

Kowloon City District Urban Renewal Forum

**Urban Renewal Plan for
Kowloon City**

**Social Impact Assessment
Executive Summary**

(PLNQ 4/ 2012)

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I. Introduction

- I. 1. Promulgated in 2011, the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) has proposed to set up District Urban Renewal Forum (DURF) to adopt a “People first, district-based, public participatory” approach in carrying out urban renewal. In June 2011, the first pilot DURF was established in Kowloon City. As one of the old districts, Kowloon City District has over 1,000 buildings aged over 50 years, one-quarter of the total number of same type of buildings in Hong Kong. There are many dilapidated buildings in the district, but only a few Urban Renewal Authority (URA) or private-led redevelopment projects involved. The Kowloon City DURF (KC DURF), as a newly-established advisory body, whose major responsibilities are to advise the Government on the renewal plan for Kowloon City, including advice on redevelopment and rehabilitation areas; plus preservation and revitalisation initiatives. Under this framework, the KC DURF commissioned consultants to commence the study on Urban Renewal Plan for Kowloon City (Planning Study) and social impact assessment (SIA) in May 2012. Between August and September 2012, as well as between April and June 2013, two stages of public engagement programme were conducted, to collect opinions from local residents and different stakeholders on the Urban Renewal Plan (URP).
- I. 2. The consultants have collected data from different aspects (Figure 1), for inclusion in the SIA. They first compiled a community profile, to understand the community characteristics and livelihood of the Kowloon City, different sub-districts and areas affected by the URP. SIA questionnaires were then distributed to evaluate the potential impact of the URP on the affected areas, with further site visits to interview the main stakeholders, in order to propose adequate mitigation measures. This SIA focuses on the study of the recommendations on urban renewal plans which involve redevelopment and rehabilitation. This executive summary consists of three parts, namely **Community Profile, Social Impact and Feedback from Stakeholders and Proposed Mitigation Measures**.

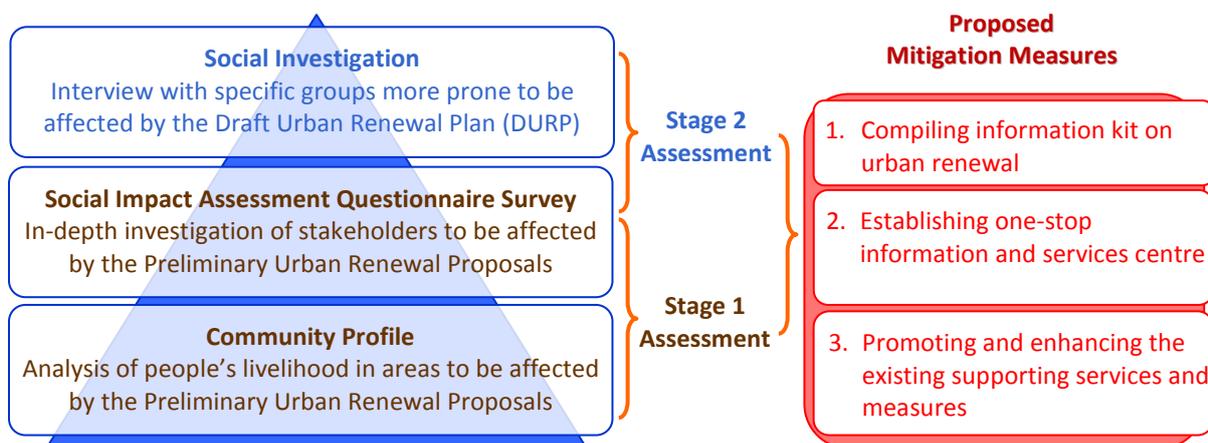


FIGURE 1. DATA COLLCECTION OF SIA

II. Community Profile

II.1. The compilation of the community profile aims at analysing the livelihood of those areas affected by the URP. The Consultants analysed the data of the Large Street Block Groups in the Population Census 2011, conducted site visits, questionnaire survey and solicited views of stakeholders in the public engagement community workshops. In this study, Kowloon City is divided into three major areas and seven sub-areas (Figure 2).

