen are elected by the City Council. The College prepares the resolutions to be adopted by the City Council and implements these resolutions once they have been adopted. The City Council is the highest authority in the city of Amsterdam and it sets the city's annual budget. There are currently 45 seats in the City Council and Council members are elected every four years by the city voters.

3.8 The Amsterdam government maintains tight control of spatial development and implements a leasehold system (i.e. the city land is not sold, but leased to the private sector), which results in the Amsterdam government owning about 80% of the city land. (About 20% of the city land was sold in the early 20th century.) The Amsterdam government states that the implementation of the leasehold system can effectively prevent land speculation and generate revenues for financing infrastructure projects. In some cases, the city government may purchase the private city land from its owners, or develop those land parcels in collaboration with the owners.

3.9 The Amsterdam government takes the initiative for the programming and planning of spatial development. The land use and zoning plan is given

substance and formulated by means of a series of joint decisions reached by the government with commercial parties, developers, architects and local citizens. The city government also actively formulates development and redevelopment project plans specifying locations for houses, businesses or offices in order to achieve a particular spatial development. Normally, the city government does not develop real estate itself, but prepares the land for the building process. After land formation, the land is issued to one or more developers who will develop the buildings and facilities according to a set of rules, which are defined by the City Council. These rules can be about aspects of urban planning, land use, development programme and financial conditions etc. The use of a particular land plot is defined in the zoning plan and corresponding to that zoning plan, in the leasehold contract.

3.10 In Amsterdam, the city government sets the land prices. The Development Corporation, a department of the city, directs the land pricing process. The land price policy applies to the whole city, although the 14 city districts have executive powers regarding local urban development. The objectives of the land price policy are to attain the desired development, contribute to a stable development of the real estate market and determine the revenues generated in the planning zones.

3.11 The Amsterdam Physical Planning Department is responsible for the spatial planning of development in Amsterdam. The Department has the functions to develop spatial vision and plan strategies for Amsterdam, and advise the City Council of Amsterdam in the areas of planning, public space and greenery.

3.12 For the city's urban renewal, a number of authorities and organizations are involved, the major ones being the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, Amsterdam Physical Planning Department and Amsterdam Development Corporation.

### **Town planning policy**

3.13 While the legislation governing town planning in Amsterdam is the National Planning Act and National Environmental Managing Act, the

Amsterdam Structure Plan 2003-2010 sets out the main thrust of the policy that the Amsterdam government pursues with respect to the city's spatial and physical development. The zoning plans of the city districts must comply with the requirements set out in the Structure Plan. The Structure Plan also provides a vision on the spatial development of the region. The strategic priorities laid down in the Structure Plan include --

- (a) realization of intensive and mixed-use environments;
- (b) optimal connections with public transport networks;
- (c) a high-quality network of cycle paths;
- (d) improvement of accessibility via roads, rail and water;
- (e) improvement of the quality of water and greenery;
- (f) the development of Schiphol Airport into an international aviation hub;
- (g) development of the seaport;
- (h) concentration of business activities that have an environmental impact along the North Sea Canal; and
- (i) improvement of accessibility in the Schiphol Airport-Amsterdam zone.

### **Urban renewal policy**

3.14 In 1997, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment of the Netherlands formulated the Revitalizing Policy for Major Cities, which marked the beginning of a new integrated approach to urban renewal with an intent to provide cities with a new impulse. To shape the physical aspect of revitalizing cities, a new national urban renewal policy was launched in January 2000. This policy addresses the urgency for reshaping inner cities,

former industrial sites/harbours and post-war neighbourhoods. Under this policy, the national government provides the cities with financial support for urban renewal, which is known as the Investment Budget for Urban Renewal. By formulating the Long Term Development Programme, the so-called G4 (four biggest cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Hague and Utrecht) and G26 (26 medium cities) have started the process of revitalizing their urban centres.

3.15 In Amsterdam, the Amsterdam Physical Planning Department and the Amsterdam Development Corporation work in cooperation with businesses, the district councils and representatives from other relevant parties to prepare the urban renewal programme of the city.

3.16 The urban regeneration programme of Amsterdam propagates the idea of "liveability", i.e. the provision of attractive, sustainable and safe residential environments. Specifically, emphasis is placed on boosting vitality on the street, ensuring an optimal mix of different types of housing, improvement of public space and green areas, and provision of modern public facilities to meet community needs.

### **Major urban development and regeneration projects**

3.17 A number of urban development projects are underway and in the pipeline that will give Amsterdam a new face in the coming decade. The projects are not concentrated in a particular part of the city but are fairly dispersed. They involve urban expansion (e.g. Zuidas, IJburg, South-East Central Area), changes in function for obsolete port districts (e.g. Eastern Harbour District and Amsterdam-Noord), expansion of the port and the airport and other new infrastructure (the North/South Metro Line).

3.18 The current urban regeneration programme of Amsterdam targets at four residential areas, namely the city centre, the Parkstad in South-West Amsterdam, the Amsterdam North and Bijlmermeer in South-East Amsterdam.

3.19 During the visit, the delegation was given guided visits to IJburg, Zuidas, the NDSM site at Amsterdam-Noord, and Bijlmermeer in South-East Amsterdam.

The delegation also met with the representatives of the responsible organizations and was briefed on the planning and implementation of the projects.

### **Sites of major development/redevelopment projects in Amsterdam visited by the delegation**

#### IJburg

3.20 The demand for housing in Amsterdam has always been high, and remains so. Because of a lack of large new locations for residential property available within the city boundaries, the Amsterdam City Council voted in 1996 to build a series of eight artificial islands in the IJmeer. The IJburg district was created island by island by spraying layer after layer of sand into the open water. The project scheme initially provoked an uproar in the city and this resulted in a referendum in 1997. In the referendum, the majority of voters said no to the project scheme, but the requisite number of voters was not achieved. As such, IJburg was given the go-ahead.



