

# Implementing Hong Kong 2030+ Hong Kong SAR

November 13–18, 2016



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Building for the Future: Urban Design and Its Impact  
on Liveability and Global Competitiveness

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# About the Urban Land Institute

**THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 40,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, includ-

ing urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2016 alone, more than 3,200 events were held in 340 cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at [uli.org](http://uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

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# About ULI Advisory Services

**THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES** program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 600 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and non-profit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration,

participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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# Acknowledgements

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Thank you to the ULI Asia Pacific staff who helped welcome and accommodate the panel's stay in Hong Kong.

Thank you also to John Fitzgerald and the other members of the staff at ULI Asia Pacific.

Last, the panel thanks all the stakeholders—developers, architects, planners, politicians, and community leaders—who shared their thoughts on the future of Hong Kong's urban development. Hong Kong is a unique and global powerhouse. The panel hopes its recommendations on how the city works with developers in shaping the urban landscape of the city continue to promote Hong Kong's strengths.

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# Executive Summary

**THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** Advisory Services panel was asked to consider Hong Kong's height limitations and ridgeline protection measures as they apply to the Quarry Bay district, as well as their impact on the competitiveness of Hong Kong in a changing regional and global economy. As part of the panel's deliberations, it was suggested that reviewing the height limitations in the context of the broader Hong Kong 2030+ plan would be more effective. Overall, the panel has several observations and recommendations.

Observations:

- The Hong Kong 2030+ undertaking by the city serves the appropriate purpose of providing a strategic vision for overall development and growth of the SAR.
- The ridgeline protection and viewshed height limitations outlined in the SAR Design Guidelines focus on two-dimensional drawings of building heights from a limited number of perspectives at harbour level.
- The SAR's desire to improve liveability will improve the city's competitive advantages by helping attract and retain talent.

Recommendations include the following:

- The 2030+ plan must be supplemented with individual and discrete area plans for the SAR's most important

neighbourhoods and business districts, such as Quarry Bay. The local area plans will help translate the SAR-wide goals of 2030+ into actionable undertakings that consider the specific characteristics and features of more-defined geographic areas.

- The ridgeline protection portions of Hong Kong's current Design Guidelines are, in the panel's view, simplistic and rigid. In the absence of more detailed and comprehensive guidance that would more realistically represent viewsheds, the government should rethink its approach to managing the views of the ridgelines. The panel strongly believes that limited punctuation of the natural ridgeline with taller iconic buildings could improve the overall skyline.
- Leadership to implement the 2030+ plan should focus on actions and approaches that will permit the SAR's built environment to thrive, improving liveability and increasing its competitive advantage as it competes within the new realities of the regional and global economy.

The remainder of this report expounds on these basic recommendations.



# Background and the Panel's Assignment

**THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** Advisory Services panel has been asked to consider the built environment of Hong Kong and review factors affecting overall future urban and building design. In Hong Kong, the three separate departments—Planning, Building, and Lands—have predominantly determined development and have grown independently over the years. This separation of subject matter into “silos” leads to the potential of each regime missing the broader picture for challenges in the current and future built environment. In addition to a more coherent and consistent application process, the city needs a more flexible approach to land use planning, building design, and land administration.

In the interest of promoting Hong Kong's competitiveness as a global financial and commercial centre, Swire Properties and the Hong Kong government have asked the panel to address the following questions:

- Is a more flexible approach possible to land use planning, building design, and land administration as it relates to density, building heights, view corridors, ridge-line protection measures, street-level greenspace or open space and ventilation, and can those approaches to flexibility be internally implemented within a coherent, consistent, and timely framework by the various Hong Kong regimes?



Regional map.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

- How can Hong Kong improve liveability, urban and building design, and public realms (the built environment) in accordance with the territorial development strategy, “Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030”?
- What is the best way for these concepts of flexibility to be incorporated in the Hong Kong 2030+ vision initiative and other regulations?
- What are some other ways that the recommendations can be mainstreamed into the political, social, and economic realms of the Hong Kong SAR?
- What analogues and examples from other locations around the world might provide guidance to Hong Kong?

*Victoria Harbour and the Kowloon skyline.*

# Hong Kong: Current Conditions and Future Vision

**HOME TO MORE THAN 7 MILLION PEOPLE**, Hong Kong is often advertised as “Asia’s world city,” a gateway to the Asia Pacific region. With its global competitive positioning, the city is very appealing to different industries, especially the financial and logistics sectors. The World Economic Forum *Global Competitiveness Report 2015* states that Hong Kong has a per capita gross domestic product of US\$42,390, among the strongest in Asia. In addition, unemployment is stable at 3.4 percent currently and fosters a moderately growing economy.

Beyond its quantitative advantages, many other competitive advantages make Hong Kong extremely attractive:

- A temperate climate;
- Strong legal and commercial market transparency;
- A strong, established financial services sector;
- Proximity and access to high-quality natural amenities, such as mountains, beaches, and islands;
- Access to the ocean and river delta, for both commerce and enjoyment;
- An efficient transportation system that delivers its 7.4 million people from work to home and back; and
- A highly educated and motivated workforce, 70 percent of whom are employed in services.

*Lower-priced, cheaper office spaces in neighbouring cities, such as Shenzhen, are becoming more appealing, drawing owners away from Hong Kong.*

Hong Kong is a critical part of the 120 million–person Pearl River Delta region, one of the most productive and rapidly growing areas of the world. Hong Kong has been blessed with a handful of developers who are long-term owners and act as stewards of the city. Due to the long-term investment developers have in Hong Kong, the government has the potential to develop meaningful partnerships with the private sector to execute future goals in the city.

## Office Space: Owner and User Experience

From the property owner’s perspective, Hong Kong’s office market is lucrative and impressive. With only a 4.2 percent vacancy rate, compared with 11 percent across the Asian region, Hong Kong’s office space is in high demand. The continued rental growth (second highest in Asia) and high cost (second only to London) for office rentals create desirable market conditions for property owners. However, the lack of Class A office space supply in Central (Hong Kong’s primary business district) has been linked to Hong Kong’s relatively slow growth compared with its neighbours. Although land constraints in Central are a factor, the cheaper office spaces in neighbouring cities, such as Shenzhen, are becoming more appealing, drawing businesses away. In Central, office space rents for US\$160 per square foot



MICHAEL BARLOW



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



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*Views of Quarry Bay (left) and Central (right). Although Central will remain the primary central business district for Hong Kong, districts such as Quarry Bay (and several others on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon) can emerge as important submarkets for both employment and residential space. Judicious planning and redevelopment of such districts will help support Hong Kong's ability to attract and retain the talent it needs to compete with other Asia Pacific global cities.*

annually, whereas in Shenzhen it is only US\$60 per square foot.

From the occupants' and users' perspective, Hong Kong is a high-cost location. Given the mobility of employers, Hong Kong needs to promote and market the geographical advantages of the city over other cities' cheaper office spaces. In certain respects, affordability is an element Hong Kong can control through construction and diversification of types of office spaces, improving timely delivery of higher-density office space supported by a comprehensive transit-oriented development strategy.

In addition, Hong Kong has been relatively reliant on the financial services and logistics sectors, which are being challenged by external forces. Investment banks have experienced revenue contraction in mergers and acquisitions, leading to predictions of contraction in the former sector in Hong Kong. In the logistics sector, recent changes in cabotage rules have experts estimating a 14 percent throughput reduction in the Port of Hong Kong.

## Impact of Globalization and Positioning in the Asia Pacific Region

With the shifting political powers and growth of cities in the Asia Pacific region, international forces will likely lead to changes in Hong Kong industries such as finance and trade. What effects will this have on Hong Kong, and how can the city differentiate itself from other competing cities?

### Liveability

Although Hong Kong in 2016 is rated as the most liveable city in China, it has not maintained its positioning relative to other major Asian or Eastern hemisphere cities (e.g., Singapore, Melbourne). Liveability is something Hong Kong needs to prioritize and address to draw and keep commercial users that provide employment and create income.

### Liveability

The panel uses the term *liveability*, as defined by the Partners for Livable Communities: "Liveability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life—including the built and natural environments; economic prosperity; social stability and equity; educational opportunity; and cultural, entertainment, and recreation possibilities."



MELBOURNE PUBLIC DOMAIN PICTURES.NET



SINGAPORE WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

*Two cities in particular—Melbourne (top) and Singapore (left)—are praised globally for their high quality of life.*

Although some elements, such as external pollution, cannot be immediately controlled, the pollution from the built environment can be immediately addressed.

In addressing liveability, Hong Kong will also need to address how the city can continue to be a highly competitive location and maintain its position as the gem in the Pearl River Delta region. In conjunction with a well-educated workforce, can effective urban planning and design change the city's course and create a sustainable advantage for Hong Kong?

