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Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design

Press Release

Recommendations of the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design on the Hong Kong Government's First Five-Year Plan

[15 July 2026] The Public Consultation Document for Hong Kong's "First Five-Year Plan" comprises of six parts, and quality urban design is the prerequisite for meeting the objectives of all parts.

Part 1 aims to accelerate the development of the Northern Metropolis and optimise spatial planning and urban renewal in other districts, making Hong Kong a more vibrant and liveable city. Part 2 focuses on consolidating and enhancing Hong Kong's status as an international financial and trade centre. Part 3 calls for accelerating the development of an international innovation and technology hub and a high-level talent aggregation base. Part 4 seeks to enhance citizens' sense of well-being and security. Part 5 proposes promoting integrated development and in-depth dovetailing with the Greater Bay Area, and Part 6 aims to improve quality of life, build a liveable city, and boost Hong Kong's attractiveness.

All these objectives require effective urban development strategies and high-quality urban design to create a prosperous and liveable city, thereby attracting international investment and top-tier talent to come to Hong Kong.

The current urban development planning mechanisms and implementation models in Hong Kong have been in place for many years, and there are considerable room for improvement. HK need to align with the requirements of the national "15th Five-Year Plan", on continuously improving the quality of urbanisation, and achieving the goals of building an innovative and modern people's city.

Recommendations of The Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design (HKIUD) covers the following six areas:

- (A) Critical review of the urban development and planning strategies and mechanisms for HK.
- (B) Development of Northern Metropolis.
- (C) Enhance housing quality and diversify housing policy.
- (D) Support youth development and build a premier hub for high-end talent.
- (E) Tidy up the building maintenance market to restore integrity and safety to the city.
- (F) Assume the role of a super-connector and expand international circulation.

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(A) Critical review of the urban development and planning strategies and mechanisms for HK

A.1. The "15th Five-Year Plan Outline" requires Hong Kong to consolidate and enhance its status as an international financial, shipping and trade centre, an international aviation hub, and a hub for high-end international talent. To achieve these goals, Hong Kong needs to adopt a two-pronged approach focusing on both software and hardware. The software includes policies and regulations in finance, shipping, trade and aviation, as well as tax incentives and immigration policies that facilitate the entry of talented professionals. The hardware includes relevant buildings, infrastructure and urban design – which fall under the professional expertise of architects, planners, landscape architects, surveyors, engineers and urban designers.

A.2. Commercial, trade and transport activities require high-quality, efficient buildings and infrastructure to meet functional needs. Hong Kong has an excellent track record in this regard. Furthermore, Hong Kong needs high-quality urban design to create a liveable environment to compete with other cities in attracting international professionals and to ensure local professionals are willing to stay. However, there is still significant room for improvement in Hong Kong's urban design. Below we focus on the importance of this aspect.

Urban Design Objectives in the 15th Five-Year Plan Outline

15th FYP Alignment Matrix + KPIs

A.3. To translate national priorities into implementable actions for Hong Kong's first Five-year Plan, the matrix in Appendix 1 maps key 15th Five-Year Plan themes to proposed policy/delivery actions, suggested lead bureaux/departments, an indicative timeframe (2026–2030), and measurable KPIs. The suggested KPIs are indicative and should be refined and confirmed through cross-bureau coordination and public engagement.

A.4. Chapter 31, Part 9 of the national "15th Five-Year Plan Outline" states the need to deepen the development of people-centred modern metropolitan areas: continuously improve the quality of urbanisation, optimise urban size and structure, promote intensive urban development, and foster coordinated, compact development of large, medium and small cities and towns. Advance the modernisation of megacity governance, radiating to drive the common development of surrounding cities and counties. Build innovative, liveable, beautiful, resilient, civilised and smart modern people's cities. Improve the implementation mechanism for urban renewal, promote the green and low-carbon transformation of urban development, optimise greenway networks and slow traffic systems, enhance urban drainage and flood prevention capacity, as well as fire prevention and rescue capabilities for high-rise buildings. Strengthen the management of urban townscape and architectural design, ensuring that urban buildings better reflect Chinese aesthetics and contemporary trends. Promote the intelligent and refined governance of cities.

A.5. Hong Kong needs to reform its spatial planning model to align with national policies and enhance regional competitiveness through an urban design-led approach.



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The Strategic Value of Urban Design

A.6. High-quality urban design is no longer just a secondary aesthetic consideration but a key driver for attracting and retaining talent, promoting social stability, and fostering a strong sense of belonging. To align with the national 15th Five-Year Plan strategic direction of high-quality development and people-centred new urbanisation, urban design should be treated as a core means of delivering these objectives.