*The delegation at IJburg*

3.21 Construction of all 18 000 homes in this new district, IJburg, is scheduled to complete in 2015. IJburg will then be home to a total of about 45 000 people and will bring 12 000 jobs into the area. IJburg has been planned as a self-contained district with its own shops, offices and schools. A major theme of the urban design scheme approved by the City Council is to establish a mixed residential environment with a varied population. As such, the housing in IJburg is very varied, including low-rise blocks of flats and terraced and detached houses. A wide variety of housing is provided in IJburg from social rentals to mid-priced housing as well as the higher-priced, owner-occupied dwellings. The urban design scheme for IJburg places strong emphasis on sustainable urbanism, focusing on constants in society and on facilitating comfort. A great deal of attention has also been devoted to the ecological aspects.

3.22 From spring 2005, the islands of IJburg have been linked to the city centre by a high-speed tram. This so-called "IJ Tram" runs to Central Station and takes about 18 minutes. The service operates every five minutes in peak hours and every 10-15 minutes at other times.

3.23 The delegation was given a guided visit on one of the islands of IJburg. The density of development on the island is low: 85% of the houses are in low-rise buildings. Part of the housing development on the island is dedicated to self-built housing, where private individuals are able to buy a plot and build a dwelling designed by an architect or by themselves. The series of linked houses each with a unique design have created a lively and architecturally impressive neighbourhood.

### Zuidas

3.24 Zuidas is a new and contemporary urban centre in Amsterdam with a strategic location between the city centre and the city's airport. It is being developed as a "city hub" with a balance of housing and workplaces. The spatial plan is to achieve a mix of 45% homes and 45% work, with the other 10 % devoted to other facilities: shops, cafés, restaurants, sports and culture.

3.25 The area to be developed encompasses about 270 hectares and is currently intersected by the A10 motorway (the city's ring road), and train and metro lines. Currently, about 1 million square metres (m<sup>2</sup>) of real estate has been constructed, and the area now hosts head offices of a number of international firms, a World Trade Centre, a major congress and exhibition centre, a university, a hospital, as well as other communal facilities. However, the noise and other environmental problems generated by the existing transport infrastructure at the ground level have constrained the development of the area.

3.26 As Zuidas is ideally positioned with regard to the airport and the city centre and enjoys excellent accessibility, the City Council conducted studies in the early 2000s to identify feasible development schemes to further develop Zuidas into a prime business district in a world-class cosmopolitan setting. In February 2005, the City of Amsterdam and the national government reached agreement on the so-called "dock model", under which the local transport infrastructure will be moved underground, thereby drastically reducing current noise and air pollution. In so doing, new land and development opportunities will be created, resulting in a total development potential of some 2.7 million metres of floor space in the area. Approximately, 42% will be used for residential purposes, 43% for offices and 15% for other functions.

3.27 Essential spatial planning elements include a relatively high density development with towers up to 100 metres high; a cityscape with public amenities that can be assessed at the street level; and high-quality public areas and pedestrian links to the surrounding buildings. It is envisaged that upon full development, there will be about 25 000 residents, 80 000 workers and 40 000 students accommodated in Zuidas.



*The delegation met with Drs J D (Jan) Stoutenbeek, Director of Zuidas Amsterdam and was briefed on the Zuidas project, a new and expanding urban centre in the south of Amsterdam*

3.28 Apart from taking a site visit to some of the streets and buildings in Zuidas, the delegation was briefed by the director of the project on the development approach. The further development of Zuidas will be structured as a Public-Private-Partnership. The Dutch Ministry of Finance and the City of Amsterdam will each take a 20% minority share in the Zuidas company, which is scheduled to become operational in late 2008 to undertake the project. The remaining 60% majority share will be allocated during a bidding process among the eight pre-qualified private parties who have demonstrated the expertise for and dedication to the project.

3.29 The total cost of the project is estimated at 4.1 billion Euros (2006 price level), of which the relocation of infrastructure underground accounts for about 70%. The national and regional governments of the Netherlands and the City of Amsterdam have agreed to invest 0.9 billion Euros. The Zuidas Company will obtain leaseholds for the 2.7 million m<sup>2</sup> floor space in the Zuidas area. The term of the leasehold is open-ended; payment of the leasehold fees will have to be made upfront per 50-year period. The private shareholders of the Zuidas Company will share in the proceeds obtained from the distribution of the

leaseholds, while assuming the remaining cost of relocating the infrastructure underground. Besides, the private shareholders will, through a dedicated Development Company, enter into a "forward sale and purchase" agreement for the development of 480 000 m<sup>2</sup> in the very heart of the Zuidas area.

### Regeneration of the NDSM site

3.30 The NDSM site is a former shipyard on the northern bank of the IJ bay. It occupies an area of about 32 hectares. The area is being developed in phases. The intention is to preserve the character of the old shipyard in the new plans. The city of Amsterdam supports the idea of using the site as a cultural incubator for creative businesses and cultural establishments. It is envisaged that upon full development, the site will have a total of 5 200 rental and owner-occupied housing units, 270 000 m<sup>2</sup> office space, shops and amenities.

3.31 Once a prosperous harbour, the NDSM Wharf has been left abandoned for nearly two decades. In 1999, a group of artists, theatre people, skaters and architects, calling themselves Kinetisch Noord, approached the local council with a plan to redevelop the former shipyard. In June 2002, Kinetisch Noord presented its plan to turn the NDSM Wharf into the largest creative hub in the Netherlands. Since then, working closely with tenants, Kinetisch Noord has built affordable studios and other working spaces for creative activities. NDSM builds the basic units that the tenants then complete themselves, giving everyone a say in the costs, quality and design of their own spaces.

