

Reconstructing Urbanscape

– Research Report on Development Strategies of the Hong Kong “Secondary City Centre” and the Hong Kong Section of the Hi-Speed National Rail Network

The Professional Commons
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I. Introduction

- 1.1 Out of the policy initiatives from the Policy Address announced in late October in 2007, the “ten major infrastructural projects” caught the most attention. These “ten major infrastructural projects are categorized into three major aspects, including transport infrastructure, cross-boundary infrastructure, and New Urban Development Areas. It is expected that these infrastructure projects will have a tremendous impact on the future development of Hong Kong and would be a top policy priority in the next five years.
- 1.2 The Professional Commons strives to enhance the quality of public governance in Hong Kong and has published two research reports on major public policy issues to date. As the West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the “ten major infrastructure projects”, it will be of vital significance to the long-term developments of the arts and culture sector in Hong Kong. Hence, the Professional Commons has conducted an in-depth study on respective issues and listed out the research outcome in the report entitled the “West Kowloon for the People: Research Report on the Planning and Development of the West Kowloon Cultural District” in December 2007. In the report, we have made a number of recommendations, including alternative planning principles for the benefit of the general public, low carbon development model, provision of green open public space, incubation of the cultural roots for West Kowloon, and the development of cultural strategy facing all over Hong Kong.¹ We also proposed a model to democratize the governing structure of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority through greater participation of the stakeholders.² In view of the HK\$100 billions of prospective fiscal surplus in the 2007-08 fiscal year, we have published another research report entitled “Fairness, Forward-looking, Development: Research Report on Better Use of Fiscal Surplus”, and recommended a set of measures to improve people’s livelihood through using the public resources to a better way, ranging from the provision of “special subsidies” to the poor, offering public transport subsidies to every single citizens,

¹ The Professional Commons, “West Kowloon for the People: Research Report on the West Kowloon Cultural District Development,” December 2007. The Report could be viewed at <http://www.procommons.org.hk/documents/WKCD_Report--full%20report.pdf>.

² “工（公）專聯建議文化設施提早二年完成”, *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, 12 December 2007, p. 11.

setting up a “citizen’s account” to meet individual needs, to the establishment of a “Climate Challenge Fund”.³

- 1.3 As its name suggests, the ten major infrastructure projects should be project items with a major impact in Hong Kong. In view of this, they have to take into account of the individual areas, as well as the overall development needs of Hong Kong. Also, it has to be of broader vision, and to be prepared in view of the long-term development needs of Hong Kong. On the contrary, the Professional Commons has regarded that the positioning of the Hong Kong section of the Guangdong-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (hereafter the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section) and the New Development Areas (hereafter the NDAs) are of too narrow-minded, which failed to perceive from a more macro and strategic angle, and therefore were unable to bring the social and economic development of Hong Kong to a new height.
- 1.4 After years of discussions, the HKSAR Government (hereafter the “Government”) has adopted the “dedicated alignment” option for the construction of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section. Details of the alignment are as follows: The trains will be departed from West Kowloon, running to the border via tunnel. The terminus of the Mainland section will be in Shibi in the Panyu District of Guangzhou. The travelling time will be less than one hour. It is expected that the new railway will have the following functions:
- The GZ-SZ-HK ERL is an organic component of the Hi-speed National Rail Network, passengers could transit to the hi-speed trains reaching the main cities in the Mainland (for example, the travelling time from Hong Kong to Beijing would be around 10 hours);
 - The GZ-SZ-HK ERL would be able to connect to the Pearl River Delta Rapid Transport Network;
 - The targeted customers of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL include the business customers (including business travelers from the Mainland). That makes the railway a significant medium of economic interactions between Hong Kong and the Mainland, which will add momentum to the economic development of Hong Kong.
- 1.5 To catch up with the developments in the cooperation of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau, it would be advisable for the HKSAR Government to revisit the positioning of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section. The Professional Commons regards,

³ The Professional Commons, “Fairness, Forward-looking, Development: Research Report on the Better Use of Fiscal Surplus, January 2008. The Report could be viewed at <<http://www.procommons.org.hk/documents/Budget%20Report%20Eng.pdf>>

through realignments and repositioning of the stations, together with the strategic thinking of the regional development of Hong Kong, not only the railway could become an economic powerhouse for the development of the local economy, it could also raise the economic interactions between Hong Kong and the rest of the Mainland. In order to illustrate the different meanings of this railway in the relationships between Hong Kong and the Mainland, different names would be used in the following ways:

- The Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Railway: The railway network linking Guangdong, Shenzhen and Hong Kong in general;
- The Hong Kong Section of the Hi-speed National Rail Link: The organic component of the Hi-speed National Rail Link;
- The GZ-SZ-HK ERL, it is applicable to the following situations:
 - ◆ First, it is the official title of the railway;
 - ◆ Second: it is a component of the express rail link connecting to different cities in the Pearl River Delta region.

1.6 Another major item in the “ten major infrastructure projects” is the new development areas.⁴ According to the *2007-08 Policy Address*, the development plan on the drawing board is to “ease pressure on developed areas and to meet the demand for land arising from population growth”.⁵ However, the scale of the NDAs is not of a large scale, their strategic functions are therefore not clear. As the Government did not adopt a holistic approach in its planning, these development projects have raised the following issues:

- The primary functions of the NDAs are to settle new populations. As most of the industrial activities have shifted north, unemployment would be a critical issue facing the residents of the NDAs.
- The planning strategies based upon the Victoria Harbour have been the dominating form of territorial planning in the past quarter of a century, resulting to a worsening environment in the developed areas. On the other hand, the New Territories has been long-standing an auxiliary position from a spatial perspective. This indirectly triggered off many social and family problems in the new towns of the New Territories. Hence, there is a need for an in-depth discussions concerning the overall development strategies of Hong Kong;
- In light of the strengthening cooperation between Guangdong, Hong Kong and

⁴ The NDAs are the proposed new towns the Government is planning to develop. They include Fanling North, Ping Che and Ta Kwu Ling (the so-called “Three-in-One” Plan), and Hung Shui Kiu in Northwestern New Territories. The New Development Areas is the one of the three projects under the “New Urban Development Areas” category as announced in the Policy Address in 2007. Please refer to the *2007-08 Policy Address*, para. 20, item 10, <<http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/07-08/eng/p20c.html>>.

⁵ *2007-08 Policy Address*, para. 20, item 10, <<http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/07-08/eng/p20c.html>>.

Macau, there should be a new role that the New Territories could play in cross-boundary cooperation.

- 1.7 Not only this research report would point out that the problems in the alignment, locations of railway stations, as well as the design of the stations, we would also formulate recommendations in view of the concepts and ideas from a macro perspective. By doing so, it would provide more positive functions concerning the new railway and the NDAs, such as raising of the level of the regional development in Hong Kong, and improving the connection between Hong Kong and the Mainland. The second chapter of the report illustrates the territorial-wide planning strategies since the 1980s, providing a brief historical background on the evolution of the strategy. The third chapter explores the actual situation of the territorial-wide planning, through analyzing the general ideas of the “Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy” from the Planning Department. The Fourth Chapter illustrates the social and economic situations under the influence of unbalanced development in the New Territories North. The Fifth and Sixth Chapter highlights the issues in the design the NDAs and in the GZ-SZ-HK ERL. The strategic proposal for the development of a Secondary City Centre in the New Territories will be discussed in the Seventh Chapter. The feasibility and specific proposals for developing Kam Sheung Road as a Secondary Urban Centre would be discussed in the Eighth Chapter. Major policy recommendations of this Research Report would be mapped out in Chapter Nine.

II. An Historical Overview: Territorial Development Strategy/Metroplan

- 2.1 The economy of Hong Kong has grown tremendously since the 1960s-70s. The growing economy has raised the issues of shortage of land and how to meet the developmental needs through planning. Against this background, the colonial government conducted a series of Long-term strategic planning and promulgated a “Territorial Development Strategy”. From then on, the Government continued to implement the development strategies based upon the Victoria Harbour, under which large scale reclamation projects were undertaken in the Harbour covering the Central, Wan Chai, Green Island, Hung Hom Bay, Kowloon West and Sham Shui Po. The colonial government also saw the importance of the developments of the New Territories and proposed sub-regional development strategies on New Territories North, North Lantau and Tseung Kwan O. These new development models could be summarized as two streams of development concepts: i.e. the development along the shore of the Victoria Harbour and the development based upon the New Territories.⁶
- 2.2 As Hong Kong enters the latter stage of the transition period, the colonial government proposed the “Hong Kong Airport Core Programme” for the preservation of the economic dynamics and the confidence of the community. Specific projects under the master plan included the construction of the new airport and its supporting facilities, the transport and reclamation developments along the shore of the Victoria Harbour, and the new town in North Lantau. Unfortunately, there was intense political struggle and mutual distrust between London and Beijing over the projects, in particular its financial arrangements. Although the core projects were constructed as scheduled, it was difficult to put in place any meaningful strategic planning straddling 1997.
- 2.3 Despite the fact that the colonial government had completed a number of development plans, most of them had not been pushed forward seriously. Even the “Territorial Development Strategy Review” in 1993 proposed a number of suggestions, the colonial government did not follow through, maybe because it considered itself as an “undertaker” Government. In fact, many proposals in the review are crucial to the long-term development of the New Territories, including: developing Tin Shui Wai as a commercial and industrial area of cargo freight and

⁶ Dimitriou, Harry T. and Alison H.S. Cook, “Transport Planning and Metroplan: Progress or a Missed Opportunity?” in Harry T. Dimitriou and Alison H.S. Cook (eds.), *Land-use/Transport Planning in Hong Kong: The End of an Era*, (Alsershot: Ashagte, 1998), pp. 203-240.

high technology industrial village, the construction of new satellite towns such as Kam Tin and Tai Ho, etc. On the other hand, the colonial Government formulated “Metroplan” as the blueprint for territorial development. It is obvious that attaching greater importance to the development of the urban core is a pragmatic response to the challenges of the unforeseeable future.

- 2.4 As Hong Kong enters the HKSAR era, the developmental density in the metro core have been raised further and the situation of the imbalance of regional development intensified, along with the developments in the Central and West Kowloon reclamation areas, as well as the planning strategies in Kai Tak. As a result, the Victoria Harbour continues to be the core of development de jure. Although the Government has listed the median-term and long-term growth areas in the “Territorial Development Strategy Review” in 1998,⁷ the economic depression under the Asian Financial Crisis and the governance crisis came subsequently hindered the strategic proposals from full implementation. Even worse, the Government did not acknowledge the existence of imbalanced development and continued to add fuel on the development of the metro core.
- 2.5 Under the framework of the “Metro Plan”, the construction of new business premises as well as most of the major development activities would be found in new reclamation areas, the old airports of Kai Tak and urban redevelopment sites. These development projects have increased the pressures on the developed areas, worsened the shortage of land, and therefore raised the rentals of properties, which is hazardous to the SMEs and the general public as a whole. It would also results into a number of negative consequences, for instance, the worsening of the regional air quality, “screen flats”, destruction of cultural and historical heritage, etc. On the other hand, the sustainable development for New Territories has been neglected, resulting in the lack of job opportunities, insufficient supply of social services, high prices of transportation to the urban areas, etc. The lack of effective management has caused massive destruction of the rural environment.
- 2.6 The territorial development strategy should derive from the vision of Hong Kong. It should be a high-level issue related to policy directions, which requires a holistic view as well as a higher level of visions and knowledge. The society as a whole are all longing for a more visionary development plan. The Government has conducted a planning study in view of long-term development up to 2030 and put forward a

⁷ Planning Department, “Territorial Development Strategy Review – A Response to Change and Challenges, 1998”.

planning vision and a set of strategic recommendations. Whether the recommendations could be departed from the past development constraints, and whether it could adopt a holistic approach and to maximize the development opportunities would be an issue of concern.

3 Consolidated and Biased: The Short and Medium term Development Setting of Hong Kong

3.1 The development blueprint outlined in the *2007-08 Policy Address* was based on the final report of the “Hong Kong 2030 Planning Visions and Strategies” (hereafter the “Hong Kong 2030 Study”). Therefore, we could have a better understanding of the future development of Hong Kong through grasping the planning concepts employed in the Hong Kong 2030 Study.

