



香港規劃師學會  
THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF PLANNERS



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*Young Planners Group*

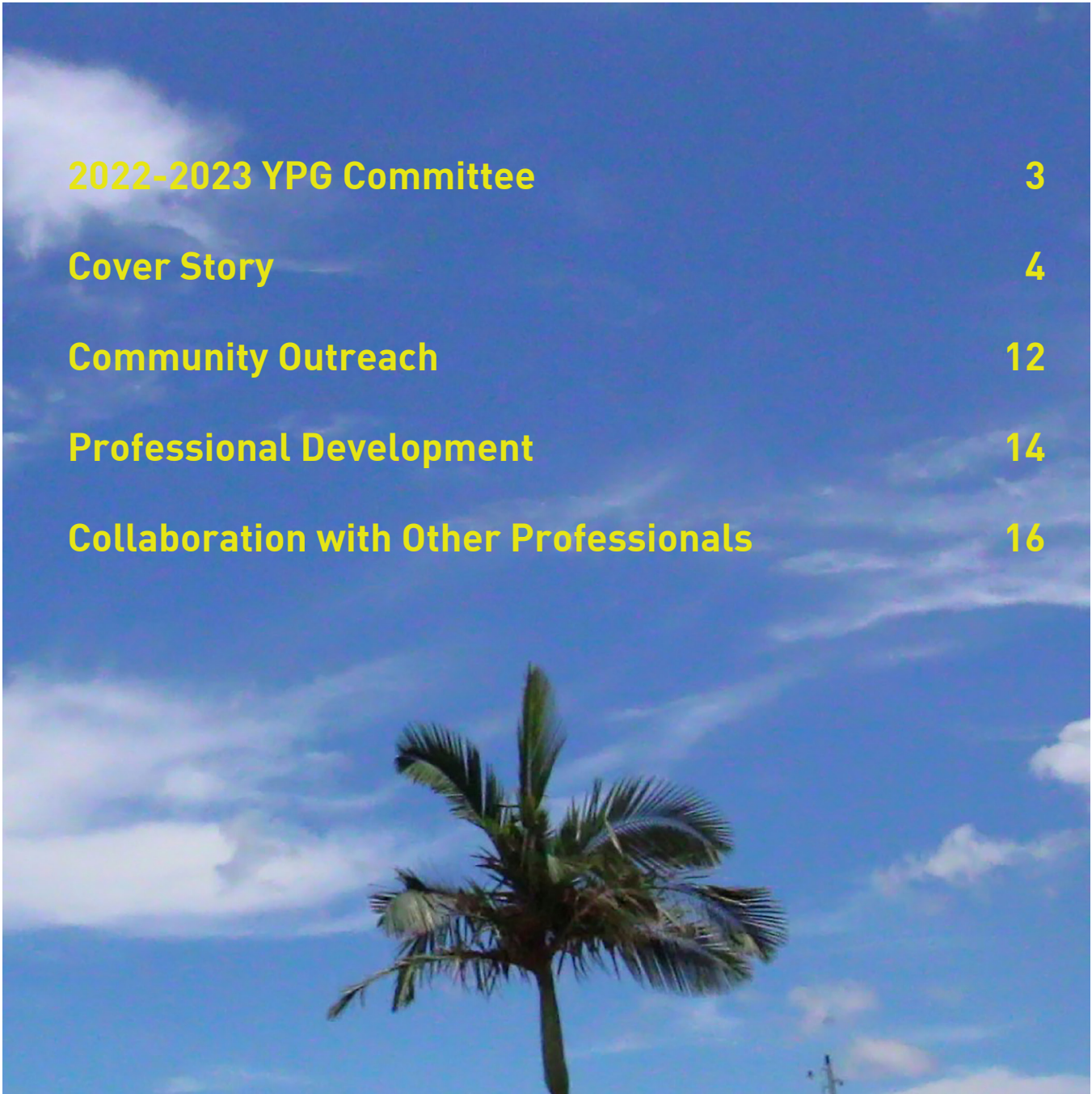
*The Hong Kong Institute of Planners*

# ***YPG NEWSLETTER***



*Cover Story: Play Lab @ Hung Hom*

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**Young Planners Group, the Hong Kong Institute of Planners (HKIP-YPG) was founded in 2001 by a group of energetic and ambitious young planners aiming to promote sustainable urban development of Hong Kong. As a group of devoted and passionate young planners, we aim to bring our members a series of activities and events in professional development, community outreach, and leisure events.**

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# Play Lab @ Hung Hom

## Background

Since the relocation of the open-air bus terminus at the plaza opposite the Hung Hom Ferry Pier in 2019, the land has been opened for public use in the form of "open first, then optimise" instead of closing it immediately. We noticed that there were more organic and interactive activities in this park than ordinary parks, such as children's play, bicycle or scooter riding, sports and so on.

