

Speech by CE at Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors Best Development & Conservation Award 2021 Award Presentation Ceremony (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors Best Development & Conservation Award 2021 Award Presentation Ceremony today (November 12):

Edwin (the President of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, Mr Edwin Tang), Alexander (the Chairman of the Best Development & Conservation Award 2021 Organising Committee, Mr Alexander Lam), Members of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, guests, ladies and gentleman,

It really gives me great pleasure to speak on an occasion of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS). Many of you will remember that I was a very frequent speaker at the functions of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors during my five years as the Secretary for Development. In fact, I don't think I have missed a single annual conference of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors. I much enjoyed in those days coming to the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors' annual conference because every year HKIS would pick a topic which was very closely related to my policy priorities. It would be a very good sounding board for the Secretary for Development to receive first-hand feedback from a very important profession related to the work of development in Hong Kong.

I still remember the inaugural annual conference in 2007 that I attended as the Secretary for Development. It was about heritage conservation, because in the 2007 Policy Address, that was the first year after I had been appointed the Secretary for Development, we rolled out a new heritage conservation policy as a response to the aftermath of the demolition of Queen's Pier. HKIS had kindly taken on my suggestion and organised its annual conference around the theme of heritage conservation with a subtitle of "preserving and adding value". I think what is important was the part on adding value because surveyors' job is to add value, that was what I was told. Then, on the fifth successive annual conference of the HKIS that I attended in late 2011, that was after the 2011 Policy Address of the then-Chief Executive, in which he announced, upon our contribution, Energizing Kowloon East, the 2011 HKIS annual conference had a theme of Central Business Districts (CBDs) – it's not just a single CBD in Central – today and tomorrow.

Much has happened in the last 10 years from the time when I attended as the Secretary for Development, and I would say that both topics of heritage conservation and creating more business space in Hong Kong have progressed

pretty well in the last decade. Take heritage conservation first. Under successive leadership of the Secretary for Development – including the Permanent Secretary for Development (Works), who is here, Mr Wai Chi-sing, he was responsible for heritage conservation for a few years – by now, all over Hong Kong, you will be seeing and enjoying the revitalised heritage buildings owned by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. By my count, there are a total of 22 government buildings that have been put under the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme in six batches, and 12 of these projects have been completed, and five of the 12 projects have received UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards; with the Top Award, which is the highest award that Hong Kong has ever received, gone to Viva Blue House in the Wan Chai cluster. We are all very proud of all these heritage buildings being preserved and in the words of HKIS – "being added value" for the enjoyment by the people of Hong Kong, but that is not the end of the story. Although these 12 projects have already received over 7.8 million visitors over the years of their existence, beyond the revitalisation scheme, there are even more exciting and bigger heritage projects that have been completed in Hong Kong in the past decade.

The first is the PMQ, the second is the Tai Kwun, and finally this much awaited Central Market, which was only opened in August this year. I show you some of the figures of them being visited by people of Hong Kong: the PMQ together with Tai Kwun have received and entertained over 30 million visitors, and even the Central Market which has been in operation for three months, has received over three million visitors. They have not yet formally opened it, but I have been sending out my people to check on the Central Market, because I want to be assured that while the building has been preserved to my satisfaction, the operation of the Central Market really performs the role of the "Central Oasis". It's a very nice hang-out area for the white-collar people in the heart of Central. I am very pleased with all these results that have been achieved. But what is even more exciting is, even the private sector, which often is about making money, I know some of the developers are in the audience, they have also embraced heritage conservation. I understand some of the projects will be awarded in this afternoon. We have The Mills, by Nan Fung Group, and we have the Chicago Booth, which is by the Chicago University, and I am sure in no time we will see the preservation of the State Theatre by, again, your sponsor, New World Development. Looking ahead, we could expect more and more of this passion for preserving Hong Kong's built heritage and even natural heritage like the Victoria Harbourfront for the enjoyment of the people of Hong Kong.

Going on to the second theme, about Energizing Kowloon East, I am sure surveyors here all know about the effectiveness of Energizing Kowloon East in creating a second CBD for Hong Kong. If you now look at the eastern part of Kowloon, it's very much like Central with all these high-rise buildings and many of them have anchor tenants. They love to have a building named after their company. Based on the information given to me, Energizing Kowloon East now already provides 2.9 million square metres of commercial office space – much of it is actually quite top-grade office space – which was a 70 per cent growth compared to the time when we announced Energizing Kowloon East. But more to come – in the pipeline, that is under construction to be completed in

the next one to two years, we'll increase the total GFA (gross floor area) in Energizing Kowloon East to 3.5 million square metres. I think that would be even more than the Central CBD. We still have more commercial space in the Kai Tak area. These two initiatives have given Hong Kong, I would say, a changing cityscape and a lot of functional space for various business and non-business activities to take place.