### Strategic Positioning of the City

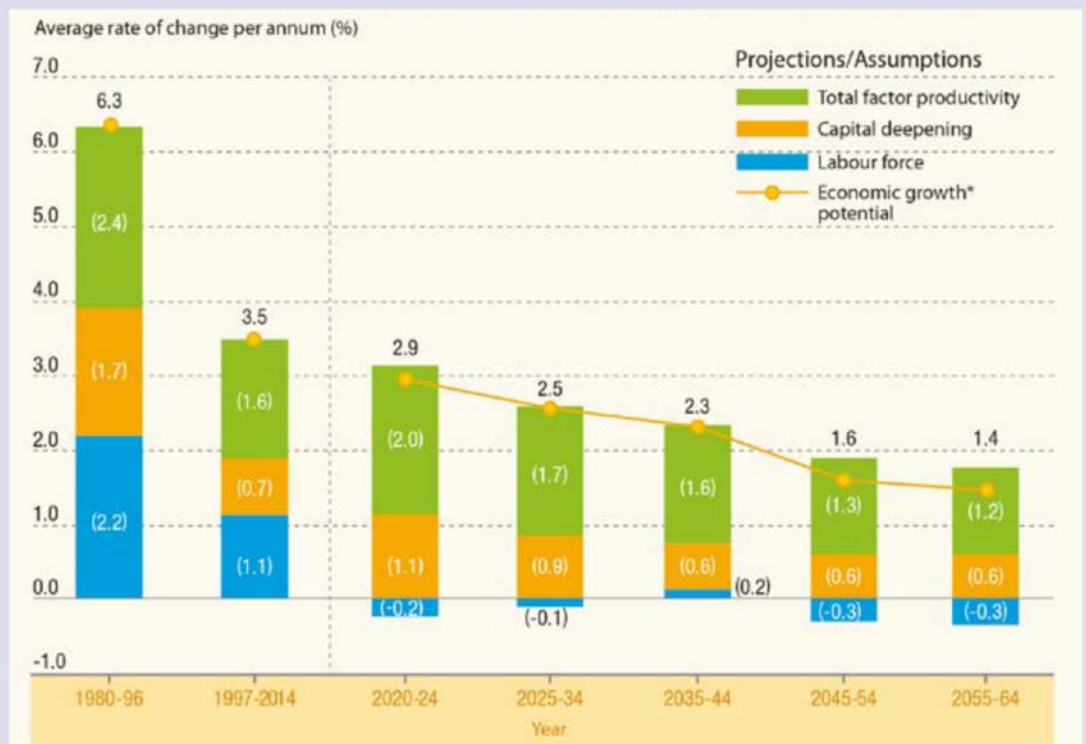
Hong Kong is a truly unique international city that exemplifies the benefits of high-density development joined with

a globally linked market-based economy. Although Hong Kong earns praise in many city indexes and rankings, as with many other established cities today, Hong Kong faces a number of challenges arising from its past successes.

Today the established urban areas of Hong Kong, particularly those areas centred around Victoria Harbour (the Metropolitan Core), possess several critical attributes, including the following:

- The area is the major focus of high-value employment.
- It enjoys high accessibility to an educated workforce.
- It is well served by public transport and significant established infrastructure.

Fig. 9 Economic Growth will be Dragged by an Insufficient Labour Force



Notes: ( ) Rates of contribution of the various factors of production towards the economic growth potential.  
 (\*) Economic growth potential refers to the potential output growth assuming full employment and the utilisation rates of other factors of production at normal levels. As such, the growth rates from 1980 to 1996 and from 1997 to 2014 shown in the diagram are slightly different from the actual GDP growth in the same periods.  
 Figures may not add up due to rounding.

The ageing and shrinking labour force will require Hong Kong to reevaluate how it attracts and retains talent. Land development, new housing, and amenities that cater to a higher-value and knowledge-based labour force can be an important step in minimizing the impacts of the ageing trend.

- It enjoys high connectivity to a wide range of services and facilities.
- High connectivity exists within the Metropolitan Core.

The recent release of the draft Hong Kong 2030+ planning vision and strategy provides a significantly updated vision as to how the city could continue to grow and integrate into the broader region. The strategy recognises all of the factors mentioned above.

The strategy's first building block seeks to plan for and create a *liveable high-density city*. This building block includes the goal of enhancing liveability in a compact high-density city through retrofitting the existing densely developed urban areas. The panel agrees with this aspiration.

### Reliance on the Status Quo Not an Option

The importance of creating a truly liveable city cannot be overstated. Such cities offer a safe, healthy, liveable environment together with attractive employment opportunities that will succeed and remain globally competitive. Competition for creative talent has never been higher—as recognised in the draft 2030+ strategy—and Hong Kong needs to focus on ways to improve the urban life of those already here as well as that of the talented workforce it is

*The 2030+ plan is an update and expansion of the Hong Kong 2030 plan. This territorial development strategy will guide planning, land and infrastructure development, and the shaping of the built environment of Hong Kong beyond 2030.*



HONG KONG 2030+

trying to attract. Every major city in the world recognises this necessity and is seeking to significantly improve its environment and overall attractiveness. The competition from other Asian cities, such as Singapore and Shanghai, is relentless, and some are making major strides towards creating more-liveable cities.

The Hong Kong government believes it requires more land to meet its growth projections. However, new land supply is only part of the answer. The existing urban areas must be redeveloped and renewed to ensure that the significant public and private investment in infrastructure (in all its forms) and the agglomeration benefits of commercial concentration are optimised.

## ULI's Ten Principles for a Sustainable Approach to New Development in Hong Kong

In 2011, ULI Asia Pacific completed *Ten Principles for a Sustainable Approach to New Development*. This publication was undertaken to develop a more sustainable approach to large-scale developments in Hong Kong. Under the guidance of the project's steering committee, issues related to large-scale development were discussed in a collaborative process including a multiple-stakeholder workshop. The resulting Ten Principles for a Sustainable Approach to New Development are practical and relevant guidelines intended to have a positive influence on new large-scale developments in Hong Kong and the region. These principles follow:

### Ten Principles for a Sustainable Approach to New Development

1. Build on Your Strengths
2. Create Great Places
3. Extend the Urban Grid
4. Open Up Public Space
5. Integrate Infrastructure
6. Activate the Streets
7. Keep It Flexible
8. Promote Sustainability
9. Engage People Early On
10. Manage, Control, and Coordinate

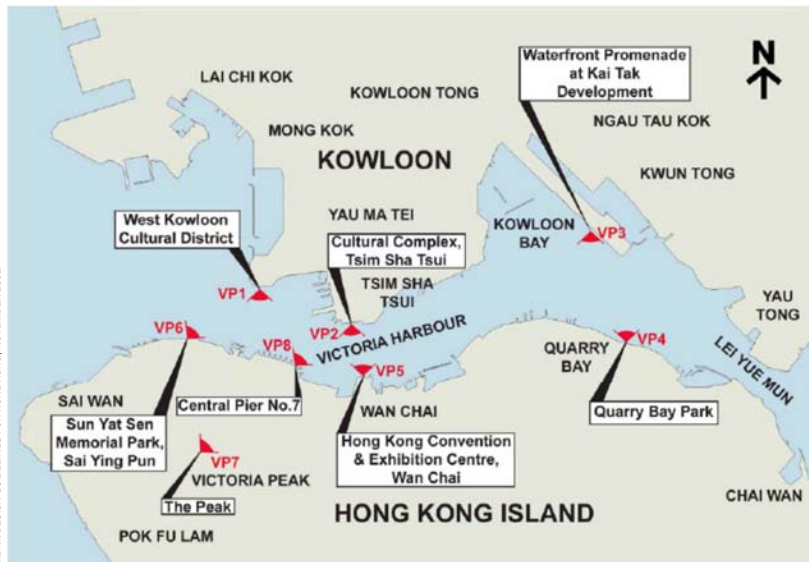
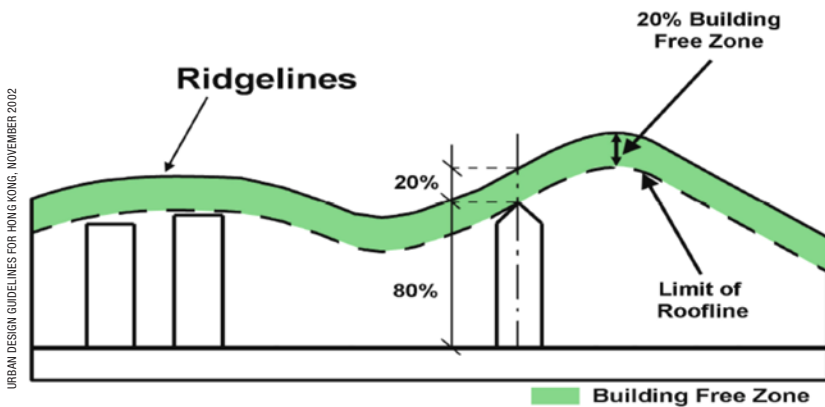


The panel supports the many components of the Ten Principles for a Sustainable Approach to New Development in Hong Kong. Of particular interest are the principles focussed on design, such as those regarding open space, activating the streets, and keeping the process flexible.

The panel supports Hong Kong's curating of ongoing redevelopment of the established urban areas, particularly the Metropolitan Core, to create more liveable, integrated,

and sustainable places. The Metropolitan Core is not a location where development is ever "complete." It is the centrepiece of Hong Kong's success and will continue to evolve and renew. The concept of "curating" seeks to manage this renewal process in a holistic, integrated manner to achieve positive change and improved liveability. It is this action that will make the most significant advance in achieving the aspirations of the 2030+ vision.

*The drawing from the ridgeline protection portions of Hong Kong's current Design Guidelines is a basic two-dimensional "elevation" showing the building-free zone. This drawing is combined with a limited number of vantage points at harbour level. The panel's opinion is that this approach is simplistic and rigid. In the absence of more detailed and telling axonometric drawings that would more realistically represent viewsheds, the government should rethink its inflexible approach to managing the views of the ridgelines. The panel strongly believes that limited punctuation of the ridgeline free zone for taller iconic buildings could actually improve the overall viewshed.*



## Bridging the Gap between Vision, and Planning and Building Controls

The proposed updated strategy recognises that the different components of the city need to be well connected and integrated for the city to perform well. Yet a significant gap exists between the vision and the current planning and building controls in terms of achieving these aims.

The current Hong Kong urban design guidelines and processes do not recognise and promote urban complexity. The result is swathes of buildings that look the same and are of the same height, as well as the creation of inactive streets. The planning controls focus on the vertical rather than the ground plane. The planning and building requirements are precise but relatively inflexible with a focus on the site rather than its context (precinct or district). The current range of controls have been developed over a period of time to address particular matters (e.g., air flows and views) to the point where they create unintended constraints that prevent the achievement of other desirable planning and amenity outcomes.

