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Case Study Presentation 3: The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

“Public Participation in the Planning Process in Hong Kong”

Mr. Jimmy C.F. Leung, Assistant Director/Technical Services

Planning Department, Hong Kong Administrative Region Government

Good afternoon, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is always a challenge to speak immediately after lunch since you have just had such a good lunch. So I will try my best to keep you awake with this presentation.

First of all, let me talk about Hong Kong in relation to Kumamoto. Hong Kong is some 2,000 kilometers to the southwest of Kumamoto. It is strategically located on the southeastern coast of China.



It covers an area of 1,100 square kilometers with a population of 6.8 million. Hong Kong is expected to grow to a population of 8.72 million by the year 2031. In order to cope with the population growth and the demand arising from different sectors of the economy, it is important to have an open planning system which allows active public involvement. In the rest of the time this afternoon let me share with you our experience in promoting public participation in the planning process in Hong Kong.

[Presentation Outline]

What I will try to do is to divide the presentation into three parts. In the first part I will talk about the strategic planning level, what the public participation process is like, and then I will talk about the district planning process. And then last I will talk about how we try to promote public awareness in Hong Kong.

[Planning System]

Our planning system: At the top level we have the so-called “strategic” level of planning. And then we have the local planning and Hong Kong planning standards and guidelines. Basically we have a two-tier planning system comprising plans of strategic level and district level. At the strategic level we call it the territorial development strategy and covering the whole city, integrate government policies on land use, transport and environment. It provides the long-term planning framework for district planning at the lower level. At the lower level we have statutory and administrative plans which translate the broad planning principles identified at the strategic level to the district level through the destination of land for different uses are prepared. Guiding the preparation of these plans is the so-called Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, which is the policy document setting out the criteria for determining the scale, location and site requirements of various land uses and facilities. It is applied in planning studies, preparation of town plans and development control. The town planning ordinance is a legal document. It provides a legal framework for the preparation and execution of these statutory town plans.

[Public Participation in the Planning Process in Hong Kong - Strategic Planning]

Now I will start with the participation process at the strategic planning level. At this level we have a study, as I mentioned earlier on, the so-called Territorial Development Strategy. It's the highest tier of land use planning for Hong Kong. The TDS, in short, was first prepared in 1984, and since then it has been updated on a regular basis just to keep pace with the changing circumstances. The last review was completed in late 1996. Since then there are a number of factors that have implication for the long-term development of Hong Kong that have surfaced. These factors include the financial turmoil in Asia right after 1997, China's assertion to the World Trade Organization, WTO, a more intensified pattern of movement of people between Hong Kong and the Mainland, in particular, the Pearl River Delta Region, which is really thriving with high economic growth. As a result of these changes, the Planning Department of the Hong Kong SER Government launched a study called the Hong Kong 2030 Study for planning a vision and strategy to review the territorial development strategy and to bring it up to date.

[Hong Kong 2030 Study]

In this study we have basically four stages. The first stage is really about agenda setting; the second stage is examination of the key issues involved; at the third stage we are generating different scenarios and development options; and the last stage is the development strategy, the formulation of strategy itself. And in between all these stages of formulation of strategies, we have consultation at each of the stages. The first stage of the consultation focuses on the planning objectives and the key issues to be examined for Hong Kong 2030.

What it means is that we go out to the public and ask them what they want to cover, what should be the objectives. Under the second stage, we centered the finding on the examination of key issues and the evaluating criteria. So we wanted to set up some form of evaluation ultimately for the scenarios and the development options, what sort of objective they have to meet. Actually we have finished the first two stages, and very shortly we are going to embark on the third stage, consultation, which is to ask the public's opinion on the scenarios and development options. And in the final stage of the consultation, again, once we have that, we are going to ask the public's comment on the final strategy and the response plan, and see what can be altered before promulgating the policy.

[Consultation Strategy of the Hong Kong 2030 Study]

Our strategy for consultation is really simple, because based on our past experience, involving the public at the very early stage of the review process is critical in ensuring public acceptance. To enhance public awareness and promote ownership, extensive consultation with major stakeholders and members of the public has been conducted.