Consolidation

3.2 From a spatial perspective, the momentum of growth continues to concentrate at the metro core. The “preferred development option” in the “Hong Kong 2030 Study” has claimed to be the optimal mix of the “consolidation” option and the “decentralized” option.⁸ Through detailed comparison of the relevant suggestions in the Policy Address and the “preferred development option” as appeared in the Hong Kong 2030 Study, the medium and long-term development plan of Hong Kong is largely similar to the “consolidation option”. The specific examples are:

- Out of the “ten major infrastructure projects”, the West Kowloon Cultural District and the Kai Tak Development Plan are located in the metro core. The South Island Line, the Shatin-Central Link, and the GZ-SZ-HK ERL are all radiated from the metro core. These would bring a large number of population flows to the metro core, and to further increase the economic vitality of the area.
- The business zone would continue to concentrate along the shores of the Victoria Harbour. The “Hong Kong 2030 Study” has made clearly that the search for opportunities (for Grade A-offices) has been focused within the harbour areas. It also suggested that “large-scale decentralization of general office developments to the New Territories in the foreseeable future would be unlikely.” The main economic activities of the NDAs would merely be “high value-added, high-tech production and logistics activities.”⁹
- The development of the NDAs is in slow progress. The new populations are concentrated in the metro core and the existing new towns, providing accommodation for 190 000 and 160 000 people respectively by 2010 and 320 000

⁸ In the consolidation option, it assumes sites in the urban areas will be developed first and no NDAs in the New Territories will be completed before 2020. In the Decentralisation Option, development/redevelopment in the Metro Area will proceed more slowly. The NDAs will be developed before 2020. See “Hong Kong 2030 Planning Vision and Strategy: Final Report” (hereafter “Hong Kong 2030 Study”), pp. 103. See

<http://www.pland.gov.hk/p_study/comp_s/hk2030/eng/finalreport/pdf/E_9.pdf>.

⁹ “Hong Kong 2030 Study”, pp. 128, 130,

<http://www.pland.gov.hk/p_study/comp_s/hk2030/eng/finalreport/pdf/E_11.pdf>.

and 490 000 people respectively by 2020. During this period, the population growth of the NDAs is insignificant, as it would only grow to 350 000 by 2030, that is 22% of the new growth population. The population in the metro core would continue to grow, reaching 570 000 by 2030. On the other hand, the population of the new towns would be in a standstill from 2020.¹⁰

Biased

3.3 The current industrial policy is heavily biased to the financial sector. The *2007-08 Policy Address* not only suggested the policy direction of steering Hong Kong to develop into an international financial center, but substantiated the goal with a list of concrete policy measures.¹¹ The Chief Executive has been striving for new opportunities to further expand the width of the financial markets by leading a business delegation to the Middle East for the exploration of the Islamic Financial Markets in early 2008. It is well understood that the risk of the financial sector, as the single dominating sector, that would pose on the local economy. It should also be noted that the development strategies in Hong Kong as a whole is continuously constrained by the mainstream considerations. Although the new business areas have been spreading to Quarry Bay, West Kowloon and Kai Tak, they are still concentrated along the shores of the Victoria Harbour.¹² Shall these policy direction be maintained, the status of imbalance could only getting worse, the development of the New Territories would lag further behind, there would not be any fundamental change in the livelihood of the residents in New Territories North.

¹⁰ The "Hong Kong 2030 Study", p. 127,

<http://www.pland.gov.hk/p_study/comp_s/hk2030/eng/finalreport/pdf/E_11.pdf>.

¹¹ *2007-08 Policy Address*, <<http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/07-08/eng/p21.html>>, para. 21-25

¹² The "Hong Kong 2030 Study," Map 11.4, <http://www.hk2030.gov.hk/chi/finalreport/pdf/C_11.pdf>.

4 The Difficulties and the Prospects of Residents in New Territories North

4.1 Although the development of the New Territories is expected to proceed in a faster pace as the development plan of the NDAs has already been incorporated into Government's work agenda, the scale and progress of respective projects is disappointing. Except for the relatively developed areas such as Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing and Shatin, the developments in other parts of the New Territories, especially the New Territories North, is most disturbing. Of which, the worsening situation in Tin Shui Wai is a well known case. The Professional Commons holds that development is by no means a dogmatic paradigm to follow. Our primary concern is the lack of supporting services that adversely affect people's livelihood, for example, the lack of employment opportunities, public services, etc. The following figures illustrate the socio-economic situations in Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and the North District.

Population Characteristics

4.2 The age compositions of the residents in New Territories North are younger than other areas across the territories, with the median age for Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and the North District are all lower than the Hong Kong average. Among them, the median age for Yuen Long (including Tin Shui Wai) is the lowest in Hong Kong. In these 3 districts, the proportion of children and youths between the age of 0 and 24 is higher by 2-5% when compared with the average of Hong Kong as a whole. Yuen Long's ratio is once again the highest.¹³ See the table attached:

	Tuen Mun	Yuen Long	North District	Whole Territory
Median Age	38	35	38	39
Proportion of Children between the age of 0 and 14 (%)	14.0	18.0	15.2	13.7
Proportion of Youths between the age of 15 and 24 (%)	15.1	15.3	16.4	13.2

4.3 The overall education level is also relatively lower in these areas. Out of the populations who are over 15 in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun Districts, those with a

¹³ Census and Statistics Department (hereafter C&SD), *2006 Population By-census: Summary Results*, (Hong Kong: C&SD, February 2007), p. 76, <http://www.bycensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_summary_results.pdf>; C&SD, *2006 Population By-census: Thematic Report : Youths*, (Hong Kong: C&SD, January 2008), p. 49, <http://www.bycensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_youths.pdf>.

primary school education or lower is higher than the average level of Hong Kong. On the contrary, the proportions of the residents with post-secondary education in these three areas are much lower than the Hong Kong average, which has recorded a five percent of differences. Their educational background appears to be a prominent factor contributing to their deteriorating financial positions of individual households.¹⁴ The education level of those aged 15 or over can be summarized in the table below:

	Tuen Mun	Yuen Long	North District	Whole Territory
No Schooling/Pre Primary/Primary (%)	27.2	24.6	26.7	25.4
Post-secondary/Degree Course (%)	17.4	17.5	17.8	23.0

4.4 At the same time, there were 230 000 and 150 000 residents living in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long who are Mainland immigrants taking residency in Hong Kong for less than seven years. The number of new arrivals in these two districts ranked the second and fifth highest out of all the districts respectively.¹⁵ The number of single parents in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun are relatively high too, amounting to 8 000 and 6 000 people and ranking in the top position and fourth position respectively.¹⁶

Employment

4.5 Taking account for the poverty indicators as adopted by the Commission on Poverty, the proportion of the residents in Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and the North District mostly scored higher than other districts in Hong Kong in the number of people without employment, their monthly median income, the proportion of low income families. Out of these areas, the situation of the Yuen Long District is the worst, as Tin Shui Wai is in the Yuen Long District. Tuen Mun and the North District are often fallen into one of the worst positions as reflected in the poverty indicators. Please find the details in the table illustrated below:

¹⁴ C&SD, *2006 Population By-census: Summary Results*, (Hong Kong: C&SD, February 2007), p. 77.

¹⁵ C&SD, *2006 Population By-census: Thematic Report : Persons from the Mainland Having Resided in Hong Kong for Less Than 7 Years* (Hong Kong: C&SD, December 2007), p. 58, < http://www.bycensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_pmr.pdf>.

¹⁶ C&SD, *2006 Population By-census: Thematic Report : Single Parents* (Hong Kong: C&SD, February 2008), p. 60, < http://www.bycensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_sp.pdf>.

Indicators of Poverty (2006) ¹⁷	Tuen Mun	Yuen Long	North	Whole Territory Average
Proportion of Persons Living in Workless Households (%) and its rankings in the whole territory	9.8 (4)	12.1 (1)	9.6 (5)	8.9
Unemployment Rate (%) and its rankings in the whole territory	5.6 (4)	5.6 (4)	5.9 (2)	4.8
Median Monthly Household Income (HK\$) and its rankings in the whole territory	14,500 (13)	13,700 (17)	15,100 (11)	16,700
Median Monthly Employment Earnings (HK\$) and its rankings in the whole territory	9,500 (14)	9,500 (14)	10,000 (10)	10,500
Proportion of Households with income below average CSSA payment (%) and its ranking in the whole territory	15.8 (2)	17.0 (1)	14.7 (3)	11.2
Proportion of single parents Household with Income Below Average CSSA payment (%) and its ranking in the whole territory	1.9 (1)	1.9 (1)	1.4 (3)	1.0
Proportion of Low-income Households (%) and its Ranking in the Whole Territory ¹⁸	22.1 (8)	25.8 (1)	22.5 (7)	20.1

Note: The ranking in the whole territory is arranged in accordance with the absolute value in each of the category. The higher the value, the higher the ranking they will be.

Economy

4.6 The adversity of personal finance facing by many residents in the New Territories North is highly correlated with the situation of the local economy. Previously, there

¹⁷ Commission on Poverty, "Indicators of Poverty: An update for 2006," Graph 19 to 24, <http://www.cop.gov.hk/eng/pdf/CoP%20Paper_10_2007E.pdf>.

¹⁸ The classification of "low-income households" is based on the composition of households into four categories of one person, two persons, three persons and four persons, and calculated according to the household income. Half or less than half of the household income would be considered as "low income household". In the situation of Hong Kong as a whole, a households of two earning HK\$7,000 or under is considered as "low-income" families, for a three persons household, the figure considered to be categorized as a low-income family is HK\$8,750 and four persons household, the figure stood at HK\$11,850. See "貧窮榜 元朗追上深水埗," *Ming Pao*, 18 February 2008, p. A2.

would be an industrial area in the new towns to provide job opportunities for the residents nearby. Prominent examples of such developments include the Tuen Mun Industrial District, the Yuen Long Industrial Estate, the Tung Tau Industrial District and the On Lok Industrial Estate. But the relocation of the factories across the boundary, the industrial jobs has been lost dramatically, especially for low-level technical positions, resulting to mass unemployment of grassroots labour.

4.7 On the other hand, Tin Shui Wai had once been planned to develop into a centre for trading activities between Hong Kong and the Mainland in the 90's. The project was eventually failed to materialize, dampening the economic vitality of Tin Shui Wai and its neighbouring areas, nor it bring about massive job opportunities for the residents as a whole.

4.8 The displacement between the place of residence and the place of work has triggered serious consequences. As many as 60% of the employed persons living in the New Territories had to work in a different district, and those travelling to either Hong Kong Island or Kowloon also accounted for 30% of the working population.¹⁹ Please find the table below for details:

(Persons)

	Tuen Mun	Yuen Long	North District
In same District Council District	66 500	72 456	36 302
Across District Council Districts			
Hong Kong Island	28 073	27 110	14 886
Kowloon	50 091	42 758	30 634
New Territories	76 022	77 739	37 144
Others (including making cross-boundary work, those who do not work in a fixed position, those who work at home, marine population)	24 019	24 614	14 007
Total Employed Population	244 705	244 677	132 973
Those who work across District Council Districts	154 186 (63%)	147 607 (60%)	82 664 (62%)
Those who work in Hong Kong Island and Kowloon	78 164 (32%)	69 868 (29%)	45 520 (34%)

Notes: The figure in bracket is the proportion of those who work across District Council

¹⁹ C&SD, 2006 Population By-census: Basic Tables for District Council Districts, (Hong Kong: C&SD, May 2007), pp. 75, 77, 79, <http://www.byccensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_sp.pdf>.

Districts in relation with the total employed population

Transport Setting

4.9 The transport setting of the New Territories North is far from satisfactory. It clearly could not meet the needs of the residents, this includes the transport means the metro core, and between the east and west of the New Territories, and in terms of cross-boundary transportations.

- In terms of highway connections: The Tuen Mun Highway is the major high speed highway connecting the northwestern New Territories with other part of Hong Kong. Despite the fact that there were a number of criticisms in design, and fatal accidents being occurred, only recently did the Government plan for its reconstruction. Although the Route 3 was completed in 1998, it failed to facilitate the improvement of the transport situation in northeastern New Territories due to its high fares and subsequently low rate of usage.
- No rail connections between the East and the West of New Territories: The Northern Link is originally planned to connect the East and West Rail and help break the barrier between the eastern and western part of the New Territories. As the Northern Link was not listed in the “ten major infrastructure projects” in the Policy Address of 2007-08, it is questionable for the project to proceed in the next five years. Such a move would hinder the improvement of the connectivity of the New Territories with other areas across the territories.
- High cost in public transport: The geographical remoteness and the mode of public transportation that required passengers to change vehicles several times have substantially increased the transport expenses for the residents in the New Territories. For example, a single journey MTR ticket between Tin Shui Wai to Hong Kong Island costs HK\$20.
- Lack of direct cross-boundary railway services: For residents in the northwestern New Territories going to the Mainland, it is more convenient to take the cross-boundary buses than taking the East Rail. Further delay of the Northern Link project would simply extend the difficulties in crossing the boundary for those going to school and to work in the Mainland, and to those who goes to the Mainland frequently.