The distance between the vision and the current zoning controls needs to be bridged to promote an urban design system that matches the urban complexity of Hong Kong. The panel suggests introducing a system that enables the preparation of local area plans. Such plans would complement and directly give effect to many of the key strategic directions and key actions of the draft 2030+ strategy; however, these local area plans will also highlight area-specific characteristics, both advantages and disadvantages, as well as areas for growth.

The development of local area plans also enables the community to be consulted early on about the things that matter in the locality. However, consultation is not a substitute for decision making, but it is a means to obtain ideas and views to ensure the community members are aware of the local area plan's development. Once the plan is approved, it will then provide guidance on the future development and improvement of a locality.

The addition of local area plans for key locations in existing established areas will provide a direct and real effect to the proposed 2030+ strategy. Development of local area plans can be used for specific localities within the established urban area that meet the following criteria:

- They are highly accessible and can support transit development and the concept of a compact city.
- They offer the opportunity for renewal and improvement and the provision of improved connectivity, urban permeability, and urban climate.
- They can provide the opportunity for additional urban open space and public facilities.
- They can create additional employment floor space, particularly Class A office space.

The panel believes a number of locations within the Metropolitan Core (on both sides of Victoria Harbour) satisfy these criteria and can help create a stronger economic base for Hong Kong.

Quarry Bay, a burgeoning central business district (CBD), is one such location. It possesses a number of attributes that directly align with the aspirations and key actions established in the 2030+ strategy, including the following:

- Location adjacent to two Mass Transit Railway (MTR) stations served by different lines;
- Mix of new office buildings and facilities together with sites capable of redevelopment or renewal;



*An aerial view of Quarry Bay.*

- Emerging urban framework that can be enhanced and added to;
- Significant existing population base in the precincts immediately surrounding the existing activity centre; and
- Opportunity to provide significant new employment floor space and accessible lower-cost Class A floor space to maintain Hong Kong's competitiveness.

The panel further considers that other locations in the established urban areas would also greatly benefit from adopting a local area planning approach. By implementing a local planning approach, it will be possible to positively facilitate the creation of additional employment floor space in existing highly accessible locations. At the same time, the local environment of these localities will be improved to create more liveable places that are more walkable, are more permeable, and have more urban open space.

Hong Kong can continue to be competitive and attractive to residents and businesses if the city shifts its focus to improving liveability, fine-tuning urban and building design, and enhancing the public realm.





THOMAS EITLER/ULI



THOMAS EITLER/ULI



THOMAS EITLER/ULI



SWIRE PROPERTIES



SWIRE PROPERTIES

*A tableau of Quarry Bay. This district has some new development interspersed in the older, primarily residential buildings. The panel sees this district as a significant redevelopment opportunity that can leverage excellent access to the transit system and its proximity to CBD 1 as well as contribute to the 2030+ liveability goals of creating walkable live/work/play locations while improving its ability to attract and retain talent. The panel recommends a local area plan that bridges the gap between the SAR-wide vision and the site-specific regulations.*

# Urban Design in Hong Kong

**THE INITIAL PROBLEM PRESENTED** to the panel involved examining the issues around building height and preservation of views to the surrounding ridgelines in the Quarry Bay community of Hong Kong Island. An understanding of the unique problem that is facing Swire Properties as it contemplates buildout of the burgeoning CBD around One Island East made the panel realize that the real issues are not height related, but more about the urban form and character of the environment.

The discussion of processes and guidelines for Hong Kong can seem as complex as its current, dense built environment. How does one legislate good urban form and character in a dense urban context? The previous sections have highlighted the current issues with the built environment in Hong Kong and suggested process and design recommendations at both a city-wide and local scale to help create exemplary urbanism. The panel would like to pose three additional questions to shape discussion of the physical criteria to be considered in a local area plan when redeveloping.

## 1. How is change managed?

This differs from the question of how *growth* is managed. Although growth continues to be important, the reframing of the question to one of managing change is critical for areas of redevelopment. While economic assessment continues to be fundamental, the transformation of the pieces of every “sector” needs to be assessed in light of the improvements added: increasing social and cultural benefits, improving liveability, increasing the vitality of the pedestrian environment, and intensifying the unique opportunities of locale.

## 2. How are qualitative assessments of change made?

Qualitative changes cannot be overshadowed by quantitative measurements. The panel wants to raise that line of questioning to ensure that the city of Hong Kong works with developers on finding ways to improve liveability standards—not only through quantitative metrics, but also through qualitative assessments on people who work, play, and live in these areas of redevelopment.

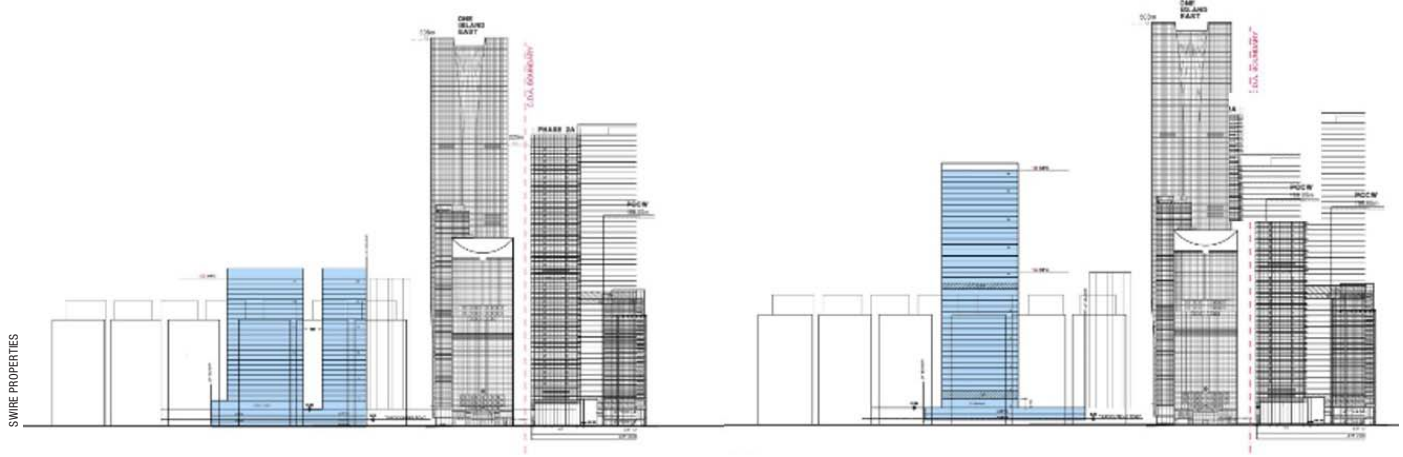
## 3. How does density meet the ground?

When redeveloping in the already dense city of Hong Kong, rather than ask how high can we build, we need to shift our focus from height to how density meets the ground.

These three questions aim to reframe the initial questions proposed to the Urban Land Institute panel and drive the conversation further on increasing the liveability of Hong Kong for a competitive and attractive future for the city.

## Looking Beyond Height

Although the panel agrees and believes that the views of the ridgelines are significant and the current policies are well intended, the focus has been on policy conformance at the expense of providing meaningful urban spaces at the ground level. The importance of defining the public realm in a very dense city is fundamental to enhancing quality of life, and indeed, the older sections of Hong Kong are known for their emphasis on street character, parks, public art, grand building entries, and open-space connectivity. The existing height-control diagram over Hong Kong Island



*A conceptual comparison between two smaller buildings (left) and one taller building (right) achieving similar plot ratios. The planning gain with the taller building is desirable with regard to street-level liveability components (green space, porosity, and pedestrian experience).*

seems arbitrary, and though it may attempt to preserve the ridgelines from one vantage point in Kowloon, the result is driving standardization and repetition in an environment that seeks to maximize the plot ratio in achieving desired land value.

### Develop Planning Principles That Guide Revitalization

A point of departure for considering how to revitalize the existing urban fabric outside the historic core is to develop planning principles that will guide decision making moving forward well past the timeline horizon of the 2030 plan. The panel recommends the following guiding principles be established and followed as more detailed area plans and developer-driven site plans are prepared:

- Connect the hillside open spaces to Victoria Harbour through the creation of logical open-space links: connect waterfront park destinations to trails in nature areas.
- Allow plot ratios in commercial areas higher than those established for residential-dominant neighbourhoods. For instance, the burgeoning CBD in Quarry Bay that is built over a mass transit station is a good example of where more building intensity and density should be both permitted and encouraged.
- Create a varied skyline, not one that is of similar height over a broad area. Allowing more plot ratio in a few lim-

ited and defined places also allows for greater creativity in skyline modulation: different building heights create a skyline that is varied and distinctive, and avoids the haircut phenomenon.

- Allow buildings to be taller if they demonstrate contributions to the public good. In mixed-use zones where office, retail, and commercial converge in dynamic ways, the trade-off for allowing more gross floor area (GFA) is the provision of public amenities that enhance the quality of life for the neighbourhood.
- Preserve older buildings with historic or neighbourhood-defining character and repurpose the use if necessary to achieve market demand. The public wants authenticity in how they experience everyday life. New can be good; old that exhibits character and conveys history and meaning is better.
- Establish buildings with a base, middle, and top. The first 25 meters of a building rising from the public street helps define the character of the neighbourhood or district. Buildings that display articulation, permeability, and material richness withstand time, and indeed, older parts of Hong Kong are good examples. Building setbacks are important to decrease shadow and wind effects, and building tops that are distinctive create an interesting skyline.



*One of the dilemmas facing the city is the use of large, uninterrupted bulk podiums. Safeguards against such designs can be incorporated into the local area plan.*

- Create meaningful open spaces that may or may not be maintained by the private sector. Hong Kong has done a very good job of creating building walkway bridges and providing small garden spaces between towers at the podium level but has not created parks and plazas at the ground level like other great cities of the world.

