

Discussion paper on the future of our city September 2018



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On 23 August 2018, the ACE Centre for Business and Economic Research, a private think tank, independently conducted an expert panel to deliberate on the issues related to the supply of land in Hong Kong.

The panel included Mr Ling Kar Kan, former Director of the Planning Department of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR); Professor Eddie Hui Chi Man of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Professor Ng Sai Leung of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Professor Andy Kwan Cheuk Chiu of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, who shared their views and deliberated on the opportunities and challenges regarding Hong Kong's future.

The ACE Centre for Business and Economic Research generously allowed us to include excerpts from the panel's summary report as a reference for the expert opinion on the matter.

Table of Contents

PR	REAMBLE	02
I.	THINKING ABOUT HONG KONG IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT	03
	GBA Connectivity Will be a Game Changer	04
	Expert Opinion Highlights I	06
	– Building a Mega City	
	– Demographic Challenges and the Competition for Talents	
П.	CITY STRATEGY ON LAND SUPPLY AND DEVELOPMENT	07
	Overcoming Shortage of Land Supply	07
	Making Quality of Life a Priority in the City Strategy	09
	Expert Opinion Highlights II	10
	– The Three Pillars of Urban Planning	
	– New Towns and Economic Development	
	Optimizing the Planning Process	11
	Expert Opinion Highlights III	11
III.	. REJUVENATING AN AGEING HONG KONG CITYSCAPE	12
	Expert Opinion Highlights IV	13
-	– Urgency of Redevelopment	13
	Case Study: Wah Fu Estate	14
СС	ONCLUSION	16



Indeed, Hong Kong has always been circumscribed by its geographical and institutional limitations which restrict its development and limit its growth potential. Coupled with an ageing population, complicated process for decayed areas' rejuvenation and overcrowded urban areas, Hong Kong has faced unprecedented challenges in maintaining its competitiveness in recent years.

Before deciding on how much land we need and how to source the land, we should ask the following fundamental question: What should Hong Kong do to maintain its competitiveness for sustainable growth?

There will be increasingly intense competition as a result of technological advancement that brings about not only new opportunities but also challenges. How does it affect the economic landscape as well as demand for services? What are the implications for our city strategy?

Demographic changes will also pose an unprecedented challenge to us. How do we address the issue of labor market changes? How does the city strategy address the issue of attracting and retaining talents?

All of the above converge to the question on whether we have a clearly-defined holistic city strategy to provide a long-term vision. The future of our city depends on how it positions itself competitively in the context of regional and global developments, how it mobilizes its strengths and aligns itself with complementary resources, and how it prepares for and manages the challenges now and in future.

This discussion paper aims at providing a reference for the deliberation on the city's development, with land supply as the fundamental issue. The outcome of this debate on land supply will set the course for Hong Kong's development in the years to come.



Preamble

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW: HONG KONG AND THE GREATER BAY AREA

At the outset, we need to properly orient ourselves under the macro environment by looking beyond Hong Kong's boundaries and considering the broader trove of opportunities in the region.

SWOT Analysis of Hong Kong (in the context of the Greater Bay Area) **S**trengths **Opportunities** • Legal and judiciary institutions • Enhanced connectivity with the • Financial system Greater Bay Area • Development of the technology and • International experience and professional services expertise innovative sector • Transport and city infrastructure Access to less expensive land for • Public goods: education, safety, residential, commercial and industrial hygiene and general healthcare uses Weaknesses Threats • Ageing population • Competitions owing to technological • Ageing buildings advancement • Geographical and institutional • Shift in the demand for services limitations to further development Diminished external demand

Overcrowdedness of its urban areas

Cyclical economic shocksAccess to larger talent pool

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area initiatives ("GBA") is a national-level development strategy to build both the infrastructure and institutions connecting Hong Kong, Macau, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Zhongshan, Dongguan, Huizhou, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing into an integrated cluster of economic and social activities. By facilitating the flow of goods and people throughout the region, the GBA goal is to foster innovation in science, technology and commerce.

