The Planning Department commissioned the “Urban Design Guidelines for Hong Kong” (the Study) in early 1998 with a view to preparing a set of guidelines to promote public awareness on design considerations, and to provide a broad framework for urban design assessment.

The overall objective of the Study is to promote Hong Kong’s image as a world-class city and to enhance the quality of our built environment in functional and aesthetic terms at both macro and micro scales.

The Study covers major topics relating to urban design with special emphasis on the following which are relevant to the day-to-day work of town planners and related professionals in Hong Kong:

(a) Urban design concepts and principles

(b) Guidelines on design issues commonly encountered in development proposals

(c) Design guidelines for layout planning

(d) Implementation
Urban Design Concepts and Principles

Urban design is generally accepted as the process of giving design directions to the relationship of buildings and space in response to social and economic forces that impinge upon the city at each stage of its development. In arriving at urban design concepts and principles for Hong Kong, it is important first to recognise that Hong Kong functions within a laissez-faire system, with a small government and an established policy of non-intervention. Hong Kong is also not a city with large coherent areas of quality architecture. On the other hand, Hong Kong has its own attributes and development needs. It is therefore necessary that the urban design concepts and principles for Hong Kong have to take due considerations of the above. To achieve this objective, it is necessary first to understand the major factors that affect physical design context of Hong Kong. These factors include topography, historical development and the major urban design programmes.

Physical Design Context of Hong Kong

Topography

The natural context is a fundamental consideration in a city’s formation. Hong Kong comprises very mountainous terrain, many coastlines and a good natural harbour. This physical context has some important implications. Firstly, it has given rise to the evolution of our city around both sides of Victoria Harbour against a dramatic mountain backdrop. Secondly, the steep topography has channelled other urbanisation in various parts of Hong Kong onto flat and reclaimed land with the mountain ranges providing the natural landscape background to the urban settlements. Thirdly, the mountain ranges give Hong Kong a number of distinct viewsheds. Each viewshied develops in different form or density without necessarily affecting visual environment in the adjacent viewsheds. Examples to illustrate the character of physical context of Hong Kong include the setting of Central and Wanchai as viewed from Tsim Sha Tsui, Ma On Shan New Town against Ma On Shan and Sai Kung viewshed, etc.
Geographical distribution of settlements and prevailing built forms add another dimension to the design context of Hong Kong. Development in Hong Kong was based upon a number of fishing villages and market towns. Then, there was rapid development in the north shore of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula as well as Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan. With the launching of the New Town Programmes, there were more deliberate and organised patterns of development at various parts of the New Territories. The evolution in the geographical pattern of urbanization was accompanied by the changes in built forms. In the early years, urban development consisted of Cantonese, Hakka and Tanka villages of one to two storeys. A need for development in the post war years led to increase in permissible plot ratio and higher density developments. Nowadays, there are still needs to develop more high-rise buildings to cater for population pressure and economic growth and also in recognition of Hong Kong’s entrepreneurial spirit.

### Historical Development

Taking into account the above, the urban design attributes of Hong Kong can be viewed at three levels:

(a) At the macro level is the urban design relationship between the built form (buildings, space and infrastructures) and its natural setting (mountains, water and green space) which together form the ‘Image of the City’. Elements include ridgelines, urban form, harbour, gateways, functional districts, etc.

(b) At the intermediate level is the relationship between buildings, buildings to space, and buildings/space to streets. Attributes include composition of buildings, massing and heights, urban architecture, landmarks, open space, linkages, pedestrian networks, view corridors, etc.

(c) At the micro level is the relationship between the users (human beings) and the built environment. It is concerned with user’s perception and experience of people with their daily environment. Attributes include human scale, transition, harmony, street furniture, streetscape and others.

### Urban Design Attributes of Hong Kong

Urban design guidelines should be formulated for enhancement of the above attributes to improve livability and environmental quality of Hong Kong. From the above, the Study establishes the definition and urban design principles to guide future development of Hong Kong.
Definition of Urban Design

“Urban Design is the use of physical design methods and development processes to create a high quality, sustainable total built environment that respects the spirit of the place and public interest of Hong Kong.”

or more appropriate:

“Urban design aims to enhance the quality of the living conditions in Hong Kong through a comprehensive strategy for improving the public realm, urban amenities and cultural facilities, improving the quality of development, and ensuring that development is suitable for its setting, so as to improve the urban competitiveness of Hong Kong and to make it a better place in which to live.”