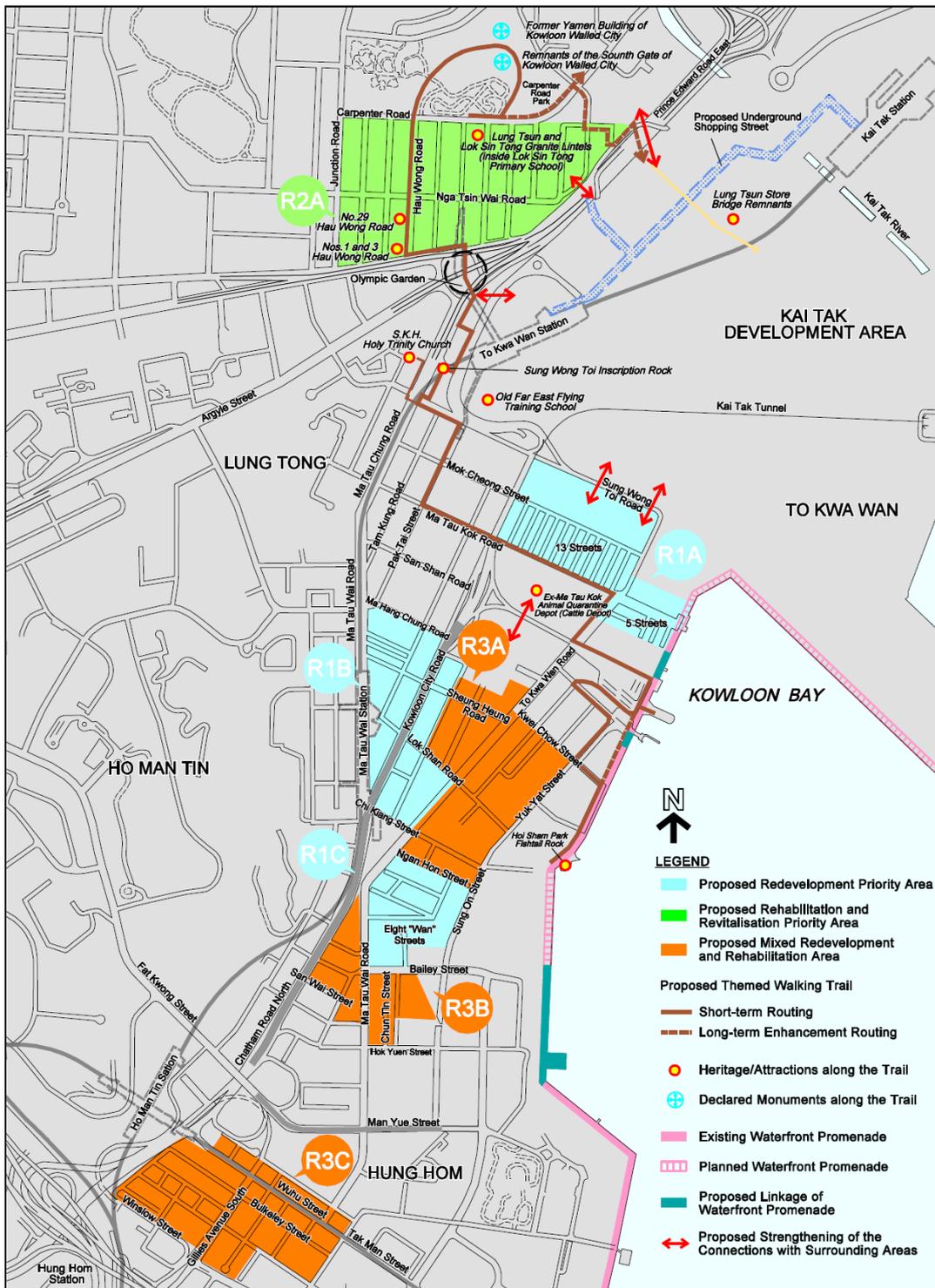


FIGURE 2. STUDY AREA: AREAS AFFECTED BY THE KOWLOON

<p><u>Proposed Redevelopment Priority Area</u></p> <p>R1A: “5 Streets” and “13 Streets” (To Kwa Wan)</p> <p>R1B: Kowloon City Road and Lok Shan Road (To Kwa Wan)</p> <p>R1C: Eight “Wan” Streets / Ngan Hon Street / Sung On Street (To Kwa Wan)</p> <p><u>Proposed Rehabilitation and Revitalisation Priority Area</u></p> <p>R2A: Nga Tsin Wai Road (Long Tong)</p>	<p><u>Proposed Mixed Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Area</u></p> <p>R3A: Ngan Hon Street / Sheung Heung Road / Kwei Chow Street / Yuk Yat Street (To Kwa Wan)</p> <p>R3B: Bailey Street / Chun Tin Street / San Wai Street / Chatham Road North (Hung Hom)</p> <p>R3C: Wuhu Street / Winslow Street / Gillies Avenue South (Hung Hom)</p>
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Demographic Characteristics

- II.2. The total population of the affected areas (R1, R2 and R3) was 89,596, in 32,711 domestic households. R3 was the most populated, with 44,794 people (50.0%); 31,512 (35.2%) were living in R1; and the population in R2 was 13,290 (14.8%).
- II.3. In the affected areas, there were more **people aged 60 or above** (accounting 22.4% of the affected population), **new arrivals**¹ (accounting 4.7% of the affected population) and **students aged 14 or below** (accounting 11.9% of the affected population), when compared with the territorial average. Hence, their housing, living, schooling and employment needs deserve attention in the process of urban renewal.
- II.4. Besides Filipinos, Indonesians, White and Japanese, who were less affected by urban renewal, the most populated **ethnic groups** in the affected areas are Indians, Pakistanis and Thais, with a total population of 2,351 (40.4% of the ethnic minority population in the affected areas). The Thais are relatively well-off in terms of community support and economic well-being, and are capable to integrate into Hong Kong society. It is noteworthy to mention that quite a number of Indians and Pakistanis (a total of 1,064) lived in Proposed Redevelopment Priority Area (R1), almost all are tenants with lower income, limited budget for rent and living in overcrowded flats. Appropriate measures should be undertaken to address these challenges in the process of urban renewal.

Community and Structure of Social Groups

- II.5. In area R1, residents of “5 Streets” were significantly more engaged in the urban renewal issues, some of the R1B residents were also very active, but with lower organisational capacity. Some buildings in area RIC were successfully acquired by developers and residents were therefore more concerned about the redevelopment plan; with the assistance from the District Councillors and Kowloon City District Office, they were actively organising the property-owners to discuss the redevelopment issues with the developers, such as to apply for the Demand-led Redevelopment Project, in order to speed up the redevelopment process. Residents in area R2A were growing up with a stronger sense of

¹ New arrivals are people who have resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years.

history, the senior residents felt that their past had closely attached to the changes of Kowloon City District and had higher expectation of urban renewal. Many residents proposed to make a comprehensive development plan for the whole district and connecting with the Kai Tak Development Area. They expected redevelopment and re-settled in the same district. In area R3, community network was mainly formed by District Councillors and owners' corporations (OCs), no self-organised residents' groups to lobby for redevelopment have been identified.