Benchmarking Regional Excellence: The "Design-First" Paradigm

A.7. A comparative analysis of our regional peers—Singapore, Sydney, and Shenzhen—reveals a common success factor: the adoption of an urban design-led planning framework. These cities treat master planning not as a purely technical or engineering exercise, but as a spatial design challenge:

- (a) Singapore: Through the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC), Singapore has institutionalized a "science of city-making," utilizing evidence-based research to embed liveability into the core of urban policy.
- (b) Shenzhen: For strategic growth engines such as Qianhai and the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation Zone, the city has mandated international urban design competitions to ensure world-class architectural and ecological standards.
- (c) Sydney: Sydney's planning hierarchy ensures that site-specific urban design controls precede engineering feasibility, ensuring that infrastructure serves the public realm rather than dictating it.

A.8. In these jurisdictions, a comprehensive Urban Design Study is a mandatory precursor to any statutory planning or engineering feasibility assessment.

Strategic Recommendations of the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design

A.9. To ensure Hong Kong maintains its status as an international metropolis, we propose the following three major reform pillars:

- (a) Paradigm Shift Study: Commission a comprehensive review of Hong Kong's current planning protocols to transition from an engineering-led model to an urban design-led approach, benchmarking against international best practices.
- (b) Institutionalizing Innovation: Establish a dedicated Urban Design & Liveability Research Centre. This body will serve as a think-tank to bridge the gap between academic research, social data, and spatial policy.
- (c) Mandatory Design Procurement: Formalise a policy requiring all "Projects of Significance" to be procured through International Urban Design Competitions. This will guarantee transparency, promote innovation, and ensure that Hong Kong's future skyline and streetscapes meet global excellence standards.

A.10. Over the years, the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design (HKIUD) has made constructive recommendations to the government and the Town Planning Board on urban design issues concerning



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the Northern Metropolis, the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands, the Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok redevelopment, and other districts. These include: promoting walkability, inclusivity and accessibility, urban-rural integration, conservation of historic buildings and traditional culture, biodiversity, blue-green infrastructure, microclimate, environmental protection, eco-tourism, carbon reduction and energy saving, ensuring adequate recreational facilities and public spaces to attract international professionals, and providing sufficient international schools, kindergartens and playgrounds for their children.

HKIUD Manifesto for Liveable Streets - A High-Quality Public Service Attracting Talent and Tourism

A.11. In July 2025, the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design presented its Liveable Streets Manifesto to the Chief Executive's Policy Unit following a three-year development period. The Manifesto makes the economic case for more effective utilisation of existing street space in Hong Kong, together with the delivery of higher-quality standards to better serve civic needs, retain talent and attract tourists in line with international best practice. A three-point plan is proposed: a Vision for Streets; a Task Force for Streets; and an Action Plan for Streets.

A.12. The Manifesto has been prepared for submission to the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for consideration in the Policy Address and is aligned with the Mainland 15th Five-Year Plan. It has been drafted in collaboration with a wide variety of contributors and stakeholders over a three-year period and reflects outcomes from experiential urban research, an international conference, and a number of working groups and discussion sessions.

Recommendations of the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design for the "Five-Year Plan"

A.13. The Institute recommends that the government's five-year plan should cover how to further enhance Hong Kong's urban design standards. We offer the following recommendations:

- (a) Comprehensively review Hong Kong's urban planning and design strategies, drawing lessons from advanced cities worldwide to align with the goals of the "15th Five-Year Plan Outline", and adopt an urban design-led development strategy.
- (b) In recent years, Hong Kong has focused on the development of the Northern Metropolis, but we should not overlook the importance of the historic Harbour Metropolis. Its development potential should be fully tapped, creating six to eight distinctive nodes around the harbour to enhance the quality of life for Hong Kong citizens. Hong Kong should strengthen its self-promotion, showcasing not only its compact, high-density urban fabric flanking its most precious natural asset, Victoria Harbour, but also its safe social environment, world-class public transit system, country parks, mountain peaks and extensive coastline.
- (c) Street design is a very important part of urban design. In addition to meeting the traffic and mobility needs of citizens, streets also serve as crucial public spaces for creating a liveable city. Based on the recommendations in paragraphs 10 to 12, and with