3.32 The delivery of the development is managed by the NDSM association, the membership of which comprises mainly artists and practitioners in the creative industries, in co-operation with a number of non-profit making organizations in the cultural sector. The Regional Government of Amsterdam-Noord, the City Council, the National Government and a panel of external advisers provide assistance and expertise. The building costs are subsidized by a local fund for affordable workplaces and creative incubation, the Department of Social Development and Economic Affairs, the Dutch ministry of Housing, the Regional Development and Environment Department and by substantial private investments by residents. Funding for the costs of maintaining the Kinetisch organization is raised through the programming of art

festivals and the renting out of space for commercial events and cultural activities.

3.33 Currently, the NDSM tenants are working on a number of projects on the site, some of which are complete. The redevelopment covers a total of 85 000 m<sup>2</sup> and includes --

- (a) an art village in the NDSM Warehouse with ateliers, studios and working space;
- (b) a theatre working space (12 studios) for site-specific theatre;
- (c) performance spaces for exhibiting art work, theatre, dance and music;
- (d) a skate park;
- (e) recording studio's and a hip-hop school;
- (f) an experimental climbing wall;
- (g) a windmill in the crane and a sustainable energy company;
- (h) a restaurant built with second hand and sustainable materials;
- (i) mobile gardens and a mobile library on the outdoor premises; and
- (j) a warehouse for large events, flea markets and house parties.

3.34 According to the Kinetisch Noord, the project adopts an alternative town planning approach which allows democratic participation in the creation of a sustainable urban and social environment. The re-use of old (or new) buildings is a key element in this approach and the end-users take responsibility to finish (and finance) the building process and/or interior design. The strategy also has a focus on bottom-up intervention, whereby the users produce the new vision for a city or a neighbourhood and at the same time manage the process of achieving such vision. An important theme of the project is that the existing built

environment is treasured and certain important components of the former shipyard are preserved.



*The delegation was briefed by Mr Quinten C van Olden, Account Manager of Stadsdeel Amsterdam-Noord, on the regeneration of the former NDSM shipyard into creative space for artists*

3.35 While the project is being pursued based on a holistic and creative approach, Kinetisch Noord acknowledges that the gap between idea and realization is still quite wide. The development needs to tackle certain building conversion problems, which also imply a rise in costs with potential loss of support and commitment by residents and users. However, despite the problems, Kinetisch Noord considers that the development of the NDSM Wharf remains a unique experiment of bottom-up community and cultural planning which deserves the support and attention of all experts in the regeneration field.

### Regeneration of Bijlmermeer

3.36 Bijlmermeer is an area within the South-East Amsterdam district. It was the largest post-war high-rise estate built in the Netherlands intended for young families and residents from the city's urban renewal districts. Thirty-one high-rise gallery-style blocks, with 13 000 luxury apartments, surrounded by acres of parkland were built before construction was finally stopped. There was strict spatial separation of residential, work, recreational and traffic functions in the design of the area. The idea was that this would give rise to a hygienic, green, spacious, light and thus healthy city. A rectangular system of raised roads was constructed, within which honeycomb-shaped, 10-storey flats were erected. Some common facilities were located underneath road decks and parking garages.

3.37 Criticisms of the Bijlmer were being voiced long before its completion. Its massiveness, uniformity and the strict separation of slow and fast traffic excited negative comments. The raised roads came in for particular criticisms, because they created unsafe areas where surveillance was difficult. The spatial problems were moreover aggravated by a number of socio-economic problems. Moreover, during construction, cutbacks were made, and as a result facilities such as lifts were scrapped. Within a short time the Bijlmermeer became home to a predominantly low-income immigrant population. Drug-use and related crimes skyrocketed. The vast parkland, long gallery corridors, parking garages and alleyways were scary and unsafe. At its peak, more than 25% of the apartments stood empty and the yearly turnover of residents was 50%. The housing estate was losing money at an alarming rate.

3.38 At the beginning of the 1990s, the national government decided to take a radical approach. There was widespread agreement that any solution had to tackle not only the physical infrastructure, but also social and economic aspects. Together with residents, the Bijlmermeer Renewal Project Bureau, an organization established by the city of Amsterdam, the local council and the responsible housing association, put together a renewal plan. The focus is on developing more jobs, and more social and cultural facilities like churches, mosques, and spaces for small-business in the area. More than half the high-rise blocks were to be demolished and replaced with new buildings. The remaining high-rise blocks would be renovated with upgraded facilities. The

surfaces of roads would be lowered and public areas would be re-organized. The renovation process also includes major maintenance works and the provision of new physical and social facilities.



*The delegation was briefed on the Bijlmermeer regeneration project*

3.39 In spite of the integrated character of the interventions, the approach was neighbourhood specific. The area was divided into smaller districts which were then fleshed out by various urban planners. The public space would be more clearly organized with streets, squares and public buildings. Upon completion of the project, half the total housing supply will consist of subsidized rented flats, whilst the other half will comprise private sector housing. Families that are forced to move as a result of the renovation project, but who nevertheless wish to remain in the area, are entitled to a suitable and affordable home in the area.



*The delegation was received by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic at a working luncheon*



*The delegation at the parliament building in Prague*

## **A general profile of Prague**

4.1 Situated on the River Vltava in central Bohemia and with an area size of 496 km<sup>2</sup>, Prague is the seat of the highest level legislative, administrative and political bodies of the Czech Republic. Prague has been the political, cultural, and economic centre of the Czech state for over 1 100 years. The Parliament, government, and the most important social, cultural and educational institutions reside here. The city is the entrance gate to the Czech Republic. Prague has a population of almost 1.2 million permanent residents. Besides, the number of commuters and visitors move about the city in a normal day is estimated to be around 1.5 million.

4.2 Prague is considered as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and is among the most visited cities on the continent. Since 1992, the historic centre of Prague has been included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization world heritage sites.

4.3 Prague generates over 20% of the national gross domestic product. Over the last decade, Prague's economy has undergone profound transformation; a majority of Czech businesses have undergone privatization and a number of foreign companies have established their operations in the city. The services sectors have grown significantly while the percentage of production industries is decreasing. The most important industrial sectors are printing, the food industry, the chemical industry, and the engineering industry. A significant proportion of national research and development activities are carried out in Prague.

