A visionary design is launched in Vision City for a better and environmentally more sustainable urban landscape. This ‘Living wall’ concept which is the biggest green wall ever built in Hong Kong actually make part of the building envelopes to sprout green gardens that grow on exterior walls.

This is a tailor made system which involves highly integrated knowledge and design in the fields of horticultural, geotechnical, irrigation and structural engineering as an economical and practical design element that is sustainable and environmentally-friendly. The ultimate objective of this endeavor is to promote and advocate the appropriate use of the Vertical Greening System as an ecological alternative and green design solution for our built environment.

This green wall has demonstrated many environmental benefits other than just aesthetic appeal. Other major advantages of this living wall include:
- Reduction of ambient temperatures
- Provision of thermal insulation
- Acoustical control
- Air purification

The Vertical Greening System in Vision City is constructed upon a building facade of a two-storey car park. Design parameters require adequate natural light and cross ventilation to allow natural ventilation into the parking area. In addition, this system will need to meet the following design criteria: i) Minimum maintenance, ii) Self sustainable, iii) Fully organic with no chemical application, iv) Automatic irrigation and v) a design complimentary to its environs.

In response to the above objectives, this Vertical Greening System is designed to consist of 3 main components: “B-I-G” in order to meet these design parameters.

“B” Base structural frame tailor made to fit the existing site condition which occupies the façade of the car park floor located on the 2/F and 3/F of the shopping arcade. The size of the entire frame is about 90 m long, 10m high and rises 17.5 m above existing ground level. The total area of this wall is 700 sq. m which is equivalent to a standard championship size tennis court.

“I” Irrigation system. This is a low volume and low pressure system linking each green panel to an automatic irrigation system. The whole irrigation system is controlled by an automatic timer device, humidity sensor, regulating valve and distributor which provides a suitable volume of water supplied on a timely basis and at proper intervals as advised, avoiding excess water in rainy days.

“G” Green panels system. This is the heart of the Living Wall where the 2 major important elements namely the growth media and the living plants are housed. Each green panel is designed to achieve construction and installation convenience. In order to provide necessary openings for natural air ventilation, a series of Vertical Louver System is installed, using a wood composite derived by combining recycled wood waste and plastic PVC resins. This product is recyclable, biodegradable and reusable.

Aside from the hardware component as described above, the selection of the 'software' meaning suitable growth media and plant species for the VGS is equally important. Detailed performance specification on the properties, sequence and growth condition of the above must be carefully studied. Eventually all of the 8 different plant species are selected with due consideration to existing site conditions (such as available natural light and shade) and the characteristics of plant materials such as their requirement for water, maintenance frequency, ability to withstand drought condition etc.

In both aesthetic and functional terms, the VGS has played an important role in creating a milestone for green architecture. With the new technologies coming in, there is bound to be many improved versions of the existing system which the industry could adopt and apply.

In the future, the important thing is to use this technology appropriately and sensibly and to be cost effective as well.

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Even in the cold and cloudy weather conditions, 20 participants gathered on time at Tsing Yi MTR Station on 26 Jan 2008 (Sat). All were expecting to visit Stonecutters Bridge and to witness the construction of one of the longest span cable-stayed bridges in the world linking Tsing Yi and Cheung Sha Wan. Now, section of the 1,018m clear span between Tsing Yi and Kwai Cheung Container Port is under construction. Tentative completion date of the bridge is early 2009.

We stood on a 238m high temporary working platform at the tower over looking the bridge deck and the opposite bridge tower at Tsing Yi. It was exciting as the construction lift rose slowly to bring us from the ground level to the bridge deck level and even further, to the upper tower. At the beginning of the site visit, Carries and Jonathan, the Site Project Engineers gave us a brief presentation regarding the project, the construction progress, the quality control on material module production and also the design of the bridge. We could see that how the material and the finishing treatment had been highly considered to provide aesthetic pleasure.

The activity was organized by the Institute and the Landscape Association of Architectural Services Department, HKSAR. Acknowledgement is also given to all the Site Staff guiding us to a safe and informative tour. It was a valuable experience.

Discussions on West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) have been focusing on performing venues, museums, and real estate development. Little has been said about the WKCD’s master plan. HKU SPACE held a seminar on 8 December 2007 for the exchange of professional views on WKCD Master Plan. Iris Hoi, our Chair of Practice Committee, represented HKILA and delivered a speech on harbourfront open spaces.