With a combined gross domestic product of US\$1.45 trillion, the GBA will be China's technology, innovation and economic powerhouse. The GBA will also be a logistics and transportation hub, as it includes some of the world's busiest container terminals and airports. By 2030, the economic output of the GBA will surpass that of the New York Metropolitan Area, San Francisco Bay Area and Tokyo Bay area.

We believe that Hong Kong is well positioned to leverage the immense opportunities presented by the GBA. With new policies and infrastructure developments, the conditions are ripe for Hong Kong to take advantage of developments surrounding GBA, some of which could help relieve the burden on the city's land resources. This should therefore be part of the formulation of Hong Kong's city strategy.

COMPARING	SIMILAR	"BAY	AREA"	CLUSTERS	AROUND	THE WORLD ¹

	Guangdong- Hong Kong- Macau Greater Bay Area	Tokyo Bay area	New York Metropolitan Area	San Francisco Bay Area
Area (1,000 km²)	5.61	3.69	2.15	1.79
Population (million)	68.0	44.0	20.2	7.7
GDP (US\$ billion) (current prices)	14,560 ¹	16,156 ³	16,027 ²	7,220 ²
GDP growth (%)	7.5 ¹	0.9 ²	4.3 ²	7.3 ²
Per-capita GDP (US\$) (current prices)	21,400	36,700	79,300	93,800
Annual air passenger traffic (million passenger-times)	165	113	95	50
Annual air freight traffic (million tonnes)	7.0	3.4	1.3	0.4
Port container throughput (million TEUs)	68.0	7.2	6.3	2.4
GDP share of tertiary industry (%)	65.3 ¹	76.3 ^{3,4}	83.1 ²	71.7 ²

GDP = gross domestic product, km^2 = square kilometre, TEU = twenty-foot equivalent unit.

¹ 2016 figures

² 2015 figures

³ 2014 figures

⁴ Excluding Gunma Prefecture

GBA CONNECTIVITY WILL BE A GAME CHANGER

The Guangzhou–Shenzhen–Hong Kong Express Rail Link and Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macau Bridge will soon commence service. After they have become operational, Hong Kong will be more connected to the GBA hinterland than ever before. The enhanced connectivity will be the biggest game changer to Hong Kong's urban and economic development, as it could form part of an effective solution for the city's pressing land supply issue, not only in terms of land for economic development, but also space for living and working.

⁺ Retrieved from http://hkmb.hktdc.com/en/1X0ACUJZ/hktdc-research/The-Guangdong-Hong-Kong-Macau-Bay-Area-and-Hong-Kong

In terms of economic development, the enhanced intercity integration brought about by greater connectivity within the GBA will give rise to unprecedented business opportunities for Hong Kong's entrepreneurs and young professionals. For example, Shenzhen is already a hotbed for technology start-ups, which will need financing, professional services and management to grow, areas in which Hong Kong has demonstrated expertise and resources.

A full range of regional policies are in place to facilitate Hong Kong's development into an innovation and technology centre within the GBA, including the joint development of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park at Lok Ma Chau Loop, enhanced tax deductions for research and development investments, and increased science and technology funding by the Chinese Government for Hong Kong universities and research institutions. These policies will provide ample job opportunities for the young talent in Hong Kong's technology sector.

With the GBA's cross-city economic platform supported by language and cultural proximities, Hong Kong entrepreneurs will also enjoy more convenient access to the mainland market and opportunities for closer multilateral business collaborations.

In terms of living space, the development of the GBA also brings forth wider residential possibilities. The State Council has announced a series of policy measures that will allow residents of Hong Kong and Macau living in mainland China to enjoy the same treatment as mainland residents in the areas of education, employment, starting businesses and daily living. From 1 September 2018, residents of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan can apply for a new identity card granting the holders access to a wide range of public services in mainland China, including those relating to employment, social insurance and housing fund schemes, as well as primary medical care. Furthermore, the 18-digit identity card number allows the holder to access to services such as e-banking and mobile payment offered by online digital platforms.

