

Quest for a Tool to Help Plan a Better Built Environment for Hong Kong

Vincent Cheung

Hong Kong Planning Department

Hong Kong is a high-rise, high-density city. Planners in Hong Kong are facing a dilemma -- maximizing land uses to meeting the increasing demand on the one hand and promoting a better environment on the other.

On strategic level, shall we concentrate developments by increasing the intensity on certain parts of urban areas or new towns? In doing so, we can minimize development in the rural areas so as to preserve existing green field sites. Alternatively, shall we develop some green field sites so as to help ease the development pressure in the urban areas?

On site level, shall we build high-rise, high density buildings, that might breach the ridgeline, so that we can reserve large open area and more space between buildings? Alternatively, shall we have low-rise, high density development so as to protect the ridgeline at the expense of less area for open space and space between buildings? How can we plan a good quality urban space which is sustainable, with minimum adverse impact on the environment?

Planners have long been in search of a tool to help plan a good and sustainable built environment. Some researchers have suggested Sky View Factor (SVF) to proxy heat gain and solar access, and to evaluate visual impact. It will be a useful forum for academics and practicing professionals, including planners, to share experience and exchange ideas with a view to promoting a better built environment.