This public open space is a part of Hung Hom Urban Park that was under planning. The Government and the public were exploring different design options to utilise this space to enhance public experience. This site might also synergise with the nearby "Open Space Development at Hung Hom Waterfront" project by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the beautification of the Hung Hom (South) Ferry Pier.

People had been using the site for different activities on their own initiative. The site had become a common ground for resting and a playground for kids. Building on such organic development, we would like to observe how the street furniture could stimulate and facilitate the use of space.



## Project Introduction

The experiment team adopted some intervention strategies in this vacant space near the pier to see how different installations and street furniture may affect users' behaviours and experiences in the urban spaces. The project would also provide insights into some effective means and materials for creating installations to enhance urban vitality and create unique urban experiences. This social experiment was carried out on 26 June 2022 afternoon for around 4 hours. A lot of local residents showed their support for our experiment and project ideas.

With the different installations created and provided by the team, many kids and local residents made use of their creativity and explored ways to utilise the space. The space temporarily became a playground for different groups of people. It reminded us of the close relationship between urban street furniture and installations and urban living. The experiment also implied that the local community groups (including kids) play indispensable roles in spatial planning.

Our team believes that bottom-up planning and experimental design will provide us with feasible insights into future place-making and urban planning. Different groups of people can work together and play a part in creating a better place which belongs to everyone.

## Baseline Observation

We observed that there were more organic and interactive activities in this vacant site than other parks. Various groups of people carried out different activities, including jogging, cycling, playing scooters, and doing workouts, along the lay-bys. It was common to see parents bringing their kids to play here during weekends, holidays, and after school in some weekday afternoons.

The pier plaza provided a "playground", "race lanes", and "gathering points" for children. While caregivers usually stood aside to keep an eye on their children, we observed that some of the caregivers brought along their own stools and chit-chatted with each other.

There were fewer space users in the plaza during 12-3pm. It was sunny and shelter was lacking. It was common to see kids cycling or riding scooters along the existing "track" formed by the former bus lanes and lay-bys. Users might find this quite standardised and boring for cycling and other different activities.

Given the diverse behaviours of the co-users as observed, we were inspired to imagine: If we provide some small props in the area, will it enhance the experience of all users of the community-led / built public space? Could some movable furniture also help create better urban spaces and user experiences? All these imaginations and questions inspired our team to carry out this project and social experiment.



## International Case Study

### 1. Backyard Experiment in Garema Place, Canberra, Australia

An eight-day experiment was conducted at Garema Place, a largely concrete, underused open space located in the heart of Canberra, to gain insights into how users spend time in public spaces and to uncover how movable seats and other simple interventions such as colour, lighting and greenery can impact the community.



