

SUBMISSION ON

**HONG KONG'S
FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN**

August 2026



Masterplan Limited: Submission on Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan Main Points

1. Northern Metropolis

- The proposal to develop the NM is fully supported as it is the largest area of flat land in Hong Kong and has the closest proximity to Shenzhen.
- NM is a relatively small area when compared with Shenzhen and other locations. Intensity of use should be maximised and well planned, so that land is not wasted.
- The NM is an ecologically important area of international significance.
- The University Town is important. The sites seem quite small and should be reviewed.
- Sites near the campuses be reserved for private sector to build ancillary accommodation.

4. Peoples Livelihood and Social Development

- Must maintain and improve the physical environment in older parts so that people will live in high-quality neighbourhoods.
- Basic facilities such as public toilets and public seating are not adequately provided.
- Footpaths, trees for shade and gardens are not cared for and difficult to use.

5. Development of Regional Co-operation

- Closer integration with the GBA is inevitable and it will increasingly function as the hinterland for Hong Kong, similar to other great cities.
- Hong Kong has a role in international relationships for packaging and presenting the GBA.

6. Culture, Sports and Tourism, Green Living and Other Areas

Culture

- Cultural activities should not only be seen as being for high value-added visitors.
- There is talent abundant in our population to develop specific forms of our own culture.
- Hong Kong has a history with an interesting range of cultural activities that involve creative arts, film, music, performance and dance.
- In the Plan there should be a separate policy package for excellence in cultural activities.
- The policy should develop local cultural components which will also create connections with other places.
- Cultural development will provide a solid basis for social and community development.

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Sport

- Encouraging greater participation in sports is a positive objective. However, a big problem is the lack of indoor and outdoor “space for sport”.
- The support system for elite sports needs adequate facilities for athletes yet to meet criteria for entry to the Sports Institute.
- There is an urgent need to encourage NSAs to develop their own training facilities.
- A longer land tenure of 7 to 21 years would facilitate NSA’s investment in facilities.
- Existing events are regularly over-subscribed very soon after entries open on-line.
- The Plan should not only promote the highest level of events, but also the mass participation events for Hong Kong participants and for visitors.
- Active promotion of Hong Kong and the GBA for the 2036 Olympics should be included in the Plan.

Tourism

- Hong Kong is being successfully promoted as a place to come and experience. This will continue to grow as cultural and sports facilities and other attractions develop.
- There is a natural saturation capacity for tourists in any city, and continued growth of tourist’s arrivals beyond a figure of around 65 million per year may be unsustainable.
- Hong Kong’s “Tourism is Everywhere” initiative has expanded the city’s appeal beyond traditional commercial hubs into local neighborhoods, historic revitalizations, and scenic outdoor trails.
- Additional tourists therefore justify even greater expenditure on pedestrian facilities, seating, greening and public toilets.
- Investment in local facilities and quality of environment is also an investment in tourism.

Green Living, Conservation and Resilience

- Hong Kong must be a strong advocate and world leader for all aspects related to climate change mitigation.
- Living and “designing with nature” must be promoted in the way forward.
- Development is at a critical stage in certain locations where nature is threatened.
- Other areas are under threat as ecotourism is spreading into our fragile countryside and marine environments.

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Masterplan Limited: Submission on Hong Kongs First Five-Year Plan

The creation of the First Five-Year Plan (the Plan) is fully supported as it will provide a medium-term focus for Hong Kong's development over a comprehensive range of topics. A well-constructed Plan will be effective in establishing objectives and priorities, and coordination "for *actualising the "people-oriented" governance philosophy*".

Masterplan Limited is a Planning and Development Consultancy which has a wide range of professional experience in Hong Kong for over three decades. We have worked for many developers, NGO's and community groups, as well as for private land owners throughout the whole of Hong Kong. In this submission brief comments are provided on those aspects of the Plan which interact with our activities and experience. In doing so we take a forward-looking perspective with an aim to bring to the attention of the government issues and opportunities which may arise during the term of the Plan.

In providing these comments we will follow the structure of the Consultation Document (the Document), but comments are limited to Sections 1, 4, 5 and 6 where we have relevant experience and expertise. The numbering of the following paragraphs follows these 4 main themes.

1 Northern Metropolis

- 1.1 The focus on the Northern Metropolis (NM) has resulted in actions being taken forward in locations which previously faced development constraints. The proposal to develop these locations is fully supported as they comprise the largest area of flat land in Hong Kong and are in the closest proximity to Shenzhen. The progressive development of physical linkages and removal of administrative constraints between these two areas provides great scope for long term effective interaction.

