

YPG NEWSLETTER

- Cover Story -

Planning for Transitional Housing in Hong Kong



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



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WELCOME MESSAGE

Review of Past Events

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Young Planners Group Committee (YPG) has kept up the pace in achieving a meaningful year with our fellow members. From organising events to promoting professional development and social network among the members, responding to the social responsibility is also one of our focuses. The participation in the 2019 Hong Kong Biennale of Urbanism/ Architecture has broadened our horizons in reaching out to the widened public as well as the professionals. Moreover, switching the event medium from a physical venue to the online webinar can be a good way to cope with the new norm of social-distancing. The online webinars have provided the flexibility and convenience for the participants to attend our professional development sessions, such as the experience-sharing session for the full HKIP Membership.

Future Events

We are committed to continue delivering a wide range of events and professional opportunities to our fellow members. Meanwhile, we will continue to strike our best to promote the town planning knowledge to various community groups through engagement and collaboration. Fueled with the devotion and passion of our young members and vigorous support of our experienced planners, the YPG will keep the momentum going and continue the good work to welcome its 20th anniversary. Stay tuned!



INTRODUCTION OF YPGC 2019 - 2020

Young Planners Group Committee

Keith WU
Co-chairperson
(External)

Clarice HO
Co-chairperson
(External)

Felix KU
Co-chairperson
(Internal)

Canon WONG
Secretary

Peggy TSUI
Treasurer

Professional Development

CHAN Hung Hing
Charlotte LAM
Ivy FOK
Jasmine CHIU
Jonathan CHOW
MAN Chun Yin
Sam HO

Events

Alice YEUNG
Anson KUNG
Annie KONG
Janice WONG
Jeff LEUNG
Lily LAU
NG Hoi Ying
Sara CHIONG

Community Outreach

Cheryl YEUNG
Cyril CHAN
Janice HO
Kelvin CHUI
Michelle KWAN
Robin CHAN
Sam KONG
Vincent LAU
William CHUNG
Zita LEUNG

Secretariat

Charissa LEUNG
Cyrus CHAU
Jethro FUNG
Rachel LO

COVER STORY

Planning for Transitional Housing in Hong Kong

COVER STORY

In 2014, according to the Public Consultation Report published by the Long Term Housing Strategy Steering Committee, it was suggested that transitional housing could potentially be provided on suitable temporary underutilised sites in the urban area to those in need before the public rental housing is in place. The importance of transitional housing was reiterated in the 2020 Policy Address.

“By making better use of vacant land and premises, we aim to provide short-term accommodation for people with pressing housing needs” Policy Address 2020 says.

To better assist and facilitate the provision of transitional housing, the Task Force on Transitional Housing (the Taskforce) under Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) has been set up to provide coordinated support for community-initiated transitional housing, in particular, the projects initiated by non-government organisations (NGOs).

Building upon the funding set up for transitional housing, the Government announced an increase in the provision of transitional housing by scaling up the three-year target from 10,000 to 15,000 units on 14 January 2020. To support the new policy directives, Finance Committee of Legislative Council (LegCo) approved a non-recurrent commitment of \$5 billion to support the implementation of transitional housing projects initiated by NGOs in March 2020. According to the latest information

provided by THB to LegCo in May 2020, 790 transitional housing units have been completed in existing residential buildings. 3,095 units under newly-built projects while 247 units under project involving conversion of the whole building. Besides, there are 6,510 units under further in-depth studies, with further details to be announced upon the completion of the study. To have a better understanding of the role of town planners in transitional housing, an interview with Ms. Cindy Tsang, Director of Townland Consultants Ltd., was conducted to solicit views from a town planning consulting perspective at the early stage of a transitional project.

THE REALISATION OF TRANSITIONAL HOUSING POLICY FROM THE PRACTITIONER'S VIEW

Interview with Ms. Cindy Tsang, Director of Townland Consultants Ltd. and Mr. Vincent Lau, Senior Town Planner of Townland Consultants Ltd.



What is the role do planners play in responding to the transitional housing policy?

As planners working on transitional housing projects, our goal is to ensure that every project is envisioned through a holistic approach that not only caters to the basic needs of the community for shelter, but also creates a healthy living environment, ensuring that each site for transitional housing is appropriate and desirable for temporary habitation. We are not only helping to alleviate the pressing problem of affordable housing supply in the short term, but creating added value to residents and the surrounding communities.

To share TOWNLAND's experience, we have been involved in transitional housing in the following ways:

1. Site identification stage: providing advice to NGOs on zoning implications, planning constraints and opportunities of sites under consideration for transitional housing.

