

General Comments on 2021 Policy Address (PA)

The Hong Kong Institute of Planners (HKIP) welcome the initiatives in the PA, which shows efforts to address several issues, yet it's worth noting that HK needs consistent and continuous planning work, and timely implementation to address the land supply, housing, sustainability, quality of life and strategic development needs. With the new land supply initiatives, there should be room for minimum flat size to improve the quality of housing for Hong Kong people.

We also have the following comments on some broad issues.

1. LAND SUPPLY AND HOUSING

The policy initiative to identify long term land supply for providing 900,000 homes in the next 20 years and beyond is supported, from social and economic perspectives.

However, the PA has only set out the broad targets for the future development of HK, but lacking essential details on how and when the different components could be materialised.

There are only broad housing and land production targets listed but it needs concrete implementation programme, taking into account social, economic trends and resources.

HKIP is of the view that regarding the New Development Areas (NDAs) with Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) prepared, including Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen (HSK/HT), Kwu Tung North (KTN), Fanling North (FLN), etc, the HKSAR Government should speed up their implementation, and a Land Supply Commission, with members from the public, should be formed to monitor the land supply situation for effective implementation.

2. NORTHERN METROPOLIS

The Northern Metropolis Area could be considered a logical extension of the NDAs, including HSK/HT, KTN, FLN, San Tin/Lok Ma Chau (ST/LMC), and the comprehensive approach to plan New Territories North (NTN) is fully supported. This can also supplement and address the development needs of the short-term approach of developing 12 brownfield clusters outside NDAs for public housing.

It is good to position NTN as a metropolitan area ideal for people to live, work and travel (宜居、宜業、宜遊). We must not just focus on high density housing but should conserve nature and heritages where suitable.

Wetlands should be taken as an integral part of NTN. If we plan sensitively, protect and enhance the value of wetland to the migratory birds, this can be a unique model for the region and the world in facing climate change and sustainable growth. In this connection, a comprehensive ecological study of the wetland should be conducted before any disruption to the existing wetlands.

The emphasis on transport infrastructures, innovation and technological development, employment provision, collaboration with Shenzhen and Greater Bay Area are also reasonable, given the mobile population on both sides rather than with the main urban areas.

3. RAILWAYS

Railway-led Northern Metropolis is supported in general. Capacity creation in terms of transport is important for Hong Kong at this juncture.

For the rail link from Hung Shui Kiu to Qianhai, Shenzhen the timing of building such link needs to be examined closely, taking into account the Qianhai's economic development and property vacancy rates much higher than Shenzhen average right now.

As such, consideration should be given to assigning higher priority of railway investment to Northern Link (NOL) and its extension linking up HuangGang/Lok Ma Chau loop/Heung Yuen Wai. The NOL serves to open up vast amount of land along its alignment and providing paramount linkage between innovation and technology industries in Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

4. URBAN RENEWAL

While CE mentioned the Yau Mong model by Urban Renewal Authority (URA), it's important the Urban Renewal plan and programme should improve the living environment, esp. in the old urban areas. The proposal from URA has yet to demonstrate the practicality and level improvement.

In fact, there is a need to thin out urban living density, and therefore, we should take a cautionary approach in pushing the model into other areas. Financial viability is one, but not the only angle in urban regeneration.

We need sustainable efforts for holistic and overarching planning to improving our older urban districts rather than simply replying on the approach suggested by URA.

5. HEALTHY CITY AND OTHER ASPECTS

We should not lose sight of important planning objectives, including healthy city, sustainability, quality environment, accessibility. Government should step up planning efforts in these areas.



The Hong Kong Institute of Planners

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