## **Characteristics of the spatial structure of Prague**

4.4 The spatial structure of the Prague city can be perceived as comprising the three historically created belt areas -- the city centre, the Prague suburban areas and the outer belt. The city centre comprises the historical core (which has developed along both banks of Vltava river since the 10th century) and the inner-city neighbourhoods (which have developed since the mid-19th century). The Prague suburban areas are mainly dominated by housing estates constructed in the 1950s and 1960s and council housing in garden cities dating from the pre-Second World War era. There are no plans for extensive measures to be

taken into the spatial structure of the Prague suburbs. The city government sees that changes on the monofunctional urban structures in the suburban areas should not be aggressive unification with the character of the city centre buildings, but should be based on finding their own identity and spatial order.

4.5 The outer belt is dominated by the suburban landscape with its original rural settlement. The city government considers that all new construction should sensitively tie-in with these traditions. The outer belt provides the best conditions for the extensive development of green areas and for reaching an ecological stability system by linking up with selected green areas and water elements.

### **Institutional framework for the city's town planning and urban renewal**

4.6 Prague is governed by the Prague City Council, with its members being elected by universal suffrage. The Council is led by the Executive, which is chaired by the elected Mayor for a four-year term. For administrative purpose, Prague is divided into 22 districts which possess individual district councils responsible for controlling and planning spatial development. At the municipal level, there are a total of 57 city boroughs whose administrative powers are laid down in the Charter of the City of Prague responsible for administering the daily operation of individual city boroughs.

4.7 The City Development Authority of Prague, a municipal government department, is responsible for formulating and implementing both spatial planning and urban renewal policies. While the legislation governing the city's town planning is the Spatial Planning Act, the planning of Prague's urban development is mainly governed by two citywide planning documents: the Master Plan and the Strategic Plan.

## **Town planning policy**

### The Master Plan for the Prague city

4.8 The Master Plan, which was approved by the City Assembly in 1999, is a physical plan (close to a zoning plan) that specifies the allocation of functions in the city and regulates the development process. The main principles of Prague's spatial development expressed in the Master Plan are --

- (a) extension of the boundary of the compact city so as to allow controlled city growth;
- (b) deconcentration of functions from the city centre through extension of the city centre and the creation of secondary centres;
- (c) location of regional shopping centres in the outer city;
- (d) residential areas for medium-rise apartment housing located within the compact city and low-rise single-family housing in outer city locations adjacent to the compact city and existing village settlements in outer zone;
- (e) new areas for short-term recreation in the outer city;
- (f) concentration of development to areas with a good accessibility by public transport and in the outer city by railway;
- (g) extension of the underground system; and
- (h) construction of the inner city ring road and the outer city express road.

### Prague Strategic Plan

4.9 The need for a document which would set out Prague's long-term development goals, propose ways to achieve them and enable regulation of the decision-making process was recognized by the city's political leaders and the

general public in the aftermath of the "velvet revolution". The work on the preparation of a strategic plan for the city started in 1994, and the final output, the Prague Strategic Plan, was approved by the City Assembly in May 2000.

4.10 The Strategic Plan formulates the long-term programme of city development for 15 to 20 years. It is intended to purposefully manage the process of urban change and to co-ordinate the decision making processes of city administration with the numerous interests, activities and resources of various actors in the city. The Prague Strategic Plan is not only an overall vision of the city's future, but it is an agreement between politicians, specialists, corporate sector representatives and citizens of Prague about what the city wishes to achieve in the next two decades and how to proceed in the solving of problems in particular spheres. The Prague strategy is based upon the city's strengths, especially its unique character and spiritual, intellectual and cultural traditions, quite exceptional natural and urban quality, its economic and human potential, advantageous position in the heart of Europe, its good reputation, and its attraction for foreign visitors.

4.11 The strategic priorities of the Prague city are --

- (a) to create a favourable entrepreneurial environment;
- (b) to support science and education;
- (c) to protect and develop the city's cultural and urban values;
- (d) to achieve an efficient economy for all resources (nature, land and property, water, energy and finance) with respect to sustainable development;
- (e) to develop a polycentric structure of the city; and
- (f) to build the Partnership for Prague between the public sphere, private sector and citizens.

4.12 The basic strategic aim in town planning of Prague is the change-over from a monocentric to a polycentric city, emphasizing the need to alleviate the

pressure on the city centre and make more balanced use of all its territory. The city administration has identified the following problems and threats which need to be addressed through town planning measures --

- (a) While Prague is a unique and well-known genius loci of the Czech Republic with exceptionally rich history and culture, there is the problem of general overburdening of the centre, particularly of the Prague Heritage Conservation Area. There is incomprehensive, and in some cases, lack of care of historical sites particularly of those outside the conservation area;
- (b) A high proportion of housing estates built in the earlier decades offer nothing more than accommodation that were built to low technical standards and offering very few job opportunities;
- (c) There is the threat of unchecked urbanization of suburban areas and disturbance of the traditional settlement structure and appearance of the city;
- (d) There is a lack of co-ordination between Prague and its neighbouring region, the Central Bohemia Region, when forming land use policies; and
- (e) The natural landscape of Prague has been under threat as a result of insensitive and poorly planned urban policies in the past.

4.13 In an effort to realize the strategic vision of changing-over from a monocentric to a polycentric city, the city administration (elected bodies, authorities and city organizations) has pledged to do the following, in collaboration with the public and private sectors and the people of Prague --

- (a) develop a system of city-wide, district and local centres that are easily accessible for the people from all parts of the city;
- (b) do what it can to see that selected parts of the city are transformed in a sensitive way to becoming new centres by making them

pleasant and attractive localities with a rich selection of job opportunities, services and public facilities;

- (c) in developing these new city centres, measures are to be taken in parallel to relieve the pressure on the historic centre and preservation of the *genia loci*; and
- (d) do its best to improve the spatial structure and the architectonic quality of Prague.

