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Hon Audrey Eu
Chair
Panel on Environmental Affairs
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong
panel_ea@legco.gov.hk

Urgent need for measures to curb light pollution

Honorable Chair and Members,

Let's not wait for the consultancy report. We call on the administration to immediately take every step to control light pollution:

- To speak out against such pollution and support the absolute right of residents to a peaceful living environment as soon as possible;
- To limit the Symphony of Lights to only the harbour-facing facades of buildings directly on the waterfront;

In the meantime, the consultancy report should focus on:

- Restrictions on light impact on neighbours to be included in environmental and building regulations; and
- all other practical legislative measures.

The intrusion of pulsating light is a frontal assault on people's right to a home where they can relax without having to install blackout curtains.

Few will object to soft still lights accentuating the architecture of buildings, but there is no place in Hong Kong for allowing moving and flashing signs and billboards on buildings (also known as occulting signs) which affect residential premises.

Hong Kong benefited until 1999 from a stringent control on occulting signs under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance.

Designing Hong Kong Limited
2501, 25/F, Caroline Centre
28 Yun Ping Road, Causeway Bay
Hong Kong
Tel: +852 3180 3663
Fax: +852 2187 2305

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This total prohibition was abandoned in 2000 following the move of the airport from Kai Tak to Chek Lap Kok and now only signs which directly affect road, sea or air traffic are controlled under the law.

Around the same time, the government decided to sponsor the multimillion-dollar production of light shows and co-ordinated the installation of interactive lights on 44 key buildings.

These lights were no longer confined to seasonal graphics facing the harbour but entire buildings are wrapped with changing lights and screens.

This government programme was the start of a race among owners of buildings including those further inland to compete with ever more light for the attention of property buyers, tenants, retailers and shoppers.

In under 10 years, Hong Kong has changed from a city without occulting signs to a city of occulting buildings.

We do not oppose the ability to temporarily light up the waterfront facades of buildings for festivities, but the government must act quickly before more developers and advertisers invest in ever more lighting schemes - affecting ever more residents - making it harder and harder to have them removed.

By curbing light pollution, Hong Kong can reconnect with the sight of stars.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Zimmerman
Founding Member

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