4.10 The lifestyle of the grassroots of the New Territories North, or more straightly speaking, their quality of life, would have been adversely affected by the long hours of travelling to and from the place of work, and the heavy burden in transport costs. For example:

- The residents would be forced to give up some work opportunities that could not

cover the transport costs, indirectly increasing the opportunities for unemployment;

- To save transport costs, the grassroots would choose a relatively inexpensive transport mode but requiring more time, and therefore suffer from longer travelling time;
- Those working and residing in different districts would have less family time and is more inclined to become the hotbeds for family problems;
- Constrained by the transportation issues, the activities area of the grassroots sector would be confined to the neighbouring areas in their residence.

4.11 From the perspective of urban planning, there has been a number of design failures concerning the development strategies of the New Territories:

- Most of the population is concentrated in new towns which are separated with each other. Even worse, there is little functional difference between the new towns. Their key features and components are similar, such as: residential areas, shopping centres and factories, resulting in a weak organic connection between the new towns.
- The northbound shift of the industrial employment places has intensified the problems of unemployment, leading to the eventual failure in the realization of “self-sufficient” communities.
- The Government failed to learn from the setbacks in the planning of the new towns and planned to construct a large number of public housing in the New Territories North by 2010.²⁰ Such a move is expected to make the new towns to become more problematic.

4.12 The provision of public facilities is far from satisfactory. The residents who are among the first group of residence in those districts to face the problem of insufficient public services due to the strict adherence of population requirements in service provision. For instance, the provision of medical services in New Territories North is lower than the average level in Hong Kong. According to the statistics from the Hospital Authority, there were only 1.9 hospital beds for 1,000 Tuen Mun and Yuen Long residents in March 2006, and 2.2 hospital beds in the North District, which was much lower than 2.9 hospital beds of the Hong Kong average. The details are illustrated in the table below:²¹

²⁰ “5 年後新公屋 集中新界西北”, *Hong Kong Economic Times*, 19 December 2005, p. A30.

²¹ The figures from the Hospital Authority were from March 2006. The data from the C&SD is from July 2006. See The Hospital Authority, “Annual Report of the Hospital Authority 2005-2006,” <[http://www.ha.org.hk/hesd/v2/AHA/ANR0506/HAAR05-06_v14\(FullSet\).pdf](http://www.ha.org.hk/hesd/v2/AHA/ANR0506/HAAR05-06_v14(FullSet).pdf)>., pp. 143-144; C&SD, 2006 *Population By-census: Basic Tables for District Council Districts*, (Hong Kong: C&SD, May 2007), pp. 74-79, <http://www.bycensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_sp.pdf>.

Districts	Hospital Beds (Numbers)	Population (Persons)	No. of Hospital Beds (per thousand people)
Tuen Mun and Yuen Long	1 970	1 036 227	1.9
North District	607	280 730	2.2
Whole Territory	20 225	6 864 346	2.9

Note: The number of hospital beds in the three areas of New Territories North only includes those in general hospitals, excluding the specialized hospitals serving the population of Hong Kong as a whole (for example the Castle Peak Hospital and the Shiu Lam Hospital serving patients of mental illness).

4.13 Lacking strict land use control has provided a leeway for many lands originally classified as “farmland” being converted for the storage of containers and abandoned vehicles. Despite the land was leased out in a short-term (three year), the lease could usually be extended, resulting in the destruction of the rural landscape. Although the Town Planning Board has requested these open-air storage to designate measures for improvement, the tenants were unwilling to adopt long term strategies. In many cases, the usage of land has been changed illegally, and the activities it is conducting have been seriously affecting the environment. The malpractice is quite common in the rural areas in New Territories Northwest. Between 2003 and 2007, there were 474 cases of illegal cases of open-air storage around Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai, involving an area of 145 hectares and with most cases found in Ha Village and Ping Shan.²² These malpractices in land use control have brought about serious problems, including: abandoned containers and vehicles, destruction of countryside views, toxic substances from abandoned vehicles, destruction of ecological environment, a waste of land resources, etc.

New Strategies, New Situations

4.14 Although the final report of the “Hong Kong 2030 Study” and the *2007-08 Policy Address* were announced in the same month, the Policy Objectives as revealed in the Policy Address has clearly illustrated that the development strategies outlined in the Hong Kong 2030 study are lagged behind the latest development in many areas. Specific examples include:

- The Policy Address clearly suggested “the reduction of the development density”. Comparatively speaking, the wordings in the “Hong Kong 2030 Study” is however

²² “違例貨場毀地擾民”, *Metro Daily*, 22 March 2007, p. 26.

ambiguous, as it suggests that the “high development density does not automatically equate to a poor living environment or overcrowdedness”, and “many would agree to the merits of high-density developments and mixed use”.²³ In line with the new policy direction, the Government has promised to specify development parameters and to lower the development density in the application list of land starting from the fiscal year of 2008/09.²⁴ Meanwhile, some changes have been recognized. For instance, the Planning Department has proposed to lower the maximum land plot ratio of the former land site in North Point Estate from 10 to 3.05 to 4.12,²⁵ and a height restriction would be introduced in the “Outline Zoning Plan” in Kowloon and in Hong Kong Island.²⁶ The Planning Department also suggested the reduction of the plot ratio of the former Hill Valley Estate Road site to 5 times.²⁷

- Although the “Hong Kong 2030 Study” stressed the importance of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, the cooperation between Shenzhen and Hong Kong Airport, and the Lok Ma Chau Loop Area, there is no timetable for completion of these projects, that is, they have a “route map” and not a timetable. On the other hand, the Policy Address promulgated three cross-boundary infrastructure facilities that would push forward the interactions between Hong Kong and the Mainland in the economic and social aspects.
- The negotiations between Guangdong and Hong Kong and between Shenzhen and Hong Kong has proceeded in a fast pace. There are a number of projects currently under discussions, including the development of the Lok Ma Chau Loop Area, the GZ-SZ-HK ERL and the specific arrangements in the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, as well as the feasibility studies of the railway connection between the Hong Kong and Shenzhen airports.

4.15 The “Hong Kong 2030 Study” is over-conservative. The so-called “preferred development option” is simply extending the development strategies based upon the Victoria Harbour. In light of this, short and medium-term development projects would still be concentrating in the urban core which would continue to be the economic core in Hong Kong. Most new Grade A office blocks would be constructed along the shores of the Victoria Harbour, the “prime area” with plenty of expensive properties. Hence, the “consolidation” model for the future development of Hong

²³ “Hong Kong 2030 Study,” p. 23.

²⁴ “SDEV’s opening remarks at press conference on the Application List (English translation),” 29 February 2008, <<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200802/29/P200802290289.htm>>.

²⁵ “避「屏風效應」倡建築物限高 80 米環團讚有進步北角邨地皮地積比銳減六成”, *Ming Pao*, 4 January 2008, p. A6.

²⁶ “九龍城新樓將設高度限制”, *Ming Pao*, 17 January 2008, p. A8.

²⁷ “山谷道邨地增 15 米通風廊 料更多地皮加入此措施”, *Ming Pao*, 22 January 2008, p. B11.

Kong is rock solid, while the “decentralization” model is simply castle in the air.

Gives New Territories North a Fair Deal

4.16 The New Territories has long been confined to the secondary position as compared with the overall development of Hong Kong. The imbalance in economic and social development has been led to serious setbacks to the local community, which basically undermine the planning design as a whole. Against this background, it has been difficult for the New Territories North to become a relatively integrated community. Thus, the future development of the New Territories could not be restored to the old roots. Piecemeal measures such as the installation of extra public facilities, or the improvement of traffic could not help resolve the problems. It is because the limitations of the existing development model could not be overcome unless fundamental changes were put forward. In the nutshell, the current development strategy of Hong Kong is both consolidated and biased. The problem of spatial imbalance could only be addressed by downplaying the development models based upon the Victoria Harbour, relieving the developmental pressures from the shores of the Harbour, and affirming the developmental needs in other areas across the territories. One of the feasible solutions would be the development of a regional city centre for the provision of employment and a higher level arts and entertainment facilities. In view of this, the development of the New Territories should be high on the agenda of the Government, and the development of a new city centre in the centre part of New Territories be listed in the action plan.

5 Seemingly New But Old Ideas: New Development Areas

5.1 The NDAs appear to be a complement to the development plan of Hong Kong. Although some breakthroughs have been made, the planning designs of the NDAs were constrained by the guiding principles of the new development strategies. They would be a smaller in scale but carry similar functions as compared to the traditional new towns.

Basic Ideas

5.2 The Policy Address in October 2007 has proposed a number of NDAs in New Territories North, including the “Three-in-One” New Development Area of Ku Tung North in the North District, Fanling North and Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling, and the New Development Area in Hung Shui Kiu. According to the information from the Government, the designing concepts of the New Development Area include:

- They are developed as small-scale new towns to provide housing land and to meet other land use requirements in the future;
- NDAs will be nodal developments located adjacent to existing new towns, each accommodating a population of about 100 000 to 200 000;
- The population of the Hung Shui Kiu NDA could be served by the West Rail with the possible development of an additional rail station;
- Considerations would be given to consolidating these dispersed uses into well-organized container back-up or storage zones at Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling or Hung Shui Kiu.²⁸

5.3 The Government further emphasized that for the creation of a high quality living and working environment, the principles of sustainable development shall be strictly adhered in the city design and planning, including:

- In terms of city design: Control on building mass and height; provision of breezeways, well-organized open space, and comprehensive pedestrian way networks;
- In terms of energy efficiency: Examining the scope for the re-use of treated effluents in the NDAs, encouraging non-fossil-fuel-based transportation (including walking and cycling), and facilitating the use of renewable energy (such as solar energy) and recycled water.²⁹

²⁸ Development Bureau: “Final Report of Hong Kong 2030 : Planning Vision and Strategy - New Development Areas (for Discussions),” November 2007, pp. 4-5, <<http://www.devb-plb.gov.hk/eng/business/pdf/LegCoPaper071127.pdf>>.

²⁹ Development Bureau: “Final Report of Hong Kong 2030 : Planning Vision and Strategy - New Development Areas (for Discussions),” November 2007,

The Professional Commons is supportive and praise the inclusion of the elements of sustainable development in city planning.

A “Castle in the Air” without Economic Basis

5.4 The Professional Commons is concerned that whether the NDAs be sustainable economically. The *2007-08 Policy Address* suggested that the NDAs would provide land for “employment, high value-added and non-polluting industries”³⁰. The “Hong Kong 2030 Study” also recommended the allocation of the land for the development of special industries in the NDAs (that is high-valued added non-polluting industries in the NDAs, for example, research industries).³¹ However, the Government failed to provide specific arrangement concerning the above proposals. On the document submitted to the Legislative Council in February 2008, the Government only suggested that the economic activities of the New Development Area would merely be concerned with “regional retailing, services and community facilities”. As the restaurants and retail services were closely related to the regional development, and mainly serving the residents in respective locality, it would be difficult to provide a large number of employment opportunities. Despite the Government highlighted “industrial activities” as part of the powerhouse of the local economy, there is not action plan for the development of “special industries”. It is a fact that the business sector in Hong Kong is unenthusiastic to the investment in high technology sectors. Should the Government fail to display a comprehensive strategy on high technology development, it would be difficult to lure the business sector to invest in special industries. If the newly developed industrial zones with special industries as its pillar could not be materialized, there would be a new supply of employment opportunities. Consequently, large number of residents would have to travel long distance to the metro core to work, or even leading to unemployment.

5.5 On the other hand, the Government insisted that “as most of the job opportunities are still concentrated in the main urban areas, we will put more emphasis on enhancing accessibility to the main urban areas in the planning of NDAs.”³² It is obvious that the Government has no intention to make changes in the regional

<<http://www.devb-plb.gov.hk/eng/business/pdf/LegCoPaper071127.pdf>>.

³⁰ *2007-08 Policy Address*, para. 20(10), <<http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/07-08/eng/p20c.html>>.

³¹ “Hong Kong 2030 Study”, p. 127,

<http://www.pland.gov.hk/p_study/comp_s/hk2030/eng/finalreport/pdf/E_11.pdf>.

³² Development Bureau, “North East New Territories New Development Area Planning and Engineering Study” Paper Submitted to the Development Panel of the Legislative Council, para. 12(e), LC Paper No. CB(1)860/07-08(03),

<<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/plw/papers/dev0226cb1-860-3-e.pdf>>.

imbalance. Even worse, the Government treats indifferently the long distance travel faced by thousands of residents of the new towns on a daily basis. It also has no strong will to improve the traffic between different areas in the New Territories and attach greater importance to the development of the New Territories in light of closer partnership of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau.