These supporting measures and enhanced mobility in the GBA will enable Hong Kong residents to significantly broaden their sphere of living, enjoying easy access to not only employment, lifestyle and entertainment choices, but also more diverse options in mainland China with regard to home purchases and retirement. In a nutshell, this enables Hong Kong residents to establish residence within the GBA while maintaining their relative standard of living.

EXPERT OPINION HIGHLIGHTS I

(From the expert panel conducted by the ACE Centre for Business and Economic Research)

Building a Mega City

The panel suggested that through the building of a "Mega City", Hong Kong will enjoy the benefits from enhanced efficiency owing to economies of scale as well as the ability to tap into a much bigger pool of talent supply.

Demographic Challenges and the Competition for Talents

The panel however agreed that GBA cities and Hong Kong's ageing population imply a potential shortage of working age population, which will be a major challenge for the economy of Hong Kong.

"As Hong Kong undergoes significant changes to its demographic composition, society as a whole need to begin reacting to these coming changes 20 to 30 years ahead."

"Mainland China is facing similar demographic challenges and, due to its larger population size, these constitute a much bigger issue, with spillover effects on Hong Kong."

Currently, there are eight categories in the Hong Kong Immigration Department's Admission Schemes for Talent, Professionals and Entrepreneurs. The panel suggested that the government should review the effectiveness of the schemes by making sure that they are not only attractive to the talents but also complement Hong Kong's population strategy.

THE COMPETITION AND CHALLENGES

From a strategic point of view, Hong Kong has many institutional strengths. Hong Kong is known for the soundness of its monetary and financial systems, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, and a highly competitive and adaptive market economy. Hong Kong is also renowned for its world-class education system, public safety, hygiene, and healthcare, establishing a solid foundation for social stability. Additionally, Hong Kong's reliable and efficient city infrastructure, such as its public mass transit system, makes it possible for the city to sustain a vibrant and fast-paced lifestyle.

In recent years, however, there are signs that Hong Kong is losing out in the competition against other mainland cities. Hong Kong used to be the world's busiest port but has gradually lost its place to Shanghai, Shenzhen, and very soon to Guangzhou. Hong Kong will not even be one of the top five ports in the world by 2020.

Hong Kong is no stranger to competitions. We have managed our past economic transformations by moving up the value chain. The competition ahead of us, however, presents a totally different kind of challenge. Better connectivity in the GBA, both in terms of transportation infrastructure and institutional integration, will bring about not only new opportunities but also more intense competition from neighboring cities.

As in the case of container terminals, geographic constraints can pose severe limitations to our competitiveness. Land is a fundamental element of economic and social development. Indeed, the government has played a significant role in land development since Hong Kong's early days as a British colony in the 19th Century. The north shore of Hong Kong Island as well as the east and west sides of the Kowloon Peninsula were developed on reclaimed land. It is hard to imagine what Hong Kong would be like without these historic land reclamation projects.

As a city's population grows, the supply of quality space and infrastructure is vital to sustain its growth. The explosive growth in population since the 1960s has brought successive waves of new town developments in the New Territories, which have enabled Hong Kong to house millions of new residents. There are currently more people living in the New Territories than on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon.

Land supply is not a problem unique to Hong Kong. It is a common issue faced by cities that have experienced rapid development all over the world. By benchmarking how other major cities manage their allocation of space will help us better understand and devise an effective land policy.

OVERCOMING SHORTAGE OF LAND SUPPLY

The shortfall in land supply is Hong Kong's most pressing issue. The city's population is projected to grow to 8.22 million by 2043, resulting in a deficit of 815 hectares of land by 2026, and 1,206 hectares by 2046. Unless the government manages the land shortage problem, it will severely stifle social and economic development in Hong Kong.