#### Updating of the Master Plan and Strategic Plan

4.14 Both the Master Plan and the Strategic Plan have been under regular updating by the City Development Authority. Changes to them require the approval of the City Assembly by resolution. A monitoring report in respect of the Strategic Plan is published by the City Development Authority annually. The monitoring reports contains evaluation of previous year's achievements and identification of warning signals about projects that stray way from the original aims or are taking too long. Currently, the City Development Authority is working on the updating of the Strategic Plan to take into account the following new factors --

- (a) consequences of the Czech Republic accession to the European Union, focusing on the need for better utilization of the intellectual potential of the city;
- (b) increased risks connected with global terrorism and devastating floods;
- (c) new trends in the territorial development of the city (especially the revitalization of brownfields in Prague); and
- (d) consideration of organization of big international events in Prague (e.g. the plan to bid for hosting the Olympic games in 2016 or 2020).

### Urban renewal policy

4.15 The main guiding principles of the Prague's urban renewal policy are as follows --

- (a) The city government plays a key role in formulating the urban renewal policy. Commercial enterprises, professional associations and citizens are consulted to determine the best urban renewal option. The city government may sell the land to foreign developers for redevelopment purposes. In many cases, the city government co-works with the private sector to implement large urban redevelopment projects.
- (b) The city government develops good transport infrastructures and regenerates green spaces to improve the living environment.
- (c) The city government employs world-class architecture firms to carry out large urban redevelopment projects.

### **Sites of major development/redevelopment projects in Prague visited by the delegation**

#### Smíchov

4.16 Smíchov is a district in the inner city of Prague and is located at the left bank of the Vltava River. It is one of the districts selected by the city government for revitalization to become a new city centre to relieve the pressure on the historical centre. At the beginning of the 19th century, Smíchov was an industrial district full of chimney stacks, railway yards and smoky factories. In the early 20th century, Smíchov became a nursery of modern architecture with settlement of villas built within the hilly and undulated city district. In the 1990s, the Prague government began co-working with private companies to demolish old industrial buildings and built a hypermarket, two multiplex cinemas, two hotels and several commercial premises.

4.17 The theme of the revitalization project is to transform the district into a pleasant and attractive locality with a rich selection of job opportunities, services and public facilities. Smíchov has a number of large cultural and business administration centres as well as residential complexes. The gradual re-construction of parks and amenity planting, together with the realization of the Anděl pedestrian zone and the Mrázovka tunnels, transform Smíchov into a greener district as well as moderating the dense automobile traffic in the centre of Prague. The development of a tram line Hlubočepy–Barrandov allows convenient and prompt accessibility to the central district from residential areas. The delegation observes that there is a mix of old and new buildings and different functions in the district. Old buildings with historical and architectural values are retained for adaptive uses such as markets, communal facilities and public sector offices.

#### Náměstí Republiky (Square of Republic)

4.18 Namesti Republiky is a square which is known especially for the Powder Tower, Art Nouveau building of Municipal House, newly reconstructed theatre house Hybernia, department store Kotva, banks, and other historical buildings. A large-scale renovation project, the Palladium, was completed in October 2007. The Palladium is now a modern multifunctional shopping and entertainment centre and is the largest commercial complex in Prague. It comprises five levels of shopping galleries with over 200 shops and 30 restaurants, 11 500 m<sup>2</sup> of office space with fine views of the city and about 900 underground parking spaces.



*The Palladium in Namesti Republiky where a 19th century barrack has been refurbished into a multi-purpose commercial development*

4.19 The Palladium was built on a site of the former Imperial Army Barracks in the centre of Prague. The Barracks had been under the army's ownership for more than two hundred years (1780s - 1996). The complex became dilapidated in the second half of the 20th century as the facilities were not used very much. While occupied by the army, the complex was completely closed to the public. The Palladium stands on archaeological grounds and one can see preserved parts just inside the mall.

#### A7 Arena Holešovice Pivovar

4.20 This renovation project is located in Prague 7 – Holešovice on the plot of the former First Prague Burgess Brewery established at the end of the 19th century. The plot occupies an area of 80 000 m<sup>2</sup>. The production of beer was stopped in 1996. The renovation project includes the reconstruction of three listed industrial buildings, plus the construction of four new buildings and an underground car park with 441 parking spaces. The reconstructed and new

buildings will be used as office, commercial, and residential premises. An interesting element in the residential section will be the construction of 36 loft apartments in the former brewhouse and the cask store. The complex offers a magnificent view of the city of Prague, and is situated close to the Stromovka park and a golf course. It is easily accessible by public transportation.



*The delegation at the site of the renovation project at Holešovice*

#### The PARK at the Prague 4 district

4.21 The PARK is a master-planned campus-style office community business park. Upon completion, the site will house up to 12 state-of-the-art office buildings. So far 10 buildings have been completed including the Plaza, which is the PARK's central square and community focal point. Buildings are located within a landscaped garden environment. Atrium gardens and vestibules connect each building with the outside garden environment and create a unique office environment.

4.22 The PARK is located with easy road access as it is adjacent to the Prague-Budapest-Vienna highway. It is also close to the Chodov Metro station and transportation hub. The site is also located next to one of Prague's large-scale retail-entertainment development projects - the Chodov Shopping Centre. At present, The PARK offers a variety of amenities including cafeteria, fitness, major tenants' customer service center and showrooms, and also provides childcare and health care private services.

4.23 The developer of the project, AIG Lincoln, has obtained a 50-year lease from the city government for the development and has been granted the right of first refusal upon expiry of the land lease. It pays an annual rent to the government instead of an upfront land premium for the land. The land concerned is a greenfield site. The company secured the site through negotiation with the city government, rather than through land auction or tendering. The office space already developed amounts to 150 000 m<sup>2</sup> and there are now 6 000 employees working in the Park.