2. Feasibility stage: co-ordination of multi-disciplinary teams to develop layout options with initial feasibility assessments and broad cost estimates for transitional housing. This includes the early setting out of planning and urban design objectives, such as achieving a quality living environment for future residents, integration with surrounding communities and incorporation of public planning gains (such as shared social welfare facilities as may be offered by the NGO(s)).

3. Preparation of S16 Planning Applications for transitional housing projects as necessary. This includes co-

ordination of technical assessments and liaison with government departments and other stakeholders for both pre- and post-submission until Town Planning Board decision.

4. Provision of technical support for application under the “Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing Projects by Non-government Organisations” (including S16 Approval)

5. Detailed design stage: (i) Advice on scheme amendments, (ii) Discharge of Conditions, (iii) S16A(2) Applications (including Extension of Time for Discharge of Approval Conditions)

What are the difficulties and challenges faced by the operators in providing transitional housing in rural areas?

Each project has its own challenges. However, one major issue faced by transitional housing in rural areas is a general lack of accessibility. As residents are low-income groups waiting for public rental housing, proximity to GIC, commercial facilities and public transport are essential to avoid community isolation / lack of social community services/facilities. Whilst the NGO operators may be able to provide limited social services and basic retail facilities on site for residents and nearby communities, access to public transport (which in some cases may mean new or revised bus/ GMB routes with on-site lay-bys, increased frequency of bus/ GMB services, etc) is also necessary, e.g. for schooling, employment, etc. Further some rural sites simply will not secure in-principle policy support from the Task Force for Transitional Housing due to remoteness and poor accessibility.

The lack of infrastructure connections to some rural sites is also a major constraint given the current Government funding mechanism for transitional housing. According to the “Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing Projects by Non-government Organisations: Guide to Application” issued

by the Transport and Housing Bureau in June 2020, the maximum amount of the funding subsidy to be granted to each approved project is \$0.2 million for each transitional housing unit for projects situated in vacant residential building and HK\$0.55 million for each transitional housing unit to be provided through erection of temporary structure on vacant land and in non-residential building. The costs for providing basic services to rural sites (e.g. water supplies, drainage, sewerage, utilities, etc) will increase the basic capital costs. As Sr. Vincent Ho (Past President of The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors) quoted in a SCMP article dated 29 October 2020, *“Transitional homes are more expensive to build than we initially thought,”* he said. *“The government should find larger sites so as to enjoy the economy of scale, so some costs can be spread out over a larger number of flats in a project.”* Similarly, site formation and/or tree removal works on rural sites may be an additional cost and time constraint compared to vacant urban sites. Financial viability is therefore a real and practical constraint.

What are the planning merits of transitional housing?

First and foremost is being able to make use of vacant or underutilised lands, including both Government and privately-owned Land, to provide much needed housing for people who may be in dire living environment and/or facing financial hardships. The intention is to provide a well-planned community, managed by a NGO operator to improve the overall quality of life for residents. The NGO operators may also run various programmes for residents and the surrounding communities, e.g. life skills or interest workshops.

Furthermore, the use of modular construction in the provision of transitional housing is an efficient, economical and environmentally friendly construction method that can be implemented in a timely manner, and can also be reused and relocated to other developments upon disassembly.

Transitional housing can help to fade out some undesirable existing brownfield activities in rural areas to improve local environmental conditions. Transitional housing development does not compromise the long term planning intention of sites.

What can be done to speed up the implementation programme of a transitional housing project?

For planners, there needs to be clear understanding from the start of the NGO objectives, Government requirements, and knowledge of any expectations from local stakeholders. Planners can act as coordinators and facilitators between different government departments, NGOs/operators, consultants providing technical support to ensure projects meet societal needs, achieve beneficial planning and design objectives, while being delivered in a timely manner.

In general, increase of funding subsidy and review of the funding mechanism by the Government will be helpful in clearing some of the financial hurdles and associated delays. Infrastructure upgrades by government departments to accommodate the transitional housing projects in advance of population in-take will also be instrumental.



Planning Application No. AYL-KTS/847, Town Planning Board

HIGHLIGHTS OF PAST EVENTS

YPG has endeavored to offer a wide range of events and activities to promote professional development and social network among our fellow young members and to engage in community collaboration with our external parties. The highlights of past events (Session 2019-2020) are provided below.