Credits: Randal Photography

### 2. Plazoleta Programme in City of Bogota, Columbia

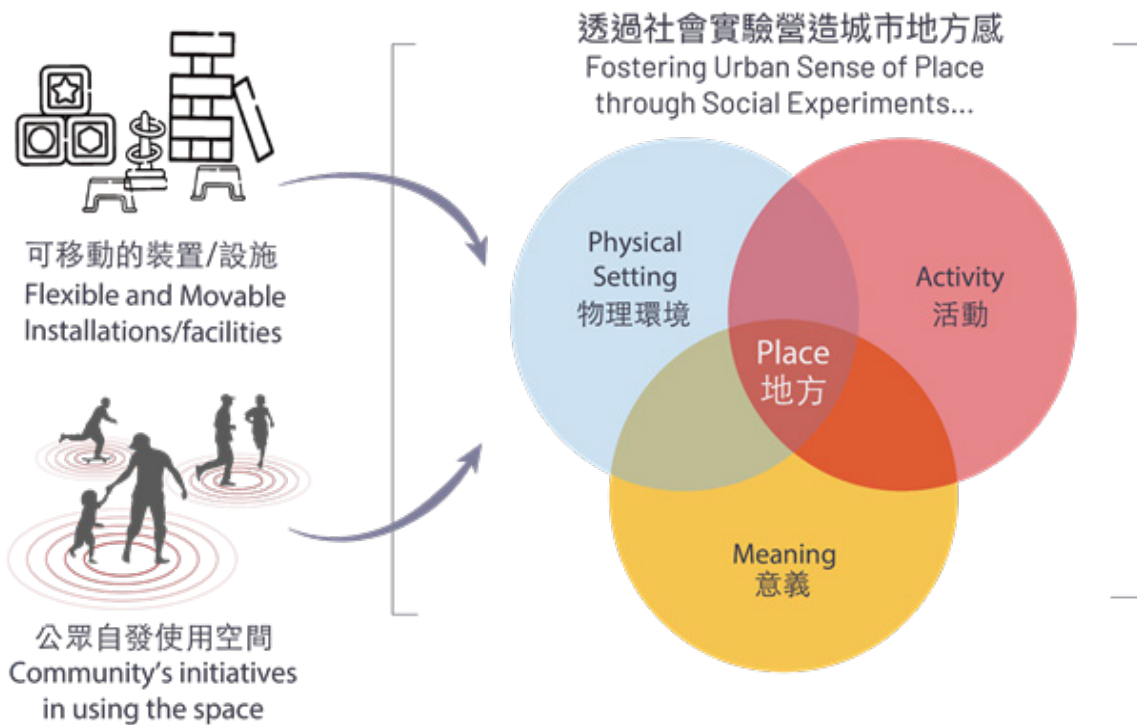
With the objective to enhance pedestrian environment by improving pedestrian mobility, road safety and public space quality, the program first tested out ideas with a one-day pop-up event with simple materials. After better knowledge of the issues and opportunities for permanent implementation was obtained, the second phase trial as an interim solution would remain for several months and finally come up with a refined final design to reclaim underutilised public spaces in the neighbourhood. Eventually, after 7 pop-up tests in community level, around 4,000 sqm public spaces were reclaimed for the local community.



Credits: Global Designing Cities Initiative

We summarised a few crucial elements in fostering urban sense of place and enhancing urban experiences:

1. Physical Setting
2. Activity
3. Meaning



(資料來源 Source: Montgomery, 1998)

## Race Kart Track

The bus lay-bys of the old bus terminus cut the site into lanes. We observed dynamic activities along the lanes, like cycling, riding scooters, and driving model cars. The pier plaza meant "racing lanes" to the users. To complement the existing uses, we used finishing lines, road signage, and traffic cones to design a race track. However, we discovered that the users would not confine themselves to the race track. They had their own way of racing and utilising the space, as demonstrated in the experiment. It reflected that the actual users have a higher degree of creativity and understanding of the space.

To echo with the theme of "racing", we provided some simply assembled go-carts for children. Although they were interested about the carts, they needed some encouragement from the caregivers and facilitators to play with the toys. Other kids were attracted when some people were playing with the go-carts, and it formed a larger playing group.

It was observed that most of the users of the existing space were children, who could only ride on non-motorised vehicles. It was intended to establish the theme of racing by forming a track using signage symbols. Various signs were created to show directions and direct the routes of users, as well as designed for decoration.

To overcome the level difference of the bus bays, the team collected recycled cardboards and assembled them to form ramps to be used by non-motorised vehicles (e.g. scooters, bicycles, skateboards, race carts, and balance or pedal bikes). In addition to flat tracks, gentle slopes provided various routes for a richer play experience. Although the ramps were not as accessible by the race carts as expected, the ramps attracted some other users, including kids riding bicycles or scooters who tried to ascend and descend using the ramps.





## Lamp Post Basketball

We noticed that only some planters were placed under the shelter in the pier plaza. To better use the shaded area and develop the vertical space, we set up some basketball hoops on a column of the shelter. With shading and sea breeze, the area attracted kids, youngsters, and adults.

At first, we only set up one basketball hoop at a level similar to the height of teenagers. With observation and trial and error, we realised that setting up hoops at different heights could enable participants of different ages to have a better sense of achievement and could also make the game more challenging and interesting.

