Environmental, social and governance

Cities

We support clients seeking to address the myriad issues and opportunities to which massive urbanization has given rise, while also seeking to transform the urban environment and enrich the lives of its inhabitants.

The issue

Urbanization is one of the great historic trends of civilization. 55% of the world's population live and work in cities and this is projected to rise to 60% by 2030 and 70% by 2050. Cities are centers of commerce and community and a confluence of nearly every aspect of human life. A great city should be a community where people feel connected, economic opportunities abound and culture thrives.

Increasingly, the pace of growth and consumption in cities has placed them under acute stress – access to clean water, affordable housing, technology and other basic needs is increasingly challenging. Many cities are failing to provide their citizens with basic needs and services, resulting in nearly a quarter of urban populations being categorized as slums. The aging populations in many more well-established cities has exacerbated health and emergency care concerns. Additionally, with so many of the world's major cities in low-lying coastal areas, many of them are on the frontline of climate change impacts.

Alongside local law requirements, standardized frameworks such as standardized certification frameworks in the EU are driving sustainable building practices, which include social benefits for stakeholders and circular economy practices. International green building certifications, including BREEAM and LEED, are increasingly demanded by local governments, investors, occupiers and consumers from developers and contractors.

The UN Sustainable Development Goal ("SDG") 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and several other UN SDGs are highly relevant to achieving sustainable and inclusive urban growth. Increasingly, Just Energy Transition Partnership Agreements are underpinning the commitment to allocate resources for the development of renewable energy projects in emerging markets where such projects might otherwise not be economically feasible.

What we do

The challenges to making cities sustainable are many, but several exciting innovations are taking place to help alleviate some of these issues, including:

- Green building and town planning techniques to enhance energy efficiency
- BIM, 3D printing and modular construction building techniques to save on time and costs
- More intelligent use of public spaces to increase a sense of community and the spontaneous encounters that can make city life so rewarding
- An innovative approach to the re-greening of cities by creating new green spaces and vertical forests
- Smarter use of data analytics to better identify the needs of the population and streamline provision of governmental and other services while also safeguarding privacy and ensuring against intrusive surveillance
- A re-imagining of sustainable transport networks to reflect growing trends of electrification and digitization

Our leading infrastructure, construction, real estate, planning, technology and cybersecurity practices, together with our green energy and low carbon practices assist leading developers, city councils and other government authorities and their investors and lenders on major city developments, urban renewal programs, developments of new smart cities and retrofitting of smart city technology to existing urban centers.

We advise on:

- Infrastructure needs of sustainable modern cities, including waste management and recycling (including energy-from-waste) projects
- Deploying renewables and virtual offtake arrangements enabling customers to have greater control over their energy sources
- Urban development through PPP / PFI and other mechanisms
- Delivering on Paris Agreement and UN SDG commitments
- Training governments, corporates and investors on sustainability and social impact principles and best practices
- Complying with new laws and regulations requiring increased disclosure, energy efficiency and low carbon solutions

Our impact

We have partnered with numerous clients to address their urbanization issues goals and drive change. Examples include:

- Representing WIST, Inc. in raising financing through diverse social impact investors to install 188 Water ATMs to provide safe water to 228,000 people in Bangladesh
- Representing IFC and the procuring Government authority in the Belgrade EfW project in Serbia, helping to alleviate an acute waste landfill issue
- Representing King's Cross Limited Partnership on a unique and innovative project to supply sustainable heating services to the £2 billion, 8 million square feet King's Cross Central development - London's most significant mixed use development
- Representing The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Ltd and Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited on the refinancing of the Changi Newater II PPP wastewater project in Singapore
- Advising a number of major UK institutional investors on their real estate transactions, including maintaining their standard form documents to reflect ESG-related issues and drafting asset management documents and other policies

Relevant contacts

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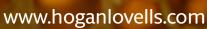matthew.eisler@hoganlovells.com

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