*A typical office building at the PARK*



*The delegation met with Mr Rene Samek of AIG Lincoln and was briefed on the PARK project.*

## **Trends and directions in strategic planning**

5.1 Instead of responding passively to development and changes and making piece-meal planning, Hong Kong, Amsterdam and Prague are in common in drawing up strategic plans to guide their urban development and management of the overall spatial environment in the longer term. The strategic plans seek to translate the vision and long term development objectives of the cities into the spatial planning context.

### Planning objectives

5.2 Sustainable development is the overarching goal of the spatial planning for all the three cities. The delegation observes that there is no significant difference among the three cities in terms of planning objectives (e.g. balancing economic growth and conservation needs, meeting housing and community needs and promotion of cultural activities and creative industries etc.).

5.3 For all the three cities, the strategic plans do not envisage strong pressure from population growth. Instead, the demand for more land arises mainly from economic development and the need for additional/expanded infrastructure facilities, and the demand for more housing due to rising community aspirations for more spacious dwellings and the trend towards a smaller household size.

5.4 As in the case of Hong Kong, the economies of both Amsterdam and Prague have undergone considerable growth over the past decade or so and this would continue to be in the case in the foreseeable future. Sustaining economic growth and prosperity is a common goal of the three cities and hence a priority consideration underpinning their strategic plans for managing the spatial environment.

### Spatial development pattern

5.5 The basic strategic aim of Prague's urban development to accommodate the increasing demand for commercial land is the change-over from a monocentric to a polycentric city, emphasizing the need to alleviate the demand for land/space in the inner city and make more balanced use of all its territory. The functions to be decentralized are mainly related to commercial activities

rather than residential uses. The decentralization is necessary to enable sustainable economic growth of the city while preserving the built heritage and maintaining a quality environment of the historical centre.

5.6 For Hong Kong and Amsterdam, as both cities have already resorted to decentralize their commercial activities from the central business district to other areas of the city a few decades ago, the emphasis on decentralization is not so prominent in their current strategic planning. The delegation observes that there is a common trend of intensification or consolidation of the existing commercial districts in Hong Kong (e.g. the Central Business District) and Amsterdam (e.g. Zuidas). This is attributed to the need to meet increasing demand for office and retail service spaces and the consideration that there is unrealized development potential in those areas. Such intensification is mainly made possible or justified by the availability of high capacity modern transport infrastructure and support services within the vicinity.

5.7 To complement economic growth and to reduce inner-city car traffic, there are specific transport infrastructure projects included in the strategic plans of the three cities. The common emphasis is on strengthening the metro and railway infrastructure to serve as the backbone of the city's overall transport network. The alignment of existing and planned metro/railway facilities in turn is a major factor in determining the location of new commercial and residential developments.

### Planning context

5.8 The planning context for the strategic plans of the three cities goes beyond the administrative boundaries of the cities. All the three cities accord high priority to the need to plan in cooperation with the neighbouring cities. Indeed, one of the themes of HK2030 Study is to strengthen the links with the Mainland. This theme is manifested in the planning of cross-boundary land transport infrastructure and in the initiation of planning studies for development of boundary areas such as the Lok Ma Chau Loop and the Frontier Closed Area. Both Amsterdam and Prague are aspiring to become a metropolitan city to strengthen their position in European and globally. In this regard, in drawing up a new master plan for the city, Amsterdam has placed emphasis on regional cooperation, i.e. cooperation with neighbouring municipalities, in the areas of housing, industries and transport. In its Strategic Plan, Prague stresses the need

to attain better coordination and cooperation with the neighbouring Central Bohemia Region, in particular on matters that involve development of the main traffic corridors, co-ordination in locating new shopping parks and on major development projects.

### **Planning to achieve a quality living environment**

5.9 Over the past 40 odd years, Hong Kong has been subject to intense development pressure resulting from rapid population and economic growth. The Government has responded to such pressure through launching massive land production, public housing and infrastructure programmes. While the living standards of Hong Kong people in general have risen, the community's awareness of various environmental and social issues has considerably heightened. Many people in the community are beginning to ask, for example, why our beautiful harbour is so inaccessible to the public, why Hong Kong cannot have better and more open space and buildings of varying designs, and why our natural resources and cultural heritage cannot be better preserved. With the outbreak of SARS and the problem of global warming, some have also asked whether our development intensities are too high. "Providing a quality living environment" is one of the three board directions of the planning strategies recommended in the HK2030 Study. In his 2007-2008 Policy Address, the Chief Executive pledged to provide for a quality city and quality life, and to lower development intensity where justified in addressing the community's calls for less congested building layouts and a better environment.

5.10 In this regard, the delegation considers that Hong Kong can draw reference from Amsterdam and Prague in regard to their application of urban design principles to the developments in the city. Firstly, both Amsterdam and Prague adopts comprehensive planning for all urban development and regeneration projects. While the proposed land uses are required to be in compliance with the relevant zoning plan, the city government would first commission an urban design scheme, either to be drawn up by the city's planning department or by the project proponent from the private sector. Apart from details about the spatial arrangements of buildings, roads and other facilities, the urban design schemes also include urban design concepts and the architectural designs of the buildings in question. In Prague, the closer is a development to the historical centre, the more stringent would be the requirements with regard to

the built form and architectural quality. In the case of Amsterdam, as the city government issues land at fixed prices, project proponents thus compete mainly on the quality aspects of development schemes.

