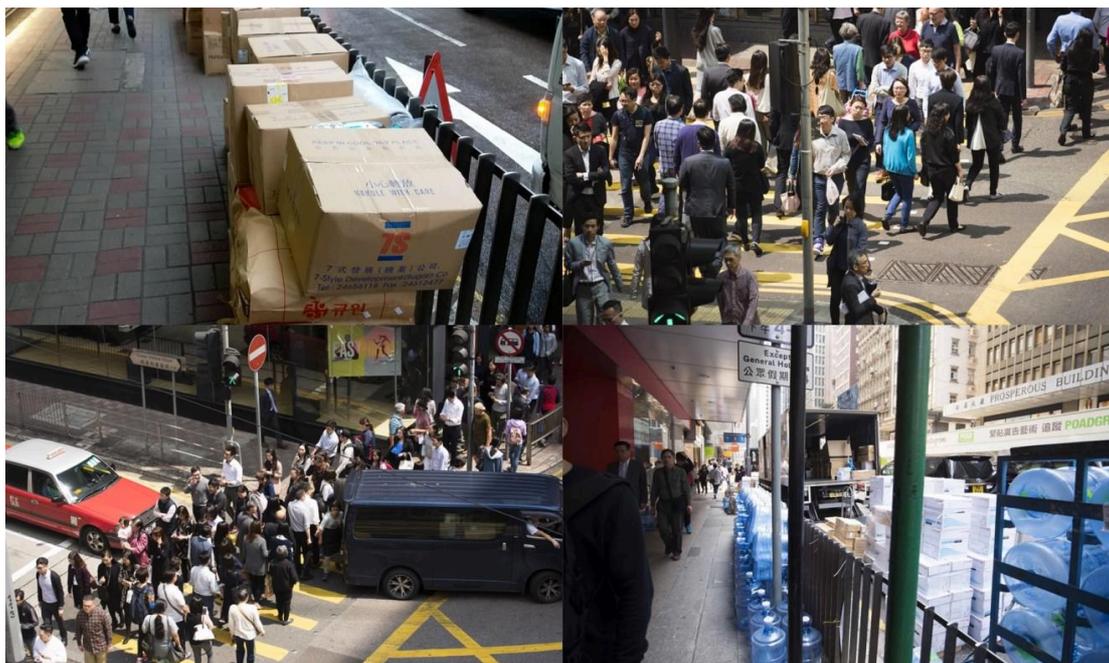


How a walkable Hong Kong can make the city smarter and more liveable

Following the HK2030+ consultation we anticipated that the Chief Executive's first Policy Address would have more solid proposals on promoting walkability and liveability in the city. While the Chief Executive dedicated a section to pedestrian-friendly environment, it appears that the government is still focused on improving the efficiency of walking, rather than making the activity an enjoyable and enriching experience.



A walkable Central Business District?

