

香港城市設計學會
Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design

HKIUD's Response on the setting up of the Harbourfront Authority

We fully support the setting up of the Harbourfront Authority to ensure that Hong Kong can truly become a world-class Harbour city.

1. Victoria Harbour is a world-class natural asset viewed from the Peak by visitors and locals, and has been the working harbor for the city over the years. Additionally, the people of Hong Kong aspire to have a vibrant, accessible, and enjoyable harbourfront which increases quality of life while minimizing ecological footprint and improve sustainability.
2. However, the harbourfront is underutilized for two main reasons. Firstly, it has very little convenient access linking with the hinterland. Secondly, even though some parts of the waterfront are used or being planned for use as promenades they are interrupted by incompatible uses such as pumping stations, drainage facilities, car parking and other utility or GIC uses.
3. The harbour planning principles followed by the Harbourfront Commission and formulated initially by the Harbourfront Enhancement Committee are guiding the harbourfront planning but in a piecemeal manner. We not only need principles, but also specialized departments or organisations with the mandates and resources to actually apply such principles to process and implement various projects.
4. With the continued efforts of the Harbourfront Commission and the Harbourfront Enhancement Committee several short-term and temporary quick wins have been achieved such as the temp park at West Kowloon, the Kwun Tong promenade, the popular pet park in Wan Chai and the more recent waterfront promenade linking Hung Hom to Tsim Sha Tsui. However, these efforts remain piecemeal and have taken almost a decade to achieve.
5. There is still a lot more work to be done paying attention to the land water interface to facilitate water borne transport services for inner harbor traffic as well as services to outlying islands, and to promote boating and aquatic sports activities while incurring minimal impact on existing hydrologic and nutrient cycles, and protecting the quality of the larger natural system.
6. Besides the Central Harbourfront, Kai Tak, West Kowloon Cultural District, other areas such as the Island East, Island West, Kowloon East and Kowloon West can also offer continuous waterfront promenades with hinterland to harbourfront access. The vast amount of work yet to come would well justify the early establishment of a dedicated body which can pull together resources now spread out in many different niches in the bureaucracy and to provide the much needed drive and overall strategy.

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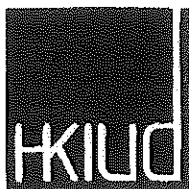


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7. As urban designers we see great potential to bring the city to the harbour and the harbour to the city, and truly make our harbourfront to improve the community quality of life, to enhance public space, a place for the people of all ages with activities 24/7 with opportunities for recreation and leisure, such as a morning jog, an evening stroll, walk their dog, bike along and also enjoy marine activities with water access. Several nodes along the harbourfront, can be developed on both the Hong Kong side and Kowloon side of the harbour, creating both active and passive areas with unique character along the various districts for the public enjoyment of all.
8. We envisage that the Harbourfront Authority, comprising representatives from various sectors of the community, should be in a more convincing position than the present fragmented approach of different departments, to engage all concerned stakeholders to produce a strategic vision to make Hong Kong a world class harbor city.
9. The Harbourfront Authority should be the planning and coordinating body so that both public and private land can become more accessible and effort to be made to ensure that the vision is realized following the Harbourfront Planning Principles. There should also an overall harbourfront plan with specific urban design plan and guidelines for each area to ensure a world class harbourfront with proper land marine interface. The Harbourfront Authority should also be responsible for place making and place marketing by organizing and promoting events on a regular basis.
10. The Harbourfront Authority should also ensure that Victoria Harbour could continue with its functions as a working harbour by maintaining essential cargo working areas, public landing facilities, piers for ferries and public vessels whilst these could be logically grouped together and reorganized as needed to avoid conflicts with the recreational land and other marine uses.
11. Land could be vested to the Authority with the aim of harbourfront enhancement and the creation of new destinations along the waterfront. It is therefore very important that the Harbourfront Authority functions in a transparent way, engaging the community and wins the trust of the community by achieving low hanging fruits while working towards a longer term vision.
12. Whilst the Harbourfront Authority should justifiably have administrative jurisdiction in overseeing the harbourfront area to guide its development, it should not overlap or take over the statutory landuse planning power of the Town Planning Board under the Town Planning Ordinance. Nevertheless, it is envisaged that the Authority could usefully complement and influence the Board's landuse planning work by close liaison with the Board for areas related to the harbourfront.
13. The Harbourfront Authority should be tasked to deliver immediate, short to mid term harbourfront enhancement including programs and events, while working towards a longer-term strategic vision.

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14. The Harbourfront Authority should function in a transparent manner and engage multiple stakeholders while addressing the needs of the community and the public in mind at all times to maintain its credibility. Whereas the Authority might be endowed with many responsibilities as suggested above and substantial power of vetting / approving private projects, it would be advisable to consider establishing an independent board in parallel to evaluate the Harbourfront Authority's performance and also provide an opportunity for any grievances to be heard to keep checks and balances on its function, operation and delivery.
15. The Harbourfront Authority should have an expanded harbour unit with more staff, to coordinate all the relevant departments with power and jurisdiction of the harbourfront given over to the Authority so efforts are not duplicated and inter departmental coordination becomes seamless, for e.g. PlanD, TD, HYD, LCSD, EPD, MD, FHD etc.
16. The Harbourfront Authority due to its multi-disciplinary nature needs to be supported by administrative and professional staff including urban designers to undertake various, planning, urban design, management, vetting and reviewing applications, undertaking project implementation, evaluating and monitoring progress.
17. The Harbourfront Authority will need to work with various stakeholders including the private sector, NGOs and the public to tap into their abilities to transform the harborfront as per the strategic vision and the aspirations of the community.
18. The membership of the Harbourfront Authority should be well represented with various stakeholders including the public, private, professional, academia, community and chaired by a non government person with a deputy who is from the higher levels of Govt. similar to the HC's current mode of operation and the meetings should continue to be open to the public as well.

The Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design

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