Urban Design Concepts and Principles

In this connection, urban design principles for Hong Kong should include:

- **Ensure high quality:** One of the key objectives of urban design is to improve the quality of life by providing a high quality built environment commensurate with the natural setting.

- **Embrace flexibility:** Guidelines of urban design need to be robust and endure over time.

- **Encourage dynamism:** Hong Kong’s spirit is based on a pluralism and dynamism, and any guidelines should seek to encourage, not stifle this excitement.

To achieve these principles, the Study prepares a collection of commonly encountered urban design terms/concepts with illustrations in the Hong Kong context and overseas. These are contained in Final Report.

Based on the foregoing discussions, it is considered that the direction of urban design in Hong Kong should specifically focus on the basics of urban design, i.e. by striving to ensure a high quality of built environment and providing a high quality of life.
Public consultations were held to obtain general agreement by the community on the major urban design issues of Hong Kong, including development height profile, waterfront development, cityscape, pedestrian environment and mitigation against noise and air pollution from road traffic. Broad design guidelines were then formulated on these issues for public consultation. It was commonly agreed that apart from the issue of preservation of views to ridgelines and achievement of a well-designed waterfront, the guidelines for most of the urban design issues could be in advisory form and be applied administratively when appropriate. The recommended guidelines are broad brush and separate studies will be necessary for detailed design items. The generally agreed design guidelines are presented below.

- Provide relief and diversity in height and massing of developments in different localities (detailed studies should be carried out for individual areas where necessary).

- Preserve low density areas to enhance diversity in the urban core and introduce interesting landscape, and built forms where appropriate.

- Protect existing view corridors to ridgelines and provide visual access to the countryside.

- Retain and enhance the district character of specific localities. Consider suitable height control, setbacks and tree preservation where appropriate.

### Development Height Profile

#### a) Height Profile for Inner Areas of Hong Kong and Kowloon

![Image of high density development and Garden Estates](image)
b) Height Profile for New Towns

- New developments should respond to the unique topographical and landscape setting of a new town. View corridors / breezeways to mountain backdrop or waterbody should be maintained.

- Respect and integrate with low-rise neighbouring developments by stepping down building height. Use lower buildings such as community halls, schools, etc. as interface and as visual and spatial relief in the urban core.

- Developments should be compatible with their context. Out-of-context “sore thumb” developments should be avoided, especially at the periphery of a new town.

- Create landmarks at the civic / commercial centres or focal points where appropriate.

- Where appropriate, adopt a coherent gradation in building height profile from the high density core area to the fringe / low density areas.
Urban Design Guidelines for Hong Kong

- Building height and mass should be harmonised with the rural setting. Out-of-context “sore thumb” developments should be avoided.

- Define distinct viewsheds according to major ridgelines. Determine appropriate height profile within individual viewshed.

- Encourage diversity in building heights in new low-rise developments to add variety and interest to the suburban built form. Avoid stereotype or monotonous developments.

- On the waterfront, particularly Victoria Harbour which is the “Front Elevation of Hong Kong”, a visually interesting water edge should be created both with activities at promenade level and with innovative waterfront building design. The recommendations of the Town Planning Board’s “Vision & Goals for Victoria Harbour” should be followed.

- See discussion below.

Waterfront Development

Waterfront Development

Incompatible Building Mass

C) Height Profile for Rural Areas

D) Height Profile for Areas around Victoria Harbour
• Create an active waterfront with diversity in activities and functions including restaurants, bars, retail facilities, promenades and piers. Add well-designed landscaping and street furniture where appropriate.

• Provide promenades along the waterfront and avoid incompatible land uses. Sites along the waterfront should be reserved for cultural, tourism-related, recreational and retail activities.

• Encourage diversity in building mass to avoid a monotonous harbourfront image. The massing should create points of interests and nodes.

• Introduce landmarks at suitable locations, for example at the harbour entrance or to mark a district. Well-designed low-rise buildings can also achieve this goal on the waterfront such as the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre New Wing in Wan Chai.