[Consultation Methods - Public Forums]

We have adopted different means of engaging the public. I shall briefly describe each of these now. The first one is public forums. We have public forums to provide opportunity for the public to give

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comments and to exchange views. We send out invitations to organizations, institutions and groups. And in fact, members of the public are all welcome to attend these public forums. They are attended by more than 300 people at the first stage and another 300 people at the second stage.

[Focus Group Discussions]

The focus group discussion is slightly different. It involves in-depth dialogue between the public and the study team on specific topics. They are open to all but mostly we send out invitations to invite the concerned groups and stakeholders to come along. We have one session held in the first stage and five sessions held in the second stage and each session was attended by 50 to 60 people. So more than 300 people have attended these more in-depth group discussions.

[Expert Panel]

Apart from these two we have the Expert Panels. The purpose of the Expert Panel is to advise on the key issues of Hong Kong and to comment on the recommendation of the study. The Panel comprises 12 experts in economics, transport, environmental and maintenance fields. The engagement of these experts in the study process has broadened our perspective in charting the future development direction of our city. We are just not inviting people to us; we also take a very proactive approach of going to the public; so we go to the statutory and advisory body and give them a briefing.

[Briefings to Organizations, District Council Forums]

Apart from this advisory body, we also go to professional institutions and other concerned groups. We tell them what we are trying to do and ask for feedback. In the first stage we have briefed 24 organizations and under the second stage we have briefed 22. We also held a discussion session with the interested District Council members from 18 District Councils in Hong Kong to exchange views and comments. The District Councils are really local advisory bodies with elected and appointed members. We also receive quite a lot of written submissions on the study; about 80 to 100 submissions were received for the first stage and a similar number for the second. Views were expressed in the media, newspapers and TV or radio, we also closely monitor all these views so as to take them into account in the study process.

[Youth Involvement]

The study involves the long-term future of Hong Kong, so we cannot really avoid consulting the younger generation. So, to arouse the awareness and interest in strategic planning among young people, a special community involvement project called Hong Kong 2030 Creative Planning Design Competition was launched in February last year. Young people were invited to express their aspirations and proposals for the development of Hong Kong in year 2030 by designing web pages, computer games and planning proposals. In addition, a youth leadership training course on town planning in Hong Kong was also conducted from March to June last year. The training course comprised workshops, a field visit, a training camp and group projects. It was intended to encourage youngsters to develop a sense of ownership and concern for Hong

Kong's future. Upon completion of the training course, the participants presented the proposals and suggestions to the study team, who has taken all these into account in the study process.

[Electric Forum, Website Set Up for the Study]

An electronic discussion forum was also provided on the Hong Kong 2030 study. This is to facilitate information exchange, announcement of events and activities, and uploading of consultation documents, reports and technical papers, so that the public can have easy access to these documents. An electronic forum for discussion on the study was also set up on the website. So far we have a hit rate of over 200,000, and about 240 electronic messages have been received.

[Publicity & Consultation Document]

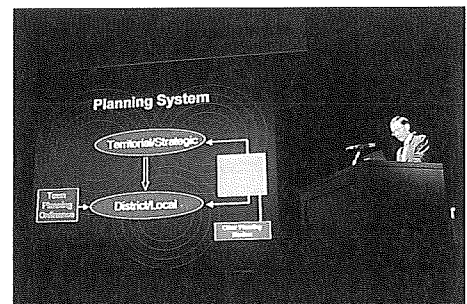
In addition to all these activities, we also publish a consultation digest summarizing what the public has to say and supplementary notes to provide more information to interested parties. We printed more than 40,000 copies and distributed them at both stages. The consultation reports summarizing all the comments received with government's responses are compiled and widely distributed at the end of each stage. They are also uploaded to the website for public viewing.

[Public Participation in the Planning Process in Hong Kong - District Planning]

So much for the strategic level. I am going to move on to the district level of planning. I will briefly explain about the statutory plan-making process.

[Town Planning Board]

First of all, the Town Planning Board: The Town Planning Board is a statutory body established under the Town Planning Ordinance. All members of the Board are appointed by the Chief Executive of the SER Government. They are charged with the responsibility to promote health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community.



