

*Management of Greening Master Plans*

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The Audit Commission ("Audit") conducted a review to examine the management of Greening Master Plans ("GMPs").

2. A GMP serves as a guide for all parties involved in planning, design and implementation of greening works. It defines comprehensively the overall greening framework of a district by establishing the greening themes, proposing suitable planting species and identifying suitable planting locations to promote a clear district identity, and thus paves the way for continuous and consistent results in enhancing the green environment. As of December 2018, the Civil Engineering and Development Department ("CEDD") had developed 11 GMPs for urban areas and nine for the New Territories ("NT"). A total of \$734.7 million had been incurred on development and implementation of GMPs, and about 29 000 trees and 7.8 million shrubs had been planted under GMPs.

3. The Committee noted the following findings from the Director of Audit's Report ("Audit Report"):

- for GMPs for Phase 3 of urban areas and the four GMPs for NT with greening works completed, considerable number of trees (45% and 42%) and shrubs (16% and 26%) had not been planted at potential planting areas under the works contracts due to underground utilities, objections and interfacing projects. The following cases show room for improvement in dealing with these issues:
  - (a) although CEDD was aware of the presence of underground utilities at Location A at Shing Mun River Promenade in Case 1 in paragraph 2.11 of the Audit Report, it decided to plant there (with reduced planting to avoid underground utilities) with a view to implementing greening works there. In the event, no tree planting could proceed due to obstruction of underground utilities;
  - (b) CEDD only conducted a pedestrian flow survey at Location C in Sha Tin in Case 2 in paragraph 2.11 of the Audit Report in response to public objections received after construction of a planter which occupied one-third of the footpath. Subsequent removal of the planter and reinstatement of the pavement resulted in a total abortive cost of \$175,000; and
  - (c) the planned planting at Location D in Sha Tin in Case 3 in paragraph 2.11 of the Audit Report was included in tender

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invitation for works contract about one year after the development proposal for Phase 2 of a housing estate had been presented to the Sha Tin District Council. In the event, CEDD decided not to proceed with the planting due to the interfacing projects;

- of the four districts under GMPs for Southeast and Northwest NT, the numbers and percentages of theme trees planted were lower than those under the related works contracts in all the four districts, and the percentages of theme trees planted (8% to 10%) in Sha Tin, Sai Kung and Tuen Mun did not meet the internal reference rates (20% to 30%);
- the two GMPs for Southeast NT had specified a total of 23 focal points, of which greening works for 10 (43%) focal points were not implemented and only two (9%) focal points were planted with theme trees;
- for the four districts under GMPs for Southeast and Northwest NT, the numbers and percentages of native trees planted for all the four districts and the native shrubs planted for Tuen Mun and Yuen Long were lower than those under the related works contracts. Except for the planting of native shrubs in Sha Tin (49%), the native trees and shrubs planted in all the four districts (ranging from 9% to 23%) were lower than the estimated rate of 35% reported to the Legislative Council;
- CEDD and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") had different definitions of trees (based on species (CEDD) and trunk diameter measured at a specific height (LCSD)) and different measurement bases for shrubs (based on number (CEDD) and size of planting areas (LCSD)), leading to differences in planting quantities for trees and shrubs between CEDD handover records and LCSD inventory records. For instance, for GMPs for Phase 3 of urban areas, CEDD handover records showed that there were about 16 500 trees and 3.4 million shrubs while the planting quantities were about 3 100 trees and 75 000 square metres of planting areas for shrubs based on LCSD records. As CEDD handover records did not have details about height and trunk diameter measures of trees planted, it would be difficult for LCSD to reconcile the planting quantities in the handover records with its inventory records;
- Audit's site visits to 81 locations under GMPs for urban areas found deficiencies in 44 locations involving removal of some trees and shrubs (32 locations), unsatisfactory conditions for some shrubs (14 locations),

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and replanting of some trees and shrubs with other plant species (17 locations);

- LCSD had not issued any guidelines requiring its staff to make reference to the greening themes and the plant palettes of GMPs for replanting of trees and shrubs during maintenance;
- unlike that for GMPs for urban areas, CEDD had not reported the implementation progress for GMPs for Southeast and Northwest NT to the GMP Committee and the Steering Committee on Greening, Landscape and Tree Management since commencement of the contracts for the related greening works;
- of the 288 medium and long-term measures under GMPs for urban areas which needed to be followed up, the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section had not taken specific follow-up actions with private sector/public organizations on the 67 measures requiring their participation, and no time frame had been set for completion of the 288 measures; and
- while GMPs for NT were approved by GMP Committee in March 2013 (for Southeast and Northwest NT) and February 2014 (for Northeast and Southwest NT), CEDD only uploaded the related GMP information onto its website about five to six years later in January 2019.

4. The Committee did not hold any public hearing on this subject. Instead, it asked for written responses regarding reviews of the reasons for the trees and shrubs not planted at the potential planting areas; measures to enhance the assessment of feasibility of planting at focal points under GMPs; plans to ensure that greening works completed under GMPs are properly handed over and accurately recorded; guidelines on replanting of trees and shrubs during maintenance; reporting mechanism on implementing greening works under GMPs for NT; the latest progress of the 288 medium and long-term measures which need to be followed up under GMPs for urban areas and the mechanism to monitor the progress of implementing these measures. The replies from **Secretary for Development, Director of Civil Engineering and Development** and **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** are in *Appendices 4 to 6* respectively.

5. The Committee wishes to be kept informed of the progress made in implementing the various recommendations made by Audit.