• Visual access should be maintained to the waterfront by preserving and providing additional view corridors. This will also allow visual permeability from the waterfront into the inner areas and enhance the micro-climate of inner areas by facilitating air movement through breezeways.
Avoid the "Wall" effect and create a varying building height profile where appropriate. Taller developments should be located inland, with lower developments on the waterfront. In new developed areas, consideration should be given to designation of coastal sites for low density development.

Maximise accessibility to the waterfront for pedestrians (including persons with disabilities) by providing physical linkages from the urban core areas.

Avoid major infrastructure projects on the waterfront which create a visual and physical barrier to the open water. Roads along the waterfront should be avoided where practicable.
Encourage well landscaped green open spaces that meet the functional requirements for active and passive recreational uses.

Provide a balanced mix of hard and soft landscape. Detailed micro-scale landscape design should be site specific to maximise legibility, to create a comfortable environment and to green the city.

Provide focal landmark features in open spaces to achieve orientation and create a sense of place.

Maximise public accessibility to open spaces with easy pedestrian circulation and minimum interface with roads. Visual linkage along view corridors could help orientate pedestrians and direct them to the open space facilities. View corridors should be landscaped wherever practicable.

Introduce more “green” spaces at street level. Encourage developments to allocate more ground level space for landscaping and provide more setbacks (e.g. less podium coverage) for tree planting. Where practicable, provide more well landscaped green areas and amenity strips along major transport corridors, street frontages and walkways.
b) Conservation of Heritage Buildings/ Local Characters

- Encourage conservation of heritage, architectural, and culturally significant buildings to enhance cultural and historical continuity in Hong Kong. Provide or preserve suitable settings for heritage buildings.

- Suitable settings should be created for individual or clusters of heritage buildings. Building heights should generally step down towards these heritage buildings.

- Maximise the provision of well landscaped open space at ground, podium, and roof levels. This will both serve the open space users as well as viewers overlooking the green environment.

- Minimise negative impact of new neighbouring development. For example, terraced and landscaped podium could be adopted to integrate more coherently with scale and possibly the character of a heritage building.

- Local districts have their own unique cultural activities, physical and historical characters. In redevelopment, retain and enhance these activities and characters as far as possible. The step-streets of Central, the overhead signage of Tsim Sha Tsui and the retail activities at Temple Street are examples of characteristics worth preserving.
c) Stilted Structures

- Minimise the negative visual impact of these supporting structures by using infill panels such as brick or ornate metal screens.
- Introduce suitable landscaping with tall trees and hanging plants to screen the stilted structures.

Pedestrian Environment
a) Pedestrian Circulation

- Provide pedestrian priority facilities, such as pedestrianised streets and underground/semi-submerged roads, to encourage segregation of vehicles and pedestrians where appropriate.

- Integrate the provision of pedestrian linkages with that of open space networks.
- Introduce traffic calming measures such as speed bumps and raised crossings to minimise the conflict between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Provide safe, clean, accessible and interesting environments with due consideration to micro-climate for pedestrian circulation. Ease of access should be ensured for persons with disabilities.
- Provide direct pedestrian linkages between activity nodes and places of interest. Enhance the attractiveness of these linkages by providing active frontage and wider streets interspersed with open spaces and green nodes. For ground level and underground pedestrian passages, more lively and green environment should be provided.

- Provide ramps for the circulation of the elderly, persons with disabilities, parents with children, etc.

- Provide high quality pavement surfaces such as patterned tiles, brick paving, or stone finish. The provision of street furniture should complement the character of the area or the adjacent developments. Avoid using standardised specifications for designs and materials especially in business and tourist areas.

- Reduce ground coverage of podium to allow more open space at grade and for street activities. Allow for small-scale focal landmarks such as the entrance, sculptures or landscape features as memorable landmarks at street level.
• Roadside planting should be encouraged. Provide attractive hard and soft landscaping to improve the quality of the street environment. Soften the hard edges with landscaping (e.g. tree planting and shrub beds where appropriate).

• Due considerations should be made for persons with disabilities in the design of crossings, tactile paving, braille information boards etc. Street furniture should also cater for the needs of persons with disabilities and the elderly.

• Introduce internal public circulation on “desire lines” to connect popular destinations. These linkages should be freely accessible to the public, should be of suitable scale depending on pedestrian flow, and should have natural light where possible.