Accelerate Northern Metropolis Development

- 1.2 Based on our long experience of working in the NM we would make the following points:-
- (a) While the area of the NM is considered to be quite large for Hong Kong, it is still a relatively small area when compared with Shenzhen and other locations. Use must therefore be well planned and intensity of use should be maximised so that such available land is not wasted;
 - (b) Speed of development needs to be optimised and procedures kept simple. Many new processes are being introduced and some of these are untried and uncertain, especially in the planning and development processes. These need to be carefully and cautiously monitored so as to ensure the long-term objectives are met and a high quality is achieved in a balance with efficiency.
 - (c) Much of the NM is already occupied and uses firmly established. It is also an area with important heritage components and well-established communities. Some are in villages such as those at San Tin and Ha Tsuen, while others are in existing urban developments such as Yuen Long Town, Tin Shui Wai and lower rise developments such as Fairview Park. Careful integration of these existing

developments and their communities needs to be a big concern for the development of the NM.

- (d) The NM is an ecologically important area of international significance. The documentation for the NM has rightly identified this as an important component of the way forward. The importance of the ecology of the wetlands, rivers and hillsides needs to be celebrated as a unique characteristic of the area and a priority for careful inclusion.

University Town

- 1.3 The concept of the University Town is an important one. Most of our existing universities are constrained by the limited size of their campuses. When looking at the current proposals for post-secondary education in the NM it would appear as if the sites to be allocated are relatively small and contain little room for long term expansion.
- 1.4 There is a need to provide suitable accommodation outside the campuses for those attending or working in the universities. Existing shortage of appropriate accommodation is seen as a negative for Hong Kong as an international educational hub. It is important that sites convenient to the campuses be identified so that the private sector can invest in and build the ancillary facilities that are needed to support the educational institutions.

I&T Development

- 1.5 There remains uncertainty over how the land is to be allocated for various I&T uses and activities. A relatively simple enquiry can lead to referrals to several bureaus or departments for the potential developers, just to identify whether the potential project is to be supported. The sites which may be available for the proposed project and the terms on which the site will be made available are uncertain.
- 1.6 This process within the existing bureaucracy needs to be streamlined and there is a need for the private sector to be able to build facilities which can be used for a range of users. The decision then becomes a relatively simple commercial decision between the building owner and the proposed operator. The process and procedures for bringing I&T development to the NM needs to be quickly clarified so that the employment and production objectives can be achieved.

Other Spatial Objectives and Old District Renewal

- 1.7 These are very important topics in their own right and should not be included under the NM section. The requirements for the renewal process are too complicated and not related to the main NM objectives. This should be a specific stand-alone subject more relevant to Peoples Livelihood and Social Development.

4 People's Livelihood and Social Development

- 4.1 The Consultation Document recognises a large number of important issues in relation to the aging of the population, education, healthcare and social welfare. The heading of "Housing" does not really cover the need for "old district renewal" and "to improve the living environment and quality of life." The need to maintain and improve the physical environment for people to live in a high-quality environment cannot be underestimated.

Improving the Older Districts

- 4.2 Increasingly the public realm in older neighbourhoods is looking drab and losing attention and care. The pavements, road surfaces and railings are looking increasingly derelict and no longer satisfy public needs. Many of the open spaces, roads, bridges, buildings built in the 1980's to 2000's are poorly maintained and no longer providing the quality of environment that is required to improve the quality of life for local residents. Basic facilities such as sufficient shading, public toilets and abundant public seating to meet the needs of the aging population are not provided. Footpaths, shading and planting of trees and gardens are often not cared for and difficult for people with different levels of disability to walk along. Public utilities such as water supply are breaking down because of inadequate renewal programs.
- 4.3 The older areas of Hong Kong are the largest areas of development and accommodate the greatest numbers of people. There needs to be a major policy change to provide a substantial increase in funding for improving local neighbourhood public facilities and public spaces. The local communities need to be involved in how these can take place as part of a process of community building and understanding community needs.

5. Development of Regional Co-operation

- 5.1 Closer integration with the GBA is inevitable and it will increasingly function as the hinterland for Hong Kong in a way similar to other great cities. Hong Kong also has the international focus and connections that benefit the GBA. The Document has a comprehensive summary of how this is likely to develop.
- 5.2 This integration and the leading role of Hong Kong in international relationships will be important for packaging and presenting the bid for the 2036 Olympics on behalf of the GBA. This is outlined in paragraph 6.17 and 6.18 below.

6. Integrated Development of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Green Living and Other Areas

Factors to Consider for Culture

- 6.1 Cultural activities should not only be seen as being primarily for the attraction of high value-added visitors to Hong Kong. There is clear evidence there is natural talent abundant in our own population to develop specific forms of our own culture. Hong Kong has a historical background of an interesting range of cultural activities that involve creative arts, film, music and dance. People visit Hong Kong to see our talent perform, while focusing on our own talent provides residents opportunities to grow and excel.
- 6.2 There needs to be a clear policy to develop our local cultural components which will in themselves create connections with other places. Cultural development activities will provide a solid basis for social and community development. In the Plan there should be a separate policy package to focus on the development of excellence in the various areas of cultural activities.

