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Presentation to Panel on Housing Subcommittee on the Long Term Housing Strategy

11 November 2013

Introduction

- 1 The Institution of Civil Engineers Hong Kong Association (ICEHKA) sees the need for the development of a new Long Term Housing Strategy (LTHS) and agrees that the new LTHS should be a supply-led strategy, with public housing accounting for a higher proportion of the new housing production.

Supply target and transparency

- 2 ICEHKA considers that the supply target of 470,000 units for the period of 2013-14 to 2022-23 is on the low side and should be increased.
- 3 ICEHKA considers that the long term housing supply targets, though needs to be reviewed from time to time, should not be affected by temporary market downturn.
- 4 ICEHKA is of the view that the government need to maintain an updated database with detailed information on the housing supply for easy access by public.



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On manpower

- 5 Whilst the Institution of Civil Engineers Hong Kong Association (ICEHKA) welcomes the idea for the Government to invite the private sector to be involved in the provision of subsidized housing, ICEHKA was concerned that the effect may not be significant as one of the key constraints to housing supply is the scarcity of the frontline manpower in the construction. The Government needs to ensure that the involvement of the private sector in subsidized housing delivery would not jeopardize the progress of the delivery of public housing by public agents.
- 6 ICEHKA agrees that the Government should initiate a coordinated effort via Development Bureau/Transport and Housing Bureau amongst all major stakeholders including Planning Department, Buildings Department, Lands Department, Hong Kong Housing Authority to modify the planning and building legislations and land leases to streamline the application and approval processes for land supply and housing construction.
- 7 ICEHKA advises that the Government together with the Construction Industry Council should continue monitor the composition and supply of the manpower in the construction industry, with due consideration of the need and standardization of each particular trade of skilled labours / experienced workers for housing construction and the market situation of the demand of both private and public housing; as well as a review of the Government's time-frame and strategy on infrastructure development to maintain a healthy and balanced workforce for the whole construction industry including both infrastructure and housing sectors.



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On measures to increase housing supply

- 8 ICEHKA considers that the Planning Department should holistically review the potential of an appropriate increase in plot ratios in selected areas of Hong Kong. There should also be a review on how to make best use of brownfield sites to enable optimization of housing development density in every district in Hong Kong. For example, a higher than the current plot ratio could be adopted for housing development in Kai Tak area with insignificant negative impact on the traffic and environment in such urban area; re-zoning of various Brown Field Sites in New Territories for housing development purpose.
- 9 ICEHKA considers that there is a need for Hong Kong to enhance the land supply strategy by devising a good mix of supply options and building up a sufficiently large land reserve to achieve a balance among social, environment and economic needs. The enhanced land supply strategy should include a full coverage of land production / revitalization processes, with a programme of land supply and demand projection; and quantifiable indicators affecting land use.

About ICEHKA :

The Institution of Civil Engineers Hong Kong Association is an organization representing some 5,000 professional civil engineers in Hong Kong. It is part of the UK based Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). The ICE is a global membership organisation that promotes and advances civil engineering around the world. It is a leading source of professional expertise in transport, water supply and treatment, flood risk management, waste and resource management and energy. Established in 1818, it has over 80,000 members throughout the World. ICE's vision is to place civil engineers at the heart of society, delivering sustainable development through knowledge, skills and professional expertise.