• Encourage the provision of active street frontages and various street activities, such as shop fronts, bars, cafes at street level and human scale. Avoid locating mechanical plant rooms or “dead elevations” on these frontages.

• Provide non-sensitive buildings or setbacks to create buffers between roads (pollution source) and sensitive receivers. Office buildings, enclosed sports halls, retail malls, etc can be used as buffers.

• Priority should be given to controlling pollution at source. Measures such as the control of vehicles’ emissions, provision of submerged or semi-submerged roads, and pedestrianisation can help achieve this goal.
Enhance the micro-climate of the urban environment by providing breezeways to facilitate better air circulation. Breezeways should be positioned to take advantage of the natural air movement directions which may vary with season.

Acoustic barriers need to be visually unobtrusive. These elements could have a negative visual impact on the streetscape. Therefore, where appropriate the screens could be incorporated in a landscaping scheme, or be made of a transparent material (e.g. glass) to minimise their visual impacts.

Provide enclosure of noise source where feasible.

Provide sound absorbing materials for roads.
For the more contentious issues like the preservation of views to ridgelines and the approach to achieve well-designed waterfront developments around Victoria Harbour, the Study has undertaken some broad analysis.

**Preservation of Views to Ridgelines/Peaks**

Seven vantage points are established around Victoria Harbour as a start for consideration of views to ridgelines/peaks.

They include:

(a) Viewing from Kowloon towards the Hong Kong Island ridgelines / peaks

- **VP1** - Proposed Cultural and Arts District, West Kowloon Reclamation;
- **VP2** - Cultural Complex, Tsim Sha Tsui; and
- **VP3** - Proposed Promenade, South East Kowloon Development.

(b) Viewing from Hong Kong Island towards the Kowloon ridgelines / peaks

- **VP4** - Quarry Bay Park, Quarry Bay;
- **VP5** - Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre New Wing, Wan Chai; and
- **VP6** - Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park, Sai Ying Pun.

(c) Viewing from Victoria Peak

- **VP7** - Lion Pavilion, The Peak

Taking into account the committed/planned developments / redevelopments, the existing and future views from these seven vantage points to ridgelines/peaks on the other side of the harbour are examined. View corridors from the vantage points are then established to preserve views to the remaining ridgelines.
Proposed Vantage Points
Urban Design Guidelines for Hong Kong

Panoramic View from Cultural Complex, Tsim Sha Tsui to Central Hong Kong Island
VP2 from Tsim Sha Tsui towards Central is illustrated as an example. Taking into account the committed / planned developments / redevelopments known at this stage, some parts of the ridgelines have already been breached by existing high-rise developments. Only those ridgelines/peaks coloured red remain and could potentially be preserved.
The figure shows the extent of ridgelines/peaks on Hong Kong Island that are still visible from Cultural Complex, Tsim Sha Tsui.

The feedback from public consultation exercise has confirmed that views to ridgelines/peaks are worthy of preservation.
Approaches adopted in considering height profiles on both sides of Victoria Harbour to preserve views to ridgelines include the following points:

• The Metroplan (1991) guidelines could be used as a starting point in the consideration on preservation of ridgelines/peaks.

• Allow flexibility for relaxation on individual merits for punctuation effects at suitable locations.

• Select vantage points on the basis of accessibility and popularity to the public at large.

• Views from famous tourist spots should be preserved.

• Preserve all ridgelines/peaks with distinguished identity as far as possible, and with agreement by the community at large.

• Avoid loss of development plot ratio on private land.

• Allow high-rise nodes at selected strategic locations depending on the nature of land uses, location and impact on ridgelines preservation.
On the basis of the aforementioned approaches, the conceptual city height profile on both sides of Victoria Harbour with reference to the seven possible vantage points is shown in the adjacent figure.

Hong Kong side - Areas within the view corridors (i.e. the shaded blue areas) may have allowable heights ranging between 30 to 40 storeys on the waterfront and above 60 storeys inland. Areas outside the view corridors could have no height restrictions (Notes 1 and 2). There is no loss of development plot ratio (Note 3).

Kowloon side - Similarly, allowable heights for areas within view corridors may range between 30 to 40 storeys on the waterfront and above 60 storeys inland. Areas outside the view corridors would have no height restrictions (Notes 1 and 2). There is no loss of development plot ratio (Note 4).