Socio-economic Characteristics

- II.6. The **average monthly household income** of the affected residents was relatively low. The average monthly household income of each sub-area was lower than the average monthly household income of the whole Kowloon City (HKD23,560). The average monthly household income of four sub-areas, R1A, R1B, R1C and R3A, was even lower than the territorial average (HKD20,500). The low income level maybe related to residents' **occupations**. Many of them worked in the service and sales sectors (accounting 11.8% to 27.2% of the workforce of the sub-areas), elementary occupations (16.3% to 24.6%), with only a small proportion of professionals or executives (2.8% to 8.0%). Furthermore, their occupations were related to their **educational attainment**. About 50% of the residents attained secondary school level (accounting 47% to 58.7% of population of the sub-areas), residents attained primary school level accounted for over 20% (20.1% to 28.9%). A small proportion of residents have attained post-secondary school or higher level (17.1% to 24%) in the affected areas, except in sub-area R3C².

Housing Conditions and the Degree of Overcrowding

- II.7. The population census provides information of the **household characteristics** of the affected areas. Most of the residents were living in private residential flats (92.1% to 99.9% of the households in the sub-areas), half of them fully owned the flats (without mortgage and loan) (46.1% - 53.7%). The proportion of sole tenants was lower than the territorial average, but the proportion of co-tenant/main tenant/sub-tenant (2.4%) was higher than the territorial average (0.5%). These statistics corresponded to the observations of high density of sub-divided units in the district. R1C (3.7%), R1A (3.4%), R2A (3.4%) and R1B (3.0%) had the highest number of co-tenant/main tenant/sub-tenant.
- II.8. Quite a number of the buildings in the affected areas had a **building age** of 30 years or more. Building with more than 50 years were mainly located in “5 Streets” and “13 Streets” of To Kwa Wan (R1A), Hung Fook Street (R1C), Kai Ming Street (R1C), Eight “Wan” Streets (R1C) and Whampoa Street, Hung Hom (R3C). Some also were scattered in the areas of Nga Tsin Wai Road, Lung Tong (R2A), Lo Lung Hang Street, Hung Hom (R3C), Kowloon City Road (R1B) and To Kwa Wan Road, To Kwa Wan (R3A). Buildings close to or over 50 years are described by local residents as sub-standard “salt-water buildings” and many of

² 29.2% of the residents in area R3C have attained post-secondary school or higher level education. It may be related to the tertiary college nearby, quite a number of tenants in area R3C are indeed students.

them are with severe defects, which make repairs difficult. The sub-divided units and rooftop constructions create grave challenges to the building structure and sewage system, which further deteriorate these sub-standard buildings.

- II.9. Between 2009 and 2010, the URA conducted a sample building conditions survey and found that among all sub-areas, **building conditions** in Nga Tsin Wai Road, Lung Tong (R2A) were the worst in the district, with 70% to 80% buildings in the area being classified as “dilapidated” and “marked dilapidated”; followed by 60% to 69% of “dilapidated” and “marked dilapidated” buildings in the area from Lok Shan Road to Bailey Street (R1C, R3A); 50% to 59% of “dilapidated” and “marked dilapidated” buildings in the “5 Streets” (R1A), Kowloon City Road and Ma Tau Wai Road (R1B), Dock Street and Gillies Avenue South (R3C); 40% to 49% of “dilapidated” and “marked dilapidated” buildings in “13 Streets” (R1A), Lok Shan Road and Sheung Heung Road area (R3C), San Wai Street and Chatham Road North area (R3B). Building rehabilitation works, through the "Operation Building Bright" (OBB) Scheme, was carried out in some buildings, particularly those were located in “5 Streets” and “13 Streets” (R1A), To Kwa Wan Road (R1B), Shung Tze Houses (R3B) and Whampoa Street (R3C). According to the analysis of questionnaire survey, there were three main reasons contributing to the dilapidated buildings: 1) poor quality building with old building age, 2) widespread existence of multiple ownerships causing the lack of OCs to organise repair and maintenance works and 3) low financial capacity of the households. These reasons hindered the launch of rehabilitation works. Moreover, high density of sub-divided flats, unauthorized building works and over-crowdedness make the building conditions of the district continue to deteriorate.

Future Development of the District

- II.10. Kowloon City will undergo numerous large-scale infrastructure projects, including MTR's Shatin to Central Link and the Kwun Tong Line Extension which are under construction, and the proposed Central Kowloon Route. These projects will bring a new scene to the district in the future.

Characteristics of Local Business Activities

- II.11. There was no major or upmarket shopping malls in the affected areas, the main business activities were from individually-run small shops. Area R1 was the hotspot for **vehicle repair industry** in Kowloon City district, more than 200 vehicle repair workshops were found in the “5 Streets” and “13 Streets”. Pollution caused by this industry was a factor contributing to the district's poor living conditions. Many **featured shops** and restaurants were located in Area R2 (Nga Tsin Wai Road area), making it a distinctive area in the district. Winslow Street and Gillies Avenue South were the hub of **funeral and related industries** and many residents were affected by the operation of these industries.

The Availability of Amenities, Community and Welfare Facilities

- II.12. Located at the Kowloon City Government Offices and run by the Government, the first community hall in Kowloon City was built and officially opened for public use in

mid-October 2013. Numerous **social welfare organizations** operate in the affected areas, including some organizations providing services to the ethnic minority groups in Kowloon City.