Professional Development



Technical Tour to Victoria Dockside

Tsim Sha Tsui Waterfront has been the jewel presenting one of the best scenes of Hong Kong to both the locals and visitors. Following the refurbishment of the Avenue of Stars, a guided tour was offered by Mr. Jeff TUNG from New World Development on 12.10.2019 to the newly-opened K11 MUSEA and K11 ARTUS of the Victoria Dockside. A total of 37 members participated in the tour, where they learned more about the planning stories behind the entire redevelopment project, and checked out various innovative architecture and fine design features that promote sustainability and technology.

Technical Tour

/ Avenue of Stars /
/ K11 MUSEA /
/ K11 ARTUS /

12 OCT (Sat) | 14:00 – 16:30 | 20 QUOTA

CANTONESE AS MEDIUM
FREE OF CHARGE

Register at

香港規劃師學會
HONG KONG PLANNING INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONALS

Discussion Forum on Lantau Tomorrow Vision for Future Generations - Challenges and Opportunities of Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands, Lung Kwu Tan Reclamation and Tuen Mun West Development

On 2.12.2019, YPG organized a discussion forum on Lantau Tomorrow Vision (LTV) and invited representatives from the Government, including Mr. WONG Wai-lun, Michael, JP (Secretary for Development), Mr. LIU Chun-san, JP (Under Secretary for Development), Mr. LAU Chun-kit, Ricky, JP (Director of Civil Engineering and Development), and Mr. CHUNG Man-kit, Ivan, JP (then Deputy Director of Planning/Territorial). In the forum, young planners shared their views towards the planning and design concepts and principles of LTV, as well as the challenges and opportunities of the proposed Kau Yi Chau and Tuen Mun West development. Participants also discussed with the guests on how professional planners could take part in these projects.



Professional Development



Career Development Workshop – Opportunity Series

YPG organized the “Career Development Workshop–Opportunity Series” on 18.11.2019 to let students, graduates and young planners have the latest recruitment information and early preparation on their career development. The workshop consisted of a sharing session given by speakers from the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) outlining the role of planners in urban renewal and introducing their upcoming Planner Trainee Programme.

A Route to Full HKIP Membership: Experience-sharing Session by the Membership Board and Full Members of HKIP

Following the success in past years, YPG continued to organize a sharing session on 24.6.2020 for young planners to facilitate their preparation for full membership of HKIP. The event featured veteran planners from the HKIP Membership Board and full members who were recently elected. Despite the pandemic rendering the event necessary to go online, the speakers and participants had fruitful discussions on different topics and typical queries from candidates.



Visit to Sports Expo

SPORTS EXPO, located at the commercial portion (namely "THE FOREST") of the Sai Yee Street Project of the URA in Mong Kok, is a sports-themed interactive information hub newly opened in October 2019. Aiming at promoting local sports, SPORTS EXPO showcases the development of various sports in an innovative and interactive way while recognising the outstanding achievements of Hong Kong athletes. YPG organized a visit to the SPORTS EXPO in Mong Kok on 4.12.2019. Participants enjoyed a wide range of sports activities through multimedia and virtual reality (VR) games.

Visit the SPORTS EXPO

Date: 4 December 2019 (Wednesday)
Time: 19:00-21:00
Venue: SPORTS EXPO, Shop 212, 2/F, THE FOREST, 17 Nelson Street, Mongkok, Kowloon
Quota: 30
Language: Cantonese
Fee: Free of Charge

Register at:

Logos for HKCBEA, YPG, and other partners are visible at the bottom right.



Community Outreach

2019 Hong Kong Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture (UABB 2019)

With the opportunity of UABB 2019, YPG and Warehouse, a local NGO based in Aberdeen, brought a group of young planners and young artists together to share and exchange their views and ideas on the notion of "Future City". By imagining the future Hong Kong, in terms of "Identity", "Liveability" and "Sustainability", young artists adopted various art forms/media to present their innovative and bold ideas while young planners introduced relevant planning concepts to the audience for their in-depth reflection.

*[(un)bottled future 重塑圍港]*

Human as part of Mother Nature, symbolized by the river and mountain-like structure, needs to face the challenge of waste generation. Recycled plastics were transformed into construction materials and revitalized as combination furniture allowing public enjoyment. Participants were encouraged to experience upcycling first-hand by shredding plastic waste into reusable plastic particles through Precious Plastic. The installation demonstrated waste could be transformed into worth with ideas and innovations.

WAY FORWARD

YPG would like to express our sincere gratitude to our fellow young planners for their contribution and support in the past year. YPG will endeavour to continue offering a wide range of events despite the unprecedented circumstances the world is undergoing. We look forward to members' continuous support to the YPG in the future.

See you again!