Factors to Consider for Sport

- 6.3 Two factors make planning for sport a challenge. One is the change taking place in Hong Kong's population profile, with more young and middle-aged people caring about health and actively involved in sports. Greater longevity also means more active older people participating in sport well into their 80's.
- 6.4 The second point is the changing nature of sport. New sports are being invented all the time and some were added to the Paris Olympic Games, like Climbing and Breaking. Sports such as Esports and Hyrox are being promoted by commercial interests and spread world-wide. More of this type of commercially structured sports are likely to appear within the five-year Plan period.

Objectives and Participation

- 6.5 The Document mentions many reasons and objectives for sports. The prime focus should be the *"promotion of community sports and the encouragement of public participation in sports" to help people enhance their physical and psychological well-being*. Involvement of people in club and team activities has tremendous health and social benefit. On-line clubs and groups are becoming more important and less structured than traditional clubs and organisations. Often people just need a place to carry out their activities and often these are not venues designed for the sport. The space available inside the Happy Valley Racecourse is an example of how masses of informal sports activities take place in a venue not specifically designed for those purposes.

Increased Public Participation: Inadequate Space for Sport

- 6.6 Encouraging greater participation in sports is a positive objective. However, greater participation in sport will occur naturally as the population profile changes. A big problem regarding increased participation in sports is the lack of indoor and outdoor "space for sport". Current planning standards for space and facilities for sport are out-dated and not receptive to change. For example, there is no plan in the Northern Metropolis for a sports facility similar to the Happy Valley space which could accommodate formal and informal sports and other diverse recreational activities. The Five-Year plan needs to address this limitation. More capacity needs to be planned, and it needs to be flexible. Esports and Hyrox use facilities originally planned for conventions and exhibitions.

Elite Sports and Support System

- 6.7 Hong Kong can be proud of the achievements of our elite sports. One objective is to optimise the athletic support system. This support system needs provision of adequate facilities for those athletes who are not yet meeting the criteria for access to the Sports Institute. To achieve this there is an urgent need to encourage the National Sports Associations (NSA) to develop their own training facilities.
- 6.8 To achieve this the land tenure from government for NSA's needs to be longer, such as 7 to 21 years tenancy being proposed for other uses in the Northern Metropolis. In the NM it is proposed to use flexible land-grant arrangements, encouraging enterprises to set up businesses and invest in the area. Sites granted as tenancies instead of land lease may have a term exceeding seven years to provide greater flexibility. This approach could readily be applied to tenancies throughout Hong Kong for NSA's to provide sports facilities

which are really for a form of public use. Investments by NSAs of tens of millions of dollars can only really be justified if the land tenure will provide adequate certainty. A similar form of tenancy should apply to those private clubs which are obliged to provide facilities for joint use with other sporting groups and non-members.

- 6.9 This land tenure would make a big difference in facilitating NSA's investment in high-quality facilities for training and competitions. Enabling facilities specifically for management by the NSA's, will provide a continuous flow of well-prepared athletes for eventual entry into the HKSI and high-level international competitions. These facilities will complement the facilities already provided by government through the LCSD for general community use.

Sport as an Industry and Employer

- 6.10 One of the indicated policy directions is to "enhance professionalism in sports, and develop sports as an industry". The government is promoting sport as an industry with important economic benefits. The Kai Tak Sports Park is leading the way in establishing an international perspective and boosting the mega-event economy. While having top performances in Hong Kong is beneficial in terms of entertainment, major events for regular Hong Kong athletes to enter is even more significant. International age group competitions bring in tourists who compete against Hong Kong people, and stay for several days before and after the event.
- 6.11 Our existing events are regularly over-subscribed very soon after entries open on-line. The marathon is probably the best example where over 70,000 people take part in the various races, but many people can't get in. The same for other sports like the Cross Harbour Swim, the Round the Island Races for sailing, rowing and out-rigger canoes, the International Dragon Boat races, the Trail Walker, other trail running events, Esports and the new sport Hyrox, which this year had 20,000 competitors over a three-day event.
- 6.12 Hong Kong should consider strengthening its efforts in career development nurturing professional sports administration, sports science and sports medicine. These skills and technical experience are important support requirements for an efficient sports industry and can open a lot of career possibilities for Hong Kong people.

