

Fact Sheet on Lands Department

June 2022

Established on 1 April 1982, the Lands Department is responsible for all land matters in Hong Kong. It comprises three functional offices, namely the Lands Administration Office, the Survey and Mapping Office, and the Legal Advisory and Conveyancing Office, with a staff of about 5 000.

Lands Administration Office (LAO)

The LAO's duties mainly include land disposal, valuation, land acquisition, estate management, lease renewal and modification (including land exchange), slope maintenance, lease enforcement, land control and management, squatter control, etc.

On land disposal, government land is now generally sold by way of public tender to the highest bidder. The land sale revenue together with the premium received from lease modifications (including land exchanges) and the rentals from short term tenancies are one of the major sources of government revenue.

To support established government policies and to meet Hong Kong's socio-economic needs, suitable government land may also be granted by way of private treaty for specified uses, such as the Hong Kong International Airport, the Hong Kong Science Park, the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, the West Kowloon Cultural District and subsidised housing developments.

Furthermore, lot owners may apply for modification of the lease conditions governing their lots to optimise land use within the statutory planning framework. Owners may also apply for modification of the lease conditions by way of land exchange for various reasons such as re-alignment of land boundaries. If the modification (including land exchange) is approved, the premium payable is assessed generally based on the enhancement in land value.

Another main function of the LAO is to acquire private land to make land available for the development of new development areas and subsidised housing and the implementation of infrastructural projects such as those involving railway. The LAO also assists the Urban Renewal Authority in acquiring private properties to implement urban renewal projects.

In respect of the New Territories, the LAO is responsible for processing applications for the development of “small houses” made under the New Territories Small House Policy.

The LAO has set up and maintains the Slope Maintenance Responsibility Information System, by which the public are given access to information concerning maintenance responsibility of registered man-made slopes near their properties through the Internet. The LAO carries out maintenance inspections and works to registered man-made slopes assigned to the Lands Department for maintenance. It also operates an Emergency Control Centre during times of inclement weather to deal with landslide emergency cases and to undertake necessary urgent repair works.

The LAO is responsible for the management of vacant government land and the implementation of clearance operations to remove unlawful occupiers and unauthorised structures, if any. It also carries out ad hoc maintenance of natural vegetation on unleased and unallocated government land not maintained by any other departments. To ensure that the use of private land complies with the lease conditions, the LAO is responsible for taking lease enforcement action against lease breaches.

Survey and Mapping Office (SMO)

The SMO is a dedicated agency of the Government for survey, mapping and geospatial data. It provides and maintains geospatial information of Hong Kong.

The SMO establishes and maintains a territory-wide positioning infrastructure to facilitate positioning for land developments and to enhance satellite positioning. To meet the needs of the Government and the general public, the SMO carries out topographic surveys, performs land boundary surveys and provides photogrammetric and aerial survey services. It also provides and maintains maps and plans of Hong Kong in both digital and printed formats at various scales and for various purposes, such as bilingual topographical maps, Hong Kong Guide, the countryside series, orthophoto maps, satellite image maps and flying charts. To meet the increasing need for 3D Digital Map applications, the SMO is developing a territory-wide high-quality 3D Digital Map in phases for completion by the end of 2023.

The SMO provides support to the Land Survey Authority in administering the Land Survey Ordinance that governs the registration and discipline of Authorised Land Surveyors as well as the control of land boundary survey standard in Hong Kong. It

ensures that the land boundary plans submitted by Authorised Land Surveyors comply with the Code of Practice and maintains a record of these plans for reference by land surveyors. The SMO is also responsible for street naming under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, and co-ordination of geographical place naming.

In view of the increasing public need for open spatial data, the SMO has developed and launched different geospatial portals and services, such as the GeoInfo Map, the Hong Kong GeoData Store, the Hong Kong Map Service 2.0 and the MyMapHK Mobile Map App. In order to promote the use of digital maps and geospatial data and to align with the Government's open data policy, the SMO has opened up various types of digital map products and most geospatial data. Commercial organisations and the general public can download these digital map products for free from the Hong Kong Map Service 2.0.

The SMO also provides technical support to the development and implementation of the Common Spatial Data Infrastructure and develops a BIM-GIS Data Repository for smart applications.

Legal Advisory and Conveyancing Office (LACO)

The LACO provides legal advice primarily to the Development Bureau and the Lands Department on land-related matters. It also provides conveyancing services to The Financial Secretary Incorporated as well as the Government in their property transactions.

The LACO is responsible for drafting land documents in respect of land disposal and lease modification including conditions of sale, conditions of grant and modification letters. It is also responsible for the preparation of other legal documents such as waiver letters, deeds of easement, licences and documentation relating to compulsory acquisition of land held by private owners.

In addition, the LACO administers the Lands Department Consent Scheme by giving consent to sell units in uncompleted developments. It also approves Deeds of Mutual Covenant pursuant to the land grant conditions.

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Vision and Missions

Vision

We strive to achieve excellence in land administration in Hong Kong for the greater benefit of the community.

Missions

- To keep pace with economic and market trends in a local and regional context.
- To continuously review policies and employ best practices to meet the changing needs of the community.
- To develop and sustain a culture of transparency and professionalism.
- To use up-to-date technology and optimise human resources to enhance productivity and efficiency.

Good land administration ensures optimum land use

Lands Department