Projected Demand and Supply of Land in Hong Kong"

(hectares)

	Up to 2026			2026–2046			
	Demand	Supply	Short-fall	Demand	Supply	Short-fall	Total Short-fall
Land for Residential Use Land for Commercial Use	768 196	660 61	-108 -135	902 262	780 141	-122 -121	-230 -256
Land for Infrastructure	1,661	1,089	-572	931	783	-148	-720
Total	2,625	1,810	-815	2,095	1,704	-391	-1,206

One of the biggest divisions in public discourse concerning the land use issue has to do with proposed development of peripheral areas of Hong Kong's country parks. Some stakeholders consider country parks natural sanctuaries in Hong Kong's concrete jungle that the city cannot afford to lose.

However, with more than three-quarters of our territory covered in vegetation, Hong Kong has more green space than most other major cities in the world. On average, key metropolises dedicate only about one-quarter of their areas to green space. To make matters worse, rigid demarcation between green space and build-up areas limits our ability to bring more nature into our living environment, which reinforces the perception that Hong Kong is a densely populated concrete jungle.

Land Utilization in Hong Kong (2017)^{III}



Retrieved from Planning Department - https://landforhongkong.hk/en/demand_supply/land_demand.php
Retrieved from Planning Department - https://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/info_serv/statistic/landu.html

Amount of Green Space and Living Space in Hong Kong and Comparable Cities^{IV}

	Green Space	Living Space
Hong Kong	105.3 m ²	14.9 m ²
Singapore	66.2 m ²	23.9 m ²
Taipei	49.6 m ²	34.4 m ²
Shanghai	41.9 m ²	18 m ²

 m^2 = square metre

MAKING QUALITY OF LIFE A PRIORITY IN THE CITY STRATEGY

Comparing land use in Hong Kong vs Singapore shows that Hong Kong puts too much emphasis on the extremely limited urban built-up area for all its needs. Even though population density in Singapore is 14% higher than Hong Kong, Singaporeans enjoy almost 60% more living space.

Although Hong Kong consistently ranks as one of the cities with the highest quality of life in the world, its densely populated urban areas are posing a great challenge to our growth and creating a misguided perception on conservation.

Instead of merely debating whether we should develop the peripheral areas of Hong Kong's country parks, we ought to discuss how to more efficiently allocate amongst different land uses. Land supply is not always a zero-sum game – a gain in urban area does not necessarily mean a loss in greenery. It is possible to strike a balance between living space, urban greenery and natural conservation for a better quality of life if we can build a consensus on prioritizing our use of resources. We should also make green areas more accessible by including them in the developed areas so it is easier for people to enjoy them. WHO and UN as well as other organizations have research that demonstrates the health value of green areas in urban settings, as well as recommended standards for "green" construction and plot ratios.



[™] Asian Green City Index (2011), a research project conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit

EXPERT OPINION HIGHLIGHTS II

(From the expert panel conducted by the ACE Centre for Business and Economic Research)

The Three Pillars of Urban Planning

As defined in Hong Kong 2030+, there are three pillars of urban planning in Hong Kong: (1) plan for a high-density liveable city, (2) grasp the economic opportunities and (3) create capacity.

There is no doubt Hong Kong is a high-density city. But Hong Kong is also a highly "liveable" city. The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2018 liveability survey ranked Hong Kong at number 35, making it one of the top three cities in Asia.

Aside from planning for a high-density liveable city, the other two pillars – grasping the economic opportunities and creating capacity – are also crucial to Hong Kong's urban planning.

New Towns and Economic Development

The panel also expressed concerns about whether the overcrowded urban areas have the capacity for growth and suggested alternatives for the government.

"Development of new towns in the New Territories has been the key strategy in urban development in Hong Kong and job creation is a decisive factor on whether a new district can be developed successfully. The government should consider moving some of its departments into new towns to facilitate the development of the local economy."



OPTIMIZING THE PLANNING PROCESS

The excessively complicated and lengthy land development process has been a systemic issue in Hong Kong. According to the Planning Department, it takes 11 to 14 years from planning review to completion of construction on "non-spade ready" sites.