The Former Closed Frontier Areas and Old Thinking

5.6 The planning of the NDAs fell short of close linkage with that of the Frontier Closed Area (hereafter FDA), which appears to be another indication of policy segregation. It further illustrates that the development strategies in the New Territories North have not been reviewed along with the opening of the border area. The Government recommended the reduction of the coverage of the FDAs from 2 800 hectares to 800 hectares in September 2006, and the further reduction of the coverage to 400 hectares in January 2008.³³ Due to historical reasons and relevant administrative measures, many historical heritages and the scenic countryside have been preserved in the FDAs. We should treasure these places of ecological value, as well as historical and cultural architectural heritage.³⁴ It would be important to designate a new development strategy, so as to strike a balance of the needs between development and conservation. In the submission to the Legislative Council, the Development Bureau clearly stated that “some of the land within the NDAs has already been taken up by private developers and may complicate the future land resumption processes.”³⁵ The resumption of land by the developers in Kwu Tung should be treated as an alarm.³⁶ The relaxing attitude of the Government on land management in the New Territories is highly likely to result in an un-orderly mode of development, in light of what had happened in the NDAs.

³³ “Plan finalised for reducing coverage of Frontier Closed Area,” *Press Release*, 11 January 2008, <<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200801/11/P200801110129.htm>>.

³⁴ “邊境禁區倡縮至 400 公頃 剔出河套區蠔殼圍 環團憂損生態價值”, *Ming Pao*, 12 January 2008, p. A6; 〈300 珍貴建築隱居邊境禁區〉, *Ming Pao*, 11 February 2008, p. A11.

³⁵ Development Bureau: “Final Report of Hong Kong 2030 : Planning Vision and Strategy - New Development Areas (for Discussions),” November 2007, p. 6, <<http://www.devb-plb.gov.hk/eng/business/pdf/LegCoPaper071127.pdf>>.

³⁶ “古洞發展區 財團購地佔半”, *Ming Pao*, 19 November 2007, p. A14.

VI. Serving the Needs of Both Long and Short Distance Travel: The Planning and the Selection of Stations of the National High-speed Rail Link

6.1 As we have revealed earlier, both the *2007-08 Policy Address* and the “Hong Kong 2030 Study” failed to envisage the development of the New Territories as part of the territorial development strategies. It would also be important to take into consideration the various problems in the New Territories, the long-term development strategies of Hong Kong, as well as the new positions on the interactions between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau. Notwithstanding that there has not been any thorough discussion between the Government and the society on the way forward, the Government should regard the issue as a matter of priority, so as to catch the attention of the community and to build collaborative effort to push forward the plan. The Professional Commons has considered that the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Railway would provide an important opportunity for the development of New Territories as well as adjusting the overall development setting in Hong Kong. We shall explore some basic issues concerning the GZ-SZ-HK ERL.

Positioning and Planning

6.2 In the “Guangdong-Hong Kong Cooperation Joint Conference” held in August 2007, the two authorities concluded an agreement on the construction of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section. The Chief Executive subsequently announced in the *2007-08 Policy Address* that the planning and design process was scheduled to be completed in 2008, and the construction process would commence in 2009. The basic design of the railway could be summarized as the following:

- The adaption of the “dedicated tunnel option”. A dedicated tunnel will be constructed from the terminus in West Kowloon directly to the border area near Lok Ma Chau. The train line will then pass through Futian, Longhua and Humen, and finally terminates at the Shibi station in Panyu, Guangzhou.
- The train ride between Hong Kong and Guangzhou will last less than one hour.³⁷ The railway will be an important component of the National Hi-speed Rail Network. The train can be connecting through the Beijing-Wuhan-Guangzhou-Shenzhen Express Rail Link to other cities in the Mainland,³⁸ or change to Xiamen-Shenzhen Railway in Longhua station. Moreover, passenger could change to the Inter-city

³⁷ “行政長官新聞發布會談話內容（二）（Chinese Only）,” *Press Release*, 2 August 2007, <<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200708/02/P200708020236.htm>>.

³⁸ The webpage of the Chinese Ministry of Railway, <http://www.china-mor.gov.cn/zwgk/zwgk_fzgh_zcqh.html>.

Rapid Transit System to other areas in Guangdong Province, and to take the Shenzhen Metro to other places in Shenzhen.

- The terminus of the Hong Kong section will be located in the West Kowloon reclamation area, at the northeastern section of the West Kowloon Cultural District. More specifically, the station would be located between the Kowloon Southern Link (currently in construction) and the Kowloon station of the Tung Chung line.
- The railway is also a dedicated passenger railway. The West Kowloon terminus would be an underground station with customs clearance facilities.

Inconsistencies in Planning and Positioning

6.3 The Professional Commons is in question of whether the abovementioned proposal is the optimal choice. It is because the Government had once supported the “shared corridor option” for the construction of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, which would use the tracks of the Kowloon Southern Link, West Kowloon and the proposed Northern Link, with West Kowloon as the terminus. Government officials explicitly opposed the “dedicated alignment option” under the excuse of cost efficiency. But when the Government has made a complete U-turn and chose the “dedicated tunnel option” as the eventual alignment of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, it did not provide any valid statement on supporting the shift of policies. It made us question on how and why such decisions are made. In the past deliberations, the criticisms on the “dedicated tunnel option” included:

- Expensive Construction Costs: “The capital cost of the Northern Link and the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section under the Dedicated Corridor Option would be about one and a half times of that of the combined project under the Shared Corridor Option. The difference would be a significant sum of several billion dollars.....” “When compared with the shared corridor option, the journey time could only be reduced by two minutes, from 13 to 11 minutes. Spending a few billion dollars more for simply saving two minutes can hardly be justified.”
- Difficulties in the engineering works and the high level of risk: “The Dedicated Corridor Option will involve construction of a long tunnel of about 30 km, which will be among the longest tunnels in the world. The risks associated with such tunneling works and with rail operation within such a tunnel are very high, necessitating the imposition of very stringent fire prevention and ventilation requirements..... The tunnel would have to be bigger to cater for the significantly stronger air drag between the body of the higher-speed train and the tunnel wall”;
- Poor Performance in cost-effectiveness: “...any forecast of rail passenger demand beyond 2030 will unlikely be accurate. Therefore, it would only be prudent to start with the ‘Shared Corridor Option’; “by adopting the Shared Corridor Option... avoid

under-utilization of a dedicated rail at the early years of its operation. By postponing heavy capital investment in the Hong Kong section of the Express Rail Link to some later years subject to transport need, there will be savings in interest cost of capital. The higher utilization rate of the West Rail should have positive impact on fare levels of the West rail and the financial position of the KCRC..... the combined project would generate an Economic Internal Rate of Return of 17% per annum in real terms. This includes time saving to cross-boundary passengers and road users, operating cost savings for operators, and safety benefits.”³⁹

A Good Plan? A Bad Plan!

6.4 There are other fallacies that the supporters of the “Dedicated Corridor Option” would need to address, including:

- Longer Construction Period: The Mainland section of the Railway between Longhua and Shibi would be completed by 2010. On Hong Kong side, the “Dedicated Corridor Option” would not be able to be completed by 2015 a year late when compared with the shared corridor option.
- Postponement of the Northern Link: Despite, the Northern Link had once been an integral part of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, it was absent in “Ten major Infrastructural Works” as announced in the Policy Address in 2007. It is noteworthy that the then Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works Bureau suggested to the Legislative Council in early 2006 that “without the Northern Link, access to the Lok Ma Chau Terminus from the western side of the territory will continue to be mainly road-based..... Northern Link passengers can use the Spur Line to interchange with the East Rail for travelling to stations on the East Rail. This arrangement will obviate the need for passengers to travel on the Northern Link all the way to Lok Ma Chau before they can switch to the Spur Line.”⁴⁰ As the construction plan of the Northern Link is put on hold, the residents in New Territories West have mainly to rely on road transportation for cross-boundary purposes.
- Intense competition between different modes of public transport. Apart from East Rail, there are a number of cross-boundary paths between New Territories West and Shenzhen, resulting in low usage of some of the pathways. Should all the construction plans of cross-boundary railway be implemented, it could result in

³⁹ Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, “Northern Link and Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link,” Legislative Council Brief, February 2006, <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdpceb1-etwb_t_cr_1_16_581_99-e.pdf>, pp. 5, 7-8, 10.

⁴⁰ Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, “Northern Link and Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link,” Legislative Council Brief, February 2006, <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdpceb1-etwb_t_cr_1_16_581_99-e.pdf>, p. 2.

intense competition and subsequently lower the cost-effectiveness of the Railway. The specific situations is as follows:

- ◆ The Lok Ma Chau Spur Line has been operating for a certain period of time, but the patronage is not satisfying. The MTR Corporation even provided free tickets to encourage passengers to take the new train services on a trial basis.⁴¹
- ◆ The usage of the Western Corridor was lower than expectations, with the daily dual-way traffic only constituted 14.8% of the designed capacity, while the passenger flow largely adhered with the projected capacity.⁴²
- ◆ The Government has planned the construction of a direct rail link between the Chek Lap Kok Airport and the Shenzhen Airport, which would allow passenger to transfer flights between the two airports without going the relevant customs and immigration clearance. The travelling time between these airports will be restricted to 20 minutes and will therefore split the patronage base of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL.
- ◆ The Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link, currently under planning, would connect between the Shenzhen Bay Port, New Territories Northwest and the Hong Kong International Airport. It will be another potential competitor of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL.

“Iron Rule One”: “Less than One Hour”

6.5 The most important evidence in supporting the “Dedicated Corridor Option” is to shorten the travelling time between West Kowloon and Shibi in Guangzhou to be less than one hour. The then Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works stated in the Subcommittee in Relations of Railways of the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council in April 2006 that the location of the terminus of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section in Chau Tau, which is near the border “would not be able to meet the intended objective of shortening the intercity journey time from Guangzhou to the Hong Kong urban area to within an hour.”⁴³ Such a standard was proposed as early as in the 2001 Policy Address.⁴⁴ The major determinant would be whether this one hour “iron rule” could be treated with flexibility. It would also be important to consider other factors in deciding the

⁴¹ “落馬洲線免費票 4 天僅派出半數”, *Ming Pao*, 9 January 2008, p. A14.

⁴² “運輸及房屋局局長回應立法會議員提出「善用深港西部通道」議案總結發言” (Chinese Only), *Press Release*, 30 January 2008, <<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200801/30/P200801300260.htm>>.

⁴³ Minutes of meeting of the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways, (Document Number: CB1/PS/1/04/1), 21 April 2006, p.12, <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/minutes/rd060421.pdf>.

⁴⁴ “Policy Address 2001,” para. 63, <<http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/pa01/e58.htm>>.

alignment of the railway and the location of the railway station, such as whether it could be complementary with the new situation of transport system between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, whether the fares could be lowered, and whether it can enhance cost effectiveness and shorten the construction period?

“Iron Rule” Two: Directly to the Urban Core?

6.6 Under the constraints from the one hour “iron rule”, direct trains which terminate in West Kowloon has become the only choice. It indirectly incurs the irreparability of the long tunnel alignment option. This over-stringent mentality does not concur with the rational decision-making process, and it would easily terminate other policy options. The Government should maintain an open attitude on whether the Hong Kong section of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL could shift in terms of alignment in a bid to shorten the construction period. Lessons could be learnt from the setting by Guangzhou and Shenzhen on the GZ-SZ-HK ERL.

- Both the Governments of Shenzhen and Guangzhou regarded that the location of the terminus as the strategic measures for the promotion regional economy. Futian will be the new city centre of Shenzhen. Shibi is close to the new city centre of Guangzhou. Both of them are not developed areas. On the other hand, the proposed Hong Kong Station will be placed at the heart of the city.
- The terminus of the Mainland section of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL is located in the Shibi Village of the Panyu District in Guangzhou. The station is located 14 kilometers northeast of Guangzhou town centre, 15 kilometers northwest of Foshan town centre, 16 kilometers southeast of Guangzhou New City, and 18 kilometers southwest of Shunde.⁴⁵

6.7 There is a general view that the positioning of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL should be in close connection with the National Hi-speed Rail Link and the Pearl River Delta Rapid Transit System. The Professional Commons is supportive of such an arrangement. However, this preliminary planning seems not the best solution in the sense that the alignment and the designation of the station was unable to help materialize the functions in terms of connectivity.

