

THE INDUSTRY BIBLE FOR UK HOUSEBUILDERS & DEVELOPERS

DEVELOPER & HOUSEBUILDER YEARBOOK 2021



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One Kai Tak, a private luxurious residential development in Hong Kong's Kai Tak Development Zone, designed by LWK + PARTNERS



STREET RENAISSANCE

BY HC CHAN
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A graduate of The University of Hong Kong, HC Chan joined LWK + PARTNERS in 2005 and has 18 years of project experience in Hong Kong and mainland China, spanning mixed-use, residential, institutional and hospitality projects. As a LEED AP, Beam Professional, an active member of The Hong Kong Institute of Architects and a Director of the Hong Kong Architecture Centre, he endeavours to push for sustainable, human-centric architecture in dense urban contexts. He has been a Part-Time Lecturer of Architecture for Top-up Degree and Associate Degree programmes at Hong Kong Design Institute since 2015. He contributes to newspaper columns sharing his views on design, architecture and cities.

Are British cities benefiting from densification? As the vertical trend starts to hit areas outside central London, how can we uphold people's quality of life in these future developments? As the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns have highlighted the critical roles of naturally ventilated spaces and being connected with other people for physical and mental wellbeing, it is perhaps time-relevant to review the potential of our public realms.

Whether we are talking about a place to live, work or play, the industry should recast their sight on the vast possibilities brought by open-air streets as a key site for social connection, or healthy daily life in general. Especially in highly dense urban contexts, reinvigorating the long-lost human touch can mean a greater sense of place and belonging, which also ties in with society's calls to prioritise pedestrians over cars. The



Above: A retail development in Shenzhen, China visited by HC Chan

wise use of the public realm can drive successful developments through strategies to create walkable, human-scale places with an enhanced sense of vibrancy and community.

Breaking the building envelope

Streets are a key part of the public realm, which also acts as the veins of community life. However, in London and other post-industrial cities of the UK, Urban Regeneration/Renewal has inevitably led to a sprawl of enclosed vertical city, leaving native community reeling from the pressure of Gentrification. As people are physically isolated from one another in their homes, social networks start falling apart, taking a toll on people's mental wellbeing. This trend should be revamped with aim of injecting energy to the neighbourhood and upgrading the identity of the district. Future sustainable, walkable and healthy cities should include the street as part of their circulation planning, breaking up the building envelope through setbacks, balconies or

wide-open ground floors to keep the street environment in view and at hand, thereby nurturing vibrancy and promoting diversified activities on grade. The presence of open-air balconies can make a difference to the experience of living indoors. People should be allowed to have direct sensation of the outside world, receiving sunlight, wind and the bustling sounds of life downstairs. It is a three-dimensional extension of the streetscape that is not only environmentally sound, but constructive for intergenerational living. Street-level shops and shopping arcades – as opposed to enclosed and homogenous shopping malls – create opportunities for local businesses, while their kaleidoscopic display windows make up a wide range of visual stimulations that contribute to a unique identity for the neighbourhood. Covered archways stand as weather-proof sheltered spaces providing shades and rest spaces for passers-by. Keeping

these spaces alive is therefore vital for maintaining a high level of social cohesion. Inspiration can be taken from Hong Kong's indigenous community planning and vernacular architecture from the pre-war era. Rows of composite buildings were built side by side, forming spectacular retail colonnades that makes up a signature of old Hong Kong and which takes a key seat in the community's collective memory.

Case in point: paradigm shift in Hong Kong community planning

Hong Kong serves as a prime example of high-density environments for understanding how a sea change in community planning approach might revitalise the street. The past 20 years for Hong Kong have seen a phenomenal typology of commercial podiums topped with high-rise residential towers, where footbridges linking clusters of shopping malls and residential estates have become the key connectivity for people. By contrast, street frontages are mainly occupied by plant rooms where people rarely visit. The striking sight of desolate streets has led to a paradigm shift in community planning for the city. In the Kai Tak new area, made up of land vacated from the retired Kai Tak Airport, buildings are pushed unprecedentedly back into their respective sites to open up street spaces. Building heights are controlled to minimise the blocking of views, while site coverage is reduced so that pavements can be broadened. Land lots are carefully planned in Grid Neighbourhood patterns and will be developed into a specially designed harmonious residential area, comprising low and high blocks with varying rhythmic disposition and building façade treatment, in a bid to create a dynamic skyline and foster a

