

## Secondary Students To Become Town Planners

The Planning Department (PlanD) organises the City Gallery Summer Planning School – “Be a Town Planner” programme during this summer holiday. A wide range of activities are arranged for about 200 secondary and primary students for them to learn about the development and planning of Hong Kong. Themed on “Urban Renewal”, this year’s programme is jointly organised by the PlanD and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA). Lectures, field studies and workshops are held for students to learn about the strategy to urban renewal. Colleagues from the PlanD and the URA will talk about the aims and details of the programme, and one of the secondary students will share with us his feelings about the programme.

Over a thousand students have taken part in the programme

This is the sixth year for the PlanD to organise the City Gallery Summer Planning School. Given the overwhelming response from schools and active participation by students, the programme has become a major annual event of the City Gallery, with more than 430 upper primary students and 820 senior secondary students having participated so far.

As always, the Summer Planning School this year has met with an enthusiastic response from students: 60 students from 4 primary schools have joined the Little Planners Group and 120 students from 22 secondary schools have joined the Teen Planners Group. The theme of the programme this year is “Urban Renewal”; through field trips in the Central and Western District and exchanges with professional planners, students will learn the “5R” urban renewal strategies of the URA, i.e. Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, pReservation, Revitalisation and Retrofitting.

Nurturing a new generation of planning talent

Ms CHAU Yin-mai, Lisa, town planner of the PlanD, says that in the workshop session, Teen Planners Group students will apply the knowledge acquired at the Summer School to build a 3D model of their re-planning design of 23 hectares of land in Central and Sheung Wan districts under the guidance of tutors. During the re-planning exercise, teen planners have to ponder on issues like suitable land use, development density, building height, spatial layout and urban design. The workshop aims at providing students with a better understanding of town planning and the future development of Hong Kong, as well as enhancing their interest in

town planning, the ultimate aim is to nurture a new generation of young planners.

The URA programme is divided into two parts, which are guided tours to the Urban Renewal Exploration Centre (UREC) in H6 CONET at The Center and a redevelopment project site on Queen's Road West. The UREC presents a real-life experience of dilapidated housing displaying interesting exhibits, including some mock-up caged homes and small cubicles for students to learn about the problems of old districts and enlighten them to find ways to improve the living environment and understand the importance of proper planning in urban renewal.

#### Exploring different factors of urban redevelopment

The students also make a field trip to the site of the Queen's Road West/In Ku Lane Development Scheme. Ms SIU Pik-ling, Wynne, Senior Manager (External Relations) of the URA, says that the development scheme involves a soccer pitch surrounded by buildings, with a refuse collection point and a public toilet nearby. During the visits, planners explain to the students how to rationalise land uses and layouts within the project site by making adjustments and re-planning in order to improve the quality of public space, enhance connectivity, accessibility and comfort of the locality to provide a better environment to the residents living in the vicinity. At present, the URA will undertake urban renewal by a district-based approach to rejuvenate old areas and enhance the overall environment through redevelopment and rehabilitation.

#### Applying what they have learnt to designing a new community

TSANG Kong-san, Nathan, one of the students of the Teen Planners Group, says that he is very interested in studying town planning. Given the hilly terrain and shortage of flat lands in Hong Kong, Nathan finds it a challenging yet interesting task to conduct planning for this city of such limited space to achieve sustainable development. Within the three-day programme of field studies and lectures, they come to learn about the concepts of town planning, such as the need for a city to have diversity in building height and landmarks to attract tourists. He and his team members have learnt a lot, and they are happy that the model of a new community that they built applying the newly acquired knowledge has earned praises from the tutors.

Just as most developed cities, Hong Kong faces a formidable problem of ageing

buildings and urban decay. Many quarters of our community and our living environment as a whole, are in dire need of improvement. The PlanD and URA will continue co-organising similar programmes for students to learn about the urban renewal strategy and its importance, and to know more about the planning development of Hong Kong in the future.