### Reconstitute the Urban Design Guidelines to Provide Clear Direction for the Development Community

The panel understands that any architect must follow the existing very prescriptive parcel controls in executing his or her designs. Those controls have use, height, and plot ratio maximums as well as mandates established as part of the sustainable building design guidelines and other requirements. Although such controls are well intended, the options for flexibility in building design and form—and more important—ground plane articulation are often precluded in the pursuit of maximizing the plot ratio GFA. Referring to multiple places for information and guidance promotes confusion, results in loss of purpose, and achieves undesired results.

The panel recommends that all design requirements and criteria for development be repackaged and included in a

revised urban design guideline document for Hong Kong Island that addresses the following elements:

#### ■ Overall framework

- Describes the morphology of the city—its streets, architectural vocabulary, and park spaces;
- Describes each of the area plans and what makes them unique; and
- Describes the open-space framework for the island and what should be preserved and created.

#### ■ Area plan guidelines

- Streetwall and building height;
- Plot ratio;
- Setbacks;
- Bulk controls and tower separation;
- Lot coverage;
- Parks, open-space links and connectivity, and landscape;

*Taikoo Park is a well-designed oasis of green and open space that complements One Island East and the surrounding residential space. Acting as a “town green” for Quarry Bay, it provides one of the primary elements that begin to build a liveable framework for the district. Other areas around Hong Kong can use similar elements to create their own distinct framework promulgated through the local area plan approach.*



STAN ECKSTUTZ/ULI

- Public art;
- Parking access and storage;
- Service areas and utilities;
- View corridors;
- Signage and lighting; and
- Density bonuses and how and where they can be applied.

### **Institute a Transparent and Measurable Density Bonus Program**

The panel understands that the government must act fairly and honestly with each development proposal that comes forward for review. It must avoid a sense of collusion or furthering the needs of one entity over another with respect to the granting of development rights. That said, a mechanism should exist that allows any entity to propose and be held accountable for the construction of significant

public benefits that improve quality of life in exchange for the granting of greater plot ratio. For instance, some cities allow for a 10, 15, or 20 percent plot ratio increase in exchange for the creation of a public park, community theatre, artist work spaces, or other civic use that provides an amenity for the community that may not be possible under current zoning or use of the land. With larger parcel assemblies, the private sector can provide those amenities if clear rules are created on what is desired and what the trade-offs can be to achieve a win-win situation. Not every project need take advantage of a density bonus, and as the panel has seen in other cities around the world, its applicability is defined to limited areas. High-density mixed-use areas are especially good places to leverage the opportunity.

### **Design a Process That Allows Collaborative and Early Review of Major Development Proposals**

The panel strongly encourages early review of development proposals that are not linked to the payment of fees but are more purposed to give critique and direction to large development projects and provide for meaningful dialogue on how to create great urban places for Hong Kong. The 2030+ plan is the broad vision and umbrella for all of Hong Kong; the local area plans provide the more detailed contextual control at the community level; and the planning principles and urban design guidelines establish the clear rules of the game for the architects, engineers, and landscape architects to follow for implementation.

# The Importance of Locale: Examples from Other Cities

**REDEVELOPMENT IS AN OPPORTUNITY** for change, an opportunity where the transformation gives something back to the well-being of life in a local area. Does it improve the quality of the experience of a place for both residents and visitors alike? How does it make Hong Kong distinct from other cities around the world? The panel is not talking about just the immediate context of a particular project proposal, but rather a larger plan that brings together complex goals while taking advantage of the unique qualities of each locale.

The panel's discussion about local area plans revolves around identifying what key elements define the quality of living in a place. How do people understand a city, apart from its buildings and roads? What is the cognitive map that is used to understand a city and its component parts? These principles are what guide the panel's recommendations.

## Shanghai, China

In Shanghai, the Puxi area is a water city with organizational structure understood as moving to and from the Huangpu River. Fuxing Xi Road, Nanjing Xi Road, and Xujiahui Road—some of the major east–west streets of contemporary Puxi—are all former canals and tow roads. Until about 35 years ago, Puxi had few continuous

north–south roads. Buildings, alleys, and parks reinforce the directionality of the former canal. The *lilong* alleyways gather onto north–south longitudinal streets that hold the local retail. These, in turn, gather onto the east–west latitudinal streets that flow to the Bund, lined with regional commerce.

## Boston, Massachusetts

Boston is another example, though not nearly the same density as Hong Kong. Urban planner Kevin Lynch famously described the five elements of this city's legibility as landmark, node, path, boundary, and district. Some elements bind the entire city, but most important, Boston is known for its distinct neighbourhoods, or districts in Lynch's terms. Back Bay is recognized for its long, pedestrian-oriented streets and short cross streets that are more vehicular. The rowhouses, both new and old, reinforce this pedestrian orientation. Adjacent to Back Bay is South End, yet it is completely different and distinct in the quality of living. Laid out with alternating through roads and T-intersections, South End feels like a series of small residential parks. Again, the buildings contribute to this reading of neighbourhood enclaves by making gateways along the through road.



Far left: The Puxi area of Shanghai. Left: The South End area of Boston.

*Market Street cuts through the grid of San Francisco on a diagonal.*



## San Francisco, California

San Francisco has a different legibility: it is a gridded city, quickly platted to accommodate rapid growth in the mid-1800s. Its topography was completely ignored in the rush to house those in pursuit of fortune during the Gold Rush. Yet in ignoring the topography, the grid became a measure of tangible difference. As in other American cities, one can easily navigate the city through the abstract understanding of the Cartesian system, but the districts are identified with their topography: Nob, Russian, and Telegraph hills, or valleys such as Hayes and Noe. Boulevards diagonal to the grid, such as Market Street, provide another measure of physical difference. The grid is a powerful way to lay out the city, serving to bind many of the changes wrought by redevelopment.

## Lessons Learned

As an international city, Hong Kong can draw on the unique characteristics, trials, and lessons learned from other global metropolises. In Shanghai, a clear hierarchy of development exists in relation to street networks, and a city-wide directionality flows back and forth to the river. Unfortunately, the legibility is being erased by new development in towers that no longer contribute to creating the public realm. In Boston and San Francisco, the districts still maintain their unique differences even as new development has replaced buildings within these districts or at the seams between them. Much of this change has been managed through zoning overlays, districts, and community processes. Within Hong Kong itself, the urban landscape varies dramatically from neighbourhood to neighbourhood,

requiring a more complex system of addressing the variations. To promote and preserve Hong Kong's unique urban design, the panel recommends incorporating local area plans into the urban design and planning process.

## Improving Hong Kong's Liveability through Local Area Plans

Historically, Hong Kong's legibility has been structured by the contours of its landscape. Its powerful topography forced development to engage with the ground in ways that are unique to Hong Kong. Although many other vernacular towns and villages are organized by their topography, few high-rise cities are. The three-dimensional experience of this organization is best understood by studying the city's cross section. It is more difficult to see in plan and not seen at all by viewing the city skyline from across the harbour. On the hillside, development and redevelopment do not require many regulations to reinforce the organization provided by the landscape.

The reclamation of the harbour provided a very different ground—large swathes of flat land on which the city could grow. In the reclamation, topography was lost as an urban organizer. Parallel development of these flat lands on ever-increasing parcel sizes changed both the nature of the urban podium and the associated building heights. Although Hong Kong still has a vibrant three-dimensional public pedestrian environment, its legibility, its navigability, its inherent differences and variations caused by terrain began to be erased. Earlier skywalks are connected to the public organization of paths on the hill; newer skywalks have become mere links between individual buildings. Other ways to manage change are needed that mediate between the strategic vision of 2030+ and the statutory plan.

In addition to locations such as Kai Tak, the panel has determined that Swire Properties' Taikoo Place development in Quarry Bay in the initial study area is an excellent place to start examining the implementation of a local area plan. The panel recommends using Quarry Bay's creation of a local area plan and implementation as models to be incorporated into vision plans such as 2030+.

# Quarry Bay

**QUARRY BAY SITS CRADLED** in Siu Ma Shan, between mountain and harbour, half hill and half reclaimed. The area has a deep history, with the Hakka stonemasons originally settling in the area before the arrival of the British. Currently, the eastern side of the area, Taikoo Shing, is majority owned by Swire Properties. The office complex hosts several office towers including One Island East, a boutique business hotel, and many residential high rises in the adjacent Taikoo Place area.

## Curating Quarry Bay

To start the process of curating Quarry Bay, identify the inherent landscape characteristics of the district in terms of both opportunities and constraints. Next, assess the current urban fabric and its relation to the landscape, looking for three-dimensional opportunities to intensify connections and transform obstructions, particularly looking to change the 100 percent podium. Intensify the differences that contribute to legibility, such as orientation to landscape, porosity for wind, and hierarchy of streets. Finally, establish finer-grain view corridors between the

*A view of Quarry Bay, which is defined by the hills to the south and the harbour to the north.*



*Walkability and street-level character are key components of liveability.*

water and the hills that can be experienced within the district, not from afar.

If the city begins to see managing redevelopment as curating change, redevelopment becomes a planned process intended to bring out the best qualities of a city by directing residents, agencies, developers, and design professionals to continually participate in defining what makes a city liveable. Next, the report describes how to implement this process and understanding locale as a regulatory process.