Iris opened her speech with Toronto as an example. In 2003, Toronto developed four core principles in its lakesfront development: 1) remove access barriers and maximize accessibility; 2) build a network of public open spaces; 3) promote a clean and green waterfront; 4) create dynamic and diverse new communities. West Kowloon has the fifth core principle, Culture.

Nine HKILA members joined the Zhong Shan Jiang Mun visit (10-11 November 2007) organized by the Hong Kong Joint Young Professional Group.

The two days visit was full of activities. On the first day the Group visited Zhongshan Shipyard Park, followed by a visit to a Zhongshan residential development. Then a forum was held with the Construction Bureau, Land & Resources Bureau, Planning Bureau of Zhongshan Shi and Private Developer. On the second day, visits were made to the pedestrian streets in Zhongshan, Jiang Mun & Kai Ping Diaolou.
The HKILA 19th Annual Dinner was held on 2 November 2007, at Ming Court, Langham Place Hotel. Many thanks go the Annual Dinner Organizing Committee: Vincent LUK, Paul CHAN, Ivan SHIU, Mime TAN, LEUNG Siu Yin, Carmen LEE and SHANGGUAN Yu Jin.

We were honoured to have Mrs. Carrie Lam, Secretary for Development, as our Guest of Honour. Her speech was both captivating and encouraging. She remarked on the importance of landscape architects in the greening of Hong Kong and the possibility of the creation of a landscape architectural post at directorate rank in Government.

The dinner was interlaced with performances which were all presented by our members. First a 10-minute powerpoint presentation, prepared by Heung Wai Kin, showed some representative works of landscape consultancies in the past 10 years. Mime Tan played Schubert Impromptus D935 on the piano. Paul Chan played the piano and sang. Vincent Luk played two pieces by bamboo xiao (篳篥) and a piece by calabash (葫蘆絲). John Dainton, HKILA annual dinners’ M.C. for the 14th (?) time, was a wit. He provided confidence and entertainment throughout the dinner. To top it all, there were many lucky draw prizes.

HKILA Council is actively pursuing the creation of a landscape architectural post at directorate rank in Government.

In August 2007, Council had a lunch meeting with Mrs. Carrie Lam, Secretary for Development, during which we discussed the proposal to create a directorate rank for landscape architects in Government to assist the Bureau in coordinating landscape and greening issues for the betterment of the region’s environment, and for the profession in the long term.

To follow up, at the end of August HKILA President sent a letter to Mrs. Carrie Lam explaining the background and benefits of the proposal. Mrs. Carrie Lam replied promptly and positively.

At our Annual Dinner on 2 November 2007, Mrs. Carrie Lam as our Guest of Honour delivered the encouraging news that the creation of a landscape architectural post at directorate rank is going ahead subject to the support from Legislative Council (LegCo).

Our President and Vice-President solicited support from various parties. We sincerely thank the following for writing support letters to either Development Bureau or to Panel on Development of LegCo.

- Prof. Hon. Patrick LAU
- The Association of Landscape Consultants Ltd.
- The Association of Architectural Practices Ltd.
- Professional Green Building Council

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects
The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers
The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors
The Hong Kong Institute of Planners

The Proposed Creation of a Chief Landscape Architect Post was included in the agenda of the Panel on Development meeting scheduled on 18 December 2007. The Panel was supportive of the proposal. The issue will now have to go through the Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee.

Universal Accessibility for External Areas, Open Spaces and Green Spaces

The research report has recently been completed and uploaded onto the Architectural Services Department’s website - http://www.archsd.gov.hk/english/knowledge_sharing/ua2/index.html

The research includes topics of Universal Accessibility such as access planning; external connections; landscaped spaces; outdoor furniture and fittings; visual contrasts; lighting; safety and maintenance. The information is very useful for external space design.

There is also an earlier report on Study on Green Roof application in Hong Kong completed by Architectural Services Ltd. and their consultant, Urbis Ltd.

Five HKILA members Barry Wilson, Sandy Duggie, Willie Cheng, Chris Chung and John Chan - participated in the HKIE 60th Anniversary Golf Invitation competition. Two HKU representatives were invited to join the HKILA team. With 7 members, the HKILA team was the smallest. Even though the goal of the event was to enable members of professional Institutions / Associations of the construction industries to network in a sociable and friendly round of golf, every one was very keen and serious about the game. Other than HKIE, invited Institutions / Associations include HKIA, HKIS, HKIP, HKCA and HKILA. Without much sleep before the match, Barry still managed to win a prize "Nearest to Pin". Chris Chung, who was encouraged by Evans II to go for the longest drive with his "weird-looking" driver, grabbed a nice "Birdie" and won him three Callaway HX Tour golf balls. HKILA donated about 9 boxes of these nice golf balls printed with HKILA to celebrate the HKIE 60th Anniversary. We were proud to have Chris winning some of the balls back! Willie had advised us that the best psychology was to take it easy. However, we were too eager to get a good result, and we might have forgotten his advice during the game. Most of us didn’t perform as well as we wanted and we added a few more strokes to our total score! We thought we could have played better, maybe next time. Anyway, that was a fine day and we enjoyed ourselves! Hopefully HKILA will have more members keen on golfing and we shall be able to form a strong team in the near future!