Sport as a Symbol of International Excellence

- 6.13 This visible success has led to several World Championships coming to Hong Kong in 2027; in Dragon Boats, several classes of sailing and Hyrox. Also, the spectacular SailGP starts its international series in Hong Kong in January, all confirming that Hong Kong has a reputation to produce high-quality events. The Plan needs to include not only promotion of the highest level of events in Hong Kong but also the mass participation events for Hong Kong participants and for visitors who will flock here. But again, too many of these events are based on temporary or inadequate facilities. Well-established facilities will benefit local community events and support major international events.
- 6.14 Hong Kong's testing and certification system has been more aligned with the international standards. In strengthening leadership in sports science and medicine, it would help to retain Hong Kong as the international benchmark for these aspects and for the wider GBA region.

Sport as a Regional Integrator

- 6.15 Sport is important for regional integration and particularly with the GBA. Currently, there are competitions and training activities taking place between Hong Kong residents and those from Macau and elsewhere in the GBA. Coordination of events and activities so that they take place in a regular pattern in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the GBA, can create attractive options for tourists to visit Hong Kong as part of a multi stop sports-based itinerary.

Yachting Industry

- 6.16 The development of water sports and the push by government to establish the yachting industry as a connector to the GBA is something achievable in the coming 5 years. The physical characteristics of the waters of the GBA with many bays and islands, provide the justification such development. The main issues relate to revising documentation requirements to encourage the joint use of the water and islands.

2036 Olympic Bid

- 6.17 A Task Force is actively investigating and promoting the GBA as a multi-sports venue for the 2036 Olympic games. Earlier in 2026 the Task Force pointed out the importance of Hong Kong taking the lead in pushing the GBA forward. A unique opportunity arises in December 2027 when influential representatives from all 206 International Olympic Committees (IOC) will gather in Hong Kong.
- 6.18 The IOC will select the host for the 2036 Olympics by 2029. The host regions will have less than a year to propose credible plans with the "Strategic Dialogue" process beginning in March 2027. Active promotion of Hong Kong and the GBA as a single bidder for the 2036 Olympics should be made in December to the IOC group. The 2036 Olympic bid needs to be included in Hong Kong's Five-Year Plan so that focused action can take place.

Tourism

- 6.19 The nature of tourism visits to Hong Kong has changed in recent years as the numbers of arrivals has gradually increased. Many people are coming from everywhere in the world and many are traveling independently rather than on tours. Hong Kong is being presented as a vibrant place to come and experience. It has much more to offer than before, and this will continue to develop as cultural and sports facilities and other attractions grow.
- 6.20 There is a natural saturation capacity for tourists in any city, and continued growth of tourist's arrivals beyond a figure of around 65 million per year may be unsustainable. The number of tourists beyond this limit would likely place unnecessary pressure on transportation and other utilities, and on practical things like waste disposal
- 6.21 Hong Kong's "Tourism is Everywhere" initiative has expanded the city's appeal beyond traditional commercial hubs into local neighborhoods, historic revitalizations, and scenic outdoor trails. This strategy diversifies visitor experiences toward in-depth, community-based, and experiential travel. But it means that "everywhere" is going to be subject to large numbers of additional people, even greater than the local residents in an area or neighbourhood.

- 6.22 Many of these neighbourhoods are older areas, and as mentioned in paragraph 4 above, these areas need to be up-graded and provided with additional facilities just to provide a quality environment for local residents. Additional use by tourists can therefore justify even greater expenditure on pedestrian facilities, seating, greening and public toilets. Under this approach investment in local facilities and quality of environment is an investment in both tourism and in resident's quality of life. By taking a people-oriented approach, happy faces from the local residents bring greater and more positive experience to tourists than any other kinds of promotions.

Green Living, Conservation and Resilience

- 6.23 Hong Kong must be a strong advocate and leader for all aspects related to climate change. Hong Kong is going to be subjected to stronger storms, higher increase in sea level and changes to the ecology of our land and sea areas. At present Hong Kong is an international leader in some areas of relevant research and application of engineering solutions, such as intense rainstorms and water management. How this can be applied elsewhere can be part of a growing international understanding of how intensely developed cities can be resilient and safe.
- 6.24 Living and "designing with nature" must be promoted in the way forward. Development is at a critical stage in certain areas of Hong Kong where nature is going to be threatened by continued development. The NM is one of these areas. Other areas are under threat where tourism is spreading into our fragile countryside and marine environment. People going to these areas need to be proactively educated so they can obtain experience of how to respect and live together with nature.
- 6.25 Hong Kong could leverage on the NM development and urban renewal as opportunities to enhance greenery provision. A comprehensive review of the Planning Standards and Guidelines should be considered, drawing on references from progressive Chinese and international practices, such as Green Plot Ratio and ambitious greenery coverage targets. This will ensure higher greenery provision in new towns and redevelopments, and establish clear, measurable enhancement in greening for a more liveable environment.