High rise node - Super skyscrapers could be allowed at the southern tip of the Kowloon peninsula (Note 1).

Note 1: Waterfront areas could be subject to special design consideration
Note 2: Areas within Special Control Areas (e.g. Happy Valley and Yau Yat Tsuen may have separate height or number of storey restrictions
Note 3: Assuming view from South East Kowloon to Mount Cameron not for preservation
Note 4: Assuming view from Wan Chai to Tsz Wan Shan not for preservation
To ensure that the waterfront of Victoria Harbour continues to project the unique identity of Hong Kong, visually interesting water edges should be maintained with innovative building design encouraged. In this connection, the Town Planning Board has published a statement on "Vision & Goals for Victoria Harbour" to call for effort to enhance the images of Victoria Harbour.

Achievement of Well-designed Waterfronts

- To maintain visually interesting water edges
- To enhance the image of Victoria Harbour
- To encourage innovative building design
In order to achieve Town Planning Board’s "Vision & Goals for Victoria Harbour", one option is to prescribe pre-determined development parameters, which may turn out to be not flexible enough for the specific nature of proposed developments. An alternative is not to have prescribed parameters, but to designate waterfront areas along Victoria Harbour for special design consideration. 

The figure shows the possible location of the waterfront areas to be subject to special design consideration. The recommended design guidelines mentioned before can serve as useful reference for assessment.

The design of waterfront developments could be considered by the Town Planning Board as part of the current statutory planning and development control process. The Board could assess the design of waterfront developments and at the same time evaluate the impact of development proposals on views to ridgelines. The justification for development of super skyscrapers to serve as landmarks at the waterfront could also be scrutinised.

Alternatively, developments within the areas could be considered by a special design panel, possibly under the Town Planning Board, with expertise from the relevant professions.
An Objectives-Based Approach to Layout Planning

It is first important to define the objectives to be achieved by the layout plan after careful analysis of the opportunities and constraints of the development area and its context. A number of urban design objectives has been identified below which forms the basis of layout planning for various land uses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Protect and enhance the characteristics which give the city its unique recognisable image. For example in the Metro area the natural setting consists of: (A) Mountain Backdrop and (B) Water front.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Circulation</td>
<td>Create a safe, convenient, comfortable and legible pedestrian circulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicular Circulation</td>
<td>Create a legible user-friendly efficient transport network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>Create coherent open space framework and define urban spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>Conservation of distinct districts, character areas, and buildings of historical, cultural, or social value.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above objectives should be considered in all development proposals to see if they are applicable to the context. In general, aspects for consideration in considering and preparing layout plans include building forms, building height, podium and setback, orientation and alignment of building blocks, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, car parking provision, landscaping and open space provision. They are more or less relevant but can be applied in different ways and in different contexts. Analytical work should therefore come first as it is a fundamentally important stage for designers and town planners in producing layout plans.

The following examples are for illustrative purpose with notional sketch layout plans and 3-dimensional drawings.
### Commercial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>Project positive, recognisable image for district and city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Circulation</td>
<td>Create safe, interesting and comfortable circulation routes for pedestrians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicular Circulation</td>
<td>Create an efficient vehicular circulation system to minimise negative impact of vehicles on pedestrians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Provide adequate and conveniently accessible parking facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Quality</td>
<td>Achieve acceptable air quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streetscape</td>
<td>Maintain the vibrant streetscape character.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## High Density Residential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Issue</strong></th>
<th><strong>Objectives</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Optimise the size of the development to maximise the opportunities available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Height</td>
<td>Minimise negative impact of development height on surrounding areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Circulation</td>
<td>Create an efficient, comfortable, safe and convenient pedestrian circulation system throughout the neighbourhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicular Circulation</td>
<td>Create a non-intrusive vehicular circulation system with minimal impact on pedestrian circulation. Provide adequate and easily accessible parking facilities for residents’ vehicles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Choose a suitable location for density residential blocks to minimise the negative visual, noise and air quality impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood and Community</td>
<td>Create self-contained neighbourhoods and communities to encourage residents’ civic pride and sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space</td>
<td>Provide open space which is usable, accessible and valuable to residents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Urban Design Guidelines for Hong Kong

