

Executive Summary

Hong Kong is an international metropolitan city in Asia. Urban planning and strategic development play a critical role in continuing to make the city more liveable. Good future development of the city depends on whether it has appropriate and forward-looking urban planning.

“Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030” (hereinafter referred to as “Hong Kong 2030+”), a vision-driven, pragmatic and action-oriented strategic plan, was released by the Development Bureau and Planning Department in October 2016. It updates the territorial development strategy (i.e., “Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy”) promulgated in 2007 and serves to guide planning, land and infrastructure development and the shaping of the built environment in Hong Kong beyond 2030. The public engagement exercise for “Hong Kong 2030+” was launched to collect views from the public and will last for six months¹.

It has received public attention since the launch of the public engagement exercise. Stakeholders have different opinions on how to increase land supply, and how to strike a balance between urban development and environmental conservation. Urban development and the use of land resources are closely related to social affairs. The younger generation is the future master of society. In this sense, the future development of Hong Kong will have a direct and far reaching impact on them. They are also the future users of the plan. Thus, it is important to involve the younger generation in the planning process.

In view of the above, the study tried to explore the opinions of the younger generation on how to undertake urban planning and how to use land resources. Through this approach, the study aimed to help the government understand the viewpoints and expectations of the younger generation in order to take into account the needs of youth and the long-term interests of society in the planning process.

¹ “Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030” Public engagement Booklet.

Since planning involves a wide range of activities, the study will look at the long-standing problem of land shortage from a youth perspective. Considering the youth vision for increasing land supply and overall development in Hong Kong, the study will try to make relevant recommendations from a forward-looking perspective.

Key Findings

The data collection methods that the study used were telephone survey, 20 case and group interviews and 4 expert and scholar interviews. The key findings are as follows:

- 1. Young respondents rated Singapore as the most liveable city in Asia. They thought the liveable city should provide a good living environment and quality of life.**

A randomly sampled telephone survey conducted in December 2016 and January 2017 yielded 512 responses from Hong Kong youths aged 18 to 34. The survey found that 18.4% of respondents rated Singapore as the most liveable city in Asia, while 13.0% and 12.6% of them rated Tai Pei and Hong Kong respectively. In addition, 17.6% indicated that there is no liveable city in Asia.

Of the respondents, 67.4% indicated the liveable city should provide a good living environment and 38.3% that it should provide good quality of life. Other respondents indicated the liveable city should also have employment opportunities (33.1%), economic development potential (28.9%) and maintain social harmony (28.9%).

- 2. Young respondents indicated Hong Kong's liveability is above average in general. They thought the greatest shortcoming of Hong Kong as a liveable city is its crowded living environment.**

The survey showed that 57.8% of young people surveyed indicated Hong Kong's liveability is above average (the average score is above 5 on a scale of 0-10). Moreover, 11% of them indicated Hong Kong's liveability is excellent with an average score of 8-10. This statement

received an average score of 5.8.

In addition, young respondents indicated the top five greatest shortcomings of Hong Kong as a liveable city are its crowded living environment (74.0%), social differentiation (37.4%), environmental pollution (26.3%), poor quality of life (26.1%) and stagnated constitutional development (21.1%).

3. Young respondents thought urban planning is important and it is closely related to their daily lives. They said they were concerned about urban planning.

The survey showed that young respondents agreed on the importance of urban planning and thought future planning has a direct and far reaching impact on them. They also indicated that they were concerned about urban planning. On a scale of 0 to 10, the average scores for respondents indicating the importance of urban planning, its relatedness to daily lives and their level of concern regarding urban planning were 7.5, 7.1 and 7.3 respectively.

4. Young respondents indicated accessibility, adequate public facilities and public spaces are important considerations for a desirable living environment.

Of the respondents, 93.7%, 85.3% and 82.5% indicated accessibility, adequate public facilities and public spaces are important considerations for a desirable living environment. Other respondents, namely 79.3% and 57.1% said they would also consider whether the location is near work/school and close to nature.

In the individual interviews, the young respondents indicated that a desirable living environment also needs to be open, have enough green spaces and proper living facilities as well as good accessibility and adequate public spaces.

5. Young respondents tended to support the developments of East Lantau Metropolis and New Territories North. However, they also said that they had hesitations about the aforementioned development

plans.

The young respondents were asked about their levels of support for the developments of East Lantau Metropolis and New Territories North in the survey. It found that young respondents supported the aforementioned development plans. More than that, they tended to support the development of East Lantau Metropolis. On a scale of 0 to 10, this statement received an average score of 7.4 while the average score for respondents indicating their support levels for the development of New Territories North was 6.3.

In individual interviews, the young respondents expressed concern about whether there would be an over-concentration of people in the newly developed area after the implementation of the East Lantau Metropolis development plan. It would create high population density in Lantau Island which fails to meet the criteria for a liveable city. Whilst young respondent showed support for the development of New Territories North. However, they also showed hesitation on whether the new developed areas should be in line with Mainland cities. They thought the two cities should retain their respective economic and urban planning models.