5.11 Drawing reference from Amsterdam and Prague, the delegation considers that it is high time for the Administration to review the effectiveness of the existing planning control mechanisms and incentive schemes in managing and regulating the cityscape. Hong Kong's urban landscape is often criticized for its ultra high density and the monotonous and sterile architectural designs of buildings, be they public or private ones. The delegation notes that Hong Kong is not lacking in urban design guidelines. HKPSG provide basic guidelines on urban planning and design in Hong Kong. In 2003, after public consultation, the Administration introduced the Urban Design Guidelines as a new chapter of the HKPSG. The Urban Design Guidelines set out the major urban design considerations and the broad framework for urban design assessment. The considerations include general massing and disposition of buildings, stepped height profile for the protection of the ridgelines and the harbour view, provision of breezeways, view corridors, setback of buildings at street level, etc. In 2005, a set of design guidelines for the improvement of air ventilation. The Urban Design Guidelines can be implemented through various statutory means and administrative mechanisms. The delegation observes that notwithstanding the availability of the Urban Design Guidelines for some years, it is only in the recent few years that the Administration and the planning/urban renewal authorities have taken active steps to incorporate the Guidelines into the statutory town plans and development schemes. The community is yet to witness whether the promise of quality living made by the Chief Executive in the latest Policy Address can be successfully materialized.

### **Planning for social harmony**

5.12 In the area of housing, the Amsterdam municipal authorities support the idea of an undivided city; a city made up of areas where citizens from different backgrounds and of different income sectors will live side-by-side with no dividing lines between rich and poor or native and non-native where, in principle, everyone qualifies for a home. This housing policy has been consolidated into municipal by-laws, policy regulations and agreements with the district authorities, the social housing corporations and consumer organisations. The delegation

observes that in planning a new neighbourhood and in urban regeneration, the city government pursues the goal of an undivided city by planning an appropriate mix of housing types within the same neighbourhood. The different types of housing include homes providing care facilities, student accommodation, subsidised housing and private housing for people in the middle or high income brackets. Particularly, a specific ratio between subsidized housing and private market housing will be set for each urban development/regeneration project. A variety of community facilities and public areas are provided to each neighbourhood for shared use by residents of different housing types. Furthermore, there is conscious planning to locate markets and shopping areas in such a way that they can serve as the daily meeting points for residents from different housing categories of the same neighbourhood.

5.13 The delegation shares the idea of "undivided city" adopted by Amsterdam in designing its neighbourhoods. In Hong Kong, the spatial characteristics and the mix of housing types vary a lot from district to district. The most recently developed new towns in Tung Chung and Tin Shui Wai are often criticized for their homogeneous housing with a high density of public housing estates. Coupled with its relatively remote location and limited employment opportunities, the majority of the residents in Tin Shui Wai are either relocated from other districts or are new arrivals with weaker family support, hence resulting in relatively more family problems. Indeed, many in the community point out that the problems are very much attributed to poor town planning. In this regard, the delegation concurs that town planning and urban renewal do have an important social dimension and good town planning should give due regard to relevant social factors with a view to achieving social integration among people from different backgrounds and income groups.

### **Public participation in the planning process**

5.14 In recent years, the Administration takes a greater initiative in involving the public in the early stages of the town planning process. With the passage of the Town Planning (Amendment) Ordinance 2004, the transparency of the statutory town planning process has enhanced and opportunities for public participation in the process have increased. On the community side, the public has shown their concerns about such issues as harbour reclamation, the plans for the redevelopment of the Kai Tak airport site, the demolition of historical

structures, disappearance of traditional activities, and the redevelopment of old residential areas. In light of these new trends of public participation in planning in Hong Kong, the delegation takes the opportunity of this visit to understand the experience of Amsterdam and Prague in this regard.

5.15 In Amsterdam, while the city government leads the policy consolidation, formulation and implementation of spatial development in Amsterdam, public forums are organized to solicit views from developers, architects and local citizens when formulating land use and zoning plans of the city. As for Prague, in developing the Strategic Plan, the city council brought together both the public and the private sectors through dialogues between the people and the authorities as well as with businesses, politicians and specialists. These dialogues were conducted weekly in the form of one-day workshops focusing on the fundamental questions of city development. The participating parties together sought ways to redirect monocentric Prague into becoming polycentric and to solve various pressing problems regarding the provision of housing, transport and ways to balance heritage conservation with city expansion and development.

5.16 The delegation has also observed that there are well established procedures in both Amsterdam and Prague to engage the public, in particular the concerned neighbourhoods, at the early planning stages of development and regeneration projects. Apart from the out-reach consultation conducted by responsible project agents, there are also ample opportunities for the citizens to make representations to the relevant committees of the city council or to the city council direct where the final decision on implementation of any major development and redevelopment project is made. As evidenced in a number of projects, opinions expressed by the public often resulted in significant changes to the original project schemes.

5.17 In Amsterdam, in planning a regeneration programme, e.g. the regeneration of Bijlmermeer, surveys and forums will be conducted among affected residents to ascertain their inclination about staying within the same locality or otherwise and their opinions about reconstruction versus renovation etc. Moreover, to address the needs of residents in a vulnerable social position and to take care of related social and environmental issues, the responsible authorities will also bring in professionals and non-government organizations to provide advice and assistance in the planning and implementation process.

5.18 The delegation considers that public participation in town planning matters should be an ongoing process and the availability of a physical accommodation as a focal point for the public to gather and interact is very important. In this regard, the delegation would share its observation about ARCAM (Amsterdam Centre for Architecture), at which the delegation was briefed by its director on the history of urban development and possible scenarios of future development in Amsterdam.

5.19 The delegation notes that ARCAM was set up as a foundation in 1986 with the aim to reach the largest possible public, incite their interest in the architectural and development matters of Amsterdam, and fuel constant discussions about the future of the city. ARCAM also acts as a co-ordination centre and works together with a large number of institutes to support and co-ordinate existing programmes and to initiate new activities. The Centre is accommodated in an architecturally impressive stand-alone building located at a prime waterfront site of IJ, and is funded by several city departments and over 50 private and civic organizations. Apart from operating an information point where the public can go for information, the Centre also stages exhibitions on topics relating to architecture, urbanism and landscape. The delegation finds that ARCAM is a good illustration of the importance accorded by the community (including the government and the general public) to public participation in planning the future development of the city.

