

To learn beyond classroom and be a town planner in summer break

Hong Kong's future town planning development is closely related to our next generation. For Hong Kong to become a more liveable, competitive and sustainable Asia's World City, town planners have a vital role to play. This summer, the Planning Department (PlanD) and the City Gallery jointly organised the "Summer Planning School 2018 - Be a Town Planner" programme to provide a range of courses for both primary and secondary schools students. The programme which has recruited several hundred student participants is designed to enhance our younger generation's understanding of the development and town planning issues in Hong Kong in a plain yet comprehensive manner. Recently, I attended one day of the programme with 100-odd primary school students to test these "little planners" on their understanding of Hong Kong and get to know their views on the planning of community facilities.

The City Gallery, located at Edinburgh Place in Central, is the first planning and infrastructure gallery in Hong Kong. In 2017, the gallery attracted more than 180 000 visitors. Apart from showcasing the city's major planning and infrastructure projects, the gallery is also a useful education platform to introduce Hong Kong's future planning development. Ms LAU Sau-yee, Zoe, PlanD's Acting Senior Town Planner and organiser of this summer programme, told us that the programme had been held for the fifth consecutive year and it had continued to register an overwhelming response this year with 117 primary and 200 secondary student participants coming from six primary and 32 secondary schools, respectively.

Primary school students displaying boundless creativity

Considering the proficiency gap between primary and secondary school students, the programme targets two different age groups, namely the "Little Planners Group" and the "Teen Planners Group". On the day of my visit, colleagues of PlanD started by speaking to the "little planners" about Hong Kong's development and imparting to them the basic planning knowledge, such as the planning process, urban design elements, development direction at territory-wide and district levels, as well as issues to be considered during the planning process. I was told that they would then take the "little planners" on a field trip to the Kwun Tong waterfront and the Zero Carbon Building to learn

more about the design and planning of the harbourfront, and how all of these are translated into reality.

I was invited to host a quiz for the students during the visit. The questions included the land area of Hong Kong, the number of new towns and new development areas, etc. The response was overwhelming and the “little planners” scrambled to answer the questions. I also took the opportunity to get to know what they think about Hong Kong’s community facilities. Some of them longed for a swimming pool or park near their homes while some hoped that they could do fishing in their neighbourhood. Their ideas are simply creative.

Nurturing a new generation of young planners

Through seminars, field trips and workshops, we hope to enrich students’ understanding of Hong Kong’s development and arouse their interest in playing a part in town planning. We also hope to let them know the various factors to be considered in the planning process, with a view to nurturing a new generation of young planners. Ms Law, the school teacher who accompanied her students to attend the programme, told us that by giving students first-hand experience to attend talks given by professionals outside of the classroom was a far more effective learning experience than traditional classroom teaching. She hoped that the students would know more about the work of the Government and the past and future development of Hong Kong.

Our “little planners”, too have found the activities meaningful and are eager to learn more about the concepts of town planning and how to make cities that are convenient for the people and create a comfortable and better living environment. They also agree that we should bring in more innovative elements to our town planning practice so that our various facilities can integrate with the surrounding environment in a harmonious way.

Striking a balance in land utilisation

Given the limited land resources of Hong Kong, there is a need to strike a balance in land utilisation to meet the competing demands for housing, commerce, industry, transport, recreation, nature conservation, heritage preservation and other community facilities. The Government is adopting a proactive, pragmatic and action-oriented approach to draw up a development strategy for the future sustainable development of Hong Kong. Our aim is to shape a quality living and working environment, facilitate economic

development, and achieve the vision of strengthening Hong Kong's position as Asia's World City.

I know that students completing the programme will be invited to attend the Graduation Ceremony of the City Gallery Summer Planning School to receive a Certificate of Completion. To share their experience with the public, models completed by the students during the workshops will be exhibited at the City Gallery. I hope that the students will keep up their interest in or more, the perseverance for, the pursuit of town planning after the summer vacation so much so that they can unleash their creativity to plan for the great big world in future.