[Function of the Town Planning Board]

Specifically, the functions of the Board are to publish statutory town plans, to consider objections to the plans, and submit draft plan together with any unwithdrawn objection to the Chief Executive in Council for approval. It also considers planning applications and conducts review of applications. And there is actually one more stage after the review; we have an appeal system. But that is to be considered by a separate body, not the Town Planning body. This is one example of statutory town planning. It's a local plan. This area is called Tsim Sha Tsui, which is a very popular area for tourists; entertainment and cultural facilities are all here.

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[Statutory Plan Making Process]

Now let me talk about the statutory plan making process. First of all we prepare a draft plan, and then we go out to the District Council, which I mentioned earlier on. It's just a local advisory body. The rural committee in the rural area and area committees are other stakeholders. We have discussion with them on how the area should be planned. Then we publish the plan under the gazette to invite objections. If we have objections, we will consider the objections, and we have hearing of the objections. And after that, if we uphold the objection, we will change the plan, and we submit the plan for approval.

[Planning Application System - Public Consultation on Planning Applications]

The planning application system: some development in Hong Kong requires planning applications before work can start. They must have permission beforehand. The Planning Department, with the assistance of the District Office, collects public views on planning applications and submits the application to the Board for consideration.

We are going to change the Town Planning Ordinance, so we have a Town Planning Bill. The main purpose of the bill is to further increase public involvement in the planning process. So we try to make it more open, more transparent, and then under the current system I just mentioned, you can object to the plan but in the future you can make representation. You don't have just to object. You can say something positive about the plan, just give any comment you like about the plan. And for planning applications, at present we are doing it through the District Office, but in the future we will publish all the applications for three weeks for the public to look at in detail.

[Promotion of Public Awareness - Hong Kong & Infrastructure Exhibition Gallery]

That finishes the part on District Planning. I will come to the final part of the presentation, which is what we do to promote public awareness in the planning process. First of all, we set up the Hong Kong Planning and Infrastructure Exhibition Gallery in July last year. The exhibits include an audiovisual presentation, 3-dimensional models, computer graphic, animation, and interactive games, featuring four themes, namely, town planning, tourism, transport and logistics and environmental protection. The gallery is also used for educational activities relating to the planning and infrastructure development. Admission to the gallery is free.

[Community/School Outreach Programme]

The Planning Department has also been organizing visits to secondary schools for the past six years. The number of schools we visit each year increased from 15 in 1998 to more than 30 secondary schools this year. In addition, we are going to universities and other high educational institutes this year. And during our visit, we will stage our exhibition and our mobile exhibition center. I will talk about the mobile exhibition center in the next slide. And the center will station at the school to provide support, and we have our professional town planners to give lectures on planning projects to the students. In addition to secondary schools, this year we have extended our outreach program to the community, and our mobile exhibition

center will also visit this housing estate and other shopping centers. This is aiming to reach out to the public more proactively.

[Mobile Exhibition Centre]

Actually, this year's exhibition theme is about sustainable development. This (slide 33) is our Mobile Exhibition Center. It is basically a van. We can fold it up, and we have the plasma TV here, and inside we have interactive games and information; you just use the touch screen to do it. And we try to target even primary school or kindergarten students, to just let them get involved in the planning process, so that when they grow up they will have interest in what the city should be planning. The vehicle started its service in July last year again, and since then we have more than 35,000 people visiting the exhibition vehicle.

[Users Liaison Group]

We also have the so-called Users Liaison Group. It was established to help the public, who are our customers, to comment on our services, and also help to monitor the performance of the Planning Department. The public is invited to be members of this group which meets regularly. So they give us comments and tell us how to improve our services.

[Means to Reach Us]

There are means of which to reach the Planning Department. Planning information such as statutory town plans, planning reports, guidelines, practice of professionals, are available at the planning inquiry counters located at the Planning Department Headquarters. And a planning information hotline and an e-mail answering desk also provide efficient service to verbal and written inquiries.

[E-Planning]

Access to planning information can now also be made on-line by using the e-statutory plan system. Through the e-statutory planning system, the public can search for planning information regarding decisions on planning applications, objections to statutory plans, amendments to statutory plans, and also the zoning and types of uses permitted in relation to a particular site on a statutory town plan. So they don't really need to leave their home to go to our office to check. It's just by touching the pattern, they know all this information. And actually our website is one of the most popular among the 220 websites of the Hong Kong Government. We are ranked eighth, with more than three million hits a year.