### **Planning for a creative city**

5.20 In recent years, there are increasing calls in Hong Kong for enriching the cultural elements of the urban spaces of the city. Some also advocate that Hong Kong should aspire and develop to become a cultural metropolis. Apart from heated discussions on the West Kowloon Cultural District project, there are also discussions on the re-making of the city's urban spaces to promote cultural development and diversity. Specific suggestions include preserving structures endowed with cultural and historical value and enlivening these structures through adaptive social and cultural uses; and converting obsolete industrial buildings and factory estates into clusters to provide new economic and production spaces for the creative sector. In fact, some developments in these directions, both with and without Government support, are taking place in some parts of Hong Kong. For example, many factory units in Fo Tan that are no

longer used for industrial production are occupied by individual artists and art groups as work offices and rehearsal rooms. The Revitalizing Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme involving seven government-owned historic buildings was formally launched by the Development Bureau in February 2008 after securing funding support of the Finance Committee.

5.21 The delegation supports the idea of enriching the cultural life of Hong Kong through urban planning. In this regard, the delegation observes that both Amsterdam and Prague place high emphasis on the cultural dimension of urban planning. The regeneration of the NDSM site in Amsterdam through partnership between the city government and the community's creative sector is a good example. In Prague, endowed with a rich and unique cultural heritage, preserving and enhancing the cultural elements of the city have always been at the focus of urban planning. This is well demonstrated in the high architectonic quality of renovation projects visited by the delegation.

6.1 The delegation would like to thank the persons and organizations listed in Appendix II of this report for receiving the delegation during the visit and exchanging views with the delegation.

6.2 The delegation would also like to thank the organizations which have assisted in lining up the visit programme and making the logistical arrangements during the visit. They include the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Hong Kong, Consulate General of the Netherlands, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Brussels and Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin.

**Delegation of LegCo Panel on Development**

**Overseas duty visit to Amsterdam and Prague  
from 13 to 21 March 2008**

**Legislative Council Members**

Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP (*Chairman of the Panel and Leader of the Delegation*)

Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP (*Deputy Chairman of the Panel*)

Hon James TO Kun-sun

Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP (*Joining the delegation on 17 March*)

Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip (*Joining the Amsterdam leg only*)

Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP

Hon Daniel LAM Wai-keung, SBS, JP

Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC (*Joining the Prague leg only*)

**Staff members of the Secretariat**

Ms Anita SIT Fung-ming (*Clerk to the Panel*)

Miss Queenie LAM Shui-ping (*Senior Legislative Assistant*)

(Total : 10 members)

**Delegation of LegCo Panel on Development**  
**Overseas Duty Visit to Amsterdam and Prague**  
**(from 13 to 21 March 2008)**

**Visit Programme**

| Date/Time  | Itinerary   |
|--|---|
| <b>13 March 2008</b> (Thursday) <i>Hong Kong</i>       |   |
| 11:10 am   | Depart HK for Amsterdam (by KL888)  |
| 4:40 pm  | Arrive at Amsterdam   |
| <b>14 March 2008</b> (Friday) <i>Amsterdam</i>         |   |
| 10:00 am - 11:30 am                                    | Presentation and exhibition by the Amsterdam Architecture Center  |
| 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm                                      | Presentation by the Amsterdam Department of Spatial Planning and visit to the Eastern Port Area   |
| 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm                                      | Dinner hosted by the Province of North Holland and the City of Amsterdam<br><i>(hosts: Vice Governor Ton Hooijmaiers of the Province of North Holland and Maarten van Poelgeest, Vice Mayor of Amsterdam)</i> |
| <b>17 March 2008</b> (Monday) <i>Amsterdam</i>         |   |
| 10:00 am - 11:00 am                                    | Visit to Zuidas organized by Amsterdam Department of Spatial Planning   |
| 1:00 pm - 2:15 pm                                      | Visit to Zuidoost District organized by Amsterdam Department of Spatial Planning  |
| 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm                                      | Visit to Noord District organized by Amsterdam Department of Spatial Planning   |
| <b>18 March 2008</b> (Tuesday) <i>Amsterdam/Prague</i> |   |
| 10:00 am - 11:00 am                                    | Meeting with City Council Committee on Spatial Development  |
| 3:00 pm  | Depart Amsterdam for Prague (by KL3125)   |
| 4:25 pm  | Arrive at Prague  |

| <b>Date/Time</b>     | <b>Itinerary</b>  |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>19 March 2008</b> | <b>(Wednesday) Prague</b>   |
| 10:00 am             | Briefing on the strategic planning of Prague by Mr Milan Turba, Director of the Strategic Concept Department from the City Development Authority of Prague                        |
| 1:00 pm              | Working luncheon hosted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chamber of Deputies - Parliament of the Czech Republic   |
| 2:30 pm - 5:00 pm    | Visit to redevelopment sites arranged by the City Development Authority of Prague<br>( <i>Smíchov, Holešovice, Náměstí Republiky</i> )  |
| 6:30 pm              | Dinner hosted by Mr WONG Kai-yi, Stephen, Director (Berlin Designate), the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin  |
| <b>20 March 2008</b> | <b>(Thursday) Prague</b>  |
| 9:30 am              | Visit to the PARK and presentation given by AIG Lincoln company on the PARK project   |
| 1:00 pm              | Working luncheon hosted by the Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Chamber of Deputies - Parliament of the Czech Republic                                  |
| 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm    | Visit to heritage sites in the historical centre of Prague arranged by the Legislative Council Secretariat with the assistance of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin |
| <b>21 March 2008</b> | <b>(Friday) Prague</b>  |
| 12:45 pm             | Depart Prague for Amsterdam ( <b>by KL3124</b> )  |
| 2:15 pm              | Arrive at Amsterdam   |
| 3:15 pm              | Depart Amsterdam for HK ( <b>by KL887</b> )   |

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