- II.13. In the affected area, there were only two elderly care homes located in buildings older than 50 years, one in the proposed “Redevelopment Priority Area” and one in the proposed “Mixed Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Area”. During Stage 2 SIA, Consultants have interviewed the representatives of elderly care homes, outlined a detailed picture of the social impact on elderly care services brought by the URP, and consulted them the contents of the mitigation measures.
- II.14. There were three indoor sports centres and two public swimming pools in vicinity to the affected areas, as well as many parks and sitting-out areas. The Kowloon Walled City Park and Hoi Sham Park were the most popular, but other parks and sitting-out areas were relatively small with limited facilities. Stakeholders opined that the **public recreational facilities** had been in serious shortage in the district, facilities in parks and elderly centres were insufficient to meet the demands of the residents. Coupled with the polarization of the population in the district, namely higher proportions of the elderly and young people, insufficient facilities were provided to serve these specific groups.
- II.15. Given the presence of many ethnic minority groups in the district, some comments considered that more community centres, libraries and Muslim centres should be provided to the ethnic minorities.
- II.16. **Educational facilities** in Kowloon City were found to be sufficient, with a total of 195 schools, which included 91 kindergartens/kindergartens with nurseries, 59 primary schools, 38 secondary schools and 3 special schools. The Po Leung Kuk Lam Man Chan English Primary School, located in the proposed urban renewal area, is equipped with school-based support programmes specifically arranged for non-Chinese-speaking students.

Historical background, Cultural and Local Characteristics

- II.17. Kowloon City is enriched with history, with 34 **declared monuments and historic buildings** in the district. Ex-Far East Flying School, Cattle Depot Artist Village, 1-3 Hau Wong Road (Lok Hau Fook Restaurant), Holy Trinity Cathedral, Kowloon Walled City relic site and etc., are found in the affected areas and the vicinity.

III. Social Impact and Feedback from Stakeholders

- III. 1. Throughout the SIA process, the Consultants collected stakeholders' views mainly through questionnaire survey and focus groups, to understand the problems encountered by different stakeholders during the urban renewal process as well as their expectations to the mitigation measures, so as to analyze the social impacts of the urban renewal and to suggest mitigation measures.
- III. 2. At **Stage 1 SIA**, questionnaires were used for analysing the long-term, medium-term, short-term, positive, negative, direct and indirect social impact of the Preliminary Urban Renewal Proposals on the stakeholders. Short-term refers to the period before and during the renewal projects, medium-term refers to the transitional period after the completion of the renewal projects and long-term impact refers to the long-term changes and development after the transitional period. Mitigation measures are then put forward along three broad approaches (para. III.14 refers).
- III. 3. At **Stage 2 SIA**, Consultants reached out to the stakeholders through setting up of focus groups for in-depth discussions. The difficulties of the stakeholders in each group, the relevance of the mitigation measures in the three broad approaches, and the recommendations of concrete arrangements were investigated.
- III. 4. Between April and May 2013, eight focus groups of residents were conducted, including owners, tenants and new arrivals, the elderly, ethnic minorities and rooftop dwellers.
- III. 5. Based on the survey results of Stage 1 SIA and the comments received from focus groups of Stage 2 SIA, an analysis on potential difficulties of residents and businesses might encounter at the urban renewal process was made and elaborated in the following paragraphs. The residents included owners (with sub-groups of elderly and rooftop dwellers) and tenants (with sub-groups of new arrivals, elderly people, ethnic minorities and rooftop dwellers). Businesses cover vehicle repair industry, funeral and related industries, and operators of elderly care homes.

Potential Difficulties of Residents

- III. 6. The owners would encounter the following problems when their properties were being acquired for redevelopment:
 - a. **Insufficient information about the existing supporting services and measures:** Many owners were not informed about the updated supporting services and measures and felt helpless during the urban renewal process. For example, the rooftop dwellers knew that their homes were unauthorised building works and therefore assumed that they were not entitled to any compensation or any "rights" to resettlement, under the redevelopment projects led by the URA.
 - b. **Lack of professional knowledge:** Property owners were worried about understanding the technical jargon, abstruse legal provisions and complicated procedure, or had no knowledge of property valuation. They were often afraid of being cheated by private developers and ended up selling their properties at low prices. In particular, the elderly

owners did not understand the concepts of private acquisition or the complicated procedure of compulsory sale.

- c. **Difficulty to assemble ownerships to initiate the redevelopment procedure:** If owners want URA to acquire and redevelop their properties, they must apply for the owner-initiated “Demand-led Redevelopment Project”. However, multiple ownerships were common in the area, owners were not organized, some flats were rented out or left empty for years³, all making it difficult to engage the owners. No or seldom interactions between owners led to a lack of trust between them and made it a long and wearing process to assemble sufficient ownerships to reach the consensus at acquisition process.
- d. **Compensation for tenanted properties:** The principles of URA acquisition are to offer a higher compensation for owner-occupiers than the tenanted properties. To secure a better compensation, owners who used to live on rental income would tend to stop renting out their properties before the redevelopment project is announced. Some elderly owners would then have no income for some time and were worried about their financial burden.
- e. **Concerned about the fees related to redevelopment:** Most owners in the district were worried that they could not afford the costs relating to redevelopment, such as attorney fees, property valuation fees and etc..
- f. **Re-housing issue/Difficulty in finding suitable accommodation:** A common concern was the re-housing arrangement during and after the redevelopment process. Most owners were not satisfied with the URA's Flat-for-Flat Scheme, as they could only move back after some years. They were also worried about property price hikes as many households are finding accommodations, while the supply of flats in the district remained limited, and they would then have difficulty to buy a flat in the same district. For “owners” of the rooftop structures, knowing that their flats as unauthorised building works, were worried that redevelopment would only leave them homeless. Their financial affordability was generally low, therefore they might not be able to find another affordable housing in the same district.
- g. **Inability to integrate into the new community after relocation:** Some elderly residents found difficult in arranging the relocation or they could not adept to the new environment, their health and social life might thus affected.
- h. **Increase in financial burden after redevelopment:** Some owners were worried that moving might involve higher living costs in the future, e.g. transportation costs, management fees. In particular, the elderly owners concerned that they could not afford the extra expenses due to redevelopment and after relocation, as their financial affordability would be limited.

