

LCQ6: URA to modify redevelopment projects

Question:

It has been reported that the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") plans to modify some of its redevelopment projects as revitalization or rehabilitation projects, so as to relieve its financial pressure. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether:

- (a) it knows if any of the 25 redevelopment projects announced in 1998 will be modified as revitalization or rehabilitation projects; if so, of the details;
- (b) it knows if URA will consult the public before deciding which option of development, i.e. redevelopment, revitalization or rehabilitation, should be adopted for a particular project; if so, of the consultation procedures; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (c) as the cooperation agreement between URA and the Hong Kong Housing Society provides the latter with autonomy over development projects, the authorities concerned have assessed if such autonomy will affect the original mode of development of the 25 redevelopment projects, as well as the residents affected by such projects; if so, of the assessment results?

Reply:

Madam President,

The urban renewal policy seeks to address the problem of urban decay through a comprehensive and holistic approach. According to the Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance, the purposes of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) include demolishing and redeveloping dilapidated buildings, promoting the rehabilitation of old buildings as well as preserving buildings of historical, cultural or architectural interest. The Government's objective is that the urban renewal programme should be self-financing in the long run. However, financial consideration is not the only factor in determining the mode of implementation. The URA has

to consider a host of other factors, including the condition of the buildings, the living environment of the residents and whether the buildings have preservation value.

My reply to the three-part question is as follows.

(a) The URA will decide on the mode of implementation for the 25 projects announced by the Land Development Corporation (LDC) in early 1998 in accordance with the law and having regard to the different circumstances of each project.

According to the first Corporate Plan of the URA, projects to be launched in the relevant five-year period include all the 25 uncompleted projects of the LDC. We are aware of the proposed mode of implementation for these projects. However, as the Corporate Plan is a rolling plan which has to be updated annually and as sensitive information is involved, the URA will only announce the details of these projects, including their mode of implementation, at the commencement of the projects.

Since its establishment, the URA has announced and commenced five redevelopment projects under this arrangement. We believe that in determining the mode of implementation for the remaining 20 projects, in addition to the factors mentioned above, the URA will fully consider the expectation of the residents for redevelopment in these project areas.

(b) The Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance and the Urban Renewal Strategy have been made after extensive public consultation and deliberation. They contain sufficient provisions for regulating and guiding the operation of the URA. Regarding the overall planning of different districts and the need for urban renewal, the URA will consult the respective district advisory committees. When deciding on the mode of implementation for each project, the URA will take into account the relevant factors mentioned above. As sensitive information is involved, the URA will not conduct prior public consultation solely on the mode of implementation for individual projects.

(c) The URA and the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) are discussing the details of their strategic co-operation agreement. The underlying principle of this strategic partnership is that the HKHS will act

as the URA's agent in implementing a number of urban renewal projects in accordance with the existing statutory framework and the Urban Renewal Strategy. The factors to be considered in determining the mode of implementation for these projects should be the same as those for projects directly implemented by the URA.