

LCQ11: Work of Urban Renewal Authority

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Chi-wai, and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) commenced in May 2017 a district planning study for Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok to explore effective modes of urban renewal for old districts with limited redevelopment potential (i.e. currently having a high development density or not much residual developable plot ratio). On the other hand, the residential units under the Starter Homes Pilot Project for Hong Kong Residents offered for sale by the URA early this year received very good response. Regarding the work of the URA, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the following details about each of the redevelopment projects expected to be completed by the URA in the coming five years: (i) the address, (ii) the total floor area, (iii) the number of units (and among such units, the number of those with an area of 400 square feet or above), and (iv) the expected completion date;

(2) whether it will request the URA to allocate some of the units under the redevelopment projects mentioned in (1) for the purpose of subsidised sale housing; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it knows the latest progress of and expected completion date for the aforesaid study; whether the URA will conduct similar studies for the various old districts in Kowloon East (e.g. San Po Kong and Ngau Tau Kok), and expedite the urban renewal work for such districts, so as to tie in with the development plans under the Energizing Kowloon East initiative; if the URA will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To explore sustainable ways of addressing the problem of urban decay, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) commenced in May 2017 the district study for Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok (Yau Mong District Study). The Yau Mong District Study aims to explore ways of enhancing the efficiency of existing land use and the redevelopment potential in the two districts. The findings would also serve as the basis for the URA to identify more effective and efficient ways for urban renewal as well as practical and feasible ideas and modus operandi for adoption in the work strategy of urban renewal in future. The efficacy of various initiatives under the 2011 Urban Renewal Strategy would also be examined in the context of the study.

Having consulted the URA, my reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) Details about each of the redevelopment projects expected to be completed by the URA in the coming five years (2019-2023) (including the location of the project, total floor area, number of units to be provided, date of completion, and number of units with an area of 400 square feet or above) are listed at Annex.

(2) Of the projects listed in Annex, apart from the redevelopment project in Ma Tau Wai Road named "eResidence" which will be the Starter Homes Pilot Project for Hong Kong Residents, other projects will not be converted to subsidised sales flats. In fact, development agreements for development of these projects as private housing have been signed with joint venture developers.

As a statutory body with the function of promoting urban renewal, the URA has all along maintained an appropriate division of labour with the Hong Kong Housing Authority/Hong Kong Housing Society in terms of their roles and ambits, with the latter two being responsible for providing public housing. That said, the URA has also contributed to the provision of subsidised sales flats under its Kai Tak "flat-for-flat" project and "eResidence", the Ma Tau Wai Road Redevelopment Project. The Government has also invited the URA to identify one or two clusters of sites formerly developed under the Civil Servants' Co-operative Building Society Scheme for redevelopment under the URA's programme, and consider earmarking some of the redevelopment area for public housing development. As to whether the URA will continue to provide public housing in future, both the Government and the URA have to carefully consider the impact of this fundamental change on the supply of private housing (including the impact on replenishing the number of private housing affected by redevelopments) and the URA's self-financing mode of operation.

(3) The URA is taking forward the Yau Mong District Study progressively. The URA has earlier completed the assessment on the scale of urban decay, development density, transport and infrastructure capacity, and environmental issues of the study area, and will identify opportunities and constraints based on the study findings to address the key issues and problem areas. In addition, a selection framework for identification of "Potential Urban Renewal Opportunity Areas" will be developed. Selected opportunity areas will be consolidated into options of "Master Renewal Concept Plans" (MRCP) in subsequent stages. After the MRCP options have been formulated, public engagement will be carried out to solicit views on the options. The URA has also been reviewing the existing institutional framework and implementation mechanisms, and will incorporate the proposed implementation strategies into the MRCP options for testing. The Yau Mong District Study is expected to be completed in end-2019 or early 2020.

As mentioned above, the findings of the Yau Mong District Study will serve as the basis for the URA to identify more effective and efficient ways for urban renewal as well as practical and feasible ideas and modus operandi for adoption in other districts, including various old districts in Kowloon

East.

Meanwhile, the URA has been carrying out urban renewal efforts in various old districts in Kowloon East. Through its various building rehabilitation schemes, the URA has provided assistance services to the owners of over 80 buildings in the area for improving building conditions and living environment. The URA will also continue to follow the Urban Renewal Strategy and take into account a host of factors such as building conditions, living environment, land resources available in the district for relocating affected residents, planning gains that the redevelopment project can bring about to the entire community, as well as the financial and manpower resources of the URA, in reviewing and working out the scopes and priorities of projects requiring redevelopment and rehabilitation in various districts.