Now, in a way we are coming back to the starting position again. It's very good that the 2011 HKIS conference had the theme of "Today and Tomorrow". In my 2021 Policy Address, I described Hong Kong as being at the starting position again. We are going to enter a new era of excellence – excellence in development and excellence in conservation. In terms of office development, a third CBD is in the pipeline, and that is going to be on the artificial islands to be reclaimed off Kau Yi Chau under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. It will take a bit of time, but before that I will like to see some office space and some business buildings coming up in the Northern Metropolis in Hung Shui Kiu and San Tin, particularly for innovation and technology and advanced manufacturing. And also, on the Hong Kong Island, we announced last year the Invigorating Island South, which will be a place for fun, vitality and sports, with the Water World in the Ocean Park, which again was much welcomed by our local people, especially the young people.

All these past experiences that I have together with my professional colleagues have given me that inspiration, and because of the backdrop of enhanced governance and less political disturbance, and safeguarding national security, the Government now has this vision and courage to think and act bolder for the benefit of Hong Kong, and it is against this backdrop that I announced the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy – despite the fact that I am coming to the end of my five-year term, because good things should not wait – but Central Market is worth the wait.

This Northern Metropolis should be very promising in many aspects. I don't have enough time to share with you my passion and my vision for the Northern Metropolis, but just to give you a feel of how we are going to take forward the Northern Metropolis, if you look at the planning principles that we are going to adopt for the Northern Metropolis, many of those echo very well this theme of conservation and development. The first principle is urban-rural integration. We're not going to destroy the beautiful rural areas in the northern part of the New Territories. We're not going to fill up every fishpond or destroy every wetland. Quite on the contrary, the second principle is we will adopt a proactive conservation approach, even to the extent of resuming privately owned fishponds and farmland for the preservation of wetland parks for Hong Kong. The third principle is to go for high-quality eco-tourism for local and overseas visitors. That's why we will have expanded wetland parks and we will have a new country park on the eastern part of Hong Kong and hopefully connected all the way to the Shenzhen jurisdiction.

We need land for development – that's why another principle driving the Northern Metropolis is to optimise the spatial planning for economic purposes. We have managed to find more land for innovation and technology development in this place to be called the San Tin Technopole. We're going to

turn Hung Shui Kiu into a business area that will serve the Qianhai special economic zone right across the bay, and we will also have the Man Kam To corridor, which could again be another business area. And we need to expand the development capacity, either by higher plot ratio or amalgamation of sites, in order to meet the needs of housing. Northern Metropolis will be a significant source of housing, public and private, in the next 10, 15 years.

Finally, because Northern Metropolis is just across from Shenzhen, the final principle in taking forward Northern Metropolis is to facilitate the cross-border travel in terms of high efficiency, effectiveness and comfort for the people who are going to travel between Hong Kong and Shenzhen on a very frequent basis. That's why three of the five new railway projects that I have announced under the Northern Metropolis are cross-boundary projects to facilitate passenger flow.

Apart from these two mega-projects of Lantau Tomorrow and the Northern Metropolis, there is a lot of room for surveying excellence in the 2021 Policy Address. Surveyors are invited to contribute to other initiatives in the Policy Address such as the redevelopment of the industrial buildings. Since the "revitalisation of industrial buildings 2.0", we have received a pretty good number of projects, I think there are close to 60 projects of redevelopment. Many of them are using the standard premium as well. This is an area that I hope the surveying profession will continue to provide your professional input to owners and developers to make use of the extended time. I have extended both the standard premium and the additional plot ratio for redevelopment of industrial buildings up to 2024.

Another initiative that you could help is the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme, which we have received some land-sharing proposals. I understand more are in the pipeline from the developers, so again, surveying profession could contribute to this very interesting initiative. There is another initiative which you people are really the expert, that is compulsory sale for redevelopment. I still remember when I made the first amendment to the compulsory sale threshold, lowering from 90 per cent to 80 per cent for three categories of buildings, I had several tutors, and they were all surveyors. One was sitting outside the LegCo Chamber when I was in the LegCo Chamber being drilled in the debate. My assistant would call up this surveyor, "how should Mrs Lam answer this question?" because we are not practitioners. We have to look to you practitioners in the field of urban redevelopment to help us to tackle some of those criticisms, which often are not justified.

All in all, as I said, I am very confident about Hong Kong. I said in an interview about two weeks ago, that I hope I were 30 years younger, so I could start to contribute to Hong Kong and benefit from a much better Hong Kong for longer period of time. With those remarks, I congratulate every award recipient in the 2021 Award, and hope the HKIS will continue to organise meaningful activities like this to give recognition to professionals who have put in a lot of dedication in taking forward projects for Hong Kong. Thank you very much.