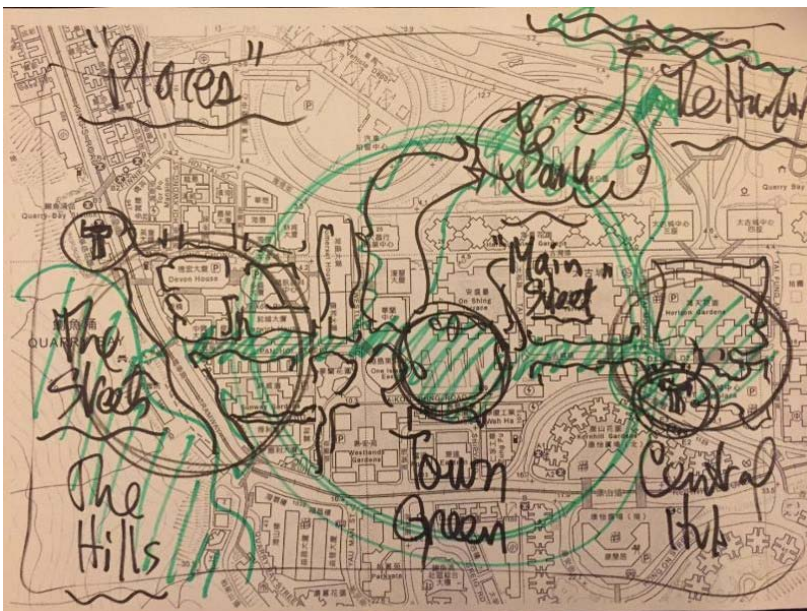
## The Local Area Development Plan

Caring for a city while encouraging growth is best accomplished by focussing down to the city's many different local areas. Caring means planning on a district-by-district basis. The city encompasses many and varied local areas. Some are more strategic to growth than others. All contribute to helping the city achieve its city-wide goals.

A district has specific physical boundaries (typically defined by a comfortable walk). Each district is unique. Each has its own natural and built features. Each has its own needs. A different plan is needed for each.

Formulas and city-wide standards are not responsive enough to the differences in a city's many districts. A more specific development plan is needed to both solve deficiencies and realize the opportunities for change. With a development plan tailored to each district, both public and private interests will find working together an easier proposition.

*A conceptual sketch of Quarry Bay identifies the central organizing features of a town green (Taikoo Park), pedestrian corridors (main streets), and transit stations. These elements combine with the physical framework of the hills, harbour, and roads to help define the setting for this important submarket of the city. Such an exercise will be an important step during the initial stages of creating a local area plan both here and in other locations across the rest of the SAR that use the area plan process.*



STAN ECKSTUT/OU

A local area plan includes both preservation and new development. It includes development of both buildings and public infrastructure. Local area plans, at this time, can become an important addition to the current 2030 plan because the local area plan offers ways of responding to competition in the world marketplace. With current workplace trends shifting away from focussing only on the stand-alone office building, emerging new companies with their younger employees are as focussed on their internal user needs as they are on their external environments.

## Competing in the World Marketplace

Developers are realizing they need to do more than offer an office building to compete. The emerging workplace criteria go beyond the individual building. The tenants and their productive and creative staff seek to be included in mixed-use districts where different stores and food options are open at all times of day and night, seven days a week. Mixed use includes lots of residential to provide the increasingly attractive option of walking to work. Beyond residential and office, a successful multipurpose mixed-use area must include much more, such as cultural attractions, convenience retail, plenty of food and beverage choices, and public facilities such as schools and libraries.

The younger generation of workers wants to be part of a robust urban fabric, where walking is a high priority—first, for easy access to transit rather than relying on automobiles, and second, just for the sake of walking. Because of the numerous demands on streets, a plan is needed to allow walking to be a priority and to provide balance among the different uses.

All ages enjoy attractive, animated, and safe streets. Cars are welcome, but only for convenience. The new workplace seeks pedestrian-oriented public environments. A plan is needed to differentiate between streets that ensure walkability and, at the same time, continue to function as thoroughfares for vehicles, buses, emergency vehicles, and the like.



CITY OF NEW YORK

*The proposed plaza at Hudson Yards in New York City. Green space and open space will be key selling points for tenants, residents, and visitors.*

Also, green space and open space are no longer optional amenities for 21st-century urban development. For example, Hudson Yards in New York City, one of the largest current real estate undertakings in the United States, has committed to allocating 40 percent of the new development to public open space. In Hong Kong, green space may be rare, but it is treasured. The millennials throughout the world have indicated the desire to engage in the urban mix of uses. At the same time, green space is highly valued. Even in the busiest, dense city centres, everyone wants to be a part of nature.

In dense cities, a curated landscape does not happen on its own. A local area plan needs to ensure preservation and inclusion of open spaces, street trees, and formal parks. Without the district development plan, nature will be limited. The world-class workplaces are seeking to be green.

Preservation of the past, including retention of older buildings—whether distinguished or, in some instances, less so—is of increasing value. In the international marketplace, preservation increases real estate values. In addition, unique historic spaces differentiate one neighbourhood from another. Some of the more innovative

start-up and technology-focussed companies prefer the older office spaces for more flexible work environments and more affordable rents.

All the preceding factors represent significant changes in developing office spaces. Quality of life, or liveability, is the new urban opportunity. Existing, dense cities offer the easiest path to satisfying these new marketplace requirements. While office buildings continue to evolve and have their own challenges, such as larger floor plates, increased ceiling heights, and tenant desires for views, they also need to be part of their external local environments.

The panel recognizes the complex undertaking and enormous risk associated. For the building going forward to succeed and be competitive, competition is now requiring more of the surrounding district, which is not in the private developer's hands.

## The Need for the Local Area Plan

Competition for economic talent calls for a partnership of public and private initiatives to enhance quality of life. The local area plan becomes the needed road map to join the two. At the same time, the opportunity exists to include additional local stakeholders. The local area plan is the means to help build local area consensus. With consensus, the plan can serve to guarantee public benefits and secure private development certainty. Both goals are key to success. In the end, they provide the flexibility that everyone seeks.

The panel believes Quarry Bay offers a very relevant precedent for a local area plan approach. Quarry Bay has all the types of challenges and opportunities found in most urban locations. The area can be a pilot to implement Hong Kong's city-wide ambitions. The panel sees this local area approach as an additional tool for the city to be incorporated into the 2030+ plan. It may even offer a way of planning the city's future development areas.

In the case of the Quarry Bay district, a local area plan should seek to leverage the district's many existing assets. The plan will need to consider what already exists: private

and public; built and natural, including adjacency to the harbour; what works, and what does not. Existing assets include what is historic and what is loved (and maybe what is threatened by development).

Quarry Bay is a unique place in Hong Kong. It is rich with clues on shaping its future. The local area plan should seek to leverage the variety and the differences (and not try to simplify and reduce to formulas). The existing district is a true business centre with excellent transit service, a robust mix of all the desired uses, and a recently built central green open space. The existing analysis should include all current development plans (public and private). Development projects are suggesting ways of improving the public realm. These current plans become the means to influence and, more important, implement the local area plan.

Additional height will continue to be sought by developers. With a local area plan, the height can be leveraged to accomplish many needed improvements to the public realm. When land is so limited, height can help free the ground area for other public-oriented uses. It can help preserve. It can help add uses that cannot afford to buy land.

The key is to evaluate height on whether it matches the characteristics determined in the local area plan. A uniform height limitation from a single, limited perspective is unattractive and could lead to perceptions of stagnancy and lack of innovation. Flexibility permitting a variety of heights makes for a more interesting and iconic skyline and signals the city's willingness to remake itself. Local area plans should incorporate goals and objectives of liveability, much of which is focussed on ground-level interaction, permeability, green space, and connectivity. A project proposal that exceeds the current prescribed height limit should be evaluated according to the site's improvement of ground-level liveability and not just on its ability to increase plot ratios. Learning from relevant successful precedents, nearby and from afar, can help shape the future. Everyone needs

to know what the competition is doing to be motivated to promote what should be done in Hong Kong.

The existing local area has lots of positives. But it also has shortfalls and the need to improve. Landscape is in short supply. Preservation is not anticipated. Yet the local markets offer exactly the street life cherished by most workers and residents. Lots of density has been built. Little human scale has been accomplished. Tall buildings exist. Oddly enough, the tallest have caused the least damage. Conversely, the lower mid-rise buildings have created huge walls. Walls prevent walking, block views, and hinder connectivity. Superblocks are a major challenge to the new type of vibrant urban fabric offered by other world-class cities.

If all stakeholders are included in the area plan, consensus will be reached and the local area plan will emerge. To reach consensus, the emphasis of the planning process and the resulting local area plan should be on the public realm, which is what everyone shares and where all interests get aligned.

The public realm starts with the streets, which provide the walkability, the vibrant street life, and the possible additional landscape. If the public realm works, the real estate value grows. The public realm is how the new workplace criteria are achieved. The office building can no longer do it alone. Nor can two or three office buildings, together, make the desired urban lifestyle.

The resulting local area plan is a plan of places, not projects. The public benefits are guaranteed, and the private developer can work within the guidelines. The result is flexibility without giving up on everyone's needs. The reason and rationale for the plan is clear: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

# Implementation

**AFTER REFLECTING ON THE DRAFT 2030+** plans, the comments of the many people interviewed, and the issues local developers face while working on projects in the city, the panel concluded that Hong Kong should go into more detail in planning specific areas and develop specific local area plans. The goal of this effort is to include public engagement, resulting in a plan that offers certainty to private developers.

Some areas in Hong Kong have almost all the qualities of a CBD, like Central, but they are less well known, if still unique and vital to the economy of the city. Quarry Bay is one such area, and the panel concluded that a specific sector plan should be developed to clarify the major functional components of the area and guide the future development of that part of the city. It is already a major office submarket, with about 7.5 million square feet, with significant retail and residential accommodation concentrated between two MTR stations. In North America, Quarry East would be a city unto itself; it deserves its own plan.

Its centrepiece, One Island East, provides world-class office space and is the focal point of the Quarry Bay/Taikoo commercial centre. With its handsome adjacent parklike open space, the tower serves as a major symbol and a very real economic engine for the area by supplying Class A office space at a cost considerably below that of Central.