Balls of different colours were provided at the site to encourage active usage. The team mainly placed the balls near the basketball hoops for kids to shoot into the hoops. The balls also attracted kids of various ages to freely throw and kick the balls around the site. Their usage was not limited to the hoops. Apart from playing alone or with their parents, some social interactions were observed as young kids interacted with other kids of similar age.

Due to safety concern, trampoline is not always found in playgrounds. As a bouncing agent for the balls, a trampoline was placed in front of the hoops attached to the column. Out of expectation, the children had fun jumping on the trampoline alone. We realised that most parents were not too worried about safety issues and encouraged their children to jump on the trampoline.





## Bowling & Foam Sticks

We wanted to give the users more alternatives by providing removable game installations in this existing "playground" to enhance the element of "play". The bus bays left from the former bus terminus were natural racetracks and we thought it would be a good idea to utilise the site features for playing by turning one of the bus bays into a bowling alley. Apart from bowling, we provided freeform foam sticks for children. The design idea was to allow them to decide their own way of playing and co-create an open space for fun.

While a bowling game may sound standard with already defined common game rules, some kids improvised the way to enjoy the bowling game. A boy suggested setting two parallel bowling alleys so that he could have a match with his friend. It was nice to see that kids came up with an interactive way of playing! Kids were also eager to suggest their desired ways of placing the bowling pins (for example, how the triangular shape should look like). Parents treated the bowling game as an opportunity to educate their kids to help clean up and some kids proactively offered help. With parents asking kids to take turns to play and kids queuing up patiently, a positive playing atmosphere was formed. Behind the bowling pins were the puzzle playmats, with which kids designed the goals creatively. Every piece on site could be a subject of experimentation!

We observed that children and parents enjoyed the installations by inventive improvisation even without our facilitators. Their ways of playing with the foam sticks included hopscotch and obstacle race (hurdling and running under an arch). Children designed their obstacle tracks by creating multiple shapes with the foam sticks and placing them in different arrangements. Indeed, users could transform the available materials for their best use to suit their own needs. This was exactly what we wished to test in our experimentation.

Towards the end of the event, kids also initiated to utilise the materials we provided, together with their own, for other game purposes. Pets joined the game too! Kids were so happy that they played with the foam sticks as if they were fencing and the situation "went wild"! The event was a huge success and it was warm to see that kids helped us uninstall the installations and pack the materials.



## Seating

The site was a nice playground for kids, but was lacking seating and sheltering, which might not be ideal for parents. We also found that users might want a place to put their belongings such as water bottles and mobile phones. We therefore decided to create seating with shelter and put it at the site to see if it could satisfy users' needs. To illustrate that temporary urban furniture and installations for practical uses can be made of sustainable materials, the bench was completely made of cardboards and the shelter was made of a recycled plastic woven bag. Handmaking urban installations with inexpensive and readily accessible materials, we hoped to exemplify that tactical urbanism is not something difficult to achieve and every one of us can do so by participating in bottom-up community design initiatives.

In terms of the design, we estimated the height of a person sitting for a more ergonomic bench design. For easy movement, the bench was made by assembling individual cardboard pieces and was therefore detachable. There are various possibilities in the form of benches and the way people interact with the seating. While only one bench was brought for the event, we have also created another cardboard-made stool with backrest for experimentation if opportunity arises in the future to see which type of seating people prefer and why.



At the beginning, not a lot of people noticed the seating. A parent felt skeptical about the sturdiness of the paper-made bench and told her child not to sit on it. This did not discourage us as we understood that our event was experimental in nature. To attract people to the bench, we moved the bench to an area that was more visible and wrote "Are you tired? Come take a seat! It's usable~" on it. We also noticed the shelter was not as necessary as people would rather stay away from the sun than to sit under the heat.

As children and their caretakers gradually came out to have fun, people would utilise the bench by putting their belongings on it, or take a rest on it when feeling fatigue. During the event, we also saw that a Kai Fong brought her own outdoor chair, which proved the need for seating provision. This led us to think "Will the seating be more readily acceptable to people if we fill the site with more benches?" At the very end, some children showed their curiosity and flipped over the cardboard cover to observe the inner structure of the bench. Realising that there was a grid structure within, kids demonstrated their innocence by hiding the bowling pins inside the bench! Would this arouse kids' interest in architecture and design?

