

PRESS RELEASE

“Managing Vibrant Streets”

Civic Exchange calls for the Government to revamp its management of the city’s busy pavements and pedestrian zones.

HONG KONG, 11 April 2018 – In a report published today, independent think tank Civic Exchange called for the Government to improve its management of Hong Kong’s crowded pavements to control problems such as noise and overcrowding, while promoting the city’s famously vibrant street life. “Managing Vibrant Streets,” written by urban planning researcher Carine Lai and barrister-at-law Antonio Da Roza, examines the lack of a coherent street management policy, outdated regulations and inconsistent enforcement.

Hong Kong streets suffer from problems such as noise, bothersome commercial touting, and a lack of space for deliveries and waste disposal. Meanwhile, activities which are an essential part of our culture – such as al fresco dining, local bazaars or busking musicians – are restrained by red tape.

“Street management is handled by up to nine Hong Kong Government departments, but is not a priority for any one of them. The approach denies the flexibility necessary for creating local neighbourhood solutions. In a city of 7.4 million, with one of the highest daily walking rates in the world, we need to rebalance the use of space by vehicles and pedestrians.”
– Carine Lai, Researcher

Key Policy Recommendations

“Managing Vibrant Streets” includes numerous recommendations for improving street management. The top priorities include:

Local schemes for local people

- Instead of relying on “one-size-fits-all” solutions, the Government should consult with the public and District Councils on the specific concerns in their districts. Residents should have a say in the types of street activities they would like to see in their neighbourhoods. Flexibility and local experimentation should be encouraged.

Joined-up Government

- Street management should be recognised as a major issue deserving of its own resources and broader policy framework. The Government should consider appointing a *City Betterment Commissioner* as a special post under the Chief Executive.
- A *Management of Pedestrian Zones Ordinance* could put designated zones under a unified authority, while liaising between Government departments and local businesses. Mini-zoning could be used for specific events or activities including interdepartmental teams of officers to provide supervision.

Fairer and updated regulations

- Clear and fair regulations would allow for more enjoyable activities like al fresco dining, musicians, fairs and artisans selling local products. There is a need to reduce the number of approvals that are required, as well as the numerous departments that are involved.

- Regulations should be updated to fit a changing urban landscape with modern problems including implementing licensing or registration schemes for street performers and commercial promoters.
- Old rules, fees and fines need to be updated to reflect 2018's realities.

“Hong Kong has some of the most vibrant and unique street life in the world. But the level of enjoyment has been impaired severely because of poor management and obsolete policies. There needs to be a coordinated effort by the Government to restore order and unleash the true potential of Hong Kong’s charismatic street culture.” – Winnie Cheung, Civic Exchange CEO

About Civic Exchange

Civic Exchange is an independent public policy think tank with a vision to shape a liveable and sustainable Hong Kong. Our mission is to engage society and influence public policy through research, dialogue and the development of practical solutions. “Managing Vibrant Streets” is part of a wider programme of research relating to walkability, public open space and urban planning. Civic Exchange has been ranked among the top 50 environment policy think tanks in the world by the University of Pennsylvania since 2011.

Contact Us

The report and other materials are available at civic-exchange.org/reports/vibrantstreets

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