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- reference to the Liveable Streets Manifesto by the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design, the mechanism for designing Hong Kong's streets should be improved.
- (d) Address “double ageing” at scale (ageing building stock and an ageing population). The five-year plan should set out an area-based, programme-driven approach that combines (i) accelerated rehabilitation and risk-based enforcement for older private buildings (especially “three-nil” buildings), (ii) a clearer pipeline and delivery capacity for district renewal, and (iii) age-friendly and barrier-free upgrades (lifts, step-free access, safer crossings, shading and seating) so that renewal improves both safety and daily liveability. This requires coordinated delivery across building safety, planning, transport, social services and district stakeholders.
 - (e) The design of functional facilities on Hong Kong's roads, such as noise barriers and footbridges, tends to be relatively conservative and dull, with no significant improvement for many years. These facilities greatly impact the city's appearance. Therefore, many Mainland Chinese and foreign cities have recently paid great attention to the design of such facilities and have made significant improvements. We recommend that the government reform the current design mechanism by incorporating design elements into these facilities to improve the overall city image. The recently completed pedestrian footbridge at the Lung Yeuk Tau Interchange in Fanling innovatively adopted a high-strength steel structure, making the bridge appear lighter. This is a good attempt, and we recommend adding further design elements. The five-year plan should set a timetable to review how to enhance the positive contribution of such functional facilities to the cityscape.
 - (f) The government recently issued guidelines on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and has committed to issuing guidelines on urban-rural integration this year. The Institute appreciates the government's responsiveness to the Institute's previous representations. We recommend that the government supervise departments and consultant companies to implement these two policies earnestly, responding seriously to the demands of the community and the Institute, rather than just going through the motions.
 - (g) Support the development of eco-tourism in Hong Kong. Currently, many environmentally beautiful outlying islands or remote rural areas are only accessible by kaito (small ferry). Most of Hong Kong's ferries and kaitos are quite old vessels that emit significant black smoke during operation, harming Hong Kong's tourism image. We recommend that the government introduce incentive policies to encourage Hong Kong's ferry and kaito operating companies to procure modern, green-fuel-powered fleets to replace ageing ones.
 - (h) The government should improve relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks as soon as possible, establishing long-term standards for the low-altitude economy, as well as relevant design guidelines for urban design and architectural design.
 - (i) Modern cities are increasingly complex and sophisticated, requiring close cross-disciplinary collaboration among urban designers, architects, engineers, landscape architects, surveyors, and others. It is recommended that the Development Bureau, public works departments, the Northern Metropolis Co-ordination Office, and the Energizing Kowloon East Office, among others, have a balanced mix of professionals. Since there are currently no urban designer positions in government departments, the government may consider hiring experienced urban designers on a contract basis.



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- (j) For design consultancy contracts for major government infrastructure projects, it is often required that the design team includes an urban designer. While the government has clear qualification requirements for other professionals, there are none for urban designers. It is recommended that the government set clear qualification requirements for urban designers, aligning with other professions, e.g., HKIUD professional membership or equivalent qualifications.



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(B) Development of Northern Metropolis

B.1. The Northern Metropolis is a creative cross-border development strategy that can promote integrated development within the Greater Bay Area. Hong Kong should set higher development standards for the Northern Metropolis, making it a model for future development in Hong Kong and beyond. We commend the government for its work in recent years to streamline the approval processes for building and urban development, including improving the Town Planning Ordinance and drafting dedicated legislation for the Northern Metropolis. The Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design offers the following recommendations:

- (a) The Northern Metropolis should be seen as an opportunity to showcase smart, sustainable and resilient development, promoting excellent urban design, ensuring walkability, liveability, and a high-quality landscaped public realm. This requires not only a focus on urban-rural integration and nature-based solutions, but also innovative urban forms, multi-level linkages, continuous street-level interfaces, supported by an extensive blue-green network that respects the rural landscape including fish ponds and wetlands, enhancing existing villages while creating the Northern Metropolis as a unique and attractive destination.
- (b) The government should formulate urban design guidelines for the Northern Metropolis so that tech companies or developers, upon acquiring land, can follow the government's guidelines to deliver good architectural and urban design.
- (c) Hong Kong needs to attract international professionals to the Northern Metropolis. A high-quality liveable environment is indispensable. We recommend that the government allocate resources to begin planning public facilities within the Northern Metropolis, such as schools, recreational and cultural facilities, parks, clinics, markets, fire stations, etc., to support its development. Land for international schools should be released as early as possible to ensure that when international professionals arrive, the Northern Metropolis is already a highly liveable city that fully caters to the upbringing of their children, without a sense of being pioneers in an undeveloped area.
- (d) The Institute has for many years recommended that the government organise open urban and architectural design competitions for major public facilities. This would, firstly, enhance the overall urban design and liveability of the Northern Metropolis, and secondly, provide a platform for young or creative design firms to showcase their talents, making them more engaged in Hong Kong's urban development and supportive of government policies.
- (e) The approval process under the Buildings Ordinance directly affects the speed at which private buildings – and thus the city – are completed. There is much room for optimisation, and we recommend that the government review it.
- (f) The industry has long criticised the government's procurement system for consultant services, which is dominated by the principle of awarding to the lowest bidder, leading to unhealthy industry development. The catastrophic fire at Wang Fuk Court



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last year laid bare the serious problems with this system. We recommend that the government conduct a serious and thorough review of the current government procurement system. Creating a healthy professional environment would enable consultant companies to provide better services for the Northern Metropolis and accelerate development.