III. 7. Issues that owners were mostly concerned relating to rehabilitation:

- a. **No guarantee of project quality:** As owners were unfamiliar with professional knowledge such as selecting consultants and contractors; planning, conducting and supervising the rehabilitation projects, the service quality cannot be ensured, such as unable to detect contraventions in selecting contractors (e.g. bid-rigging), services not being delivered as required by the contract (e.g. cutting corners on construction

³ One of the reasons of long term vacancy of flats is a strategy used by private developers, called “planting nails”, by acquiring 10 to 20% of ownerships in a building, to ensure its control at the redevelopment process.

materials), lack of follow up works upon completion (e.g. not removing the scaffolding).

- b. **Lack of professional knowledge and related information:** Owners were neither well informed about the rehabilitation polices and other supporting measures, nor had owner who had undergone the rehabilitation projects, to share experience with them.
- c. **Owners' Corporations were not formulated:** Owners failed to set up their OCs to discuss the rehabilitation issues.
- d. **Concerned about the cost of rehabilitation:** Owners were worried that they could not afford the cost of rehabilitation, such as surveyor fees, project costs.

III. 8. Difficulties reflected by tenants:

- a. **Insufficient information about existing supporting services and services:** Most tenants did not know about their rights during the redevelopment process, especially for the rooftop dwellers, they did not expect to receive any forms of settlement under the redevelopment projects led by the URA since the rooftop structures were unauthorised.
- b. **Forcibly evicted by landlords / Re-housing issue/ Difficulty in finding suitable accommodation:** Owners refuse to rent, rent hikes, forcibly eviction and etc., were common problems for tenants. It is partly due to the development projects in the district causing shortage of old flats. Some owners might refuse to rent their flats out anymore, as they aimed at getting the higher compensation for owner-occupiers, under the redevelopment projects led by the URA. This would lead to a shortage of old flats in the property market and as a result, rent would go up. Some owners avoided signing legally binding contract with tenant. In general, new arrivals and ethnic minorities have a lower financial capacity, the latter often encounter refusal from local owners. Therefore, tenants were worried about if they could find another accommodation in the same district and some even feared of becoming homeless.
- c. **Concern over children's education:** With children studying in the same district, tenants were worried if they could find suitable school places for their children after moving.
- d. **Unable to integrate into the new community after relocation:** Some tenants were worried that they could not adapt to life in the new community, especially for elderly and ethnic minority residents. The elderly commonly feared of the relocation arrangement and integration into new environment. The ethnic minority residents were concerned about the change of living style, for example, they have been accustomed to the current living setting as in a group, and were familiar with the ethnic minority services groups in Kowloon City or places of worship (mosques). Re-integration due to moving might not be easy for them.
- e. **Lack of access to updated information of the community or knowledge about their own rights due to language barriers:** Due to language barriers, the ethnic minority residents were not informed about the new information of their community. Their inability to read Chinese or English letters, tenancy contracts or legal documents, put their rights at risk.
- f. **Increase in financial burden after redevelopment:** Some tenants might not be able to afford costs related to redevelopment (such as relocation costs). They also feared that

after moving, the household expenditure would increase, such as transportation costs, rent and etc..

- g. **Heavier financial burden after rehabilitation:** Tenants were worried that during and after the rehabilitation works, the household expenditure would increase, such as rent hikes.

Potential Difficulties for Businesses:

- III. 9. Consultants have investigated the level of worries of the businesses in the affected areas, regarding redevelopment and rehabilitation related issues (i.e. "acquisition / compensation" and "dismissal of staff / loss of opportunity to make a living" due to redevelopment, and "project costs" and "effect on current business / opportunity to make a living" due to rehabilitation), at the questionnaire survey in Stage 1 SIA. Compared with others, the operators of vehicle repair workshops were more worried about "dismissal of staff / loss of opportunity to make a living" at the redevelopment process, while the funeral and related industries reflected that the impact was minimal. Yet, these two sectors were indeed incompatible with the residential land use at the neighbourhood, the businesses would face relocation difficulties at the redevelopment process. Consultants have put them to the focus groups at Stage 2 of SIA, to further understand their problems and expectations of urban renewal. Moreover, the elderly care homes might be affected by urban renewal and interviews were conducted to learn about the difficulties they might face.
- III. 10. Most vehicle repair workshops have been set up on the ground floor of old buildings and cause nuisances to the residents. They were mostly located in the area of "5 Streets" and "13 Streets" (Proposed Redevelopment Priority Area). Given their incompatibility with the residential land use, and in the long run, the industrial buildings which were suitable for the workshops would be redeveloped eliminated or revitalized for other uses, the major challenge for redevelopment was to **identify suitable relocation site**.
- III. 11. The funeral and related industries next to the funeral parlours in Hung Hom would not encounter obvious challenges at the urban renewal process. As the residents often found their existence disturbing, the industries have made two proposals to minimize their nuisances to the community, namely 1) to set up a centralized joss paper furnace in the district to avoid conflicts with residents when burning joss paper; 2) to identify meter parking spaces for hearses, in order to reduce problems such as their disturbing appearance and traffic congestion.
- III. 12. The major challenge for the elderly care homes at the urban renewal process was **relocation** due to redevelopment. Rent had gone up significantly in recent years, and the business-owners found it difficult to look for new places. Therefore they would prefer to maintain the status quo with no redevelopment plan, so that they could continue operating their business.
- III. 13. After studying the problems of business operators and their expectations regarding land use planning of the urban renewal process, the consultants put forward the following proposals to mitigate the social impacts:
 - a. **Vehicle repair industry:** Consultants proposed to study the feasibility of developing a multi-storey vehicle repair centre, to address the business operators' concern about finding new places to continue their business in facing redevelopment. Currently there

are some suitable industrial areas in Kwai Tsing District, which can be considered to develop vehicle repair centre. However, the proposal involves some complicated issues, such as whether the programme of developing the centre could dovetail with the redevelopment of “5 Streets” and “13 Streets”, the financial arrangement, operation models etc.. Furthermore, identifying an investor to develop the vehicle repair centre might not be easy, the feasibility of the proposal would need to be further explored. If it is proven feasible, it can mitigate the impacts of urban renewal on the industry.