[Achievements]

With all these efforts we have achieved better communication with the public; we are able to collect new ideas from the stakeholders, we also gained their support during the process, which minimized mistrust because by going out with them early on in the planning process, they are involved all the way through.

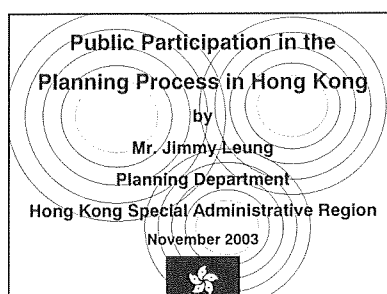
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[Conclusion]

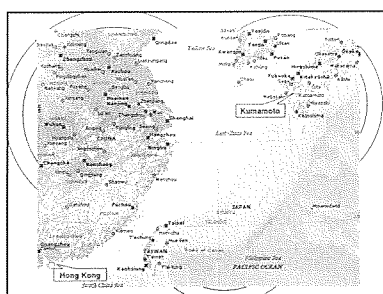
So, I have finished my presentation. I will just repeat three things that I have been telling you this afternoon. First of all is the consultation process at the strategic level of planning, and consultation at the district level planning, as well as our ways of promoting public awareness in the planning process.

With that I thank you very much for your kind attention.

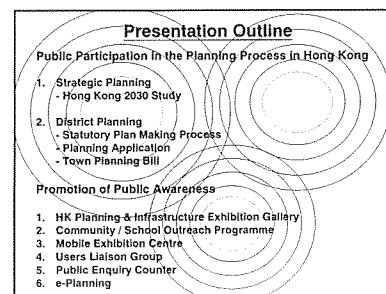
Slides



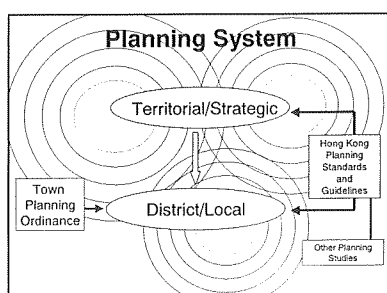
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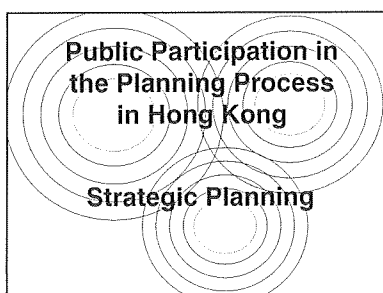
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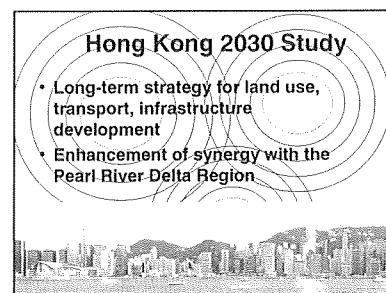
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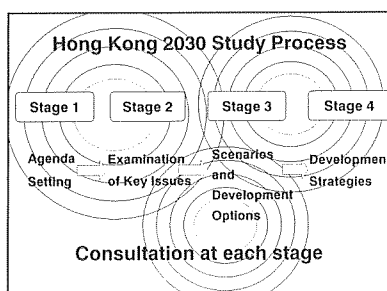
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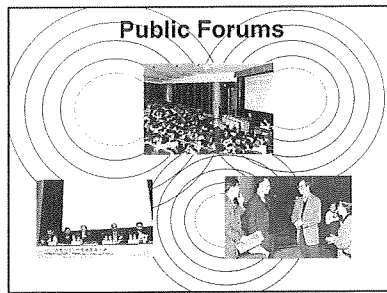
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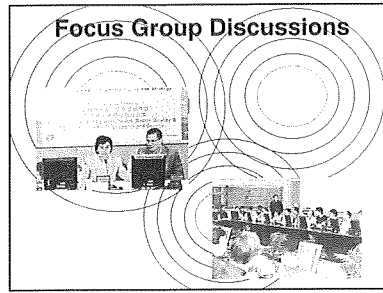