stronger sense of belonging to the community. These residential buildings are positioned with certain distances apart to create visual and wind corridors, thus directing sea breeze into the city centre, improving air ventilation and mitigating street canyon effect and urban heat island effect. Five-metre setbacks are reserved for greening with ecological elements on both sides of the revitalised Kai Tak River, which meanders through the heart of the district, to create additional recreational space for residents and provide a habitat for birds and other creatures. A positive reconnection between nature and human can be rekindled through co-existence of natural environment and built city. Taking a bicycle ride around Kai Tak and exploring en route the new landscape at the former airport is a wish shared among Hong Kong people. A shared path for pedestrians and cyclists called 'GreenWay' is installed to connect Kwun Tong Promenade and Kai Tak New District in order to realise people's cycling wish and enhance recreational value in the district. The GreenWay is planning to connect with neighbouring districts through a cycling track network to encourage regular exercise in the wider coverage of scenic spots. LWK + PARTNERS is the architect of the 2018-completed One Kai Tak residences, one of the practice's 10 ongoing or completed projects in the district that is still taking shape. Tall buildings are arranged to maximise views of the famous Victoria Harbour; and buildings are planned as far apart as possible to increase privacy for residents. To create a green, sustainable and sensible community for all, residential blocks are connected with public spaces through retail colonnades and lush landscape, contributing to the area's slow



Above: Tsuen Wan Sports Centre, Hong Kong

mobility system and encouraging people to get outside under the sun.

Future human-oriented and green retail

In planning for vertical retail developments, the inclusion of street elements can be a strategy for preserving local cultural character while offering a human-oriented, efficient consumer experience. Some newer developments have already adopted a 'semi-open' approach and multidirectional circulation system to invoke the street experience. Large building volumes are bisected into smaller-scale cluster blocks in the style of shopping villages; semi-open interfaces feature glass curtain walls, transparent canopies or naturally ventilated corridors. Circulation takes place on ground level or via interconnected walkways to promote the kind of horizontal, free-flow, boundless navigation experience offered by the street to put on an engaging shopper experience. Further, adoption of green walls, lush landscape and natural materials may

promote ventilation and sunlight reception, reducing energy consumption. It is expected that this Biophilic Design approach to restore the cherished relationship with nature will be embraced more widely to inform urban development. In short, buildings are not just objects; they are statements that represent the common values of a society. To create future communities with life, energy and style, it is time that the industry reconsiders the impact of vertical built environments on our way of life and social dynamics. It seems promising to look to our streets for inspiration and preserve these vessels of cultural diversity as the main site of daily life and a highly walkable environment.

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Above: The emerging Kai Tak Development Zone in Hong Kong

街道复兴

作者: LWK + PARTNERS 董事陈皓忠

陈皓忠毕业于香港大学，于 2005 年加入 LWK + PARTNERS。他拥有超过 18 年的建筑项目经验，集中中国内地和香港市场，他所参与的项目覆盖广泛，包括综合发展、住宅、公建、酒店等。另外，作为美国绿色建筑协会 LEED 认证专家、香港绿建专才、香港建筑师学会活跃成员及香港建筑中心董事会会员，陈皓忠积极倡导可持续并以人为本的高密度建筑设计。自 2015 年起，他还兼任香港知专设计学院建筑学学士及副学士课程的兼职讲师，并为报章撰写专栏，分享对设计、建筑及城市的看法。

高密度化是否有益于英国城市的发展？当垂直化设计的趋势逐渐蔓延至伦敦以外的地区，我们又如何能在未来规划中维持一定的生活素质？2019 冠状病毒病及相关防疫限制措施正正突显了自然通风空间及与他人保持联系，对生理及心理健康的重要性，或许是时候我们重新审视公共领域的潜力。

不论是居住、工作或玩乐的地方，户外街道为社交活动及健康生活所带来的庞大可能性，值得业界重新检视。尤其是在高密度城市中，找回久违的人情味有助提升地方触觉及归属感，也回应了社会上对行人优先概念越来越高的呼声。如能有效运用公共领域，以营造具行人尺度、人性化的地方为发展策略，将有助提升社区活力及认同感。

打破建筑物的外壳

街道是公共领域中不可或缺的一环，扮演着社区生活中的重要血脉。然而，在伦敦及其他后工业化的英国城市中，城市更新 / 重建概念无可避免地导致垂直空间过度扩张，原社区特色在士绅化的压力下慢慢消失。人们各自在封闭空间里生活，也令社交网络逐渐瓦解，严重影响人们的心理健康。

因此，未来发展方向也应调整成以“为社区注入生气并提升认同感”为方针。对一个具可持续性 & 保留行人尺度的健康城市而言，街道必须是其动线规划中的一部份，利用绿化空间、阳台或开放式地面空间，从而保留街道景观和可达性，带动地面生活和社区活力气氛。