Green roofing has become a hot topic recently. The following links provide useful information.

Powerpoint presentations of speakers in the University of Sheffield’s Green Roof Conference
http://www.shef.ac.uk/landscape/greenroof/Greenroofppts.htm

This is a collection of a number of Powerpoint presentations on green roof in a conference in 2006. Many of the speakers are prominent researchers in the field. Most of the Powerpoint presentations are very useful covering both specific and general topics.

New BS on Topsoil

BS 3882:2007 - Specification for topsoil and requirements for use has replaced the previous version (BS 3883:1994)

BS 3882:2007 specifies requirements for topsoil that are moved or traded. It is not intended for the grading, classification or standardization of topsoil or subsoil that remains in situ. It describes multipurpose and also specialist purpose topsoil and gives guidance on sampling and analysis.

2007 Mainland and HK Construction Industry Forum
Jointly Organized by Ministry of Construction and Development Bureau

To promote the exchange of construction technology and expertise, and to enhance the co-operation between Mainland and Hong Kong in the construction industry, the 11th Mainland and Hong Kong Construction Industry Forum - "Sustainable Urban Form: Planning and Development" was held on November 7-8, 2007, in Changsha, Hunan Province.

On behalf of the Development Bureau of Hong Kong SAR Government, Jr. Mak Chai-kwong, expressed his expectations on future cooperations between Hong Kong and Mainland China professionals in the field of construction and built environment.

Our President, Leslie Chen, represented HKILA at the Forum. In addition, HKILA and LARB co-sponsored two members to attend this event.
Tree Roots in the Built Environment
Research for Amenity Trees No. 8
Author: John Roberts, Nick Jackson and Mark Smith,
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)
Publisher: TSO (The Stationery Office), the U.K., 2006

‘Tree Roots in the Built Environment’ is a comprehensive review of the various aspects of tree roots. It starts with tree root biology and covers various practical issues that need to be considered in order to grow trees successfully in an urban setting. Having healthy trees in the very difficult urban setting is more challenging than one would expect.

This book emphasizes the role of a commonly neglected element - the tree root system. Moreover, this book gives a practical guide to the use of structural soil, cable trenching, control of damage to tree roots on construction sites, ‘No-dig’ method for constructing access drives, etc. It also covers topics like practical training for contractors on how to work on sites with trees.

Topics covered include:
- soil condition and roots;
- improving tree root growth in urban soils;
- water supply and drought amelioration for amenity trees;
- coping with soil contamination;
- protecting trees during excavation and good trenching practice;
- control of damage to tree roots on construction sites;
- tree root damage to buildings and pavements, sewers, drains and pipes; and
- research needs and sustainability issues.

Cassia nodosa and Cassia grandis are two similar trees originating from different parts of the world. Both are deciduous trees that bear flowers before the leaves emerge, thus displaying spectacular blossom and can be used as focal planting.

Cassia nodosa originated from South Asia. The flowers appear in early to mid summer, with colors fading during the course of flowering. Cassia grandis originated from Central America. It flowers in spring, and blossoms are a lovely bright pink. The flowers of these two trees appear on racemes at the end of the branches, and are relatively long-lasting. Since the flowers appear on the branches of the previous year, pruning should be carried out after flowering to ensure next year’s display.

Both trees have pinnately compound leaves on drooping branches, making these trees have a spreading form. Form and height should therefore be considered when placing these trees as they require proper space to develop the full crown.

Both trees prefer a well-drained soil, and require a sunny position to develop their intense blossom. Due to their tropical origin, the trees are prone to dieback in the cool winter of Hong Kong especially for newly imported stocks from tropical regions like Thailand. A location sheltered from the north winds of winter is much preferred, but once they become established they are fast growing and relatively trouble free.

A fine and famous example of Cassia nodosa is the specimen next to the car park of the Murray Building, which is listed in the LCSD’s Old and Valuable Trees for its large size and rarity in Hong Kong.