- (g) We recommend that the government review and refine the Competition Ordinance. The Competition Commission currently focuses on price-based competition in the market, while overlooking other forms of competition. For example, consultants competing on the quality of service and design rather than on the level of consultancy fees – this latter approach is now common on the Mainland.



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(C) Enhance housing quality and diversify housing policy

C.1 The Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design (HKIUD) welcomes the Housing Bureau's sustained efforts to reduce the waiting time for subsidised rental housing and to increase total housing supply. Official figures show that the Composite Waiting Time for Subsidised Rental Housing fell to 4.7 years at end-March 2026, the lowest level in over eight years, with the number of applicants on the waiting list reducing by 30 to 40%, while overall public housing production for the coming five years is projected at about 196,000 units, including Light Public Housing. These are important achievements and provide a stronger platform for the next stage of reform. HKIUD considers that the next phase of housing policy should focus not only on quantity and speed of delivery, but also on liveability, design quality, long-term adaptability, and procurement arrangements that support better outcomes. In that context, this submission makes seven recommendations:

- (a) to consolidate gains in supply while improving estate and flat design quality;
- (b) to institutionalise the implementation of the Well-being Design Guide in both new and existing public housing;
- (c) to review space and adaptability standards in light of ageing, home-based work, and changing household needs;
- (d) to update standard designs and procurement mechanisms to support innovation and quality-based consultant selection;
- (e) to broaden housing responses for different income groups, demographic needs and climate change;
- (f) to enhance urban design for HK; and
- (g) to restore heavy building maintenance market.

C.2 HKIUD offers these recommendations in a constructive spirit, with the aim of supporting the Housing Bureau's policy objectives and helping to shape a more liveable, inclusive and future-ready housing system for Hong Kong. Given that property prices in Hong Kong remain very high, the fact that more than 40% of the population lives in public housing is unlikely to change in the short term; therefore, the Housing Bureau's work in this area is crucial. Successful experience in public housing, like Well-being Design Guide can be promoted to private housing.

Consolidate progress on housing supply while strengthening quality

C.3 HKIUD supports the Housing Bureau's objective of reducing waiting time for public rental housing and recognises the importance of the recent improvement in the Composite Waiting Time for Subsidised Rental Housing. Continued delivery discipline remains essential. At the same time, because a substantial proportion of Hong Kong's population lives in public housing, the quality of public housing is also a city-shaping issue. Public housing is not only a social safety net; it is a major



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part of Hong Kong's lived urban environment, affecting public health, family life, ageing, mobility, community cohesion and the city's overall standing. As supply improves, the Bureau has an opportunity to set a stronger benchmark in estate planning, placemaking and design, block design, open space, circulation, environmental comfort, and the everyday usability of flats and communal areas.

- (a) Maintain delivery momentum to ensure that the projected public housing pipeline is completed on schedule.
- (b) Treat urban design and design quality as a core performance objective alongside unit output and programme delivery.
- (c) Require major public housing projects to demonstrate how design decisions improve liveability, accessibility, climate responsiveness and day-to-day estate management.
- (d) Include HKIUD's professional qualifications when hiring consultancy firms or employees (URA's approach).

Institutionalise the Well-being Design Guide in delivery and management

C.4 HKIUD welcomes the Housing Bureau and the Housing Authority's Well-being Design Guide as an important step towards resident-centred public housing. The guide translates well-being into eight concepts and provides a substantial set of strategies and design suggestions for both new estates and improvement work in existing estates. Its value now depends on consistent implementation. The Institute therefore recommends that the Bureau move from a reference-based approach to a more systematic implementation framework, supported by design review, staff training, monitoring and post-occupancy learning. This would help ensure that the guide's concepts are embedded not only in design statements, but also in project briefs, consultant appointments, estate improvement works, and operational decision-making.

- (a) Incorporate the Well-being Design Guide explicitly into project briefs, design submissions and estate improvement programmes.
- (b) Establish a simple monitoring framework with qualitative and quantitative indicators for accessibility, community use, environmental comfort and user satisfaction.
- (c) Introduce post-occupancy evaluation for selected projects so that lessons from completed estates can inform future schemes.
- (d) Provide structured training for Housing Department staff and consultants to support consistent interpretation and application of the guide.