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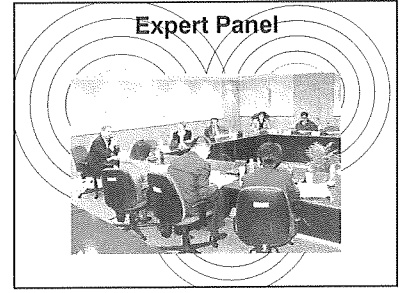
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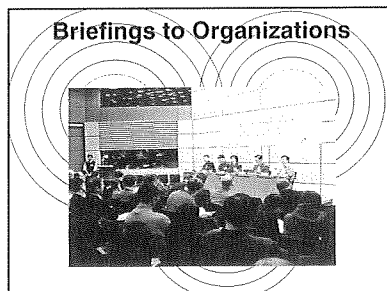
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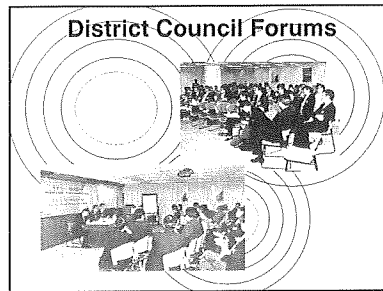
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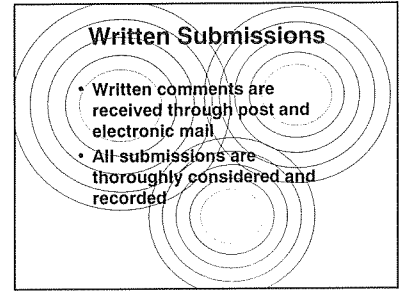
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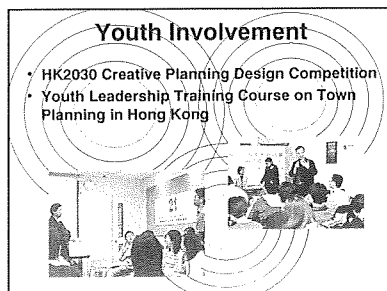
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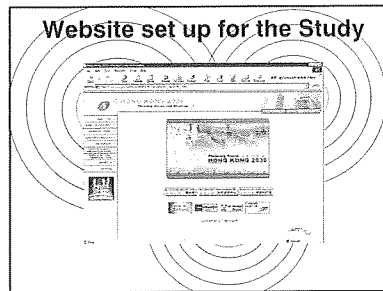
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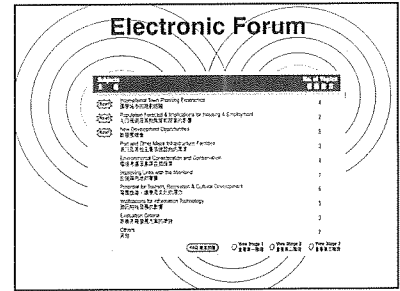
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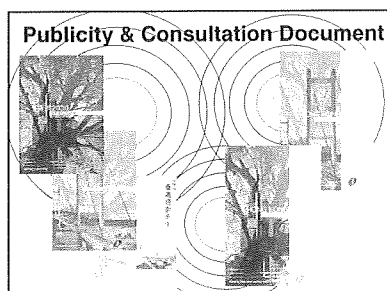
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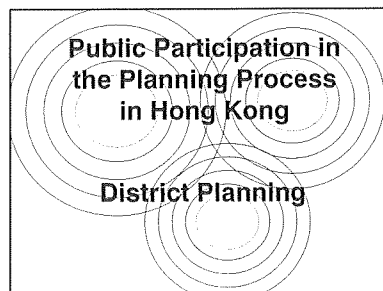
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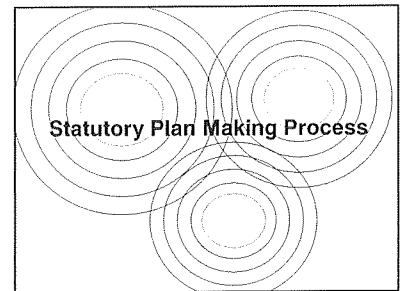
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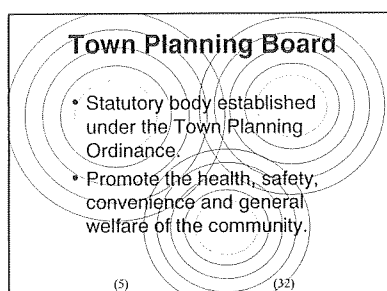
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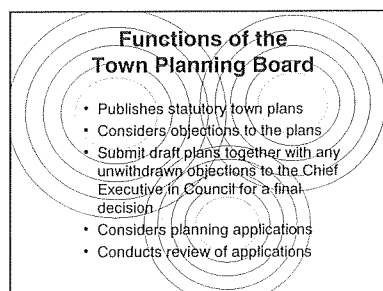
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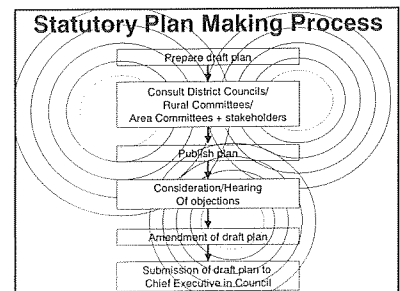
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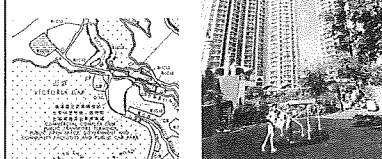
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Planning Application System

