This subject paper is intended to be a research paper delving into different views and analyses from various sources. The views and analyses as contained in this paper are intended to stimulate public discussion and input to the planning process of the "HK2030 Study" and do not necessarily represent the views of the HKSARG.

WORKING PAPER No. 36
INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY TOWN IN HONG KONG

Purposes

1. This paper aims at the following:-

   (a) to set out the main characteristics of a university town in Hong Kong;
   (b) to explore the opportunity for developing a university town in Hong Kong and assess the land requirement; and
   (c) to identify possible areas for further study.

Background

2. The success of an international city has to build on, among others, the availability of highly educated and skilled people. The realization of this vision depends on a strong education sector.

3. During the earlier public consultations of HK 2030 Study, some people suggested that to enhance Hong Kong’s competitiveness as a knowledge-based economy, the Government should devote more efforts to upgrade its ‘software’, particularly the quality of education and training for local and overseas students, and attract skilled professionals to study and work in Hong Kong. In HK 2030 Study, we have assessed the long-term planning and land use implications for major facilities. As such, while the “software” is being handled by the education sector, we need to explore the concept for developing a university town in Hong Kong and review the long-term land requirement in the context of HK 2030 Study.
Main Characteristics of University Town

4. There has been a long history of towns growing up around and because of universities. These may date back several centuries, like the famous Oxford and Cambridge in the UK, or in somewhat more modern terms, Stanford in the US. In the past decade, rapid development of university towns has been observed in Mainland China and it is noted that about 50 university towns have been built in different cities.

5. The development of university towns can mainly be categorised into two different modes. One is organic evolution and the other is government promotion. Traditional university towns such as Stanford, Cambridge and Oxford are representatives of the former mode. University graduates stayed and, in modern times, founded a range of high-tech companies around the university. These economic activities help attract related developments and supporting facilities, resulting in an increase of population and a gradual formation of a township.

6. The university town of Tsukuba in Japan and the newly built university towns in Mainland China are mainly established by the promotion of the government. They are formed by purpose-built campuses for the clustering of universities to achieve certain objectives, such as relocation and expansion of universities, promotion of high-tech industries, etc.

7. Irrespective of their mode of development, university towns in general share one or more of the following features:

- a clustering of education, research institutions and start-up companies;
- the nurturing of a number of high-tech companies and R&D activities in the surrounding area;
- the occupying of a large site area, ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand hectares, with a wide range of supporting facilities such as housing, shops, banks, entertainment and exhibition facilities;
- a high degree of facility sharing, including sharing among the education
institutes, the companies and the people living in the town; and

- the attraction of talents and international investments, thus enhancing the city’s economic status and image.

Opportunity For Developing University Town In Hong Kong

8. Currently, there are eight universities in Hong Kong and their sizes range from 6 ha (City University) to 110 ha (Chinese University of Hong Kong). Some of them, in particular those located in the urban area, may not have sufficient space for further development and expansion.

9. Taking into consideration the limited land resources and the unique characteristics of Hong Kong, the scope and functions of the university town might be different from those in western countries and the Mainland. The idea of a university town in Hong Kong is mainly to provide a suitable location for the future development and expansion of our universities, so that they may further upgrade their facilities and learning environment, and improve the quality of education.

10. Notwithstanding possible differences in the development pattern, it is envisaged that by means of the university town, Hong Kong’s role as an international city could be enhanced by training more highly educated and skilled people and attracting more talents to Hong Kong to meet the needs of local and international firms.

11. The envisaged university town could be a well designed development cluster comprising teaching campuses as well as a mix of housing, shops, parks and other supporting facilities that can enrich campus life and foster a learning atmosphere. Depending on the nature of the universities to be located there, complementary facilities such as R&D facilities, performing centres, exhibition halls, museums and galleries etc. could be provided. This could provide a good opportunity for Hong Kong to nurture R&D activities.

