

Environment planning and building
– Prof. Bernard V. LIM Department of Architecture CUHK

The presenter is the Chairman of the Board of Local Affairs, The Hong Kong Institute of Architects which has in the SARS months supported the Government's objective of bringing about a more hygienic and healthy living environment.

Looking at the problem from a broad perspective, a clean and healthy environment does not mean a garbage-free, or simply a good-looking city. Health, as defined by WHO, is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” A healthy city is not only a place free from dirt, but also an enjoyable environment for the well being of its people. The followings are some key areas of proposed actions to the “Team Clean”:

Lighting and Ventilation

The provision of better natural lighting and ventilation in the design for common areas and residential units of public housing by the Housing Authority is supported. We have supported the Government in taking steps to encourage these initiatives in housing developments through its process of offering incentives to developers.

Public Housing

We support the Government in efforts to further enhance the quality of the living environment of the older public housing estates and encourages the formulation of an action plan for the comprehensive regeneration and improvement of Hong Kong's building stock

Urban Design Quality

The Government should take the initiative to establish an Urban Design Review Board, with input from architects and various professional disciplines. The function of this Board will be to review new development projects in order to enhance the quality of living and promote a living environment

Planning: Urban Design & Density Review

We strongly advocate the concept of Urban Environmental Design in town planning to include considerations such as environmental hygiene, ventilation, lighting and quality open spaces into the urban landscape. Building density should also be reviewed in the light of environmental design criteria and should be potentially lowered if desired in order to strike a balance between development and environmental performance.

Building Research & Development

The present practice of allowing 100% site coverage for podiums up to 15 meters high from street level should be reviewed in order to reduce the effect of the phenomenon known as “urban canyons”. Likewise in large developments, the minimum distance between buildings should be increased to avoid the so-called “wall effect”.

Building Environmental Performance vs. Spatial Efficiency

The ratio of common and private areas in residential developments should be re-examined to allow for reasonable provision of common facilities and in turn improve building environmental performance in terms of natural ventilation, daylight and communal facilities. The Building Authority may consider excluding common areas from GFA calculation, or to require a minimum percentage of floor area to be used for common facilities. This will lead to a shift away from the present, excessive emphasis on floor area efficiency (net to gross floor area ratio) while allowing more design flexibility to promote better environmental performance in buildings and the pursuit of sustainable development goals.