Review space, adaptability and age-friendly design standards

C.5 Hong Kong's housing design standards should respond more directly to present and future patterns of living in an age of climate change. The city's ageing trend is pronounced: official population projections indicate that, excluding foreign domestic helpers, the proportion of persons aged 65 or above is projected to increase from 20.5 per cent in 2021 to 36.0 per cent in 2046. At the same time, working from home or hybrid working has become more common for many households,



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and family structures continue to change. In this context, flat design should place greater emphasis on usability over time, adaptability for changing household needs, and the ability to support ageing in place where appropriate.

C.6 Hong Kong's current per capita living space is low compared to major neighbouring cities such as Shenzhen and Singapore. We recommend that the Housing Bureau review the current standards for public housing to enhance residents' sense of well-being. Reviewing space standard alone is not sufficient; it also calls for careful review of planning standards, layouts, storage, wet areas, circulation, and flexibility in internal adaptation.

- (a) Review standard unit layouts to improve usability, furniture planning, storage, natural ventilation and space for home-based study or work.
- (b) Strengthen age-friendly and barrier-free provisions, especially in kitchens, bathrooms, entrances and circulation areas.
- (c) Facilitate flat adaptation for frail elderly residents and wheelchair users through more flexible detailing and future-proofed service planning.
- (d) Consider pilot projects to test more adaptable layouts for households with changing needs over time.
- (e) Improve building environmental performance

Update standard designs and procurement to support innovation and quality

C.7 Public housing standard designs have delivered efficiency and repeatability for many years, but the next phase of delivery will increasingly rely on Modular Integrated Construction (MiC), Design for Manufacture and Assembly and other high-productivity methods. The Housing Authority has already indicated that at least half of public housing projects scheduled for completion in the second five-year period from 2028/29 to 2032/33 would adopt MiC, with the remainder using Design for Manufacture and Assembly. HKIUD supports this direction but considers that industrialised construction should be used to improve quality and certainty, not to entrench overly rigid design outcomes. The Bureau should therefore review standard designs and consultant procurement arrangements together, so that innovation, better detailing, project-specific adaptation and design quality are treated as complementary objectives rather than trade-offs.

C.8 This same quality-led approach should also be extended to renovation and maintenance procurement for ageing housing stock. Hong Kong already has a substantial and growing stock of older estates and residential buildings requiring more intensive repair, upgrading and safety works. The Housing Bureau is well placed to lead a new procurement model that places greater emphasis on technical competence, safety management, lifecycle value, transparency and resident protection in maintenance and improvement works, rather than allowing price to dominate contractor and consultant selection. Such an approach would help reduce poor-quality outcomes, support more responsible market participation and improve confidence in the long-term stewardship of ageing housing assets.



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- (a) Review standard flat and block designs in light of MiC and other prefabricated delivery methods, with the objective of improving both constructability and resident experience.
- (b) Use digital modelling and data-driven design tools to test alternative layouts, accessibility options, environmental performance and estate-level outcomes before standardisation is fixed.
- (c) Review consultant selection and fee evaluation mechanisms so that design quality, multidisciplinary capability and past performance carry sufficient weight in major public housing projects (e.g., Mainland China fixed fees procurement model).
- (d) Consider design competitions or other quality-led selection approaches for landmark or strategic public housing developments where design excellence can generate wider public value.
- (e) Ensure that urban design expertise is appropriately reflected in consultant teams for estate planning, public realm and community integration work.
- (f) Develop a more robust procurement model for renovation, repair and maintenance of ageing housing stock that gives stronger weight to proven competence, safety performance, supervision arrangements, resident communication and whole-life value, with tighter oversight of contractor performance and clearer accountability across the delivery chain.

Broaden housing responses for demographic, economic and climate change

C.9 Hong Kong's housing system should respond more flexibly to a wider range of household circumstances. Alongside low-income households in need of subsidised rental housing, the city must also plan for the needs of middle-income working households, young people, transient talent, and older residents whose housing preferences and support needs may differ from standard assumptions. A more diversified housing strategy can complement, rather than dilute, the Government's core public housing mission. It can also support talent attraction, social mobility and more balanced communities. In this regard, HKIUD recommends that the Housing Bureau work with relevant bureaux and departments, the Housing Association and URA to examine housing typologies and delivery mechanisms that can better match changing demographic, economic and climate conditions.