Main Discussion

- 1. Urban planning involves the interests of different stakeholders; it is difficult to avoid conflict. Consensus can be sought through effective communication and full consultation.**

In recent years, there has been more and more controversy over urban planning and land use. These disputes reflect different demands from the community on urban planning. How to allow different stakeholders to participate in consultation and express their views has a certain influence and importance, especially in this increasingly diverse and complex social environment.

Public consultation can promote discussion on issues and help to build social cohesion. The disclosure of data during the consultation process

can also enhance transparency and accountability of policies, thereby building public trust in government. Urban planning is about Hong Kong's future development and involves the interests of different stakeholders. It is not easy to achieve consensus. Effective public consultation is indispensable for the community so that it has sufficient time for rational and in-depth discussions.

- 2. Young people's concerns about the future development of Hong Kong. They said their satisfaction towards current urban planning is at an average level. They pay attention to the aspects that are concerned with meeting the needs of daily lives and increasing land supply in urban planning.**

From the results of the research, young respondents' concerns about the future development of Hong Kong centre on the aspects of meeting the needs of their daily lives and increasing land supply in urban planning. They said their satisfaction towards current urban planning is at an average level. In group interviews, young respondents used Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung as examples that indicated to them that there is a lack of detailed planning in the development of new towns and the government has ignored the needs of residential living. They said there is not enough transport and medical facilities in new towns.

Hong Kong is a high-density developing city with rapid population growth. It is not difficult to understand that urban planning mainly focusses on the quantitative aspect of providing accommodation so as to address population needs. But at the same time, urban planning should also pay attention to the citizen's quality of life and their needs to achieve both "quality" and "quantity".

- 3. Young people thought Hong Kong's liveability is above average. They said the greatest shortcoming of Hong Kong as a liveable city is its crowded living environment and expected there to be an improvement in the living environment and quality of life.**

One of the aspirations of "Hong Kong 2030+" is to plan for a liveable city. From the study, young respondents had different views on the liveability of Hong Kong. In the individual interviews, young respondents said it is convenient for people who live in Hong Kong.

While in the survey, young respondents thought Hong Kong's liveability is above average and thought the greatest shortcoming of Hong Kong as a liveable city is its crowded living environment. According to young respondents, there are two ways to improve the living environment. One is to increase the housing supply, including both public and private housing while the other is to improve the quality of the environment such as pollution control and greening the landscape.

- 4. Young people hold a positive attitude towards increasing land supply to meet housing needs and they are most receptive to developing brownfield sites. The government can consider formulating a comprehensive brownfield management policy.**

Insufficient land resource is one of the issues of most concern in recent years. Society has different opinions on land development. From the study, young respondents hold a positive attitude towards increasing land supply to meet housing demands. Regarding ways to increase land supply, more respondents claimed they were most receptive to developing brownfield sites; while the most unacceptable way was the development of country parks.

In order to solve the land demand for long-term housing construction, the Government has repeatedly referred to the development of brownfield sites in the New Territories. However, it did not release official statistics such as the amount and distribution of brownfield sites and any relevant brownfield management policies. The government can use strategies for brownfield management used in foreign countries as references and consider formulating a comprehensive brownfield management policy to increase land supply efficiently.

- 5. Coexistence of conservation and development is an important consideration in urban planning. The government can consider formulating comprehensive conservation strategies.**

Hong Kong residents have paid more and more attention to the issue of cultural conservation. An expert pointed out good conservation not

only preserves architectural relics, but it also makes use of them by using innovation. In individual interviews, young respondents thought Lui Seng Chun is a good example of conservation. Not only does it conserve the building, but it also revitalises it and converts it into a healthcare centre for Chinese medicine. Effort was made to adhere to the basic principle of minimising the impact of the alterations in terms of heritage conservation.

Hong Kong is a small place with a high population density. It is not easy to strike a balance between conservation and development. In order to implement conservation policies efficiently, the government can consider formulating a comprehensive conservation plan. For instance, it can develop conservation strategies, or consider not only the historical value of the building, but also how to make good use of it in the process of grading historic buildings. In addition, the government can strengthen publicity so that the public can clearly understand the purpose of conservation.

Recommendations

This study suggests the following recommendations based on the above findings and discussion:

1. Develop liveability indicators with elements of social capital

The liveability indicators should include elements of social capital such as social networks, trust, solidarity and social cohesion to specifically reflect the situation.

2. Formulate a brownfield development policy as a priority

The government should formulate a brownfield development policy as a priority, including a comprehensive picture of brownfield redevelopment patterns and characteristics. The government could also create a web page with information on brownfield sites for public reference.

3. Use the concept of the life circle to guide urban planning

The government should use the concept of the life circle to guide urban planning. Fundamental principles of good town planning include providing not only various types of housing but also the necessary infrastructure investment to generate economic development. The government could also consider creating residential districts specifically for people who work in similar industries to gain a synergistic effect.

4. Provide developers with incentives to include artistic elements in building design

To promote cultural distinctiveness, the government should consider providing developers with incentives to include artistic elements that reflect local culture in building design.