

Land and Development Advisory Committee holds meeting

At its meeting today (October 29), the Land and Development Advisory Committee (LDAC) was briefed by the Development Bureau (DEVB) on major initiatives related to the DEVB in the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address (Policy Address), as well as proposals for promoting elderly-friendly building design formulated by a task force led by the Deputy Financial Secretary to encourage ageing in place.

Members supported the Government's commitment to sustaining its land creation efforts to provide a steady land supply and promoting major infrastructure projects as outlined in the Policy Address, in particular the following initiatives:

(a) 10-year Developable Land Supply: in the next decade (2025-26 to 2034-35), the estimated supply of spade-ready land is expected to reach 3 000 hectares (ha) or on average some 300 ha per year which is in line with the target level set out in the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030". About 60 per cent of the new land supply will come from the Northern Metropolis. The Government will continue to press ahead various land creation projects including commencing the statutory environmental impact assessment process for the reclamation works under the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands project by the end of this year.

(b) Northern Metropolis: The Northern Metropolis is entering a maturity phase in the coming decade, with expected delivery of a large number of housing units and industrial sites. Looking ahead, a number of initiatives will be taken forward, including the development of Northern Metropolis University Town with at least 80 ha of land already earmarked; commencement of works for the first-stage of San Tin Technopole and second-phase of the Yuen Long South New Development Area; as well as the release of development proposals for Ngau Tam Mei, New Territories North New Town, and Ma Tso Lung area. Innovative delivery models will also be experimented to drive the diversified development of the Northern Metropolis through piloting a "large-scale land-disposal approach" in three new development areas and establishing a pilot industrial park by granting some of the logistics sites to a company established and led by the Government.

(c) Promoting Eco-recreation and Yacht Tourism Economy: new measures will be put in place to drive the development of tourism, recreation, and the yacht industry, including promoting eco-tourism at Tsim Bei Tsui and Pak Nai, ex-Lamma Quarry, and South Lantau, exploring the provision of yacht berthing facilities at Hung Hom, ex-Lamma Quarry area and Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter; as well as developing harbourfront landmarks in Hung Hom and Wan Chai North.

(d) Supporting education industries: apart from earmarking land for the University Town in the Northern Metropolis to provide expansion space for local institutions and attract prestigious universities in Mainland and

overseas to set up campus in Hong Kong, a facilitation scheme will also be put in place together with the Education Bureau to encourage conversion of hotels and other commercial buildings into student hostels so as to meet the rising demand for student accommodation.

(e) Reducing construction costs and promoting research, development and application of building technology: the Government is conducting strategic research on construction costs to identify key factors for cost reduction, with plans to implement relevant measures in 2025. The newly established Building Technology Research Institute will review and enhance local building standards, promoting the adoption of efficient building practices to improve project quality and construction efficiency.

(f) Reviewing the Buildings Ordinance: the Government has undertaken a systematic review of the Buildings Ordinance to speed up building repairs, handle unauthorised structures, and strengthen regulations on construction safety. Specific recommendations will be proposed for public consultation by the end of this year, with legislative amendments targeted to be introduced into the Legislative Council in the first half of 2026.

Members supported the DEVB's continuing efforts to create land, emphasising the need to build up a land reserve to support the economic and housing needs of Hong Kong on a sustainable basis, while putting up land for sale in a prudent manner having regard to market sentiment and the economy. Members appreciated that the DEVB had rolled out a government-wide guideline to encourage all relevant bureau/department to adopt a facilitating mindset with view to enhancing speed and efficiency, reducing construction cost, and streamlining the approval processes. Regarding the "large-scale land-disposal approach" to be launched on a pilot basis in the Northern Metropolis, Members welcomed the Government's plan to launch an Expression of Interest exercise to better gauge the views of the private sector before formulating the tender terms for land disposal. Members also suggested the Government give due consideration to rural and urban integration in developing the Northern Metropolis. On Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands, Members recognised the strategic nature of the project in terms of the overall infrastructure development of Hong Kong.

On tourism promotion initiatives, Members suggested enhancing the participation of the private sector in the planning and development of new facilities, and integrating the development of yacht berthing facilities with land-side retail, dining and entertainment facilities to provide diverse experience for visitors and encourage tourism spending. Members also considered it important to provide more land for cultural and creative industries in Hong Kong, particularly in the Northern Metropolis, so as to better attract international and local tourists.

Members also supported the Government's pilot scheme to be launched in the first half of 2025 to provide facilitation measures to encourage the market to convert hotels and other commercial buildings into student hostels.

Additionally, Members noted the Government's plan to introduce elderly-friendly building design guidelines. The recommendations cover four aspects,

namely promoting spatial accessibility to enhance elderly mobility, adoption of adaptive design to facilitate subsequent modification, enhancing elderly well-being, and facilitating adoption of assisted technology. Specific measures include provision of automatic door at main entrance of residential blocks, adoption of wider common corridors and wider door to individual flats, use of slip-resistant surface materials, provision of fitness or other facilities for elderly in open space, etc. Members also noted that design features which are essential for the safety and accessibility will be mandated through legislative amendments whereas encouraged features will be introduced through provision of incentives or administrative guidelines.

Members generally welcomed the recommendations. Members suggested that all departments dealing with building, planning and lands matters should adopt a more facilitating mindset in promoting elderly-friendly and even family-friendly building design. Members also pointed out the need for different regulatory regimes to be aligned to ensure smooth implementation of the proposed measures. Members suggested that the Government adopt a pragmatic approach in mandating design requirements to minimise the compliance and construction costs. While noting that some measures may be promoted through granting exemption of gross floor areas, Members also found it a good idea to launch an accreditation scheme to encourage the industry adopting the measures on their own initiative. In terms of applicability, Members generally agreed that the mandatory requirements should apply to new private residential buildings and other non-residential premises (such as shopping centres) often patronised by the elderly, as well as alterations and additions to the existing buildings, and that public housing developments and public facilities would also comply with the requirements where applicable and feasible. Members opined that promoting the use of technology and making reference to successful experiences of other jurisdictions would help refine the proposals. Members also encouraged the Government to keep the design guidelines under review and enhance them on an on-going basis.

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With the LDAC's support, the Government would commence a two-month consultation in December 2024 after briefing the Legislative Council Panel on Development in November. Subject to acceptance of the measures during the public consultation, the Government will take forward some proposals administratively in 2025 and the rest through legislative amendments in 2026.