C.10 Climate adaptation should also become a more explicit part of housing policy. The Housing Authority has already taken important steps in this direction through micro-climate studies, air ventilation assessments, passive design, urban-greening measures, rainwater-related systems such as the Zero Irrigation System, and the use of environmental assessment tools in new public housing projects. These are worthwhile foundations. However, as Hong Kong faces rising heat stress, heavier rainfall and more frequent extreme weather, climate resilience should be more systematically embedded in the planning, design, retrofitting and management of both new and existing housing stock. The next stage should move beyond individual green features towards a clearer adaptation framework for heat, stormwater, flooding, outdoor comfort, building services resilience and protection of vulnerable residents.

- (a) Plan for a larger supply of suitable subsidised housing for middle-income working households.



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- (b) Explore appropriate forms of short-stay or serviced accommodation that can support talent attraction in sectors important to Hong Kong's future economy.
- (c) Pilot live-work housing or related typologies for young people and the creative economy where there is a sound planning and management case.
- (d) Re-examine housing options for older middle-income residents, including purpose-designed elderly housing models that can complement ageing in place.
- (e) Promote better integration between subsidised and private housing where planning circumstances allow, to reduce social labelling and support more inclusive neighbourhoods.
- (f) Build on the Housing Authority's existing climate-responsive work by establishing a clearer adaptation framework for public housing covering heat mitigation, stormwater and flood resilience, wind comfort, shaded circulation, refuge and recovery arrangements during extreme weather, and protection for elderly and otherwise vulnerable residents.
- (g) Strengthen adaptation measures in existing estates through targeted retrofitting, including better shading and thermal comfort in outdoor common areas, improved drainage and landscape design to cope with intense rainfall, more resilient critical building services, and estate-level prioritisation of interventions based on climate risk and resident vulnerability.

Enhancing urban design for HK

C.11 The "National 15th Five-Year Plan Outline" requires Hong Kong to consolidate and enhance its status as an international financial, shipping, and trading centre, aviation hub and highland for attracting international top-tier talent. These important strategies for boosting economic recovery and sustainable growth require high-quality urban design to create a liveable city to compete with other cities to attract diverse international talents to come to Hong Kong, and also ensure that local professionals are willing to stay. Although international talents are not the targets of public housing, public housing is an important element of Hong Kong's urban landscape and a breeding ground for nurturing grassroots children to become future talents for Hong Kong. Therefore, the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design encourages the Housing Bureau to further improve the urban design of public housing estates to enhance livability of HK.

C.12 We recommend that the Housing Bureau follow the URA's (Urban Renewal Authority) approach by recognising HKIUD's professional qualifications when hiring consultancy firms or employees.



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(D) Support youth development and build a premier hub for high-end talent

D.1 While building a quality liveable city to attract international professionals is important, we also need to nurture local young talent to ensure Hong Kong's sustainability. We focus on recommendations for nurturing local talent in urban development. Chapter 46, Part 12 of the "15th Five-Year Plan Outline" also proposes supporting sound youth development, promoting youth development planning and policies, and creating favourable conditions for youth to grow, mature, excel and contribute.

D.2 Urban development projects such as the Northern Metropolis and the Urban Renewal Authority's Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok redevelopment are expected to require a large number of professionals over the next two to three decades. Hong Kong's consultant companies have taken on many overseas projects in the past. Should the international economic environment recover, demand for professionals in this field is also expected to be high. However, Hong Kong's birth rate has remained persistently low for many years, and the number of university-age students has been declining.

D.3 In fact, the urban design, architecture, engineering, landscape architecture and surveying programmes offered by Hong Kong's tertiary institutions are competitive, attracting many local, Mainland and international students each year. We can leverage this advantage to establish Hong Kong as a base for gathering high-end international talent in urban development. We use the Master's programme in urban design as an example to illustrate this proposal.

D.4 Hong Kong currently has three urban design master's programmes (at the University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and City University of Hong Kong) accredited by the HKIUD. Over the past decade, they have produced nearly 900 graduates. Last year, the HKIUD conducted a questionnaire survey of these graduates through the universities. It was found that over 80% entered urban-development-related fields after graduation, including urban and architectural design, planning, engineering management and property management. This demonstrates that the skills of urban design graduates meet industry needs and are well received by employers.

D.5 Over 90% of the graduates are Mainland Chinese students, but nearly 30% stay in Hong Kong to work. Thus, Hong Kong's urban design programmes have successfully attracted some young Mainland talent to develop their careers here. Given Hong Kong's persistently low birth rate, last year's Policy Address introduced measures to attract young Mainland talent to work and live in Hong Kong. Many Mainland and international graduates of these three programmes have returned to their home countries after graduation. These are ambitious, high-quality young talents whom Hong Kong should make every effort to attract.