As mentioned earlier, the office vacancy rate in Hong Kong is so low that companies are having difficulty expanding, which will cause Hong Kong to have difficulty continuing to grow in a competitive world. One Island East offers an alternative for companies in the market. The developer and long-term owner, Swire Properties, is ready to move forward and expand the supply by adding new buildings to its portfolio in the immediate area, creating further opportunity for the city to expand in size through

redeveloping an existing urban centre rather than expanding in the New Territories or, for example, the proposed East Lantau Metropolis.

The Quarry Bay area has other major components of urbanism, including neighbourhood shops, schools, the East Hotel, and the Cityplaza shopping mall, all built over or around major MTR stations. Adding these functions to an already vital and large residential area located near the harbour and green hills behind, gives the district a unique urban quality which the city should recognize and organize through a sector plan.

The goal of the plan should be to expand in a creative way, developing this distinctive office, residential, and retail centre. The integration of these live, work, and play ingredients defines the best of 21st-century urbanism, and what currently exists needs to be improved to attract future employers, employees, and residents.

The city should foster a focus on rebuilding and expanding this area and other areas in the city, which is an element currently absent from its 2030+ plan. Well-designed streetscapes and walking connections to the harbour and the green hills behind should be incorporated into the sector plan. New open space should be encouraged and designed, and recognized as a public good with a tangible value.

High-rise towers that can attract high-end office tenants as well as serve as a focal point to the Quarry Bay area should be positioned and constructed to enhance the urban fabric of the sector as well as the entire city. In accord with the people the panel interviewed, the panel believes the artificial height limitations now established should be put aside and replaced with a design for a new group of office towers adjacent to One Island East and appropriate to the location. Such a grouping of towers can help create identity and place as well as add

to the economic engine the city needs to compete in the local, regional, and international marketplace of the 21st century.

To create a starting point, the panel's recommendations focus on making the Quarry Bay Area a pilot initiative for collaborative partnerships, realignment of authority and decision making, leadership, and a broader commitment from the Hong Kong government to the future of Hong Kong, with a scheme to fund the necessary future improvements in Quarry Bay.

## A Collaborative Partnership

The development approval process has been described as rigid and uncertain. Developers are required to invest in detailed development applications and pay substantial review fees without having a sense whether or not their projects will be approved. To do what the panel has been describing—to weave an urban fabric and develop area plans that recognize the dynamics of unique places—requires a new way of thinking about development and its role in the city's future.

To ensure that Hong Kong does not lose its place as a global urban gem, the private and public sectors must become partners in investing in the city's future. In many places, this is referred to as a P3, or a public/private partnership. Regardless of the label, it means that the public and private sectors must come together. No great project can happen in an urban setting without the recognition that both sectors have a significant and equal contribution to make. The public sector—the government—is the steward of the public good. It is responsible for setting the parameters that protect and advance the public interest. This could be through regulation, investment, or incentives. The private sector—in this case, the developer—contributes the design expertise, the capital investment, and the physical development. Together they are partners in ensuring the economic and social well-being of the city. One partner cannot do it without the other. The collaboration is paramount.



Entering a partnership requires that the government sector begin to view a development application as an opportunity and not just a ministerial check against a list of dos and don'ts in a code. The dynamics of a living and breathing urban microcosm are not evident in a height restriction, setback, or plot ratio alone. Much can be learned about an application through a conversation with an applicant about the desired outcomes. In this exchange, mutual objectives can be identified and specifically the benefits to the public. However, the developer is also obliged to reveal key ingredients of a project that will contribute to achieving those public objectives. The challenge in this process is that both parties enter into the conversation from a place of trying to work things out.

For government officials and staff, operating in a collaborative environment can be frightening. Staff may fear being perceived as colluding with the private sector for personal gain or forfeiting their obligation as a steward of the public good. Conversely, the private sector may fear showing its hand or giving away proprietary information that might be used against an approval. But these fears can stymie the creative and innovative solutions that benefit everyone in the end. The bottom line is that if Hong Kong does not address this issue head on, it will lose the opportunities to remain a global urban gem.

These collaborative processes need the following elements to work:

- A term sheet of agreed upon principles for the project and the public and private sector desired outcomes;
- An agreed upon process, milestones, and timeline for the project to move forward;

- An opportunity for an early review of a development concept to determine its feasibility and conditions upon which it can be approved; and
- Periodic reviews throughout the project development to make adjustments.

## Realignment of Authority and Decision Making

The current development approval process has been described as lengthy, rigid, and uncertain. It has also been described as challenging in that the three key entities—Planning, Building, and Lands—often conflict in their perspectives. Resolution of the conflict often comes in memoranda of understanding and other documents that would not otherwise be necessary if the regulatory scheme were designed to be clear on desired outcomes. Furthermore, the panel has heard that the Land section’s input comes late in the process and can upset the final outcome by requiring a lease payment or other value payment.

The current organization scheme can be described as functional “silos” and results in a narrowly construed review process and decision making appropriate for “as right” development applications. However, for more complex applications requiring problem solving, such as those that are likely to result from local area plans, it is obsolete.

Complex applications require a collaborative team approach to include not only Planning, Building, and Lands, but also expertise from transportation, housing, parks and trails, environment, tourism, economic development, and other functions. More important, they require urban design expertise, which is notably missing. The bottom line is that the staff must also be collaborative.

## Organizing for Success

To ensure that this team is successful, the members not only should be screened for their requisite technical knowledge of planning, urban design, architecture, building, housing, transport, and land use, but also for their acceptance of the view of the developer as a client

of the government. They must be willing to collaborate among themselves to address potentially competing public objectives.

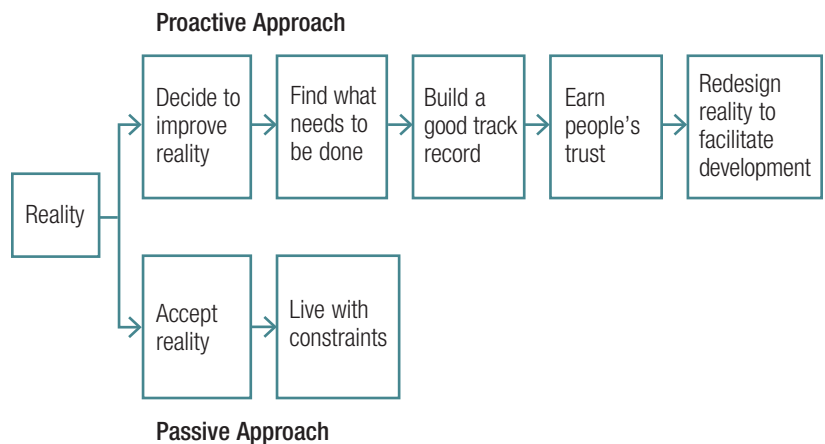
### Leadership Is the Linchpin

Success begins with leadership. More than anything else, the leader is the linchpin to transforming the perspective of a development application from merely a form for a ministerial review against a stiff code to an opportunity to fulfil more complex and dynamic objectives of urban vitality. The attributes of such a leader are often unique in a government setting; however, examples exist of people who have been able to break through silos, energize and enable staff, and garner the respect of government officials and staff as well as the development industry. These attributes include the following:

- Passion;
- Personality;
- Authority;
- Vision; and
- Calculated risk taker.

These champions will be able to push for critical and urgent urban issues. Given the complex reality that Hong

### Proactive versus Passive Approach to Leadership



Source: Coalition for Smarter Growth.

Kong faces for its future economic and land use development, the panel sees two approaches.

One is passive, that is to live with existing constraints, which is not a choice to settle for. The alternative is to take a more proactive approach, which begins by committing to make changes to the current reality. This entails finding out what needs to be done and trying one's level best to build better track records to earn people's trust. These track records can help government officials redesign the reality to facilitate good urban development.

### **Commitment at the Highest Levels of the Organization**

Organizing for success can be achieved only if the highest levels of leadership are committed to the initiative. The SAR-wide planning effort, Hong Kong 2030+, is a laudable undertaking, but its large-scale guidance about future development can be more easily met when it is translated into local standards and design criteria. The panel has suggested that local area plans be used as the vehicle to provide that more specific guidance.

The Secretary of Development and his immediate staff must understand and set a course to implement the local area plan initiative. In addition, the panel notes that the success of this vision does not mean achieving unconditional consensus for each individual area plan proposal. Leaders must listen to a diverse set of stakeholders and formulate actions that are in the best interest of the community. But action is important. The local area plans cannot get bogged down in trying to achieve unconditional consensus.

### **Commitment to Funding Improvements in Quarry Bay through the Infrastructure Fund**

Unlike in many cities of North America and Europe, funding a major infrastructure initiative is perhaps an easier undertaking given the revenue sources for the SAR. The panel believes the improvements to Quarry Bay noted in the previous sections of this report can be achieved with

a better dedication of funds. If the SAR leadership wants to improve Hong Kong's competitiveness in attracting and retaining workforce talent, districts like Quarry Bay must be given the focus, attention, and resources to improve.

### **Improve Population Size Projections and Urban Planning Approaches**

An important starting point for good urban planning is to boldly settle for a projected population size for a longer time horizon, such as 2050 or even further into the future. Although the margin of error may increase for a long time span, over-projecting population size is better than under-projecting it. Population size projections will allow the city to determine how much land should be allocated for commerce, industry, housing, and other uses and to find the optimal places for these uses in the city-wide plan.

