



香港建築師學會
The Hong Kong Institute of Architects

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24 March 2021

Mr. CHAN Mo Po, Paul, GBM, GBS, MH, JP
Financial Secretary, HKSAR
25/F, Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue,
Tamar, Hong Kong

By Post and By Email
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Dear Mr. CHAN,

HKIA Responses to the 2021-22 Budget

Following your unveiling of the 2021-22 Budget on 24 February 2021, The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) has carried out internal discussions and solicited views of our Council and Board Members.

Among others, we have focused more on the areas that the professionals and practices in our architectural sector can confidently contribute insights basing on our professional vision, expertise and experiences. The major aspects, as listed in the enclosure for the Government's review and consideration, cover Building a Liveable City, Optimising Land Use, Preservation of Built Heritage, Subsidy for Drainage Works, Developments of Construction Industry including extending into Greater Bay Area and Belt and Road Region, etc.

We truthfully believe that the Government values the professional perspectives of HKIA, and hope to work jointly with the Government for developing a sustainable, liveable and prosperous Hong Kong. We look forward to having further discussion with you and your colleagues in future.

Yours sincerely,

Donald CHOI Wun Hing, FHKIA, R.A.
President
The Hong Kong Institute of Architects

Encl. *HKIA Responses to the 2021-22 Budget*

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(1) Relieve People's Hardship - Subsidies for Drainage Works of Old Buildings

We welcome the provision of government subsidies to old buildings to carry out drainage repair or enhancement works, so as to help provide a healthier and safer living environment for the needy inhabitants. The earmark \$1 billion is a start but insufficient. In view of the role of good drainage system in the prevention of spread of Covid -19 and other diseases, more resources should be allocated to drainage repair and enhancement works.

However, further government assistance and subsidy may also be required for the needy owners or inhabitants to address other potential problems of liveability, including better ventilation, water supply facilities, electrical wiring installation, fire safety/prevention facilities and structural adequacy in a holistic manner.

To relieve the hardship in overcoming the collection of contribution money from the respective flat-owners prior to any works being carried out, **it is strongly advisable for the Government to devise an administratively much simplified procedures to allow for payment of project initiation startup fund and subsidies payment simultaneously upon the award of works tender.**

(2) Building a Liveable City

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented and has dealt a severe economic blow to Hong Kong. All the accumulated wealth in our reserves through land sales in the past decade has been chronically drained through different channels of urgent relieves. The post-COVID society will never be the same again. It is time that we reflect on the dollar-driven habitation mode, housing policy, and city planning that we had been so used to and taken for granted. **The urge for setting minimum living spatial standards has never been greater.**

Instead of focusing on quantitative targets alone in land and housing supply, Hong Kong should have a **grand vision and strategy for achieving affordability and liveability, from the perspectives of social, environmental and economical sustainability in the long term.** The holistic study should be driven by cross disciplinary professionals, rather than the conventional approach of focusing on engineering technicalities. While we support government's commitment to earmark \$500M, \$55M, and \$300M to enhance country parks facilities, hiking trails in country parks, and upgrading football pitches, we respectfully request that the quality living in the urban area should receive at least equal amount of financial support and encouragement. Money should be allocated to improve city green open space, trees planting in neighborhood parks, and more walkable car free zones in urban centers.

Optimising Land Use

Detached, scattered brownfield sites and outdated land use should also be studied and reconsidered. However, it must be considered in conjunction with a long-term Hong Kong development vision for the economic sustainability and people wellbeing. Government's abrupt unilateral rezoning consideration of 5 commercial sites in

Kowloon East for residential use begs the question if the government has abandoned its previous master vision to transform Kowloon East into a vibrant CBD2. A city development, especially to transform an area like Kowloon East with new energy and economic vitality, would take years. Such plan must not be derailed by temporary market headwinds.

For high-density Hong Kong to evolve into a smart city, innovative shared use of land is an effective way to optimize land use. Government should explore beyond traditional zoning restriction and re-examine our OZP (Outline Zoning Plan) to cast aside traditional planning thinking/constraint for accepting **multi-purpose yet compatible land uses**. The new work and living pattern resultant from COVID-19 pandemic have the silver lining of providing the city the new opportunity to rethink on land uses.

Preservation of built heritage has encountered private resistance due to the inability to fully utilize the development potential of a graded heritage building. The government needs to think out of the box and consider a mechanism for the surplus development rights of graded or preserved heritage buildings to be traded or transferred to other suitable development sites. It would make possible the optimization of land use while preserving our city's built heritage as a form of public goods.

Liveable, Healthy, Smart City

More support and incentives should be provided for developing **green buildings and green neighbourhood** across Hong Kong, such as Government leading in implementing and advocating green procurement policy and green project delivery, incorporating enhanced targets of green space and recreational facilities within development sites, revising regulations to facilitate installation of renewable energy systems in all buildings in both public and private sectors. Government should also take the lead to set target to have a certain percentage of net zero carbon buildings in the government property portfolio.