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D.6 I believe that apart from urban design, architecture, engineering, landscape architecture and surveying programmes face a similar situation. The Institute recommends that the government's five-year plan should include the following recommendations:

- (a) When developing Hong Kong into an international education hub, the government should prioritise supporting and promoting professional programmes related to urban development and design.
- (b) Provide measures to encourage such Mainland or international students to stay and develop their careers in Hong Kong after graduation. For example, offering short-term summer job positions or contract-based Graduate Professional positions in government departments, and allowing these non-local students to apply.
- (c) Professional qualifications such as HKIE, HKIA, HKIP and HKILA are explicitly recognised when the government recruits civil servants or hires consultant companies, but HKIUD does not yet enjoy the same treatment. The government should take the lead in recognising HKIUD's professional qualifications. This would, firstly, help these young talents (whether local, Mainland or international) to develop their careers in Hong Kong. Secondly, it would help ensure high-quality urban design, building Hong Kong into a liveable, workable and resilient city – one of the best in Asia and beyond.
- (d) In fact, HKIUD is already recognised by some organisations. For example, when the URA hires staff or consultant companies, HKIUD is one of the professional qualifications recognised by the URA. A government consultancy contract from several years ago (related to the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands) also required urban designers to hold HKIUD or equivalent professional qualifications, but this is not a requirement in all government consultancy contracts.
- (e) HKIUD recommends that the government follow the URA's example and recognise HKIUD's professional qualifications when hiring consultant companies for urban design-related work. Since there are currently no urban designer positions in government departments, the government may consider hiring experienced urban designers on a contract basis to join departments in need, such as the Northern Metropolis Co-ordination Office.
- (f) In the longer term, it is recommended that the government review the need to establish urban designer positions in government departments. We recommend that the government implement recommendations 15(a)-(e) in the first five-year plan, review the outcomes, and then consider establishing permanent positions in the second five-year plan.



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(E) Tidy up the building maintenance market to restore integrity and safety to the city

E.1 The Wang Fuk Court fire has had a very negative impact on the image of Hong Kong's professionals and contractors, which is not conducive for Hong Kong professionals to align with national policies and seek opportunities in Belt and Road regions. Those who do not know much about Hong Kong might think that many of Hong Kong's professionals and contractors are so poorly managed and widely involved in improper and illegal activities. In reality, the vast majority of Hong Kong's consultancy firms and contractors are far more competent than those involved in Wan Fuk Court, with much higher safety management capabilities, but they are unable to participate in building maintenance market.

E.2 Bid-rigging syndicates, through illegal means, often operate with impunity, making it difficult for legitimate consultancy firms and contractors to get involved in the building maintenance market. Moreover, too many unscrupulous people in the market, for example, by using improper means to harass Incorporated Owners' committee members who refuse to collude, would deter legitimate consultancy firms to enter into the building maintenance market. It is necessary to crack down the bid-rigging and corrupt syndicates, and restore the building maintenance market to heavy operation.

E.3 At the recent Wang Fuk Court fire inquiry, the ICAC recommended legislating bid-rigging as a criminal offence. HKIUD believe legislation would give the ICAC greater powers to investigate suspected cases. HKIUD recommend that the Government complete the legislative work as soon as possible.

E.4 It is noted that after the Wang Fuk Court fire, the government has undertaken a number of follow-up actions, mainly strengthening government supervision and approval procedures under the Buildings Ordinance. Reviewing the Buildings Ordinance is necessary, but the Buildings Department and the Housing Department are not law enforcement agencies; they lack criminal investigation capabilities and authority, and cannot tackle the illegal activities of corrupt groups alone. A mere review of the Buildings Ordinance will not solve the problem.

E.5 There are many older housing estates in Hong Kong, and there is an urgent need to restore the building maintenance market to normal operations to ensure urban safety.



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(F) Super-Connector, Expanding International Circulation

F.1 Chapter 46, Part 12 of the "15th Five-Year Plan Outline" proposes building a new system for a higher-standard open economy, promoting the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative, and expanding international circulation. In 2020, the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design took the lead in establishing the Greater Bay Area Urban Design Alliance (hereinafter referred to as the Alliance) together with professional associations from Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Macau. The Alliance aims to promote exchange and interaction among professionals involved in urban design in the Greater Bay Area, in line with the government's policy of promoting integrated development within the Greater Bay Area.

F.2 Since its establishment, the Alliance has actively promoted academic and professional exchange on urban design within the Greater Bay Area. Alliance members take turns hosting the biennial Greater Bay Area Urban Design Conference, allowing professionals and scholars involved in urban development in the region to exchange insights. HKIUD has also organised the biennial Greater Bay Area Urban Design Awards since 2020, recognising outstanding urban design projects in the Greater Bay Area to further enhance the region's urban design standards. Another important goal of the Alliance is to establish a "Greater Bay Area Urban Designer" professional qualification mutually recognised by all cities in the Greater Bay Area, promoting regional integration. The Alliance officially launched the "Greater Bay Area Urban Designer Register" on 30 May 2025 and announced the first exemption list (Grandfather List).