- BREEZEWAYS
- OPEN SPACE AND LINKAGES
- LANDMARKS ON WATERFRONT
- STEPPED BUILDING HEIGHT PROFILE
- PUBLIC ACCESS TO AND ALONG WATERFRONT
- BUILDINGS DEFINE SPACE
- VIEW CORRIDORS
- SEGREGATE VEHICLES AND PEDESTRIANS
- RECOGNISABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Buildings define space, recognisable neighbourhoods, landmarks on waterfront.
### Low Density Residential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Create a neighbourhood identity and community spirit within the development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Circulation</td>
<td>Create a safe environment for pedestrians and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicular Circulation</td>
<td>Minimise negative impacts of vehicular movement to ensure a safe, clean and pleasant environment for residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambience</td>
<td>Create an ambience to reinforce the relaxed rural life-style with open space and landscaping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Impact</td>
<td>Minimise negative impacts on surrounding natural environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Diagram of Low Density Residential Plan](image-url)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Impact</td>
<td>Locate industry to ensure minimal negative impacts on surroundings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicular Circulation</td>
<td>Create an efficient layout for internal circulation to project a positive image of industrial area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Circulation</td>
<td>Provide safe and efficient pedestrian networks to and through an industrial development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>Maximise available and usable open space for workforce.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BREEZEWAYS

MAXIMISE VIEWS OVER LOW INDUSTRIAL PARKS

FOCUS / LANDMARK

ROAD HIERARCHY

GOOD PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

PUBLIC ACCESS TO AND ALONG WATERFRONT

OPEN SPACE LINKAGES

LANDSCAPE BUFFER ZONES

POSITIVE IMAGE
Implementation

Existing Implementation Mechanism in Hong Kong

Urban design guidelines can be implemented through the following means:

### Statutory means

(i) regulation of building heights, site coverage, plot ratios, etc. through stipulation of these parameters on outline zoning plans;

(ii) control on layout and design of buildings through appropriate zonings such as “Comprehensive Development Area” on outline zoning plans;

(iii) control on individual building designs via Section 16 (1)(g) of the Buildings Ordinance;

### Administrative means

(iv) advise on urban design aspects through the lease of the site. Lease conditions could include restrictions on design and disposition of buildings, building heights, types of dwelling, landscaping works, etc.; and

(v) undertaking various urban design studies (e.g. Urban Design and Landscape Framework of Metroplan) at both strategic and district levels to set out guidance on good urban design practice for developments to incorporate in their design.

Considering the public views collected, the Study suggests generally to rely on the existing mechanism for implementing the urban design guidelines. The following approaches for implementation are recommended:

Recommended Advisory Guidelines on the Major Urban Design Issues

For the major urban design issues of development height profile, waterfront development, cityscape, pedestrian environment and mitigation against noise and air pollution from road traffic, the guidelines are recommended to be applied on an advisory basis through administrative measures. Designers in both public and private sectors are encouraged to incorporate the guidelines in their planning and design work. Where appropriate, these guidelines can be used to comment on designs submitted for consideration.

To promulgate these guidelines for implementation, it is recommended that the guidelines should be incorporated into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG). The purpose of HKPSG is to provide guidelines for improving the environmental quality, conserving landscape and heritage, with a view to raising the quality of life of Hong Kong residents. It has long been used as a working manual in land use planning and is well known to the public and the professionals in the planning and development fields. Incorporating the advisory guidelines will make the HKPSG more comprehensive and complete.

The guidelines should not be applied in an inflexible manner. Instead, it should be used flexibly on a performance oriented basis for the best overall environmental benefit.

Preservation of Views to Ridgelines around Victoria Harbour

Based on the majority views, statutory regulatory measures are necessary in achieving the objective of preserving views to ridgelines as administrative measures have not found to be effective in the past. The Study suggests to accept the public
view to stipulate height limits on relevant outline zoning plans, with flexibility to relax height limits on individual merits to preserve views to ridgelines. It is considered that outline zoning plan which is an existing statutory regulating tool will require no extra legislative measure to implement. Height limits can also provide clear guidelines and certainty for developers and designers. Provision can be included in outline zoning plans for relaxation of the height limits on individual merits. As the preparation and revision of outline zoning plans involve publication and objection procedures, there is some degree of community involvement in the mechanism.