当中，开放式阳台设计可使居住环境的室内体验变得与别不同，让居民与街道直接互动，并提供自然通风及采光，感受四时温度，是街道空间的立体延伸。设计不但具环保元素，更可提升跨代共居的质素。

而开放式的地面商铺及购物街，则有别于一般的封闭式、均质的购物商场，不但能推动地方商机，也因其多元化的规模、类型和橱窗布置，赋予街道独特的个性，更使整个社区充满丰富的视觉元素。贯穿其中的有盖拱廊亦为行人提供遮阴挡雨的歇息空间。透过在城市规划中加入相应街道空间的考虑，可以保留传统街道上承载的社会凝聚力。

有见及此，现代建筑可以向香港传统社区规划和本土建筑借镜。一列列柱廊组成有盖拱廊，代表着“老香港”精神和其独有的传统社区特色，也是社区集体回忆的重要部分，充满着浓厚的人情味和深厚的邻里关系。

实例：香港社区规划的范式转换

以高密度城市背景闻名的香港，正好示范了如何从社区规划思维重整中恢复街道生气。

在近二十年间，香港部分社区出现大量以商业裙楼及上盖高层住宅为重心的发展项目，相邻的商场及住宅屋苑以天桥连接，成为了居民在区内穿梭的主要步道。不少面向街道的地面空间反而用作配置机电设备房，人烟疏落。

不鼓励居民步行的街道亦变得死寂，了无人气，促使当局重整规划思维。现正发展的香港启德新区是前启德机场退役后空出来的一片区域，其规划一改香港既有模式，把建筑物拨归原地，回复有人气的街道。同时，该区透过控制建筑物的高度，确保视觉景观不会被高楼遮挡，并减少地盘覆盖率以释放建筑物周边空间，增加行人通道的阔度。

地块以网格状布置，以发展出一个和谐居住空间，利用高低错落的建筑群及外墙建筑手法，创造起伏有致、主次分明的天际轮廓，以增强居民的社区归属感。建筑物之间维持相当距离，创造视线通廊，将海风源源不绝地引入中心城区，提升自然通风，以对抗街谷效应和城市热岛效应。

至于贯穿该区心脏地带的启德河，其两岸各预留五米宽范围作绿化用途，既让公众享有优美的河畔康乐场所，也为鸟类及其他野生动物提供了自然栖息地。与自然和谐共生的城市设计可重新掀起人类与自然之间的互动关系。

骑着单车重游启德机场，探索该区新面貌，相信是不少香港人的盼望。因此启德新区特别增设“共融通道”连接观塘海滨花园，供行人及单车人士共同使用，以满足居民的单车需求，并建立起热爱体育运动的文化。未来单车径网络亦将扩展至邻近社区，覆盖更多优美景点，促进区内康乐活动。

LWK + PARTNERS 在启德新区负责的已建成或进行中项目达十个，在新发展中充当关键角色，包括为 2018 年竣工的启德 1 号担任建筑师。项目设计中利用了高层建筑布置，以享用最多维港景观，把高低层建筑间距做到最大，减少楼望楼的问题，保持单位私隐度。另外，为了让垂直空间内部与外围街区建立更深层的互动，项目以沿街商业及绿化景观连接住宅区域及公共空间，提供开放户外绿化空间，让居民到户外感受自然光线和新鲜空气，有助建立整个启德新区的慢行系统，缔造最适宜居住的绿化住宅区。

将以人为本及环保元素引入商场设计

谈到垂直商场设计规划，业界可考虑将户外街道的丰富体验延伸其中，在提供以人为本的消费体验的同时，亦可保留传统特色以及多元社区面貌。

为保存街区为人带来的乐趣，部分新建商场项目已循“半开放式”方向发展，并采用弹性多维的动线规划。新设计将传统裙楼的大型体量，分割为类似购物村的建筑群落，配合玻璃幕墙、玻璃天幕和对外回廊，形成半户外介面，建筑之间以地面空间及连接桥相接，重塑街区横向、不规则、没有约束的逛街体验，加强趣味和互动性。

商场更采用垂直绿化、绿化景观和自然建材，可改善通风和采光，减少能源消耗。相信这种生态友善建筑设计将获应用于更多城市发展项目中，用以修复及改善人类与大自然的关系。

简而言之，建筑实体不只是物件，而是呼应当代文化思潮和风气习俗，可谓社会共同价值观的宣言。为了塑造具生命力及文化的未来社区，业界应重新思考垂直居住环境为生活质素和人际互动带来的深远影响。街道空间的无限可能性也许是摆脱高密度城市规划中的一条出路，透过重新发掘街区的力量，让生活场所重回地面，保留传统街道上承载历史的多元文化生活和行人尺度。