Positioning One: The Hong Kong Section of the National High-speed Rail Link

6.8 As the *2007-08 Policy Address* suggested, the Mainland has proactively promulgated the construction of a “National High-speed Rail Network”. According to the latest

⁴⁵ “新廣州火車站今動工 鐵路四大客運中心呼之欲出,” “South CN” Website, <<http://www.southcn.com/news/gdnews/gdpic/200412300528.htm>>.

information from the rail authorities in the Mainland, 18 000 kilometers of express rail link with an hourly speed of 200 kilometers would be constructed by 2020.⁴⁶ This High Speed Rail Link is expected to impose a profound impact on the economic relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Most importantly, a number of Express Rail Links would be connecting with each others in the next three to five years [including the Beijing-Guangzhou, Beijing-Harbin, Longhai (Liangyungang-Lanzhou), Shanghai-Kunming Express Rail Lines].⁴⁷ Hence, the National High-speed Rail Link would be connecting with many major Chinese cities such as Beijing, Harbin, Lianyungang, Lanzhou, Shanghai and Kunming by 2013. In addition, the Xiamen-Shenzhen Railway (Guangdong section) is currently under construction, and is expected to be completed by 2011. After completion, it would shorten the travelling time to only three hours from Shenzhen to Xiamen.⁴⁸ The Mainland section of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL could be extended to Longhua in 2010. Should the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section could be completed concurrently with the rest of the Shenzhen section, it could have connected with all the cities in the Mainland immediately. This could have enormously facilitated the economic links and other means of linkage between Hong Kong and the rest of the Mainland.

- 6.9 On the other hand, the number of long-haul trains between the major cities in the Mainland has been adjusted upward. According to the latest assumptions, there would be 10 and 15 mainland cities operating long-haul through trains to Hong Kong in 2020 and 2030 respectively. This will generate 15 long-haul train pairs per day in 2020 and 23 pairs daily in 2030.⁴⁹ It exceeded the original forecast of seven pairs of long-haul trains daily between West Kowloon and cities outside Guangdong province including Beijing and Shanghai.⁵⁰ Other short-haul trains include: Four trains each direction per hour from West Kowloon to Longhua; one non-stop train each direction per hour from West Kowloon to Shibi; one train each direction per hour from West Kowloon to Shibi with an intermediate stop at Humen.⁵¹ Comparatively speaking, it would not be an urgent issue on the extension of the

⁴⁶ “加快實現我國鐵路現代化為國民經濟又好又快發展提供可靠的運力保證” [劉志軍在全國鐵路工作會議上的報告（摘要）], *People's Railway Daily*, 12 January 2008, pp. A5, A7.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. A5.

⁴⁸ “2011年深圳乘火車3小時到廈門,” *Ching Bao*, 7 January 2008, p. A11.

⁴⁹ “Northern Link and the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link,” paper submitted to the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways, Panel on Transport, Legislative Council, January 2007, Paper No. [CB(1)573/06-07(04)], p.3, <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0105cb1-573-4-e.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, “Northern Link and Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link,” Legislative Council Brief, February 2006, p. 2 of Annex B, <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0105cb1-etwb_t_cr_1_16_581_99-e.pdf>.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

frequencies of the trains to other cities in the Mainland. The Professional Commons believed that connecting with the National High-speed Rail Link as soon as possible should be the primary consideration in deciding the rail alignment.

Positioning Two: Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong High-speed Rail Link

6.10 According to the planning of the Hi-speed National Rail Link, an inter-city rapid transit system have been under construction in the Pan-Bohai, Changjiang Delta and the Pearl River Delta regions in a bid to strengthen the connection between the major cities within the regions. The Pearl River Delta Rapid Transit System could connect to Shenzhen, Foshan, Zhaoqing and Huizhou, and the Guangzhou-Zhuhai Link is already under construction.⁵² Once the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Railway has been connected, passengers could swiftly go to and from these cities in the Mainland through Guangzhou. This could tremendously strengthen the link between Hong Kong and various cities in the Pearl River Delta.

6.11 It is expected that the GZ-SZ-HK ERL would face fierce competition. The Mainland side has confirmed that an extra station would be built at Futian, Shenzhen, which will be the terminus of the Mainland Section of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL. The HKSAR Government is now “assessing how the additional station in Futian would affect the performance of the ERL”.⁵³ Nonetheless, as part of the planned Rapid Transit System (RTS) network in the Pearl River Delta, an additional rail line will be built to connect Shenzhen city centre, the coastal area, through Humen, Dongguan to Guangzhou East.⁵⁴ This new railway could bring about competition with the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, as passengers going to Dongguan and Guangzhou East, they might change to another train at Shenzhen rather than going to Humen.

6.12 It is obvious that the Rapid Transit System between Guangzhou and Shenzhen would bring about direct competition, which should be treated positively. Fare would be the predominant factor for maintaining competitiveness of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL. Thus, the construction costs should be reduced in order to raise the cost-effectiveness of the project, through the review of the alignment of the railway, the location of the station, and works arrangements.

⁵² “七條城際線 串起珠三角,” *Southern Metropolitan Daily*, 24 June 2007, p. A5.

⁵³ “Northern Link and the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link,” paper submitted to the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways of the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council, January 2007, Paper No. [CB(1)573/06-07(04)], p.3, <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp0105cb1-573-4-e.pdf>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4.

New Thinking

6.13 In a nutshell, the Professional Commons recommends a revamp of the planning and design of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section through taking into consideration of the following factors:

- Utilizing the economic dynamics of the railway to boost regional development as well as the overall development of Hong Kong as a whole;
- Shortening of the construction period for connecting the High-speed National Rail Link and the Pearl River Delta Rapid Transit System within a shorter period of time;
- Reducing the construction and operating costs for better cost-effectiveness;
- Synchronizing the transportation networks between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

7 Striking the Right Balance: Development Strategies of the Secondary City Centre in the New Territories

7.1 The construction of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Railway would hopefully bring about new developments in the New Territories, and bring in an opportunity for the review of territorial development of Hong Kong from a spatial perspective. The Professional Commons believes that a government which upholds the principle of “for the people” should be able to create a vision, and make use of this opportunity to review the overall development strategies. In view of this, the railway alignment and the location of the terminus of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section should be considered as the initial stage to remedy the imbalance of the development setting of Hong Kong. In view of the planning for the overall development strategy, should be adopted with special attention be paid on the development needs of the New Territories. In this chapter, we would prescribe a few principles for the development strategies in the New Territories for further reference. In the next chapter we would focus on the realization of the plans, and map out specific measures, especially on the planning and design of the secondary city centre.

New Parameters in Development Strategies

7.2 As we have suggested in Chapter 3 of this Research Report, the developmental concept as exemplified in the “Hong Kong 2030 Study” and the Metroplan are highly correlated with each other, with most of the developments in the next 20 years will concentrate along the shore of the Victoria Harbour. The Professional Commons believed that these developmental concepts are too conservative, as well as lack of insights. The Government should have foresight in the formulation of the development strategies for Hong Kong, which can address the interests of Hong Kong as a whole, and not be narrow minded in its vision. The Professional Commons holds the view that the planning policies of Hong Kong should be revamped through incorporating the following parameters in planning:

- Conduct an territorial-wide strategic study and explore the alternatives of a more diversified but comprehensive development of New Territories North, such as the establishment of new growth areas in the North District and in Yuen Long and Kam Tin, as well as the development of the core area in the new growth areas;
- Rather than limiting the scope of the study to the inclusion of population, land use, infrastructure, etc, there should also be more forward-looking and holistic views on the overall development model of Hong Kong, particularly in economic

development of various districts and the cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong;

- Nurture different levels of “City Centres”. Other than the metro core which maintains the status as the most prominent business centre in the territory, a number of Secondary City Centres and their respective core areas should be developed beyond the harbour region,;
- Create a structure of regional cost differentiation: Relatively inexpensive offices and commercial premises should be provided out of the metro core to house local small and medium-sized enterprises and Mainland enterprises in general trade.

Regional Policies

7.3 The Government would need to review its governing principles in rectifying the imbalance in regional development. Tailor-made measures should be provided to meet the unique condition of different areas. Such an arrangement should be formalized as a guiding principle in regional administration. The new policy structure will facilitate more responsive actions, as well as raising vitalities in individual communities. On the other hand, continuous effort has been made by the Government to boost the development of the “local economy” in individual communities after the financial crisis in 1997. However, there is no outstanding achievement as most of the projects are unable to meet the needs of the public, and as well as the absence of economic scale. Hence, it would be advisable for the Government to formulate a set of regional development strategies in the planning of New Territories, including the following:

- Formulating a strategy of the development of a regional economy characterized by the provision of higher level services at the neighbouring areas, replacing the strategy on “giving handouts to the poor” and promoting a local economy without economy of scale;
- Providing tailor-made or even preferential policies to address the needs of different regions. The Government has always been adhering to a uniform policy principle with a territorial-wide coverage. In the example of Tin Shui Wai shows that only specific policy applicable to the area has illustrated, a tailor-made regional policy would be required to tackle district specific issues;
- Provision of economic incentives, such as establishing a “regional” based taxation system (e.g. different tax credits and concessions, etc.) for economic entities in specific areas, for firms investing in specific areas; reduction of rates and Government rents, etc.;

For the promotion of the development of the information technology sector, the
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Malaysian Government has established a “Multimedia Super Corridor” (now referred as MSC) at the suburbs of its capital Kuala Lumpur in 1996, comprising an area of 750 square kilometers. The Government has provided a number of tax incentives for the companies stationed in the Zone, including the provision of tax breaks in profits tax, investment tax, and on the tax for the importation of high technology product. The Malaysian Government also provides a Research Fund for the provision of capital to encourage the enterprises in the MSC for engaging in research and development.⁵⁵

The Government of Dubai in United Arab Emirates has established a number of specialized areas for different sectors, which are referred as “Free Zones”, including the “Silicon Oasis” focusing in the development of high-end electronics and nanotechnologies, the “Dubai Cars and Automotive Zone” focusing on the automobile industries, the “Dubai Outsource Zone” focusing on outsourcing services, and the “Dubai Media City” focusing on media industries. The Government in Dubai also provides a “zero rate” for the profits and corporate tax for the enterprises and employees established in the “Free Zones”.⁵⁶

- Lowering the minimum resident threshold required by the Government for the provision of community facilities in the New Territories, as the residents of public housing in the NDAs are mostly come from the grassroots. They might have lost their community network and family support due to the relocation and therefore might result in a greater demand for public services.

Affirming the Developmental Needs in the New Territories

7.4 When the residents in the new towns in the New Territories find it difficult to obtain the necessary amenities and services in their localities, they are required to make long, expensive trips to the metro core to meet their needs. In fact these demands could be met by developing a hierarchy of cities which provides different levels of services and plays different kinds of function. The Professional Commons suggests that multi-function communities known as “Secondary City Centres” should be created in the areas in the New Territories for the provision of job opportunities, commercial and industrial activities, community services, as well as cultural and entertainment facilities. In the nutshell, these “Secondary City Centres” should comprise the following functions:

- Economic and Employment Opportunities: The development of commercial

⁵⁵ < <http://www.msc.com.my> >

⁵⁶ < <http://www.dso.ae/en/> >, <<http://www.dubaimediacity.com/>>, <<http://www.ducamz.co.ae/>>, <<http://www.doz.ae/>>

buildings, a Mainland-Hong Kong business and trade centre, a “hotel hub”, regional government headquarters, university town and a transport hub will facilitate the development of regional economy which help provide substantial amount of job opportunities;

- Public Facilities and Services: For the provision of government services on a “one-stop” mode, it would be advisable to house related government departments under one roof, for instance, to regroup government offices related to Mainland-Hong Kong trade and immigration services to one government office towers in the New Territories. A “Regional Community Service Centre” should be established in a single building to serve the residents nearby;
- Cultural and Entertainment Facilities: The Professional Commons has recommended the creation of a “Community Cultural Network” in the “West Kowloon for the People” Research Report. Such a centre could be established in Kam Sheung Road,⁵⁷ together with a number of performing arts facilities, even a “central” library, and entertainment facilities, for the improvement of leisure amenities and the quality of life of the residents in the neighbouring areas.

The Odaiba District in Tokyo is located along the shores of Tokyo Bay. Originally an island fortress, the Mayor of Tokyo has initiated a “Tokyo Waterfront Subcenter Project” in the 1980s, which was to develop the area into an area of modern office towers and tourist spots. Nowadays, there are a number of headquarters of large-scaled enterprises (for example, the Fuji TV station), a number of infrastructure, shopping centers, tourist spots, hotels and entertainment facilities incorporating modern designs. These buildings and facilities have become the tourist spots attracting domestic visitors as well as international visitors alike. There are also a light rail system and a high speed rail system connecting the District with the rest of Tokyo.⁵⁸

Reducing the Developmental Pressure in the Urban Areas and the Countryside

7.5 It is high time to review the existing development strategy which focused on the shores of Victoria Harbour. As the prevailing urban renewal measures would continue to raise the building density in the urban areas, the chance for the reduction of the density in development by itself is slim. Attaching greater importance to the development of the New Territories and pushing forward the development plan in a more orderly way would help address the development dilemmas facing Hong Kong. In the course of policy formulation, the following issues shall be addressed:

- Adoption of a well-rounded planning strategy, through the conservation in natural

⁵⁷ In the subsequent reference to “Kam Sheung Road”, we refer it the area of the existing Kam Sheung Road West Rail Line station and its immediate surroundings.