Towards the end of the event, some children volunteered to help us uninstall the bench by taking out pieces of cardboard one by one. We hope the design of this cardboard bench would encourage everyone to ponder upon the functionality and creativity of urban installations! It could be a possibility to further explore the aesthetic design of temporary seating and the differences in form to accommodate the needs of various age groups and to create a more relaxing environment at the site.



## Pop-up Play Lab - Co-Imagination of Public Open Space

Upon relocation of the open-air bus terminus adjacent to the Hung Hom Ferry Pier in 2019, the site where our experiment took place had been naturally transformed to a "children playground" despite that no conventional play equipment was provided. The children had creatively turned the bus bays into racing tracks for cycling and rollerskating, which demonstrated how the users could adapt a place for different uses by themselves. We believe that users themselves are the one who know the best of their needs. Therefore, in planning and designing the uses of public open space, allowing and encouraging the participation of the actual users is of crucial importance to understanding their expected future uses.

The incremental approach adopted by the Government in recent years provides an opportunity to encourage participation of users in collaboratively exploring the appropriate future facilities and design of different spaces. Take the open-air bus terminus near Hung Hom Ferry Pier as an example. The site had been planned as a new urban park in 2019 after the relocation of the bus terminus, while the design of the new urban park would take more than two years to finalise. It was good that the site was opened for public enjoyment during these two years under the incremental approach, but would there be anything we can do further to make better interim use of the space?

Just like the example of the old bus terminus near Hung Hom Ferry Pier, we understood what facilities were lacking and what people were expecting through the creative uses - active recreation space for cycling, skating and dog-walking. We have explored more possible uses of the space through the experiments - sitting-out area with shelters for caregivers and flexible play facilities for children.

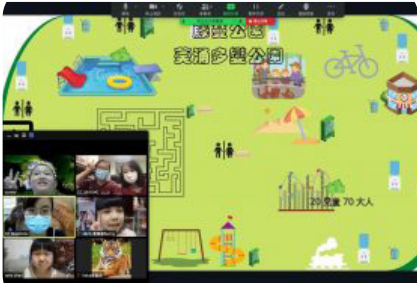
The much-needed facilities for different neighbourhoods are never homogeneous. Therefore, experiments in the form of pop-up play equipment and ancillary facilities could be a possible way to test out the most wanted facilities for the space by the users. The park designers might also gain inspirations on the possible uses which are beyond our imagination - just like the cardboard bench being uninstalled by children and turned into a brand-new play equipment in our experiment. Introduction of pop-up play facilities not only enables more flexible uses and provides more interesting experience for the users on the vacant site, but also helps to determine the final design through co-creation and co-imagination of the space with the communities.



*Watch the highlight!*

## Voices of the Children Phase II & III

Plan International partnered with Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Lady MacLehose Centre (HKSKHLMC) to launch the "Voices of the Children" Shek Lei and Kwai Fong and Kwai Chung North groups, aiming to empower the children to identify the district issues concerning their development and take action for making changes based on their findings.



1

The five-staged programme began with recruitment of children participants who later became "Junior Community Officers". Through virtual ice-breaking games, the children explored international exemplars of public spaces and learnt about key design elements of playground facilities.

2

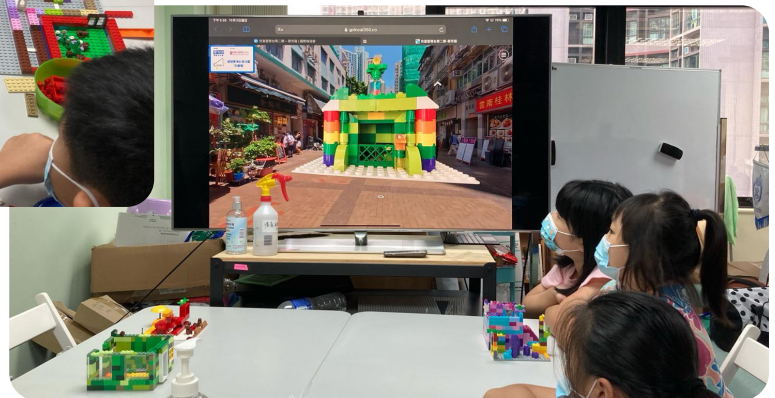
In the second stage, the "Junior Community Officers" formed a community concern group and brainstormed their ideal neighbourhood in face-to-face and virtual workshops.