Various details on the extent of ridgelines for preservation, the area covered (i.e. the view corridor) and the height limits can be considered in the context of individual outline zoning plans, having regard to the local ground level environment and circumstances.

For vantage points, all the seven vantage points proposed, which are the existing and planned popular spots, are suggested to be retained for the purpose of preservation of views to ridgelines during the consideration of land use proposals in the outline zoning plan content. Other suitable vantage points in a more local context could also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Regarding the designation of high-rise node, West Kowloon Reclamation South / Tsim Sha Tsui area will emerge as such from approved and committed development proposals. As there was no agreement on high-rise node in the public consultation, it is suggested that before the community has some degree of consensus on this, no additional high-rise nodes should be designated outside West Kowloon Reclamation South / Tsim Sha Tsui.

**Achievement of Well-Designed Waterfront**

For waterfront developments, it is important to meet the aspiration of the community to achieve good designs and at the same time to maintain design freedom which is necessary for creativity. For the benefits as stated in above, the outline zoning plan is considered to be the most appropriate means to designate waterfront areas for design considerations.

It is also recommended that details on the extent of waterfront that would be subject to design considerations can be looked under the context of individual outline zoning plan. Also, it is suggested that the outline zoning plans should only include broad design parameters such as height, massing and site coverage for waterfront developments. Details of building forms, facade treatment, and spatial relationship should be left to the building designers.

Similar to the height limits on outline zoning plans, waterfront developments falling within the designated waterfront areas will need to comply with the broad design parameters stipulated on the outline zoning plans. Those which intend to depart from the broad design parameters will need to apply to the Town Planning Board.

On consideration of designs, the Study suggests to take the public view for a special design panel to be set up under the Town Planning Board as well as to extend the membership of the panel by inviting representatives from various design professions to join the panel. The issue of its role and relationship with advisory or making decisions on behalf of the Town Planning Board can be left to the deliberation of the Town Planning Board.
Future direction for Effectively Implementing Urban Design Guidelines

Although the Study recommends to implement the urban design guidelines largely through the existing system, there is still a need to promote the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms for improving urban design prospects in Hong Kong.

The Study suggests the following points for further consideration:

(i) To improve urban design in Hong Kong, both the public and private sectors must be convinced of the economic and social merits of good urban design (in the broader sense) to make Hong Kong to be a more competitive international city. This can be accomplished through formal channels (e.g. Housing Planning and Lands Bureau, Planning Department and Town Planning Board) and informal pressure groups (e.g. professionals, academics, community, etc.). Policy support is particularly essential both from the Administration and the Executive Council.

(ii) The political parties should be made aware of the broader economic, social and physical implications of urban design to improve the quality of life for Hong Kong so as to have their support in legislation and funding allocations. The District Councils could be given opportunities to take a higher profile in the implementation of urban design related projects and programmes.

(iii) The active involvement of pressure groups can facilitate the implementation of urban design ideas in Hong Kong. The government should take a lead role in organizing regular forums and exhibitions to inform the concerned parties or representatives of pressure groups and to invite their contributions in the urban design implementation process.

(iv) More flexible urban design ‘incentive’ approaches (such as plot ratio bonus for public open space, connections, etc.) should be further explored to foster better urban design consideration in development process.

(v) Formulation of a comprehensive urban design strategy with attainable economic, social and physical benefits under the guidance of an appropriate authority. A strategic planning authority or the Town Planning Board could be invited to formulate and implement the strategy.

(vi) Introduction of urban design plans at the district level to supplement but not to replace the existing outline zoning plans to realize the concepts of the urban design principles and to enhance the urban qualities of the districts. Urban design plans could identify specific economic, social and physical constraints and opportunities of planned programmes and projects at district. These plans could serve as development guide for facilitating desirable private developments and joint ventures including public facilities by the private sectors. The authority could be the same strategic planning authority or the Town Planning Board responsible for the formulation and guidance of the proposed comprehensive urban design strategy.

(vii) There should be more effective co-ordination of public improvement projects, while private urban design projects could be properly given with suitable incentives and guidance. With the introduction of urban design plans, projects from conservation districts, tourist amenities to improved street furnishings could be undertaken by the public sector, private or joint venture initiatives. The appropriate authority could be responsible to promote sponsor or effectively co-ordinate the development of these projects while safeguarding public interest.