F.3 HKIUD has many expatriate members and also many members working in Mainland China or Belt and Road countries. For many years, it has actively acted as a super-connector, providing an interactive platform to connect Mainland and foreign professionals, enhancing Hong Kong's international standing and enabling foreign professionals to gain a more complete understanding of China's urban development.

F.4 If the Hong Kong government's five-year plan includes further strengthening Greater Bay Area integration and jointly building high-quality development of the Belt and Road as national policies, HKIUD will actively cooperate. In the past, when the Hong Kong government visited Belt and Road and ASEAN countries to promote Hong Kong's service industries, it invited representatives from the architecture, planning, landscape, surveying and engineering sectors to join the delegation. We recommend that HKIUD representatives also be invited to participate in the future.



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Appendix 1

Recommendations of the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design on the Hong Kong Government's First Five-Year Plan

15th FYP priority (theme)	Hong Kong application	HKIUD Recommended actions for Hong Kong's first Five-year Plan	Timeframe	Indicative KPIs (examples)
High-quality development; people-centred development	Liveability as a core competitiveness input to attract and retain global talent	Adopt an urban design-led planning approach for strategic areas (e.g., Northern Metropolis; Harbour Metropolis nodes) and embed liveability targets in statutory and project briefs.	2026–2027 (set-up); 2028–2030 (scale)	Urban Design Frameworks completed for all strategic sites before major engineering feasibility; annual public reporting against liveability indicators.
New-type urbanisation; urban renewal implementation mechanisms	Urban renewal that improves public realm quality, accessibility, and community cohesion	Strengthen district-based urban design guidance for renewal areas (e.g., Yau Ma Tei & Mong Kok), with clear public-realm outcomes and design assurance.	2026–2028	% of renewal projects adopting district urban design guidance; public-space provision and accessibility improvements delivered (e.g., barrier-free links completed).
Green and low-carbon transformation; Beautiful China direction	Blue-green infrastructure; microclimate and heat mitigation; low-emission mobility	Mainstream Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and blue-green networks in all major plans; strengthen shaded, walkable and cyclable networks; set clear delivery requirements for consultants.	2026–2030	Tree-canopy coverage and shaded-walkway targets for key corridors; % of projects incorporating NbS measures; mode-share improvements for walking/cycling/public transport.
Resilient cities; drainage and flood prevention; emergency response capacity	Climate adaptation, flood resilience, and safe high-density living	Set place-based resilience standards (flood, heat, critical access); require resilience-by-design in major developments and renewal; strengthen high-rise safety and access planning.	2026–2029	Service-level targets for flood protection at critical nodes; emergency-access compliance rates; annual resilience audit for strategic districts.
Smart / intelligent and refined governance	More transparent, data-informed planning and design delivery	Establish an Urban Design & Liveability Research Centre and a cross-bureau Urban Design Steering Group; publish annual dashboards; improve design assurance and review gates.	2026–2027 (set-up); 2028–2030 (mature)	Centre established and operating; number of projects passing design assurance gates; annual publication of liveability indicators and progress updates.
Higher-standard opening-up;	Position Hong Kong as a super-connector	Support and scale the Greater Bay Area Urban Design Alliance platform; strengthen	2026–2030	Number of exchange events / professional cooperation initiatives; uptake of regional



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Belt and Road; expanding international circulation	for urban design and professional services	outward-facing exchanges and participation in delegations where relevant.		professional recognition mechanisms.
Urban renewal; safe, resilient and liveable cities	“Double ageing” response: safer older buildings and age- friendly neighbourhoods	Adopt an area-based, programme approach to renewal and rehabilitation: prioritise high-risk building clusters; bundle inspections/repairs; expand facilitation for owners’ organisations; and integrate age-friendly public-realm upgrades (step-free access, lift retrofits where feasible, shading/seating, safer crossings) into renewal works.	2026–2030	Number of older buildings brought into compliance through MBIS cycles; reduction in high-risk façade/drainage defects in priority districts; % of renewal projects delivering step-free routes and barrier- free access upgrades; delivery rate of district renewal “pipeline” (projects commenced/completed).
Talent development; youth development planning	Build a talent pipeline for long-horizon urban development demand	Strengthen education-to- employment pathways (internships, graduate placements, contract roles) for built-environment graduates; formalise recognition of urban design professional qualifications.	2026–2030	Graduate placement/internship places created; % of non-local graduates retained; policy statement on recognition/qualification pathways issued.