3

Followed by the third stage, children participants revisited their daily commute routes through the lens of various stakeholders to identify local issues in their neighbourhood. As professional collaborators, young planners were invited to lead a series of design workshops to introduce urban design and planning concepts. Through active discussion and interactive workshops, children were guided to fabricate their ideal community following HKPSG and explored strategies to enhance their communities. After consolidating strategies to improve their own community, the children ideated multiple proposals with Lego blocks. Their Lego models were later published on Google Maps for immersive visualisation of their proposals.





#### 4

In the press conference cum sharing session, the "Junior Community Officers" presented and shared their ideas with the LCSD officers, district councillors, press, community groups and the general public.

#### 5

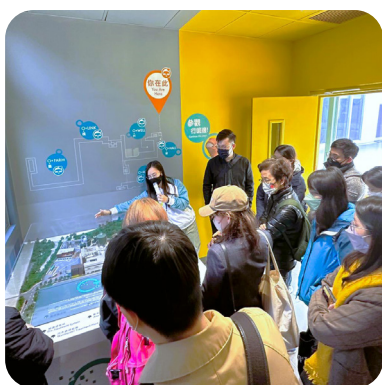
In the last stage, the "Junior Community Officers" organised a community open day with booth games to introduce the factors of park design and child participation rights.



Voices of the Children adopted Child Participatory Community Development Model to assist children to identify issues in their community, encourage them to build consensus with peers and local stakeholders, and empower them to voice their aspirations and influence policy-making in the public realm. A city for all should be built by all. The voices of different stakeholders, including the children, should be respected and heard regardless of their backgrounds. With constructive discussions and exchange of views, the ideas from different stakeholders could contribute to make our city more liveable for all, inclusive and vibrant.

## Technical Visit to Pok Oi Kong Ha Wai Village

As the largest modular transitional housing project in Hong Kong, Pok Oi Kong Ha Wai Village is a perfect showcase of the planning merits and challenges of transitional housing, the MiC method, and heritage preservation. On 11 July 2022, 20 members attended our technical visit to Pok Oi Kong Ha Wai Village. Mr Kot, Ms Alison Ip, and Dr Owen Yue from Henderson Land Development Company Limited shared their inspiring insights into the technicality and process of planning and designing this transitional housing project. The project team also introduced the extensive efforts of a tripartite collaboration among the NGO, business sector, and the Government to create an inclusive community for the grassroots. YPGC would like to cast our sincere thanks to Dr Owen Yue for the tour arrangement.



## Technical Visit to O•PARK1

A technical visit to O•PARK1 was successfully held on 31 December 2022. As the first organic waste recovery centre, O•PARK1 is a perfect showcase of the importance of planning for modern waste recovery facilities. Our members learned about food waste treatment processes through a lively animation, followed by a tour along the visitor path showcasing the actual size facilities and equipment in the centre. The tour guide also introduced the O•FARM sky garden, where compost produced from the centre is used in horticulture.

## Technical Visit to Blissful Place

On 27 May 2023, 30 HKIP planners had a guided tour at Blissful Place of the Hong Kong Housing Society, the third project of the "lease-for-life" Senior Citizen Residences Scheme, which is located in Hung Hom. Blissful Place is well-designed with age-friendly interior designs such as movable kitchen cabinet, low door curb, non-slip tiles and handrails inside toilet, baffle-type acoustic window with turn-knob window opening device and so on. Residential flats are equipped with advanced gerontechnology features to provide the tenants with timely emergency support and professional nursing services. In addition to an outdoor sky garden and a clubhouse, Blissful Place also provides a residential care home for the elderly, medical centre and rehabilitation centre to address the needs of middle-income elderly.