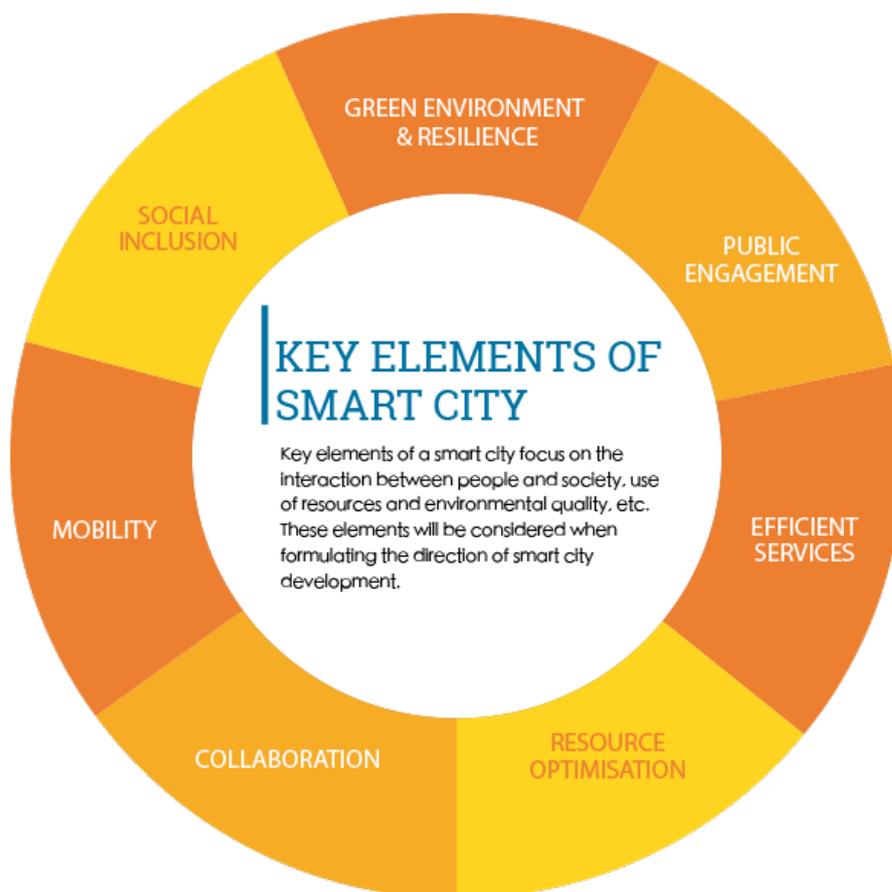
The CE recognises that Hong Kong's poor air quality discourages foreign talent from coming to Hong Kong. Des Voeux Road Central (DVRC), the core artery in the Central Business District, is one of the most polluted roads along the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. Major cities worldwide have reduced the number cars entering central business districts to limit the impact of vehicular transport on congestion and air pollution. Our Government should do the same to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of those who work, live and use this critical area. It is shameful that this key road is not pedestrian friendly and indeed does not portray Hong Kong as a technologically smart and innovative world-class city.

We urge the Chief Executive to select DVRC as one of the two study areas for the Transport Department's three-year walkability assessment to examine ways in which to create a truly comfortable walking environment. Specifically, the Government should invest heavily in upgrading street-level walking in Central to make it much safer and pleasant, instead of relying so heavily on footbridges and walkways between buildings to enhance accessibility within the CBD. The Government should also set out the specific goals the study should be achieving, namely better utilising and managing street

environments as public open spaces where the environment is beneficial and inclusive to all population demographics.

The Policy Address mentioned that the Government will develop an HKeTransport app with Causeway Bay as a pilot. This app would plan and search for the best walking routes. The general public is already dependent on their smartphones for the most effective walking, public transport and driving routes, so the Government should strive to make the app more multi-purpose to ensure greater use. For instance, the app should highlight where public seating, public toilets, access to free drinking water, parks and libraries are so people know where they can rest. This is very basic, but necessary, for people to feel comfortable and encourage people to stroll and use the facilities in their neighbourhood.

Moreover, the Government should adopt a more strategic view in making the city smarter to broaden the scope of the capital investments the CE has committed to make. It is disappointing that the Government, by default, uses CBD2 (Kowloon East) as the pilot area for all their new initiatives. We propose that the Government invests more in the original CBD to increase its competitiveness and enhance the city's image as Asia's World City.



Source: Smart City @ Kowloon East, 2017

Rather than focusing on delivering a “Smart CBD2”, the Government should be more forward thinking and install “smart” columns in areas where people require new information, especially in areas where it is frequently used by pedestrians. These posts can be made even more multi-functional by integrating street lights, WIFI, CCTV cameras and charging points within the same column. This technology can monitor illegal parking to reduce congestion and increase surveillance to enhance public safety. These integrated columns will also help to remove street clutter and improve pedestrian circulation. Walk DVRC has already done a Street Furniture Audit for the section from Pedder Street to Morrison Street to identify redundant street furniture. The government can capitalise on that and install smart columns in the area to promote a people-first CBD that is innovative, efficiency and safe.

Smart cities are more than just about technologies and improvement of services. They can help make people live more comfortably and increase their sense of belonging to the community. The Government should take a more strategic view and explore how it can play a more active role in ensuring that Hong Kong citizens and visitors can benefit more from a liveable Hong Kong.

Walk DVRC Ltd
30th October 2017