

PRESS RELEASE

A comprehensive street performance management policy: enabling diverse, lively streets and public spaces for Hong Kong***Civic Exchange's Managing Vibrant Streets 2 Summary***

- Street performance is a valuable asset to Hong Kong's liveability, sociability, culture and local economy.
- Hong Kong needs a far more proactive and systematic management approach for street performance.
- Practicable and broadly accepted policy solutions should include short- and long-term measures, such as:
 - ∴ Objective noise standards
 - ∴ Non-profit partnership management
 - ∴ Street performance activity zoning or licensing systems
 - ∴ Reorganization of administration and regulatory enforcement

Hong Kong, 20 April 2021 – The HKSAR Government should look to reshape public space with balanced and effective street management that integrates street performers, independent think tank Civic Exchange (CEX) said in a new report published today.

With an objective of creating attractive and enjoyable places for all, urban planning researchers Carine Lai and Dr Ximin Zhou of CEX released the second report in a two-phase policy study *'Managing Vibrant Streets 2: Street Performance Policy in Hong Kong.'*

The study examines how current, outdated regulatory street management could be updated to successfully re-integrate busking into public open spaces.

The report presents key insights from a series of interviews and surveys among street performers, community groups, district councillors, representatives of the business sector and government departments, among others.

"Managing street performance is a matter of balancing various stakeholder needs", Lai said. "We have tried to come up with practical, common-sense solutions that most people would find reasonable."

Calls for more proactive street management.

Across the study participants, there was broad agreement that street spaces and street performance in Hong Kong need clearer, less ambiguous regulation and objective standards.

The report includes a variety of short- and long-term policy recommendations for the Government that would be both feasible and broadly accepted by the public. These should be targeted to remain flexible in addressing particular needs and varied locations, the report suggests. Shorter term policies might include, for example:

- Invoking decibel guidelines.
- Implementing a voluntary code of conduct for street performers.

- Initiating pilot collaborations with non-profit arts organisations or street performer associations to take over management and programming for immediate relief at current performance hotspots.
- Introducing comprehensive street performance schemes in public spaces already managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD).

For the longer-term, more extensive policy measures will be needed. These could include:

- A Street Performance Activity Bill, or licensing system and licensing body under the administration of the Home Affairs Bureau.
- Reorganising the administrative and enforcement structure to bring about more coherent policymaking and implementation mechanisms. This might be achieved by introducing a Commissioner for Culture, a Department for Culture, or a Street Activity Office.
- Continuous, high quality engagement throughout the policy process to secure buy-in among the artistic and performer community and to receive sufficient feedback.

“For these solutions to work in a long run, we need to see the authorities making a consistent effort to engage with stakeholders and make well informed decisions to ensure adequate and timely adjustments,” Dr Ximin Zhou said

Improving street performance management is a common shared interest.

Lack of confidence in achieving consensus has been cited as the main obstacle to improving street management in Hong Kong, according to the researchers. But Civic Exchange’s engagement-oriented study demonstrates that there are ample points of compatible interests among different stakeholder groups.

Business representatives stressed the potential for street performance to become a valuable placemaking asset, while buskers expressed a need to improve their perceived image and legitimacy as contributors to public open spaces.

Government leadership and closer collaboration with the community and private sector are key.

The Government must take larger strides in bridging siloed thinking and aligning agendas across its departments and bureaus, and to foster stronger collaborations with the private sector and the artistic community to build mutual trust and support.

Placemaking will be crucial in enhancing walkability and improving urban liveability for Hong Kong to become a sustainable, carbon-neutral city by 2050.

Part of this effort must be a coherent, comprehensive approach to street management that: (i) encourages vibrancy and diversity; (ii) is inclusive of street performers, and; (iii) is fair and beneficial to all users of public spaces, the report said.

Enquiries

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Full Report and Press Materials available at



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<https://civic-exchange.org/report/managing-vibrant-streets-2-final-report/>



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