12. Development of a university town as a long-term strategy could also enhance Hong

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2 Polytechnic University - 10 ha; City University – 6 ha; University of Hong Kong - 37 ha. Larger sites are found only in Hong Kong University of Science and Technology - 60ha; and Chinese University - 110 ha.
Kong’s position as a center for higher education. Being a gateway to Mainland China, Hong Kong can capitalize on its unique geographic advantage and academic freedom to attain a niche in education and research, and eventually attract talented scholars and students from both Mainland China and overseas countries, in pursuit of international excellence.

**Potential Sites for University Town**

**Site Requirement**

13. For a scoping exercise to identify and select a potential site for the university town in Hong Kong, we consider the following criteria relevant as assumptions:-

a) about 30-40 ha. of developable land to accommodate core facilities\(^3\) (such as academic buildings, campus facilities, residential hostels and quarters, etc.);

b) good environment and tranquil setting to enable establishment of a prestigious identity for the university town;

c) well served by public transport, especially rail transport;

d) additional space for possible future expansion;

e) residential sites nearby to provide, in addition to hostels and quarters, off-campus accommodation, particularly for staff, workers employed in the university and students with families; and

f) complementary development of related uses.

14. In recognition of the large site requirement for a university town and the limited scope for additional large-scale development to be placed in close proximity to the existing universities, some possible sites in the New Territories such as Kwu Tung or Kam Tin/Au Tau were identified as possible areas for further examination.

\(^3\) 30 ha developable land is the minimum land requirement to accommodate the core campus facilities, taking into account the site area of the existing universities.
Kwu Tung North

15. Kwu Tung North is intended to be developed as a NDA taking advantage of its proximity to Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau boundary crossings. The planned Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line will further enhance the accessibility. Upon the completion of the Spur Line by 2007 and the future Kwu Tung Station, Kwu Tung North NDA will only be one stop to Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang and two stops to Lo Wu.

16. Kwu Tung North NDA is located in a rural setting with rich natural landscape features and surrounded by agricultural land and green belt. The area is also endowed with rich ecological resources, for instance, the Long Valley. The relatively unspoilt and unpolluted natural environment offers tremendous opportunities for recreation and eco-tourism. Apart from residential development, part of the NDA could also be identified for large-scale education use.

17. North East New Territories is developing into a technology hub of the territory. Locating the university town in Kwu Tung North NDA area will complement and further enhance this hi-tech corridor. In addition, its proximity to the boundary crossings might facilitate Mainland students, say from Shenzhen to study in the university.

Kam Tin / Au Tau

18. Kam Tin/Au Tau is identified as a strategic growth area under the Planning and Development Study on North West New Territories. The NDA is in close proximity to rich natural and cultural heritage. The ecologically significant fishponds, Lam Tsuen Country Park and Mai Po Nature Reserve are within close distance. The NDA is also endowed with rich cultural heritage assets, eg. the indigenous walled villages and ‘fung shui’ woodlands. Traditionally, Kam Tin is renowned for its status of the home of scholars.

19. The development of the Kam Tin/Au Tau NDA is highly constrained by the stringent airport height restriction, which has limited development to medium density. Medium density development in a discrete valley provides an ideal setting for a university town. Given the constraints of Kam Tin/Au
Tau, it may be more suitable to develop the area as a university town instead of residential area.

20. While Kwu Tung North and Kam Tin/Au Tau are considered as having the potential for developing a university town, it should be emphasized that the development of the university town should be integrated with the development of the NDA and more detailed studies are required to assess the development feasibility of these sites.

Further Study

21. The preliminary assessment of this report only serves as inputs for examining the feasibility of the university town concept. We hope that in the long term, a university town can contribute to expanding and upgrading the higher education sector and enhancing the general competitiveness of Hong Kong. If the concept of university town is considered worthwhile for further exploration, more detailed studies on development parameters and technical feasibility will be carried out in due course.

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