New energy transportation should be more than electric vehicles. In some overseas cities, bicycles, electric scooters, electric bikes, etc have become the main stream of transportation within walkable communities. While government is studying new transportation, the **urban spaces and public streets that can accommodate such smaller size vehicles** should be examined in more details. Traditional traffic and civil engineering mindset should be broadened to accept new transport behaviours.

Enhance Harbourfront

A comprehensive review of the **long-term vision of the overall harbourfront is urgently needed**, rather than developing individual harbourfront projects in piecemeal approach. Innovative operation models would also be needed in order to realize diversified programmes and event arrangements. References can be made to many international examples through successful private and public collaboration.

Government should empower the Harbourfront Commission with more resources to realise the above endeavours.

(3) Construction Industry

Modular Integrated Construction (MiC)

Instead of just promoting MiC alone, it is necessary to promote broader, alternative means of prefabrication in applying Design for Manufacture and Assembly (DfMA) concept, which is more embracing, and allowing greater flexibility in design. The related policy and practices of Singapore can be of reference.

The current MiC adoption relies heavily on the supply of modular units outside Hong Kong. To re-capture the money expended on MiC locally, and for reducing carbon footprint and cost due to MiC transportation, Government should **encourage and support MiC manufacturing facilities to be set up in Hong Kong**. By nurturing growth of such industry locally, more jobs and training opportunities in design, assembly, certification and quality control can be generated, and more MiC research and development targeting the specific local features of Hong Kong can be anticipated.

There is also a need to **review the current planning and building legislations** to facilitate, and to offer incentives, for MiC projects.

DEVB's Development Projects Facilitation Office

The work of the Development Projects Facilitation Office and the streamlining process should be extended to all developments, including **smaller scale ones**, which are bolted down by administrative barriers.

DEVB should review and implement policy to instigate **clear, fair, just, and simplified procedures for consultants' application for compensation and/or additional fees** in connection with prolongation of works in all public works consultancy services when projects are delayed due to issues beyond the consultants' control, such as impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(4) Greater Bay Area & Belt and Road Initiatives

HKIA welcomes the Government's initiatives to promote Hong Kong businesses and support youths for extending developments outside Hong Kong, especially into Greater Bay Area (GBA) and Belt and Road (B&R) cities.

We hope to have greater support of the Government, in both funding and promotional efforts, in **marketing the strength and experience of architectural services and design capabilities of Hong Kong architects**. A permanent exhibition center to showcase Hong Kong architecture and design excellence should be funded by the government to support the export of Hong Kong professional services. Experiences over past decades indicated that pro-active exhibitions, participation in prominent architectural exhibitions and conferences in overseas and Mainland cities to facilitate business opportunities has been one of the effective means for promoting our profession and extending the market. This also aligned with the Central

Government's policy. Enhanced support from the HKSAR Government in this regard would be good investment in our professional and economic development in the long run.

We also hope that the GBA Development Office would offer more practical **administrative or logistic assistance for smaller scale architectural practices** to establish their foothold in GBA/B&R cities.

(5) Innovation and Technology / Creative Industries

Government's investments in "Innovation and Technology" and "Cultural and Creative Industries" are vastly out of proportion. It would be narrow-vision thinking for taking innovation as synonymous with invention in technology alone. Government should equally **support inventions in the creative industries**, and **encourage adopting competition** as part of procurement for public projects, following the examples of many international cities, including our Mainland counterparts. On the other hand, we wish to reiterate on the significance of the building & construction sector in particular its designer, the Architect and the architectural profession, towards the build-up of Hong Kong as a Asia Global City since as early as the Nineties. We are of the opinion that Hong Kong deserves to be put forward for the **UNESCO City of Design** (for information, other named cities in our region included Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Bangkok, Singapore, Seoul, Kobe, Nagoya...and others.) Such naming of Hong Kong will no doubt reinforce its long serving design profession. We would like to request a budgetary support for applying for the UNESCO naming of Hong Kong as a Design City to improve its image as well as commercial competitiveness.

In the realm of Innovation and Technology, we would like to raise concern with a urgent need to **boosting the know-how, knowledge and readiness of our design profession** in encompassing various world, national and city goals such as, meeting of sustainability, climate change, the **UN 17 goals of SDG**; last but not the least, **smart city at the livability perspective**. As Architect, we see the responsibility for our profession to assume lead if not support role in outreaching and uplifting our professional responsibilities and capabilities in the championing of the mentioned goals for the sake of the people. We would like to request the support of the Budget to offer funding support for boosting the quality and standard of the profession.

(6) Green and Sustainable Finance

To position Hong Kong as a leading international green finance hub, the system of key performance indicators or certification for identify "green" projects should **include liveability and sustainability index**. In terms of construction industry, HKIA can help input our expertise on liveability and sustainability for such system, which may also include requirement on **minimum flat and room sizes**. Green financing can become an incentive for real estate projects to become more liveable and sustainable.

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