EXPERT OPINION HIGHLIGHTS III

(From the expert panel conducted by the ACE Centre for Business and Economic Research)

Hong Kong's development is encumbered by excessive constraints. The administration should review the planning process from time to time so that the requirements, such as guideline on building and population density, are realistic and appropriate. The administration should also have better public relations and information dissemination strategy to engage different stakeholders during the planning process.

^v Source: Task Force on Land Supply - https://landforhongkong.hk/en/demand_supply/land_demand.php

III. Rejuvenating an Ageing Hong Kong Cityscape

Hong Kong's buildings are ageing along with its population. As of 2017, it had approximately 30,000 buildings aged 50 years or older^{vi}, with the number set to multiply over the next three years. In the aftermath of the building collapse incident at Ma Tau Wai Road, Buildings Department launched a special investigation in 2010, sending 40 teams of inspectors to inspect 4,011 buildings aged 50 years or above. More than 25% were found to exhibit different extent of defects that may warrant the issue of repair or investigation orders.

Maintaining building safety requires considerable resources, hence, it is often more economical to redevelop these buildings. Redevelopment projects can also introduce vibrancy to regenerate a district, hence bringing not only opportunities but also conveniences to attract incoming population. By rejuvenating the Hong Kong cityscape, we also enhance the capacity of our urban areas for expanded social and economic activities.

Distribution of Buildings Aged 40 Years or Above (by District Council Boundary)^{VII}



^{vi} Source: https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201711/01/P2017110100355.htm?

VII Source: Task Force on Land Supply Paper No. 02/2017 – Demand for Land (September 2017)

III. Rejuvenating an Ageing Hong Kong Cityscape

EXPERT OPINION HIGHLIGHTS IV

(From the expert panel conducted by the ACE Centre for Business and Economic Research)

Urgency of Redevelopment

"Dilapidated buildings are a ticking time bomb. The government should expedite the redevelopment of buildings 50 years or older."

"The government could raise the plot ratio of older districts to make the best use of underutilised land."

"However, there are some related detrimental issues such as the 'curtain effect' and the burden on the roads and public transportation system."

"Redevelopment plans should be allowed to realise their fullest potential. The government should consider a more flexible rehousing programme to facilitate more redevelopment projects on a different scale."

Public Rental Housing Buildings in Hong Kong Aged over 40 Years as at the end of 2016^{vm}

District Council District	Blocks Aged Over 40	Total Blocks	Percentage
Central & Western	5	5	100%
Eastern	17	71	24%
Islands	0	63	0%
Kowloon City	19	33	58%
Kwai Tsing	30	151	20%
Kwun Tong	29	183	16%
North	0	19	0%
Sai Kung	0	36	0%
Sha Tin	20	82	24%
Sham Shui Po	51	118	43%
Southern	18	44	41%
Tai Po	0	15	0%
Tsuen Wan	23	39	59%
Tuen Mun	7	52	13%
Wan Chai	0	0	0%
Wong Tai Sin	23	135	17%
Yau Tsim Mong	0	5	0%
Yuen Long	0	98	0%
Total	242	1,149	21%

vill Retrieved from Hong Kong Housing Authority - https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/tc/global-elements/estate-locator/



Redevelopment of private buildings, especially residential properties, often requires a long lead time, mainly due to the protracted process for amalgamating fragmented ownership, compensation and rehousing tenants and occupiers. Nevertheless, according to the estimation of Hong Kong 2030+, the government's territorial development strategy, there will be 318,200 households displaced by redevelopment in the next 30 years. Among these, 22,200 households will come from public housing units.

CASE STUDY: WAH FU ESTATE

In recent years, there have been signs that the government is speeding up the pace of redevelopment of public housing estates. The Chief Executive's 2014 policy address announced the project to redevelop Wah Fu Estate, together with the development of six nearby government sites. The project is expected to be completed by 2025 and will increase the total number of units from 9,200 to 21,000 flats, housing an additional 35,000 residents.

Redevelopment of public housing estates often takes more than 15 years from announcement to completion. Using Singapore as a reference, a similar exercise there takes only five years to finish.