- b. **Funeral and related businesses:** These industries would not encounter obvious difficulties at the urban renewal process, but to reduce its nuisances to the residents, some possible measures were recommended by the Planning Consultants. They include: to enhance the free furnace service to the public for burning joss paper and confine the burning activities, to stop issuing new undertaker licence in the area and to provide additional light goods vehicle parking spaces for hearses.
- c. **Elderly care homes:** There were only two elderly care homes located in buildings older than 50 years in the Proposed “Redevelopment Priority Area” and “Mixed Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Area”. Urban renewal would have limited effects on the elderly care homes in the district. Yet, to address the needs of the local residents, the Planning Consultants proposed to provide elderly care and rehabilitation-related social service facilities in the “Comprehensive Development Area” in the District.

Stakeholders' Feedback and Expectations of Mitigation Measures Along the Three Broad Approaches:

III. 14. The above-mentioned mitigation measures for business operators were proposed through the land use planning proposals. At the face-to-face interviews and focus group meetings, the business-owners reflected that the mitigation measures along the three broad approaches at the Stage 1 SIA Report could only offer them limited assistance. Apart from the focus groups, the Consultants also distributed questionnaires to the participants of community workshops during the Stage 2 PE, in order to collect their views on the three approaches of mitigation measures, including to set up a “one-stop information and services centre” (one-stop centre), "to promote existing policies and continue to develop existing supporting schemes" and "to establish liaison with the local organisations and institutions". Most of the stakeholders responded favourably to the three approaches for the mitigation measures, by indicating "agree/strongly agree" on the returned questionnaires. (Figure 3)

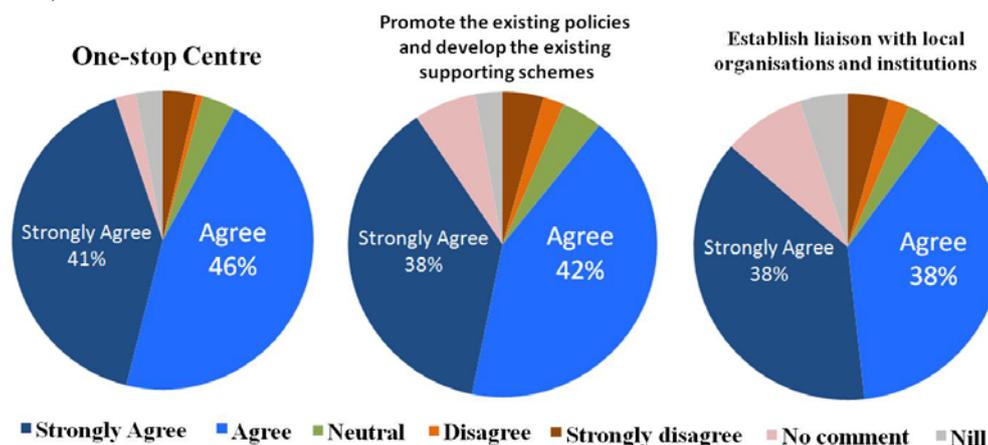


FIGURE 3. STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSES TO THE THREE APPROACHES OF THE MITIGATION MEASURES

One-stop Information and Services Centre

- III. 15. Both focus groups and public engagement activities participants supported this recommendation, with the majority believing that "one-stop centre" could **provide reliable information** and **inter-professional consultation services**. They expected the "one-stop centre" to be supported by professionals, to provide comprehensive and professional information in the areas of legal knowledge, valuation, rehabilitation works and policies. They also hoped to get advice on children's education and employment information; so as to assist them in considering the relocation plans and to resolve problems encountered during the urban renewal process. Moreover, they expected the "one-stop centre" would adopt a **pro-active operation approach**, to contact different parties and give timely support. They wished the centre to be mobile, to provide **outreach services** and support underprivileged groups. The centre should also pay specific attention to the language barriers of the ethnic minorities, e.g. to provide translation services for the ethnic groups; to hire staff members who can communicate with them, so that their needs and inquires would be addressed; to translate leaflets, tenancy contracts and related legal documents, with Chinese-English edition as reference and etc. If the "one-stop centre" would operate as they hoped for, they believed that more residents could get information and assistance, to know their rights and be prepared about the issues, when facing private acquisition.

To Promote Existing Policies and Continue to Develop Existing Supporting Schemes

- III. 16. Many stakeholders supported this recommendation. They particularly wished that the URA-run "**Elderly Domestic Owner-Landlords Compassionate Allowance**" can be extended to cover non-elderly property owners. They also wished the compensation gap between a self-occupied property and a tenanted property to be narrowed, so that owners would be more willing to rent out their flats and the tenants could be able to find rental accommodation in the district.

To Establish Liaison with the Local Organisations and Institutions

- III. 17. The majority of PE participants agreed to establish liaison with the local organizations and institutions, so as to better serve the underprivileged groups, such as elderly, new arrivals, ethnic minorities, rooftop dwellers and etc. Most residents would **contact community centres and social welfare institutions, Kowloon City District Office and District Council members** when facing urban renewals related issues, the relevant departments might consider using these networks to distribute information and organize residents. Participants generally supported the referral service of the "one-stop centre" so that the residents in need could contact the relevant Government departments, professionals and other social welfare organizations.