## Wetlands & Mai Po Field Trip

HKIP and WWF organised a guided tour to wetlands and Mai Po on 25 February 2023 to explore issues related to sustainable development and ecological conservation in Hong Kong's rural areas. The day began at Ping Yeung and Tai Po Tin farmlands, where we learned about agriculture industry in Hong Kong and reflected on the issue of idle farmland. We then visited Long Valley Nature Park to appreciate the ecological and agricultural importance of Long Valley. At Ma Tso Lung Police Post, we were introduced to the planning and design strategies of integrating the Lok Ma Chau Loop into the surrounding ecology. We also had a quick stop at the San Tin Polder to learn about floating solar power systems and the importance of renewable energy development. We then visited the Nam Sang Wai area to discuss the impact of large-scale residential development in the "Wetland Buffer Area" on the wetlands in the "Wetland Conservation Area", and discussed how to strike an appropriate balance between development and conservation in planning work. Our last stop was at Mai Po Nature Reserve, where we enjoyed the beautiful scenery of many different types of wetlands including gei wai, fishing ponds, mangroves, reed bushes and freshwater marshes. We also observed various migratory birds including the black-faced pipit at Deep Bay Wetland and were lucky to encounter a total of 18 Oriental Storks. Finally, we concluded the trip with a meeting at the Visitor Center to discuss wetland conservation technology and Hong Kong's wetland planning.



## Membership Talk

YPG organised "A Route to Full HKIP Membership: Experience-sharing Session by the Membership Board and Full Members of HKIP" on 26 October 2022 at the HKIP Office / via Zoom. Guest speakers from the Membership Board of HKIP and recently chartered young planners were invited to share the requisites for being a full member, the basics of the accreditation process, and their tips and stories. More than 30 participants including students and young planners participated in the event.



## Career Workshop

A career workshop was organised on 29 March 2023, during which a total of 8 young planners working in Government departments, public bodies, private sectors and NGOs shared their experiences from diverse working environments. More than 25 participants including both current planning students and fresh graduates attended the Career Workshop, which served as a wonderful opportunity to gain insights from and raise questions to our young speakers. Apart from idea exchange with our young speakers, Mr Thomas Lee, the President of the HKIP, was very kind to offer a briefing session to the participants on various planning topics, including the mechanism of "Registered Professional Planner (R.P.P.)", the new technologies in the construction/ planning industry, and collaboration of HKIP with other local and overseas planning institutions.





## Spring Happy Hour

It has been a while since COVID when the planners' community would be able to gather for a drink, especially for young planners who were new to the community in recent years. To celebrate the Year of Rabbit, we were happy to jointly organise the Spring Happy Hour event on 3 March 2023 with the Social Activities Committee (SAC) of the HKIP. It was a long-awaited gathering and we were excited to connect with more than 36 young and experienced planners in a cozy and relaxing atmosphere. Special thanks to Mr T W Ng and Mr Kim Chan for the lucky draw prizes and food.

## Technical Visit to AIRSIDE

Hong Kong's building sector has been striving to advance towards net zero emissions. However, achieving carbon neutrality is an arduous challenge in a subtropical and dense urban environment. To understand how the building sector helps promote sustainability and carbon neutrality in Hong Kong, YPGC and the HKIE-YMC visited AIRSIDE in Kai Tak on 6 May 2023. The program highlights include the first automated underground bicycle parking system in Hong Kong, AIRSIDE District Cooling System, automated smart waste sorting and storage, and smart management system for thermal comfort, water-saving and rainwater. 30 planners and engineers witnessed how sustainable design features with the use of technology can promote the wellness of the community and energy saving in real practice. Special thanks to Nan Fung's AIRSIDE Project Team, Property Management Team and Marketing Team for the tour arrangement.



## 2nd & 3rd Round of "Speak for the Future - Build our Home Kong"

YPGC joined forces with the Association of Engineering Professionals in Society - Young Engineers in Society (AES-YES) to invite distinguished speakers to share their insights into planning-related topics. On 19 November 2022, Mr LAM Sai-hung, GBS, JP, Secretary for Transport and Logistics, was invited to introduce the upcoming "Three Railways and Three Roads" projects and his career experience as a transport engineer. On 6 May 2023, Ir WAI Chi Sing, GBS, JP, FHKEng, Managing Director of Urban Renewal Authority, shared his thought-provoking insight into District Study for Yau Mong with young planners, surveyors and engineers.



## Way Forward

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our fellow young planners for their contribution and support in the past year. We will endeavour to continue offering a wide range of events and activities to foster professional development, social awareness and networking of our fellow members. We look forward to members' continuous support for the YPGC in the future.



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