⁵⁸ <<http://www.seaside-tokyo.gr.jp/index.html>>; <<http://web-japan.org/atlas/communities/com08.html>>

and cultural heritage, to steer future territorial development to a healthy direction. It would be of equal importance to put corresponding measures in place to create a win-win situation and to neutralize the situation of a “zero sum game”;

- Adoption of a “multi-function city” approach in the planning of the New Development Areas, under which an array of facilities, such as job opportunities, public services and entertainment facilities would be provided in the neighbourhood. A self-sufficient community could relieve the pressure of the metro core;
- Formulation of a set of comprehensive arrangements in rural land use as soon as possible: Affirm the protective measures on conservation areas and ecological sensitive areas, and designate the conservation strategies from a regional perspective. Measures should be adopted for combating the “squattering” of rural land by developers;
- Promoting “green infrastructure”: The historic sites and their immediate natural surroundings should be preserved as one integrated area;
- Introduction of “compensatory measures” for land use in natural conservation sites: Provision of flexible measures for the use of rural land without reducing the overall volume of land listed as “conservation areas”, readjusting the use of fragmented rural land in a bid to protect the “virgin land”.

Improving the Public Transport System

7.6 In view of its distanced geographical location, the improvement of external transportation in the New Territories would certainly be important for the development of the area. In fact the adoption of a balanced regional development strategy should be one of the guiding principles for the development plan of the New Territories. The specific arrangements in relation to public transport are listed as follows:

- Facilitating the integrity of the public transport system: Other than connecting to the metro core, it would be important to address the overall transport needs of the residents, such as the transport connections between New Territories East and New Territories West;
- Facilitating a well-rounded regional transportation system: Allowing different modes of public transportation to operate concurrently;
- Meeting the needs of cross-boundary transportation: Should the terminus of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL is located in West Kowloon, and with no intermediate stops, the residents of the New Territories would have to go south, or making the transfers in the Mainland for the connection with the high speed national rail link, wasting their time and money, it is unfair for the residents in the New Territories.

- The construction of roads and bridges is simply not enough. As the transport problems facing the New Territories are originated from the even distribution of city functions, it could only be addressed by an overhaul of the planning strategy and the overall economic setting from a spatial perspective. It would be worthwhile to consider the development of secondary city centres in the New Territories beyond the metro core. Hence, the demands of public transport between the metro core and the New Territories could be reduced through the provision of job opportunities, public services and recreational facilities in areas easy to reach. A reverse flow in transport could even strike a balance the traffic load to and from the metro core.

Addressing the Needs Concerning the Interactions between Hong Kong and the Mainland

- 7.7 The interactions between Guangdong, Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macao have been more prominent and inter-governmental negotiations on cross-boundary infrastructure projects are underway. For example, the concept plan of the Lok Ma Chau Loop Area, the GZ-SZ-HK ERL and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, and the feasibility studies of the connection between Hong Kong and Shenzhen Airports. In light of these latest developments, the HKSAR Government should expedite its review on the overall development strategy, and accord high priority to the overall planning strategies of the New Territories and the planning of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen-Guangzhou Rail Link, so as to create a new setting for the development of Hong Kong. To this end, our specific recommendations include:
- The development of the New Territories should be listed as a matter of priority in the governmental agenda, taking into consideration of the economic cooperation with Guangdong and Shenzhen. Under which the development of Kam Sheung Road Secondary City Centre should be the foremost item among the action plan, together with relevant policies and business environment deemed necessary for its development.
 - To meet the dual needs for connecting the national high-speed national rail network and the Pearl River Delta Rapid Transit System, the Terminus of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL, HK Section shall be built in Kam Sheung Road.

VIII. Kam Sheung Road as the Secondary City Centre

8.1 The most prominent factor affecting the development of the secondary city centres is whether it would have adequate economic momentum and capacity. It is likely for the transportation hub arising from the proposed GZ-SZ-HK ERL be clustered with economic and trade activities between the Mainland and Hong Kong could the prospective Mainland-Hong Kong business zone might bring about a large scale economic driving force that supports the economic sustainability of the secondary urban centre. In view of the “New Developed Areas” as suggested in the “Hong Kong 2030 Study”, the Professional Commons is in view that with the favourable factor of being a potential transportation hub, Kam Sheung Road could be developed into an all-rounded commercial area with commercial, trade, hotels and exhibitions facilities. Moreover, the Government could add momentum through setting up regional headquarters of the Government or a university town over there. We can see, Kam Sheung Road bears the conditions for the development of a Secondary City Centre. The crux of success would be the political determination and foresight of the Government.

Transport Hub: Hong Kong Station of the Hi-speed National Rail Link

8.2 In fact, Kam Sheung Road is a regional transport hub to a certain extent. In terms of rail transport, the headquarters of the West Rail Line and the Kam Sheung Road station are already located there. The proposed Northern Link will connect Kam Sheung Road station with the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line and the East Rail Line. In terms of the road transport, the Kam Sheung Road station is served by 23 minibus and bus lines, and a number of highways are connecting between the station and different areas of Hong Kong. The areas covered in the highway connection are as follows:

- To West Kowloon via Route 3;
- To New Territories West via the Yuen Long Highway, and to the western part of Shenzhen via the Western Corridor;
- To the northeastern part of the New Territories via the Tsing Long Highway, Lam Kam Highway, and Fan Kam Highway.

When the GZ-SZ-HK ERL and the Northern Link are completed, it is likely that Kam Sheung Road would be able to serve as a major transport hub connecting the East and West of the New Territories, and between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

8.3 In order to expedite the connection with the hi-Speed national rail link of the Mainland in a shorter period of time, the HKSAR Government could adjust the

development strategies of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL in order to shorten the construction time for two to three years through the following measures:

- The terminus of the Hong Kong section should be built under the Kam Sheung Road West Rail Line station and its immediate surroundings (the existing car park) to reduce the scale of tunneling and to occupy lesser amount of surface area;
- Connecting with Futian, Shenzhen through tunneling, in order to reduce the environmental damage to the minimum.
- As for the transport arrangements between Kam Sheung Road to the urban metro core, two proposals can be considered:
 - ◆ Extension of the West Rail Line to the Central Station of the MTR, through realigning of the West Rail Line to go direct to Central (Hong Kong Station) and shorten the Tung Chung Line to Nam Cheung Station;
 - ◆ The GZ-SZ-HK ERL could be extended to covering to West Kowloon in view of the growth in number of trains and passenger growth.

8.4 It is likely the new proposals could bring about the following advantages to the development of railways, as well as the overall development of Hong Kong as a whole:

- Earlier commencement of the rail link: As the length of the tunnel is half of its original size, the construction time could be shortened significantly. It could have facilitated the connection with the Hi-Speed national Rail Link and the Pearl River Delta Rapid Transport System as early as possible.
- Shrinking in the scale of tunneling could reduce the construction costs and raise cost effectiveness, so that the fare could be reduced in a considerable scale;
- Better use of flattened land in Kam Sheung Road;
- Associated advantages including the release of a substantial area of land in the city centre for other purposes, for instance government office blocks and companies involving the business and trade with the Mainland originally located in the urban areas;
- Financial resources saved from the revised alignment can be reallocated for the early construction of the Northern Link, which would speed up if the transportation flows between the East and West of the New Territories and between the Northwestern part of the New Territories and Shenzhen.

“Kam Sheung Road-Yuen Long-Au Tau” Core Area

8.5 Should Kam Sheung Road be developed into a “Secondary City Centre”, its span shall be extended to Au Tau at the north, to Yuen Long in the northwest, and to the Pat Heung Depot at the south, and grow into a “Kam Sheung Road-Yuen Long-Au

Tau Secondary City Centre Core Area” (hereafter the “Core Area”). It should be noted that our study is mainly to do with planning concepts, and not to regulate with the individual functions in specific areas. Nonetheless, when the municipal governments of many international cities have already strategically created a number of secondary city centres for relieving the developmental pressures of the Central Business Districts. For example, the Docklands in the East End of London, the La Defense business district in Paris, the Odaiba district in Tokyo are prominent examples of such and renders for particular attention. It should be noted that the conservation areas, such as the Tai Lam Country Park, should be well protected and preserved, or using compensatory measures to maintain the overall volume of land listed as “conservation areas”.

The Docklands is a comprehensive “Secondary City Centre” located on the outskirts of the city centre of London (the East End) with an area of 21 square kilometers. It could be perceived as a successful model of government-initiated programme for the creation of a “Secondary City Centre”. As the ship building and the port-related industries have started to contract, the district has gone through a period of urban decay. The municipal government of London then created a London Dockland Development Cooperation in the 1980s to redevelop the district, mainly through the investments from private developers. Nowadays, the district has become an agglomeration area for business, residential, trade, exhibition, hotel and catering, entertainment alike. The “Docklands Light Railway” connects the office towers and residential blocks of the District, it also connects the London Underground system to the city centre. The Docklands even has its own airport and university.⁵⁹

Mainland-Hong Kong Business and Trade Centre

8.6 Office towers shall be built next to the Hong Kong station of the high-speed national rail link, allowing the trading businesses in Hong Kong and the Mainland to station in the area. Apart from the geographical benefits of proximity to a transport hub, it is expected that the land cost and rent of Kam Sheung Road would certainly be lower than the city centre, at least in its early phase of development. The exhibition facilities of a substantial scale could create a clustering effect, which would promote the developments in trade. The exhibition activities requires the support of a wide range of services, including design, decoration, logistics, travel and tourism, legal

⁵⁹ <<http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/beforelddc/index.html>>; <<http://www.dockland.co.uk>>

services, accountancy services, translation and telecommunications. These companies would prefer to station close to their customers. For the convenience for tourists, shopping centres would also be located near the station, adding greater variety and vitality of the district. Additionally, the area neighbouring the Yuen Long Station of West Rail could be developed as a business district of a substantial scale.

- 8.7 The Government has to appropriately deal with the challenges and competitions of the “Secondary City Centre” from the urban core. It has to reflect political determination for the development of Kam Sheung Road: It has to inject a tremendous amount of resources during the early stage of its development, and to adopt policy measures of a substantial strength to assist the development of the area. This would attract the business and enterprises in relations with business and trade activities between Hong Kong and the Mainland to be located in the “Secondary City Centre”, and to develop as a centre for business with the Mainland through agglomeration. Should the Government did not put forward measures for supporting the secondary urban centre, the businessmen and the enterprises would not be willing to relocate to Kam Sheung Road “adventurously”.

Business and Trade Exhibition Centre

- 8.8 The Government has fastened its pace in the provision of new exhibition facilities in recent years.⁶⁰ In addition to the expansion of the atrium link between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, the Government has been proactively preparing the Second Phase development of the AsiaWorld-Expo. Moreover, the Phase 3 development of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (hereafter HKCEC) in Wan Chai has been under discussion between the Government and the Trade Development Council. The Government is constrained by the agglomeration characteristics of office activities and dares not to locate new exhibition facilities outside the urban core.
- 8.9 The metro core has been under intense development pressure which should be addressed with a sense of urgency. The 2008-09 Budget suggested that the Government would relocate three government office buildings at the Wan Chai waterfront in order to free some land in the Central Business Districts for developing Grade A offices. However, it is uncertain whether the reduction of

⁶⁰ The shifting of the attitude for the planning and construction of the convention and exhibition facilities by the Government may have to do with the increasingly intense competition from Guangzhou and Macau. See Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau, “Hong Kong’s position as an international convention and exhibition centre,” paper presented to the Panel on Commerce and Industry, Legislative Council, 13 March 2007, p. 3, <<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ci/papers/ci0313cb1-1090-5-e.pdf>>.

development density would be a priority issue of the Government. In fact, the neighbouring area of the HKCEC in Wan Chai is already very crowded. When the extension of its atrium link is completed, the traffic would be further deteriorated. Should there be a Phase 3 development of HKCEC, it is very likely the extra traffic load would be beyond the capacity of the surrounding traffic system. The Government has to revamp the existing development strategies under which business activities continue to highly concentrated in the metro core.

8.10 The case of running an exhibition centre next to the Chek Lap Kok Airport shows that it would be feasible for an exhibition centre stationing next to a transportation hub. Abundant boarder space for development and cheaper human resource costs are also comparative advantages of Kam Sheung Road in terms of the development of the exhibition and business and trade matters. From the perspective of source of business, the exhibition and trade facilities in Kam Sheung Road could target at the passengers of the railway system in the Mainland.

