



Review Comments on the Final Draft Design Manual for Barrier Free Access to the Panel on Welfare Services of Legislative Council by the Hong Kong Institute of Architects

Introduction

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) always supports the provisions of proper Barrier Free Access and other facilities in a building for persons with a disability and other impairs. We focus on social inclusions and create a sustainable built environment, which satisfies the lifespan of all users.

Observation

The Design Manual -- Barrier Free Access 1997 had been introduced pursuant to the enactment of Disability Discrimination Ordinance in 1995. After all these years, we found that there were significant improvements in Hong Kong as a whole regarding to the accessibility in public areas, yet due to the deficiency, ambiguity and inappropriateness of the Manual, many resources and funding were allocated to providing facilities which were not genuinely benefiting to the disable community. Some of the resources were wasted for the sick of fulfilling the prescriptive requirements in the Design Manual without assessing the genuine usage resulting in illegal alterations and abandonment of facilities by end-users. In some Addition and Alteration Works, due to the inflexibility of requirements and standard provisions in the Design Manual, projects would be shelved eventually either of inadequate space or inadequate funding for all provisions. Therefore, the whole community suffered.

Views

In the Final Draft of the Design Manual, we could see that there were a number of improvements as comparing to the existing one.

1. Most of the definitions and terms of reference were clarified that there would be fewer disputes between the architects and the approval authorities.





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(Continued)**

2. The extent of application was provided with more details and the exemption was clearly defined with rationale. Therefore, the resources could be put into right places and the disable community could be benefited from the application.
3. After the performance objectives of most requirements have been clarified, it paved the way for more creative and ingenious solutions following the advancing building design and building technology.

Execution

Hong Kong is a world-class city. Building design needs to cater for the aspiration of a vibrant city. Architecture is a creative process which needs to embrace and to reflect the locality, the climate, the economy in the context of environment, the cultural background and their needs. There is no fixed rule or standard design solution as each project has its own considerations. We therefore would like to draw the attention to how the Design Manual being executed and applied in order not to constraint any Building Design but to guide for a sustainable building with social inclusions for a world-class city.

We suggest an open and wide-represented Committee so that any design solutions not being covered or deviated from the Design Manual can be discussed in a genuine and open-minded manner and the recommendations can be assessed by the general public.

Conclusion

Apart from few minor queries which the manual needs to be addressed and further clarified, HKIA in principle accepts the Final Draft. Those queries and comments are submitted to BD under separate cover.