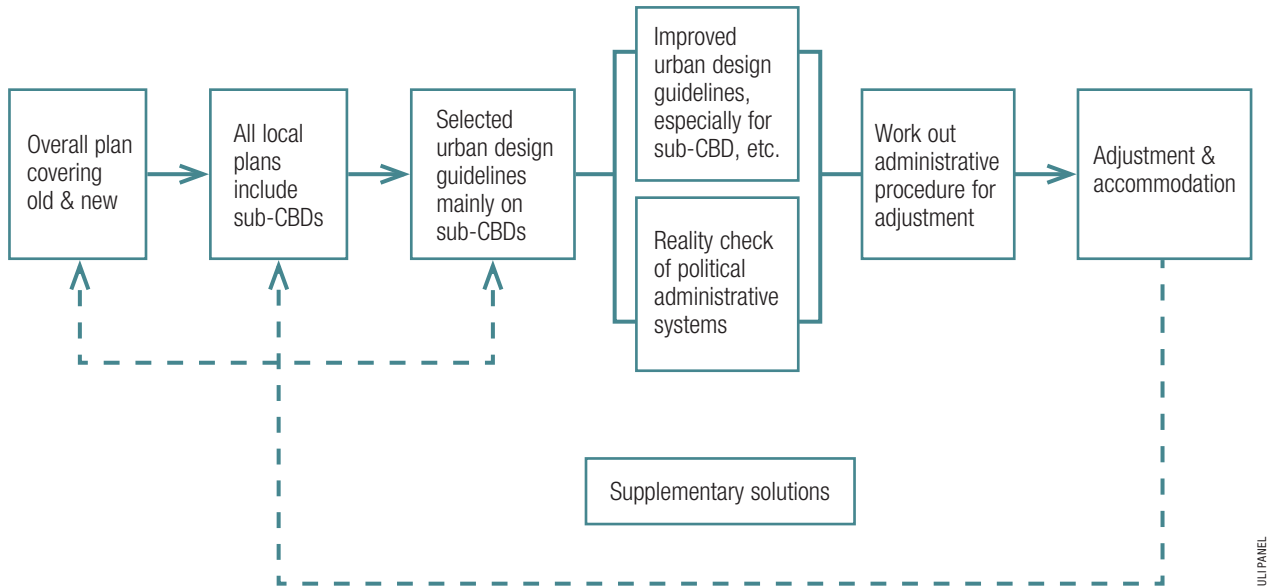
Another useful point to keep in mind is that in planning a city, a planner is to plan for the needs of the city and not for the resource capability of the government. After knowing the needs, the government will have a clearer sense of purpose to find the requisite resources to deliver the plan. In the process of implementation, compromises with existing reality may be unavoidable. Although such compromise is not ideal, it is necessary to realise the projects.

### **Creating a Road Map towards a Future World-Class Hong Kong**

The panel proposes an emphasis on pushing Hong Kong on a road map that will make the city's competitive advantage be resilient and sustain its world-class city status. To do so, creating an overall plan covering both the old and new areas, as shown on the accompanying diagram, is important.

With this overall vision as a starting point, it is important to evaluate all the local area plans and their relation to the larger vision for Hong Kong. As a part of this evaluation, the panel recommends conducting a more holistic study of urban design guidelines for these sub-CBDs. As desirable as such guidelines may be, making a reality check to see

## Conceptual Framework for Organizing for Success



ULIPANEL

how they can be accepted into the existing political and administrative system would also be necessary. Government officials will have to look into the administrative procedure and see if they can make needed adjustments in the interest of the plan. In the real world, adjusting administrative procedures to suit the ideal vision of the urban plan and urban design may not always be possible. Some degree of give and take will be unavoidable. Although not all changes may be immediately welcomed, they are necessary steps to ensure Hong Kong retains its world-class status.



# Conclusion

**THE PANEL BELIEVES** that when a developer approaches a city, a discussion needs to take place about why the development benefits the developer and how the city also can benefit. When two interests meet, this is how a viable public/private collaboration can form. For the city, this is how it can strategically move forward with its vision.

The panel was handed an assignment that required examination of the city of Hong Kong's urban design guidelines and its flexibility. Throughout this report, the panel aimed to give a road map on how Hong Kong can build on its remarkable success. From identifying global challenges and opportunities to understanding how urban design forms can shape great places, Hong Kong needs leadership and partnerships to maintain and increase its competitive advantage on the international level.

This is a remarkable moment in time when the characteristics of a competitive city are dramatically changing, driven by the forces of economic globalization, demographics, and technology. No city can afford to ignore these forces. People used to follow their jobs; now, perhaps for the first time, jobs are following people's talents. Companies

across all industries are moving their operations from spacious but isolated suburban sites into cities in response to realizing how much place matters. Talented people want to live in lively, vibrant places.

Although the 2030+ plan is important to permit continued growth, the real strength of Hong Kong is in the already developed areas of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, in sectors like Quarry Bay. The panel has suggested a framework of design and administrative changes that would enhance the potential of these areas. It requires changes in how you think about the city and how you manage the development process. Change is tough to do.

Every bold new idea is always met with opposing views—whether the plan is too expensive, too dramatic, too minor, or myriad other reasons. Listen to the concerns from the opposing side; however, whether change occurs is determined by strong leadership and vision. The community will not be satisfied with the status quo but must have the will to reach for the future. This city was built on boldness, and the panel believes the time has come for Hong Kong to revisit that founding characteristic.



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# About the Panel

## Tom Murphy

*Panel Chair*  
*Washington, D.C.*

Murphy is a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute and the Klingbeil Family Chair for Urban Development. A former mayor of Pittsburgh, Murphy has extensive experience in urban revitalization—what drives investment and what ensures long-lasting commitment. Before his appointment as senior resident fellow, Murphy served as ULI's Gulf Coast liaison, helping coordinate with the leadership of New Orleans and the public to advance the implementation of rebuilding recommendations made by ULI's Advisory Services panel for Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In addition, he worked with the Louisiana state leadership as well as with leadership in hurricane-impacted areas in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida to identify areas appropriate for ULI involvement.

Earlier, Murphy served three terms as the mayor of Pittsburgh, from January 1994 through December 2005. During that time, he initiated a public/private partnership strategy that leveraged more than \$4.5 billion in economic development in Pittsburgh. Murphy led efforts to secure and oversee \$1 billion in funding for the development of two professional sports facilities, and a new convention centre that is the largest certified green building in the United States. He developed strategic partnerships to transform more than 1,000 acres of blighted, abandoned industrial properties into new commercial, residential, retail, and public uses; and he oversaw the development of more than 25 miles of new riverfront trails and urban green space.

From 1979 through 1993, Murphy served eight terms in the Pennsylvania State General Assembly House of Representatives. Murphy served in the Peace Corps in

Paraguay from 1970 through 1972. He is a 1993 graduate of the New Mayors Program offered by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. He holds an MS in urban studies from Hunter College and a BS in biology and chemistry from John Carroll University.

He is an honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects; a board member of the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities; and a board member of the National Rails to Trails Conservancy. He received the 2002 Outstanding Achievement of City Livability Award from the U.S. Conference of Mayors and was selected as the 2001 Pittsburgh Man of the Year Award by Vectors Pittsburgh.

## Michael Barlow

*Melbourne, Australia*

Barlow is one of Australia's foremost planning and property advisers with expertise in urban strategy, city development, and large project delivery. He brings a strong knowledge of the property market to any project to create high-quality development and design solutions.

His career spans more than 35 years. Over this time, Barlow has become a trusted adviser on projects that have changed the landscape of Melbourne and elsewhere. His expertise includes airport developments, major retail and commercial precincts, entertainment quarters, and strategic urban renewal projects. Barlow's expertise extends beyond Australia to include international projects involving major city developments and metropolitan strategies in Dubai, Shanghai, and other cities throughout China.

Barlow provides expert evidence at various forums, including the Supreme Court of Victoria, Federal Court of Australia, Land and Environment Court (NSW), the Victorian

Civil and Administrative Tribunal and independent planning panels, about the planning implications and impacts of development.

## Renee Chow

*Berkeley, California*

Chow is professor and associate dean at the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley. Both her practice and research focus on the intersection between architecture and its locale. One problem for contemporary design is to link the structure of the city and landscape with its individual pieces—to design how each affects and is affected by the other. In making pieces of our cities—highways and streets, parks, and buildings—our current architectural culture too often strives for a degree of formal autonomy from surrounding circumstances. The experience of a city becomes a cacophony of competing markers. The local experiences of neighborhood textures, district orientations, and collective practices of dwelling disappear as our design practices increasingly lose the tools to make them.

Urban challenges of the 21st century—increasing density, reducing resource consumption, and intensifying urban diversity—require solutions that are locally rooted. Chow has developed analytic and generative design tools for integrating urban and architectural systems across sites and individual buildings. These tools are directed towards encoding and extending local conditions, increasing urban legibility and identity, differentiating agency and time, embedding resource strategies at a community scale, and facilitating design collaboration. To re-shape the discourse about the forms of urbanism both in suburbs and cities, Chow has written *Suburban Space: The Fabric of Dwelling* (2002) and *Changing Chinese Cities: The Potentials of Field Urbanism* (2015).

Chow is also principal of Studio URBIS, an architecture and urban design practice formed in collaboration with her partner, Thomas Chastain. Projects include single- and multi-family residences, institutional and commercial projects as well as urban and community development plans.

She has been honoured with the Eva Li Chair in Design Ethics from 2005 to 2010, by *Architecture* magazine as one of its “Ten Top Architectural Educators” in 2009, and by the AIA California Council with its Research and Technology Honor Award. She received her SBAD and MArch from, as well as previously taught at, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

## Stanton Eckstut

*New York, New York*

Eckstut is a founding principal and member of the board of directors at Perkins Eastman. As a strong ambassador for placemaking and the creation of iconic public spaces, Eckstut has focussed his work on large-scale, mixed-use developments that emphasize well-being, integrated design, timelessness, and a lasting sense of place. Lower Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn, Downtown Indianapolis, Downtown Long Beach, Hollywood and Highland Center, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, and more recently, the waterfronts of Buffalo and Washington, D.C., have all been transformed by Eckstut's designs and vision for how the 21st-century city should be built at the human scale.