8.11 It should not undermined the massive demand for exhibition and event hosting services among the 3 million residents in the New Territories who would be the potential clients in the convention and exhibition facilities in Kam Sheung Road. Other than business exhibitions and conferences, it would be capable to host a diversified range of events, serving both domestic and international clients, such as the entertainment and special events, banquets, corporate events, media conferences and seminars.⁶¹ The Hong Kong International Trade and Exhibition Centre in Kowloon Bay also provide good reference. Despite that it is located quite far away from the MTR Station, and visitors are required to take a feeder bus to go there, it is quite popular among event enthusiasts. There are event and banquet halls that could accommodate up to 100 banquet tables, and is suitable for exhibitions, tradeshow, conferences, meetings and banquets. There is also an entertainment venue entitled “Star Hall” with an area of 30 000 square feet and could accommodate 3 600 audiences. It has reportedly an active calendar of concerts from local and international artists.⁶² Against this background, should exhibition facilities could be developed in Kam Sheung Road, the local residents could be an important source of customers.

The La Defense in Paris is a business district located in the outskirts of the city centre. The municipal government of Paris was aimed at protecting the city’s

⁶¹ See Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, “HKCEC Fast Facts,” <<http://www.hkcec.com/english/introduction/files/fasfacts2008.pdf>>.

⁶² <http://www.hitec.com.hk/en/hitec_starhall.htm>.

skyline from the skyscraper buildings. Located 10 kilometers away from the city centre, La Defense has been developed as a business centre of major significance nowadays. This central business district covers 400 hectares with about 1 500 enterprises having established an office there (out of the 20 largest enterprises in France, 14 has an office in La Defense). It also accommodates 2 600 hotel rooms and 150 000 jobs. 20 000 persons are taking residency in the District.⁶³

Hotel Hub

8.12 The interrelated issues of inadequacy of hotel rooms and high costs of accommodation have heavily hindered the development of tourism of Hong Kong. It has aroused serious criticisms from inbound tourists. In a Legislative Council meeting held in early 2007, LegCo member Howard Young from the Liberal Party pointed out that as the number of hotels room in Hong Kong would still be under 60 000 by 2011, compared with the 43 000 rooms currently. The pace of increase is also lagging behind of Hong Kong's neighbouring regions. He suggested that the provision of more hotel rooms should be in high gear and the Government should "adopt a more flexible approach" in granting land for hotels.⁶⁴ In fact, the newly constructed hotels are not confined to the traditional areas frequented by tourists and have been spreading to other places with an easy access of transportation. For example, there are a number of hotel development projects in Wong Chuk Hang and Shek Pai Wan even before the promulgation of the South Island Line of the MTR. The teaching hotel of the Chinese University of Hong Kong is located in Shatin. The Regal Riverside Hotel is now under expansion works. A number of confirmed hotel projects would be located in areas which are not the traditional tourist areas, such as Kwai Chung, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, Tai Kok Tsui. The abovementioned cases indicate that building hotels in areas out of developed areas have been a growing trend in respective sector. But in the latest Land Application List, only one piece of hotel land is outside the urban core (i.e.in Tin Shui Wai), from which we can see the conservatism of the Government. Only that the existing policy direction would have been revised accordingly, there would be little room for dramatic change in the territorial development strategies of Hong Kong. More specifically, should Kam Sheung Road develops as a university town, it could follow the model of the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, CUHK to establish a teaching hotel near the campus.

⁶³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Defense>
<http://www.ladefense.fr/english_english.php>

⁶⁴ Records of Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 24 January 2007, p. 4206,
<<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/counmtg/hansard/cm0124-translate-e.pdf>>.

8.13 As a transportation hub, Kam Sheung Road could follow the example of the Airport. As the Mainland tourists might require different types of accommodation to meet a great variety of needs, it would make perfect sense to provide a wide range of hotel facilities close to the station, including three-to-four stars hotels, service apartments, guesthouse of short-term lease. A varied form of hotel accommodation could also be provided in the area neighboring the Yuen Long District. It would be difficult to estimate the number of Mainland tourists who want to strictly enter the urban areas at this stage. However, it is a logical speculation that there would be a great demand for long-haul passengers who wanted to be accommodated in a suitably priced hotel with providing convenient transportation. Should there are some middle or low priced hotels in Kam Sheung Road, it could provide an economical choice for the visitors. Also, according to people of the hotel industry, “every additional hotel room can create a job opportunity for a front-line hotel worker”.⁶⁵ It should be noted that many of these jobs would be low skill ones and could bring about a substantial number of employment opportunities for the grassroots sector.

Regional Headquarters for the Government

8.14 Apart from city planning, the provision of infrastructure and the improvement of transport, the modifications of the spatial distribution of government departments could also strengthen regional development. The development history of the reclamation area in Wan Chai could serve as useful reference. The three government buildings, i.e. Revenue Tower, Immigration Tower and Wan Chai Tower, together with the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre have brought in a tremendous population flow and helped boost the vitality of the area. Hence, a similar strategy could be adopted in the development of Kam Sheung Road.

8.15 The Financial Secretary announced in the 2008-09 Budget that the Government “will study the relocation of three government office buildings at the Wan Chai waterfront. Potential sites for relocation may be found in new districts such as the Kai Tak Development Area and Tseung Kwan O.” The Professional Commons is supportive of the Government’s willingness and efforts to relocate its offices out of the prime site, and by doing so, to promote the development of new areas and for the creation of employment opportunities in the new districts. In fact, according to the 2006 Annual Report of the Government Property Agency, the Government has

⁶⁵ Records of Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 24 January 2007, <<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/counmtg/hansard/cm0124-translate-e.pdf>>. p.4206.

planned to construct one office tower in East and West Kowloon respectively. Of which, the office tower planned in the West Kowloon district is “to facilitate reprovisioning of government accommodation affected by the implementation of the Central Kowloon Route (CKR) project.” The other one which is planned at Kai Tak is to “consolidate government offices which are otherwise scattered, reduce government expenditure on renting accommodation as well as release government accommodation at prime sites for other development.”⁶⁶ Seemingly the West Kowloon and Kai Tak do not have enough room to accommodate all government departments originally stationed in the three government office towers in Wan Chai. The Professional Commons therefore recommends the Government to re-provision some of these office towers to Kam Sheung Road. By doing so, the spatial distribution of Government offices could become more evenly spread and subsequently reduce the traffic demands going to and from the metro core in rush hours.

8.16 There are more than three million people living in the New Territories. Hence, it would be appropriate for some of the government office towers to be relocated to the New Territories, accompanied with the establishment of regional headquarters in there. In view of administrative and managerial consideration, Kam Sheung Road, which is located in the centre of the New Territories, could facilitate “management through proximity”. It could also rectify the over-concentration of Government positions in the metro core. Most importantly, such a move will demonstrate the determination of the Government in addressing regional imbalance.

8.17 In response to the growing development pressure, the Government has recently lowered the land plot ratio in relation to property development.⁶⁷ The Development Bureau announced the new application list in February 2008 and suggested an appropriate lowering of the development density, and some additional development parameters on saleable land. These could reduce the saleable area in the urban areas and the revenues from land sales accordingly. Nonetheless, the relocation of the various government departments to the New Territories could free up space in the urban areas for more valuable uses and recoup the loss of government revenues through the sale of land for redevelopment.

⁶⁶ “Annual Report of the Government Property Agency 2006,”

<http://www.gpa.gov.hk/english/doc/gpa_annual_report_2006.pdf>, p. 1

⁶⁷ “SDEV’s opening remarks at press conference on the Application List (English translation),” 29 February 2008, <<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200802/29/P200802290289.htm>>.

Cultural and Arts Facilities

8.18 It is widely known that the New Territories Northwest has been suffering from severe inadequacies of community facilities. The problems occurred in Tin Shui Wai has aptly reflected the seriousness of the issue, ranging from libraries to medical services. Against this background, it would be advisable for the centrally-located area “Core Area” at Kam Sheung Road to develop into a hub for regional-based public services, including the following:

- A Library of “Central Library” Grade: There are two libraries of a central library status across the territories, i.e. the Hong Kong Central Library located in Hong Kong Island, and the Kowloon Central Library located in Homantin. To date, there is no library of that grade currently in the New Territories yet. The Government should provide relevant facilities for the use of the public in the neighbouring areas;
- “Community Cultural Network”: One of the initiatives as suggested in our “West Kowloon for the People” Report published in December 2007 was the establishment of a “Community Cultural Network”. In view of this, a mid-level regional cultural centres should be established in Kam Sheung Road to provide learning and training studios for cultural activities as well as performing arts venues.⁶⁸

Residential Development

8.19 Residential zone could be developed in the areas extending from Kam Sheung Road to Yuen Long or to Au Tau. Apart from hotels, many models of residential development can take place, including service apartments, low density residential units, and large-scale housing compounds. Other than the large-scale development project of YoHo Town near the Yuen Long West Rail Station, the site east of the station also has the potential for sizeable private real estate development. To preserve the rural landscape, it would be more preferable to adopt a low density model for the development between Kam Sheung Road Station and Yuen Long Station, and between Kam Sheung Road Station and Au Tau Station. Should the new business area be supplement with accommodation facilities, it could facilitate the development of the “Secondary City Centre” in New Territories North.

University Town

⁶⁸ The Professional Commons, “West Kowloon for the People: Research Report on the West Kowloon Cultural District Development,” December 2007. The Report could be viewed at <http://www.procommons.org.hk/documents/WKCD_Report--full%20report.pdf>.

8.20 It is recommended in the “Hong Kong 2030 Study” that land shall be reserved at one of the NDAs for the development of tertiary educational facilities in order to attract more Mainland and international students and skilled professionals to study and work in Hong Kong.⁶⁹ The Professional Commons share the view that additional post-secondary education facilities could steer Hong Kong to the direction of a knowledge-based economy, and the development of an education hub as well. Despite the fact that a working paper of the Study suggested that Kwu Tung North would be a desirable location for the University Town⁷⁰ and the Policy Address in 2007 also confirmed that Kwu Tung North is the desirable location as the New Development Area, the “North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning and Engineering Study” document submitted by the Development Bureau to the Legislative Council in February 2008, however, did not mention any intention for the construction of a post-secondary education institute in the NDA. Moreover, the “Initial Assessment of the Development of a University Town in Hong Kong” under the “Hong Kong 2030 Study” has suggested that the Kam Tin/Au Tau Area is considered as “having the potential for the development of a University town”⁷¹. Taking into consideration of the abovementioned factors, the Professional Commons regards that Kam Sheung Road is the prime site for the prospective post-secondary education institute.

8.21 Kam Sheung Road provides a favourable venue for the development of the higher education institute, including:

- The geographical conditions of the area near the Kam Sheung Road Station matches with middle density requirements for educational facilities, taken into account the height restrictions and the valley-shaped landscape;
- The direct transport connection with major cities in the Mainland is likely to attract Mainland students to study in Hong Kong, and facilitates joint research projects between higher education institutes across the boundary;
- The establishment of faculties and research facilities in the institute should be targeted at the specific needs of the regional economy, such as the Faculty on Hotel Management and the inclusion of a teaching hotel. Such an arrangement will be an effective means in staff training and in the provision of hotel facilities in the “Core Area”. The research centre could also facilitate the development of “special industries” in the government-planned NDAs;

⁶⁹ “Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy: Final Report”, para. 11.4.13, p. 131, <http://www.pland.gov.hk/p_study/comp_s/hk2030/eng/finalreport/pdf/E_11.pdf>.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ Planning Department: “Initial Assessment of the Development of a University Town in Hong Kong,” November 2003, Working Paper No. 36 of the Hong Kong 2030 Study, <http://www.pland.gov.hk/p_study/comp_s/hk2030/eng/wpapers/pdf/wpaper36.pdf>.

- It could relieve the unemployment problem in New Territories Northwest, as a medium-sized university like the City University of Hong Kong could provide 3,000 employment opportunities.⁷² The figure does not include the additional posts created from the student dormitories.

⁷² There are 3,368 employees in the City University of Hong Kong. See the web page of the University at <<http://www.cityu.edu.hk/cio/fnf/reports/staff/staffno.htm>>

IX. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Development Strategies of the “Secondary City Centre” in the New Territories

9.1 The development strategies based upon the shores of the Victoria Harbor is largely a product of special historical circumstances. The Government should not follow the previous practice of inflexibility and rigidity in the formulation of development plan. The Professional Commons believes that a more balanced and forward-looking development mode should be adopted in terms of spatial distribution. Not only this could reduce the development pressure of the NDAs, it could strike a balance between the conflicts of development and conservation and lead to a win-win situation.