IV. Proposed Mitigation Measures

- IV.1. At Stage 1 of SIA, the Consultants have proposed mitigation measures along the three broad approaches, including to set up a “**one-stop centre**” as the basis, “**to promote existing policies and continue to develop existing supporting schemes**” and “**to establish liaison with the local organisations and institutions**”. Most of the stakeholders responded favourably to these three broad approaches.
- IV.2. Based on the feedback from the stakeholders groups as recorded at Section III, and reviewing the existing supporting services and measures of urban renewal, the Consultants have listed out the following service gaps and areas of improvements when different stakeholder groups are facing urban renewal:

Owners (Redevelopment)

- a. **Lack of information (private-led redevelopment projects):** Compared with URA-led redevelopment projects, residents affected by private-led redevelopment projects often received less information and services. Only the information service on the Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) Ordinance⁴, Pilot Mediation Scheme, Pilot Scheme on Outreach Support Service for Elderly Owners and URA’s Facilitating Services are available. When non-elderly owners who face redevelopment problems other than compulsory sale, such as joint acquisition from developers or joint sale led by property owners, they might feel confused and helpless as complicated professional knowledge and procedure are involved, while information is missing or not made available. The owners might seek help from the District Councillors or social welfare organizations, who might not be experts in handling issues related to urban renewal efficiently. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen the distribution of information, to help residents who encounter difficulties in the process of private-led redevelopment.
- b. **Strengthen the support to elderly for adapting to the new environment after relocation:** Among all stakeholder groups, the elderly owners are more vulnerable in adapting the new environment. Although there is enough support at the acquisition and relocation process, yet, adapting problems after redevelopment, such as their worries about higher household spending after relocation, their limited financial capacity, difficulty in maintaining contacts with former residents and etc., are not addressed. The Urban Renewal Social Service Team now offers services to residents affected by URA-led projects, such as assistance to elderly in adapting to the new community, getting familiar with the facilities in the community and keeping contacts with their former neighbours. Yet, the elderly people affected by private-led redevelopment projects would feel neglected, while some of them would still need emotional support and referral services at this stage.

⁴ The information service on the Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) Ordinance provided by the Hong Kong Housing Society has been ceased from 1 April 2014.

Owners (Rehabilitation)

- c. **Continue to enhance the support and services for rehabilitation:** The existing supporting services and measures for rehabilitation are rather comprehensive, with support covering different aspects provided by the URA, the Hong Kong Housing Society, Home Affairs Department and Buildings Department. To optimize their efficiency, different departments have conducted their services through coordination, improved the communication with the communities and carried out publicity and educational programmes. For the Mandatory Building and Window Inspection Schemes, Buildings Department, Hong Kong Housing Society and URA have held regular briefings to introduce the details of financial supports, statutory requirements and other related matters. The URA and concerned departments have often formulated enhancement measures for the Operation Building Bright Scheme, such as to introduce a new sub-contracting arrangement for OCs which have not distributed tender submission, so as to avoid the risk of bid-rigging and to offer a reasonable bid price for owners. To avoid doubts and to facilitate the building rehabilitations, some residents wished to obtain more information in the preparation and supervision of the construction works (with frequent problems such as bid-rigging and poor project quality), to allow them in handling potential problems, which might arise during the process. Thus, the Consultants suggested the concerned parties to regularly invite owners who had finished the rehabilitation projects to share the experiences with owners who are preparing for the similar projects, such an exchange of experience and information could facilitate the rehabilitation process.

Tenants

- d. **Lack of sufficient and centralized channel to disseminate information:** Most useful information is available online. However, tenants (especially new arrivals and elderly) were not familiar with computer knowledge and failed to receive information through this channel. They often expressed concerns about higher living expenditure and unable to integrate into the new community after redevelopment. Such worries were resulted from their lack of knowledge and the supporting measures of the current services provided by the social welfare organizations in the community. As for the compensation and resettlement arrangement which were mostly concerned by rooftop dwellers, the URA has developed a series of measures to address their concerns. However, those rooftop dwellers affected by private redevelopment projects are not entitled for compensation as they are not legal occupants. Rooftop dwellers would felt rather anxious as they are unclear about the situation. A centralized platform to disseminate information would help refer them to relevant social welfare organizations, and the local organizations could also help to distribute the information to their target clients.
- e. **Difficulties in finding rental accommodations:** Forced eviction, refusal to renew tenancy contracts or rent hikes are common problems for tenants, including the more

vulnerable groups such as new arrivals and ethnic minorities. These problems are caused by the ongoing redevelopment projects in the district and therefore fewer old flats were available in the tenancy market. As these problems involve the supply and demand of the rental market, as well as the intent of the property-owners, limited support is available for tenants.

- f. **Strengthen the assistance for the ethnic minorities to access information:** The current urban renewal information and publications are not translated into ethnic minorities' languages. As a result, the ethnic minorities are generally not informed about urban renewal and the supporting services. Most of them are low-income households and encounter more difficulties in housing and living at the redevelopment process, especially in finding flats due to unable to understand the tenancy contracts. The relevant welfare organization may need to provide interpreting service and other social services. To facilitate the ethnic minorities to use the service, the Social Welfare Department and Home Affairs Department have taken up some measures, e.g. the Social Welfare Department produced booklets/leaflets in minority languages to introduce their services; Home Affairs Department also offers assistance to promote integration, such as facilitating them in using public services, providing free telephone or video interpretation services, such as the "Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities", though there is no such a centre in Kowloon City District. Furthermore, the ethnic minority residents in Kowloon City are often inactive in participating community activities, which leads to unfamiliar of social welfare information. There is a need to strengthen outreach services to inform them about these services.

- IV.3. Based on the potential difficulties of the residents, their expectations of mitigation measures and the service gaps, the Consultants have made the following proposed social impact mitigation measures:

Information Kit on Urban Renewal

- IV.4. Currently, information related to urban renewal is disseminated through different channels. However, the general public finds it difficult to obtain comprehensive information and the related supporting schemes and services, especially the information regarding private-led redevelopment. To make the information more accessible to the public, the Development Bureau, with the assistance of the relevant Government departments and organizations, is suggested to consolidate all related information and compile an "Information Kit on Urban Renewal" so as to help the public to handle problems related to redevelopment and rehabilitation. The information kit could be made available at the District Offices of Home Affairs Department, Urban Renewal Resource Centre / Neighborhood Centres of URA and other relevant non-government organizations. After further consultation with relevant Government departments already servicing the ethnic minorities, such as the Social Welfare Department, Labour Department, Housing Department and Home Affairs Department, some materials of the information kit could be translated into ethnic minority languages where appropriate.