Eckstut's design expertise has historically focussed on downtown and waterfront redevelopments, mixed-use buildings, large commercial developments, transit-oriented development and multimodal transit facilities, and sustainable design in the urban realm. He is known for his design work on Paseo Colorado; The Wharf on Washington, D.C.'s Southwest Waterfront; the World Trade Center Site Transportation and Infrastructure Master Plan; Metro-Tech Center in Downtown Brooklyn; and for developing the integrated master plan for Battery Park City. These and a host of other projects have been recognized with distinction by the American Institute of Architects, Urban Land Institute, New York Society of Architects, New York City Department of Transportation, the Waterfront Center, and various other organizations and publications for their transformative power and unique contribution to that respective city's fabric.

Eckstut is a registered architect in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Arizona, Virginia, Maryland, Florida, Texas, Louisiana, and Ohio, and is NCARB certified. He has an undergraduate degree in architectural engineering from Pennsylvania State University and a master's degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania.

## Allen K. Folks

*Sacramento, California*

Folks is a registered landscape architect and urban designer with experience in urban revitalization and community planning assignments. In 32 years of practice, he has been responsible for a variety of assignments, including the preparation of plans for new towns and existing communities, transit-oriented development areas, reuse of military bases, design of corporate and civic campuses, and public open-space planning.

He usually directs teams of engineers, environmental scientists, and economists to address urban problems with solutions that have a creative vision and are economically feasible. He is a member of the American Planning Association, the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the Urban Land Institute. He has served as the district council chair for Sacramento and has been a member on several national product councils including, most recently, the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Council.

Before joining Ascent, a multi-disciplinary practice headquartered in Sacramento, California, in 2016, Folks spent over 28 years working at EDAW and AECOM in the San Francisco, Sacramento, and Singapore offices. From 2012 to 2015, he led the AECOM Southeast Asia business line for buildings and places, with management responsibility for over 110 staff in Singapore, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Manila.

Folks has been involved with the revitalization of urban environments in many cities in the western United States and Southeast Asia. He has prepared urban design plans for specific areas or neighbourhoods within Portland,

Sacramento, San Francisco, and Salt Lake City, as well as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, and Manila. In many of those assignments, the focus was on developing a public realm as the organizing armature for private sector investment. Folks has led community visioning exercises for public sector agencies and developer-led consortiums. He has lectured in the United States and Asia on the benefits of transit-oriented development and livable cities and is a guest lecturer at the University of California, Davis.

He has participated in 12 ULI Advisory Services panels to assist in solving downtown and neighbourhood redevelopment issues. Folks has degrees in landscape design, architecture, and planning from Temple University and the University of the Arts and a master's in urban design and landscape architecture from the University of Pennsylvania.

## Lucia Garsys

*Hillsborough, Florida*

Garsys is the chief administrator for development and infrastructure for Hillsborough County, Florida. She manages more than 1,500 employees with a US\$1 billion six-year capital program and an operating budget of US\$358 million annually. Within her purview are the cradle-to-grave operations of design, construction, operations, and maintenance of Hillsborough County's capital portfolio, including 3,300 miles of roadways, 1,300 stormwater conveyance systems, four water plants, and seven wastewater plants. Garsys is responsible for all land development activity, including mid-range planning, zoning, site and subdivision review, and building permitting operations.

Before joining Hillsborough County in 1990, Garsys led the comprehensive plan update effort in Fairfax County, Virginia. Her private sector consulting experience for public and private clients in the Chicago Metropolitan Area includes managing and directing projects in comprehensive and land use planning; downtown and commercial revitalization with tax increment financing, including a sales tax component; developer recruitment; fiscal impact analysis; strategic economic development plans; and land

use feasibility studies. She has worked with emerging democracies in Eastern Europe, namely, Lithuania, Belarus, and Kaliningrad, to develop strategic plans, public hearing processes, and local strategies to adopt codes.

Garsys has a BS in city planning from the Illinois Institute of Technology and a master's in urban planning from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana where she also served as a teaching assistant. She is an active member of the Urban Land Institute, the American Planning Association, and the American Institute of Certified Planners. She served as a juror for Association of Independent Commercial Producers' Student Project Awards between 2007 and 2010. Between 2004 and 2009, she served on the Board on Infrastructure and the Built Environment as a part of the National Research Council, and on three of the council's committees.

## Thai-Ker Liu

### *Singapore*

A renowned architect-planner, since 1992 Liu has been director of RSP. At RSP, Liu has undertaken and completed many architectural, urban design, and planning projects in Singapore and Asia. Among others are a number of tertiary education institutions, the Chinese Embassy to Singapore, and the master plan for the National University of Singapore. He has re-planned close to a dozen cities of 2 million to 5 million people each in China, Taiwan, and the Middle East as well as central business districts, townships, and residential and industrial estates.

Liu has been closely associated with the successful implementation of public housing in Singapore and the formulation of a vision for the future urban development of the city. As architect-planner and later chief executive officer of the Housing and Development Board, 1969–1989, he created two dozen new towns of around 200,000 persons each and oversaw the implementation of more than half a million dwelling units. As chief planner cum chief executive officer of the Urban Redevelopment Authority, 1989–1992, he

spearheaded the major revision of the Singapore Concept Plan, consolidation of conservation policies and practice, and streamlining of planning application guidelines and procedures. Besides sitting on the board of a number of governmental and arts organizations, he was the chairman of the National Arts Council from 1996 to 2005. He was appointed the founding chairman of the Singapore Tyler Print Institute from 2000 to 2009.

Liu has served as an adjunct professor of the School of Design and Environment from 2000 to 2007 and of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, from 2005 till now. In 2008, he was appointed the founding chairman of the Advisory Board of the Centre for Liveable Cities in Singapore. Internationally, Liu has been invited on numerous occasions as the keynote speaker to major conferences around the world. He has been appointed the planning adviser to close to two dozen cities in China. In 2002, Liu was invited as chairman of the design jury for the Beijing Olympic Master Plan competition. In 2009 he was appointed adjunct professor by the Xiamen University.

Liu is also a recipient of several awards. He received the Public Administration Medal (Gold) in 1976 and the Meritorious Service Medal in 1985 from the Singapore government. In 2001, he became the second Gold Medalist of the Singapore Institute of Architects. Internationally, in 1993, he was bestowed the second Asean Achievement Award for Outstanding Contributions to Architecture, and in 2001, the Medal of the City of Paris, France.

Academically, Liu obtained his bachelor of architecture with First Class Honours and University Medal from the University of NSW in 1962 and master's in city planning with Parsons Memorial Medal from Yale University in 1965. He later attended Stanford INSEAD Advanced Management Program, Fontainebleau, Paris, in 1980. In 1995, he was conferred Doctor of Science honoris causa by the University of New South Wales.

## Jere Lucey

*New York, New York*

Lucey is a principal of Oak Tree Management LTD, an owner, manager, and developer of residential properties in New York and Florida. Founded in 1985 by Rick Rosan, Oak Tree Management, along with its affiliates, has acquired, renovated, leased, and managed more than 250 apartments in Brooklyn, New York, and South Florida. Oak Tree Management specializes in acquiring rental properties where returns can be enhanced through renovations, operations, and management. Oak Tree Management provides property management, leasing, maintenance, and renovations services to owners of rental buildings, to cooperative and condominium boards, and to investor-owned cooperative or condominium units.

With 28 years of experience in the commercial real estate industry, Lucey has been involved in public and private equity offerings, debt securities offerings, loan sales, acquisitions, and financing transactions of commercial properties that raised over US\$7 billion. Noteworthy transactions include acting as adviser to the Resolution Trust Corporation in its first issuance of commercial mortgage-backed securities (CMBS), acting as banker on five initial public offerings of REIT shares totalling over US\$1 billion, debt and CMBS offerings totalling over \$1 billion, and originating over \$2 billion in mortgage loans and note sales in excess of \$3 billion.

Lucey was with Jones Lang LaSalle's Capital Markets Group from 2006 to January 2015, and was formerly with GMAC Commercial Mortgage; Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette (now Credit Suisse); and Prudential Securities (now Wells Fargo). He has raised over US\$100 million in equity and debt for Oak Tree's acquisition and renovation of properties in Brooklyn and Florida owned by affiliates of Oak Tree Management.

Lucey holds a BA from Georgetown University and an MBA from Harvard Business School. He is a governor of the ULI Foundation and is a member of the board of directors of the I Have A Dream Foundation, which is dedicated to

supporting children through high school and helping them fund post-secondary education.

## Richard Rosan

*New York, New York*

Rosan along with his partner, Jeremiah Lucey, owns Oak Tree Management and manages their investments in multi-family apartments in both Brooklyn and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Over the past three years they have added over 200 units to a smaller group of buildings they have previously owned. They have converted to cooperatives or condominiums several buildings, managing and upgrading apartments as they become available. They are developing an 18-unit luxury condominium on Fort Lauderdale beach. With their partner, Avanath Capital Management from Irvine, California, they are purchasing and managing additional buildings both in New York and Florida.

From 1992 to 2011, Rosan was the CEO of the Urban Land Institute, a global organization centred on land use development that has an international membership of over 39,000 real estate professionals. From 2011 to 2013, Rosan was president of the ULI Foundation, the philanthropic arm of ULI, and he also served as a consultant to the Foundation in its capital and major gifts campaign. Before his role at ULI/ULI Foundation, Rosan spent a 22-year career in the public and private sectors in New York City, including 12 years of service as the city's economic development director. During that time, he was instrumental in establishing the first business improvement district, which was set up in Fulton Mall in Downtown Brooklyn. Rosan spent six years as president of the Real Estate Board of New York and spent five years in the private development business working as project director for Silverstein Properties and Park Tower Realty on several large New York City development projects, including the Embassy Suites Hotel built above the Palace Theater in Times Square.

Rosan is an architect, trained at the University of Pennsylvania, and is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

# A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report



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