New Parameters in Planning

9.2 The Government should have foresight in the formulation of the development strategies for Hong Kong, capable of addressing the interests of Hong Kong as a whole, and not be narrow minded in its vision. The Professional Commons holds the view that the territorial development strategies of Hong Kong should be revamped through incorporating the following parameters in planning:

- Explore the development opportunities in New Territories North, including the establishment of new growth areas in the North District and in Yuen Long and Kam Tin;
- Rather than limiting the scope to the inclusion of population, land infrastructure, etc., there should also be more forward-looking and holistic views on the overall development model of Hong Kong, particularly in economic development, and taking into account of the cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong;
- Nurture different levels of “City Centres”. Other than the metro core which maintains the status as the most prominent business centre in the territory, a number of Secondary City Centres and their respective core areas should be developed beyond the metro core;
- Create a structure of regional cost differentiation: Relatively inexpensive offices and commercial premises should be provided out of the metro core to house local small and medium-sized enterprises and Mainland enterprises in general trade.

Regional Policies

9.3 The Government would need to review its governing principles in rectifying the

situation of imbalance in regional development. Tailor-made measures should be provided to meet the unique condition of different areas. Such an arrangement should be formalized as a guiding principle in regional administration. The new policy structure will facilitate more responsive actions, as well as raising vitalities in individual communities. To this end, the Government should formulate a set of regional development strategies, including the following:

- Providing tailor-made or even preferential policies to address the needs of different regions;
- Provision of economic incentives, such as establishing a “regional” based taxation system (e.g. different tax credits and concessions, etc.) for economic entities in specific areas, for firms investing in specific areas; reduction of rates and Government rents, etc.;
- Lowering the minimum resident threshold required by the Government for the provision of community facilities in the New Territories, as the residents of public housing in the NDAs are mostly come from the grassroots. They might have lost their community network and family support due to the relocation and might result in greater demand for public services.

Affirming the Developmental Needs in the New Territories

9.4 When the residents in the new towns in the New Territories find it difficult to obtain the necessary amenities and services in their locality, they are required to make long, expensive trips to the metro core to meet their needs. These demands might help develop a hierarchy of cities, namely the “Secondary City Centres” in the New Territories, which provide job opportunities, commercial and industrial activities, community services, as well as cultural and entertainment facilities. In sum, these “Secondary City Centres” should comprise the following functions:

- Economic and Employment Opportunities: The cluster of commercial buildings, the Mainland-Hong Kong business and trade centre, a “hotel hub”, regional government headquarters, a university town and a transport hub;
- Public Facilities and Services: Government departments and social services organizations should be housed in one single government office tower and “Regional Community Service Centre” for the provision of government and social services on a “one-stop” mode;
- Cultural and Entertainment: a library of “central library” grade, performing arts facilities, and entertainment facilities, etc. to enhance the quality of life of the residents in their locality.

Reducing the Developmental Pressure in the Urban Areas and the Countryside

9.5 It is high time to review the existing development strategy which focused on the shores of Victoria Harbour. As the prevailing urban renewal measures would continue to raise the building density in the urban areas, the chance for the reduction of the density in development by itself is slim. Attaching greater importance to the development of the New Territories and pushing forward the development plan in a more orderly way would help address the development dilemmas facing Hong Kong. In the course of policy formulation, the following issues shall be addressed:

- Adoption of a well-rounded planning strategy;
- Through the provision job opportunities, public services and entertainment facilities in neighbouring areas can help create a self-sufficient community and subsequently relieve the pressure of the metro core;
- Formulation of a set of comprehensive arrangements in rural land use as soon as possible: Affirm the protective measures on conservation areas and ecological sensitive areas, and designate the conservation strategies from a regional perspective. Measures should be adopted for combating the “squattering” of rural land by developers.;
- Preserving the historic sites and their immediate natural surroundings as one integrated area;
- Introduction of “compensatory measures” for land use in natural conservation sites: Provision of flexible measures for the use of rural land without reducing the overall volume of land listed as “conservation areas”, reassessing the use of fragmented rural land in a bid to protect the “virgin land”.

Improving the Public Transport System

9.6 In view of its distanced geographical location, the improvement of external transportation in the New Territories would certainly be important for the development of the area. In fact, the adoption of a balanced regional development strategy should be one of the guiding principles for the development plan of the New Territories. The specific arrangements are listed as follows:

- Facilitating the integrity of the public transport system, improving the transport connections between New Territories East and New Territories West;
- Facilitating a well-rounded regional transportation system: Allowing different modes of public transportation to operate concurrently;
- Reducing the demands of public transport between the metro core and the New Territories through the provision of job opportunities, public services and

recreational facilities in areas easy to reach.

B. New Opportunities arising from the High-speed National Rail Link

Growing Cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland

9.7 The ever increasing interactions between Guangdong, Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macao have become increasingly prominent. Inter-governmental negotiations of several cross-boundary infrastructure projects are underway, for example, the concept plan of the Lok Ma Chau Loop Area, the GZ-SZ-HK ERL; and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, and the feasibility studies of the connections between Hong Kong and Shenzhen Airports. In light of the latest developments, the HKSAR Government should expedite its review on the overall development strategy of Hong Kong, and accord high priority to the overall planning strategies of the New Territories and the planning of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen-Guangzhou Rail Link.

Hong Kong Station of the Hi-speed National Rail Link

9.8 Prior to Government's decision to overhaul the development strategies as a whole, a minor step could be proceeded through revisiting the alignments and locations of the Hong Kong stations of the GZ-SZ-HK ERL. Such a move can help boost the development of the New Territories, and partially rectify the imbalance in development as a whole. According to the "Dedicated Alignment Option" of the current proposal, in which the alignment would be directly from West Kowloon to the border and would be terminated in Shibi station in Guangzhou, the whole journey will take less than one hour. It is also important to note that this Rail Link has the following functions:

- The GZ-SZ-HK ERL is an organic component of the Hi-speed National Rail Link, passengers could transit to the hi-speed trains reaching the main cities in the Mainland (for example, it is estimated that the journey from Hong Kong to Beijing would take 10 hours);
- The Rail Link would be able to connect to the Pearl River Delta Inter-city Express Rail Network;
- Targeted customers of the Rail Link include the business travelers, including those from the Mainland. That makes the Rail Link a significant medium of economic interactions between Hong Kong and the Mainland, which adds new momentum for the economic growth of Hong Kong.

9.9 As the phase I of the High-speed National Rail Link is scheduled to complete in 2013, the Government should try its best to synchronize the completion date between the Hong Kong Section of the GZ-SZ-HK Express Rail Link (hereafter the “Hong Kong Section”), with that of the Mainland section. By doing so, it will enable a direct rail connection between Hong Kong and the major cities in the Mainland, and to facilitate the immediate connection with the Pearl River Delta Inter-city Express Rail Network at a much earlier date. Furthermore, the reduction of construction and operating costs is of utmost importance too. Our proposals are as follows:

- The terminus of the Hong Kong section should be built under the Kam Sheung Road West Rail Line station and its immediate surroundings (the existing car park);
- This section of the railway should be constructed through tunneling, in order to reduce the environmental damage to the minimum.

9.10 In fact, Kam Sheung Road is already a regional transport hub to a certain extent. In terms of rail transport, the headquarters of the West Rail Line and the Kam Sheung Road station are already located there. The proposed Northern Link will connect Kam Sheung Road station with the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line and the East Rail Line. In terms of the road transport, the Kam Sheung Road station is served by 23 minibus and bus lines, and a number of highways are connecting between the station and different areas of Hong Kong. When the Rail Link and the Northern Link are completed, it is likely for Kam Sheung Road to serve as a major transport hub connecting the East and West of the New Territories, and between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

C. “Kam Sheung Road-Yuen Long-Au Tau” Secondary City Centre

9.11 The Government should consider the establishment of at least one or even more “Secondary City Centre” in the New Territories. The Professional Commons recommends Kam Sheung Road as one of the “Secondary City Centre Core” in Hong Kong, due to its potential to be a major transport hub. Should the idea of a “Secondary City Centre” materialized, Kam Sheung Road, being the first one, will also set a precedent for the “Secondary City Centre” development strategy. It should also be noted that the Government has conducted multi-dimension planning studies in relation to Kam Sheung Road, which could be consolidated for the formulation of action plan within a short period of time. Moreover, the construction of the Hong Kong section is expected to be green-lighted soon.

“Kam Sheung Road-Yuen Long-Au Tau” Core Area

9.12 The area surrounding the Kam Sheung Road station has been identified as a potential site for the New Development Area. Should Kam Sheung Road be developed into a “Secondary City Centre”, its span shall be extended to Au Tau at the north, to Yuen Long in the northwest, and to the Pat Heung Depot at the south, and grow into a “Kam Sheung Road-Yuen Long-Au Tau Secondary City Centre Core Area” (hereafter the “Core Area”). It should be noted that the conservation areas, such as the Tai Lam Country Park, should be well protected and preserved, or using compensatory measures to maintain the overall volume of land listed as “conservation areas”. The following are major components of city functions in the “Core Area”.

Mainland-Hong Kong Business, Trade and Exhibition Centre

9.13 The areas adjacent to the Kam Sheung Road station could be developed as a commercial area for Hong Kong and Mainland businesses. As it is a new site for commercial development, its land cost and rent would certainly be lower than the city centre, at least in its early phase of development. Hence, it could raise the competitiveness of the firms locating in the area. The exhibition facilities would create a clustering effect, and promote the development in trade. Proximity of an exhibition centre to a transport hub would be another competitive edge, based upon the experiences for the AsiaWorld Expo right next to the Hong Kong International Airport. There is also a massive demand for exhibition and event hosting services among the 3 million residents in the New Territories and they would be a major source of users for the exhibition spaces in the “Core Area”. Shopping centres for the convenience of tourists should also be provided in the areas neighbouring the Kam Sheung Road station. The area around Yuen Long Station could also be developed as a commercial area of a substantial scale.

Hotel Hub

9.14 In order to tackle the factors undermining the development of tourism in Hong Kong, such as the inadequacies of hotel rooms and expensive accommodation, the “Core Area” could be developed into a “hotel hub”. As the station of High-speed National Rail Network in Kam Sheung Road would bring in tourists from all over the Mainland, it would make perfect sense to place various types of accommodation facilities to cater for different types of tourists, including three to four star hotels, guest houses, and service apartments for short-term rental.

Regional Headquarters for the Government

9.15 In the course of site selection for reprovisioning the three government office towers originally stationing in the Wan Chai waterfront, the new “Core Area” should be one of the alternatives, along with Kai Tak and Tseung Kwan O. As Kam Sheung Road is located in the very centre of the New Territories, the establishment of regional government headquarters over there will help bring the following advantages: strengthening the governance in the New Territories; facilitating a more even spatial pattern of government offices; rectifying the over-concentration of government offices in the metro core, and relieving the traffic flows to and from the metro core.

Cultural and Arts Facilities

9.16 In light of severe inadequacies of community facilities in New Territories Northwest, it would be advisable for the centrally-located area “Core Area” to develop into a hub for regional-based public services. One of the initiations as suggested in our “West Kowloon for the People” Report published in December 2007 was the establishment of a “Community Cultural Network”. A mid-level regional cultural centre would be an important component of the network which provides learning and training studios for cultural activities, performing arts venues, and even a large-scale library of a “central library” status.

Residential Development

9.17 Several residential zones can be developed between Kam Sheung Road, and Yuen Long and Au Tau. Many types of residential development can take place, including service apartments, low density residential units, and large scale housing compounds. The combination of commercial and residential properties could facilitate a more “well-rounded” development of the “Core Area” as a “Secondary City Centre” in New Territories North.

University Town

9.18 Kam Sheung Road is an ideal site for establishment of a “University Town”. The “Hong Kong 2030” Study has previously listed Kam Tin/Au Tau as a suitable location for a higher education institutes as it geographical conditions match with the middle density requirements. Other factors favourable for the development of a

university town in the “Core Area” are as follows:

- The direct transport connection with major cities in the Mainland is likely to attract students from the Mainland to study in Hong Kong, and facilitates joint research projects with Mainland scholars;
- The establishment of faculties and research facilities in the institute should be targeted at the specific needs of the regional economy, such as the Faculty on Hotel Management and the inclusion of a teaching hotel. Such an arrangement will be an effective means in staff training and the provision of hotels facilities in the “Core Area”. The research centre could also facilitate the development of “special industries” in the government-planned NDAs;
- It could relieve the employment situation in New Territories Northwest, as a mid-size university like the City University of Hong Kong could provide employment opportunities up to a few thousands.

The Professional Commons

March 2008

Reconstructing Urbanscape —

**Research Report on Development Strategies of the Hong Kong “Secondary City Centre”
and the Hong Kong Section of the Hi-Speed National Rail Network**

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