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Public Consultation on Planning Applications

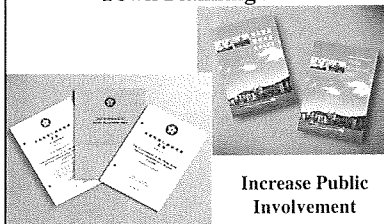


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Town Planning Bill

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Town Planning Bill



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Town Planning Bill

One of the major proposals is to enhance the openness of the planning process

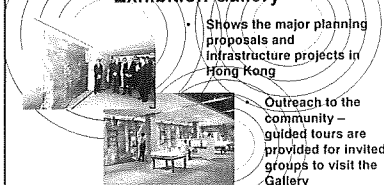
- any person can make representations on a draft or amendment plan
- all planning applications will be published for 3 weeks for public comments

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Promotion of Public Awareness

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Hong Kong Planning & Infrastructure Exhibition Gallery



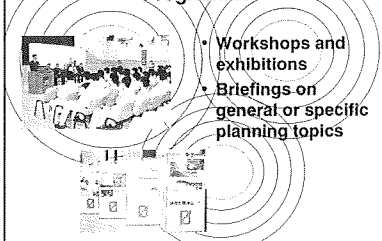
- Shows the major planning proposals and infrastructure projects in Hong Kong

- Outreach to the community – guided tours are provided for invited groups to visit the Gallery

<http://www.info.gov.hk/infrastructuregallery>

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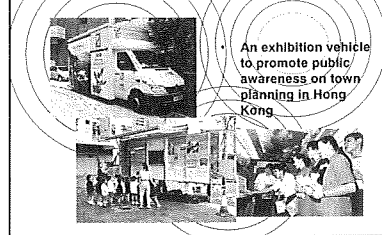
Community / School Outreach Programme



- Workshops and exhibitions
- Briefings on general or specific planning topics

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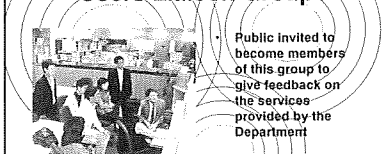
Mobile Exhibition Centre



- An exhibition vehicle to promote public awareness on town planning in Hong Kong

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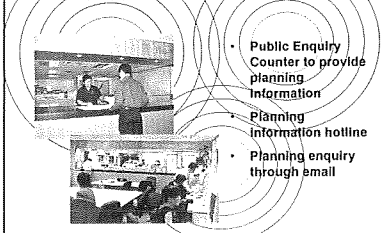
Users Liaison Group



- Public invited to become members of this group to give feedback on the services provided by the Department

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Means to Reach Us



- Public Enquiry Counter to provide planning information
- Planning information hotline
- Planning enquiry through email

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e-Planning

Websites on planning information:

- On-line access to the zoning and types of uses permitted in the statutory town plans www.ozp.tpb.gov.hk
- On-line access to information on planning applications, objections to statutory plans and amendments to statutory town plans www.ozp.tpb.gov.hk/epa



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Achievements

- better communication with the public
- collecting new ideas from the stakeholders
- gaining support from the public and minimizing unnecessary mistrust / objections to the planning process
- producing plans for the people

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Thank You



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