



of the Happy Valley Racecourse to bet on the horses. But every other night of the week the land inside the racetrack is used by football, rugby and running clubs (Hong Kong's myriad public leisure facilities, from all-weather AstroTurf to outdoor swimming pools, makes it easy to get moving). All the while, beneath the horses' hooves and the hockey boots, a gigantic stormwater drain, opened in 2017, protects the residential neighbourhood from flooding during heavy downpours. Future possibilities for freeing up space above ground include developing the land underneath major parks.

The city government owns most of the undeveloped land in Hong Kong and, as a result, it's the dominant force in urban planning. Land parcels are sold off (often via the MTR) for huge premiums to powerful property developers that are controlled by a handful of tycoons. In turn, sky-high property prices keep the government flush with cash to spend on shiny new infrastructure.

At the same time, social tensions caused by unaffordable property are compounded by a projected housing shortfall. The need to free up more land is necessitating more controversial development decisions that edge closer to the city's green lungs. As such, the government has sought public input

for the first time. Additional land reclamation tends to get the broadest support, provided it's conducted outside Victoria Harbour.

One of the largest reclamation projects currently underway will house a third runway at the airport. The world's busiest air cargo hub is a commercial juggernaut in Hong Kong as well as an important lifeline, because the city cannot feed itself despite its abundant greenery. Fresh food is flown into the city from all over the world every day, another modern logistical marvel of this urban oasis that is largely invisible to the more than 70 million passengers who fly in and out each year.



Get high: High-rise Hong Kong perches across steep terrain, delivering a network of walkways that allow for swift traffic-dodging navigation