One-stop Information and Services Centre

IV.5. To facilitate the future urban renewal in the Kowloon City District, the Consultants have proposed to set up a trustworthy, professional and comprehensive “one-stop centre”. This centre will be able to provide the residents with enquiry or other services on redevelopment and rehabilitation, ease their worries and reduce the social impact during the urban renewal process. The **services** include two categories, namely information and referral services:

a. Information Services

The “one-stop centre” can help disseminate information of redevelopment projects through different channels, such as telephone hotline, internet or services booths at the centre to answer enquiries related to urban renewal; to distribute urban renewal related materials, including the “Information Kit on Urban Renewal” mentioned above; to conduct publicity and educational activities, such as community lectures, themed workshops, group meetings, sharing, etc., which can be conducted through outreach services with local organizations; and to provide venue to urban renewal related activities, such as meetings.

b. Referral Services

As supporting services of urban renewal are provided by different Government departments and organizations, the “one-stop centre” can refer the stakeholders to relevant Government departments or organizations for follow-ups relating to redevelopment or rehabilitation, based on their needs. The “one-stop centre” is suggested to establish a communication network in the district and foster collaborative partnership.

IV.6. URA is the statutory body with credibility and professional knowledge to promote urban renewal. It has proactively and extensively cooperated with different non-government organizations such as District Councils, local organizations and professional groups in recent years, to promote community participation and collaboration projects, and build a comprehensive community network. Furthermore, the URA will expand its assistance schemes on building rehabilitation to all over Hong Kong in 2015, and has accumulated experience in establishing and operating the Urban Renewal Resource Centre (URRC). All these make a “one-stop centre” affiliating to the URA a practical and efficient way to avoid the problem of reinventing the wheel. Thus, the Consultants recommend the URA to set up and operate an “one-stop centre” in Kowloon City district, in order to provide efficient support to residents who encounter problems in facing urban renewal.

IV.7. The “one-stop centre” operated by URA, can disseminate general information related to redevelopment, such as the Information Kit on Urban Renewal consolidated by the Development Bureau. With a good liaison network between the centre and other relevant departments and service agencies, it could assist affected residents in resolving their problems or seeking appropriate supports. The operation mode of the “one-stop centre”, including the details of the services, could be further worked out in the future.

Promote and Enhance the Existing Supporting Services and Measures

- IV.8. While conducting the SIA, the Consultants found that some stakeholders in the affected areas had limited knowledge of the supporting services and measures provided during the urban renewal process. In order to effectively mitigate the social impact of urban renewal on the stakeholders, it is proposed the Government and URA to further promoting the existing services and measures, based on the stakeholders' needs.
- IV.9. As for tenants' problems in facing urban renewal, especially among the ethnic minority groups and new arrivals, the Consultants recommend the Home Affairs Department to enhance its outreach services targeting ethnic minorities and new arrivals taking into account the need of the Kowloon City district - such as "Ambassador Scheme"⁵, the ambassadors can introduce the "one-stop centre" and other social welfare services, while they are visiting the inactive or hidden tenants.
- IV.10. The low-income tenants affected by redevelopment would face difficulties in finding new rental accommodations. The long-term solution is to provide more public rental housing. During the transitional period, it is recommended that the tenants affected by the URA-led projects should seek help from the Urban Renewal Social Service Team, to seek appropriate accommodation in private flats; other affected tenants could seek help from relevant departments such as Social Welfare Department or other social welfare organizations. Moreover, the Light Home Programme⁶ under the social enterprise Light be (Social Realty) Co. Ltd allows property-owners to rent their flats through the social enterprise to vulnerable groups who face pressing housing problems.
- IV.11. In addition, the Government and URA have carried out several pilot supporting programmes related to urban renewal, such as the Flat-for-Flat, Demand-led Redevelopment Project and Facilitating Services launched by URA; the Pilot Scheme on Outreach Support Service for Elderly Owners; and the Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) Ordinance Pilot Mediation Scheme launched by the Development Bureau. They have been proven to be effective at the pilot stage. It is recommended to review these schemes when necessary, and enhance the relevant programmes based on the result of review in order to reduce the social impact of urban renewal on stakeholders more effectively.

⁵ Ambassador Scheme: Two non-government organizations (International Social Service Hong Kong Branch and New Home Association) have been commissioned by the Government to provide outreach services to ethnic minorities and new arrivals from mainland China. Ambassadors with similar background and experience are assigned to their target clients through home visits and street interviews to the ethnic minorities and new arrivals, organize exhibitions and lectures, and introduce the services provided by the Government. Referral services to relevant Government department for follow-ups are provided, when necessary. For details, please visit http://www.had.gov.hk/tc/public_services/services_for_new_arrivals_from_the_mainland/ambassador.htm

⁶ Light Home Programme is operated by social enterprise Light be (Social Realty) Co. Ltd.. Its mission is to help property-owners to make flexible use of their properties, to lease them to vulnerable groups with urgent housing needs.

V. Conclusion

- V.1. After conducting two stages of SIA, the Consultants have identified the stakeholders who would be affected by urban renewal and their difficulties. Social impact mitigation measures are proposed, after reviewing the current supporting services and measures of urban renewal. If these mitigation measures are adopted and properly implemented, they should be helpful in reducing the social impact of urban renewal on different stakeholders, especially on the vulnerable groups.