City	Hong Kong	Singapore
Project	Wah Fu Estate	MacPherson Lane Blocks 81 to 83
Age of Property	51	53
Number of Involved Household	9,000	313
How	Government will build 11,900 new public housing units; all the residents to move out in batches	Residents will move into public housing units close to their former communities; shops will receive compensation at the market rate
Date of Announcement	2014	2017
Estimate Finish Date	The first batch of new housing units will be finished in 2025; residents will start moving in 2027	Second quarter of 2023
Duration	15+ years	5 years

Redevelopment of Public Housing: A Comparison between Hong Kong and Singapore^{IX}

Ⅳ Retrieved from Hong Kong Economic Times article "星政府多管齊下加快重建 港府可仿效規劃"

III. Rejuvenating an Ageing Hong Kong Cityscape

The prolonged process for redevelopment in Hong Kong is mostly due to the complicated process of providing resettlement for residents within the same district. The unrealistic requirement to rehouse everyone affected in the same vicinity makes redevelopment economically infeasible while prolonging the project timeline.

Redevelopment may also lead to demand for additional housing units, especially for rehousing displaced residents. There are also cases when redevelopment projects allocate the sites for non-residential purposes, making the management of the overall supply even more complicated. Perhaps that is why the Task Force on Land Supply does not consider redevelopment one of the primary options for consideration.

However, redevelopment has many benefits: it can unleash the potential of old land with more housing units, upgraded infrastructure and municipal facilities, and a rejuvenated community. The government should work with the private sector to streamline the process and procedures to expedite redevelopment and serve the community better, using technology to help understand and analyse the development needs and impacts and to ensure that new construction meets green standards.



FURTHER DISCUSSION ON CITY STRATEGY REGARDING LAND SUPPLY AND DEVELOPMENT

Conclusion

Hong Kong has come a long way in creating an economic miracle through land formation and infrastructure projects. At the very beginning of this discussion paper, we listed Hong Kong's many institutional strengths, which have long made it one of the world's strongest market economies.

However, as stakeholders in the city's future, we should not be complacent of our past successes. In the context of the challenges posed by the land supply issue, can Hong Kong leverage its strengths to improve its procedures and make the relevant systems more efficient?

When considering the city strategy, we should identify our strategic priorities and ensure land policies are drawn up with the city's sustainable growth in mind. A sound city strategy should lead to the following development outcomes:

- 1. Creating a favourable environment for city's life and economic development;
- 2. Promoting quality of life and citizens' well-being, with the aim of attracting and retaining talents;
- 3. Complementing our weaknesses by revisiting the constraints, especially those inhibiting our ability to develop the land resource.

The expert opinions noted in this paper echo our proposal to tackle the root issues of establishing a city strategy to provide a vision for Hong Kong that focuses on wider development outcomes instead of reactively focusing on the shortfall of land supply as a cyclical problem only.

In addition, we offer the following cornerstones of the City Strategy for Hong Kong:

- 1. The GBA concept presents an unprecedented opportunity that could greatly enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong, improve quality of life for retirees and create a favourable environment for entrepreneurs.
- 2. Green space should not be rigidly demarcated and allocated to avoid overcrowding of the urban landscape. Less rigidity in this area could create a favourable environment for city life and economic development. Institution of "green" areas in urban planning and building codes will improve the health of our population.
- 3. There should be a more flexible strategy to facilitate the planning and urban redevelopment process, which would help improve the vibrancy of the community and economy. This would ultimately improve the quality of life of residents and facilitate economic growth.

GOING FORWARD, WE PROPOSE FOUR CRITICAL STEPS:



Reinforce infrastructure, institutions and provision of public goods.



Enhance Hong Kong's connectivity to the GBA, through transportation and economic cooperation.



Enhance the attractiveness of the city by improving people's quality of life through better integration of urban greenery.



Address core weaknesses, such as over crowdedness and ageing populations in certain urban areas.



