

Developers ignore feng shui at their peril

When a modern new skyscraper goes up in Taiwan, the owners always hire a feng shui geomancer or xiansheng to create the best position for the main entrance.

Over the years, several major new buildings in downtown Taipei have remained unoccupied and their owners have gone broke because they failed to follow the dictates of Chinese geomancy during construction.

Geomancy (feng shui) is the branch of classical cosmology that gives a blueprint for us to build our homes in splendid harmony with the elements of our natural environment. The Chinese exponents of feng shui believe that where you live and how you allocate and arrange the elements of your home, or workplace, can significantly affect the harmony of your health, wealth and happiness.

If you acknowledge and understand the all-pervasive life energy (chi), you can affect the whole tenor of your well-being. Simple things like placing your furniture the wrong way, using wrong colours, and elemental conflicts (i.e. having the water (refrigerator) next to the fire (stove), can create factors that impact negatively on your life.

The xiansheng considers four factors: the chi or "breath of life" potential of the neighbourhood; the site orientation or the importance of the direction in which the building faces; the five elements — fire, water, wood, metal, earth — and their mutual influence upon a location; the power of water and its significance in relation to the property.

While feng shui is thousands of years old and has seemingly strange rules, it contains much common sense that can be understood by everyone. For example, feng shui proposes that the best site for a home that will take advantage of the vital chi is on a south-facing slope — preferably between two hills of unequal size

(the Azure Dragon and the White Tiger). Ideally, a river will be running along one side of the structure. The river should then turn in front of the building and disappear.

Looked at another way, such a home on the south slope gets the maximum hours of sunlight, is shielded from the chilly, health-sapping north wind, and has a good supply of water for drinking and cleaning. By then conveniently disappearing under the ground and gravel, the river carries away effluents and other "dirty" water.

So, it's just plain old common sense, and any B.C. builder will find it extremely useful, even necessary, to understand these concepts.

Some of the basic concepts as they relate to real estate are:

- Avoid having a straight road leading directly to the home — with people coming and going it will dissipate the good influences.
- Avoid building at the junction of a T-street or at the end of a cul-de-sac because these locations are on the receiving end of the straight-flowing sha. A dead-end street traps the bad sha.
- The front entrance should not face the upstairs stairway.
- The front door should not have a view of the back door. The through hallway is a no-no.
- Heavy beams in the recreational room are a burden and interfere with chi.
- To have the right side low and the left

side high are both unlucky. The hills to the left should be higher than those to the right.

- Houses or buildings on triangular plots of land are ill-omened as the strange shape attracts sha.
- Water is very important and its positioning is vital to improving chi and confounding sha.

Fortunately (you guessed it!) there are ways to rectify defects even if the defect is in the terrain.

For example:

- If the left is too low, plant trees to raise the height.
- If your neighbor builds a house higher than yours, add to the height of yours so your view of the stars is not obstruct-

ed. (Of course, you may have a problem with City Hall.)

- If the plot is triangular, placing the door on the side of the triangle rather than on the point will counter the ill-omen.

For properties that back on to a river, or if the ground slopes upward from the front of a building, the entrance must be at the rear to allow chi to gain entrance.

The Chinese also believe that a house with a front slightly lower than the back is useful in dispersing the influence of sha. A pool of water (a fish pond, for example) is especially useful to conserve chi.

However, a large tree immediately opposite the front door is ill-omened as

its sharp angles can be especially unlucky, or an office or commercial building as their angles and straight edges drive off money. By contrast, curves attract money.

Then again, the flat edges of buildings, which lead toward the front of your property, are fine conductors of chi. But a road in front of your place that turns at a sharp angle can bring about the same unhappy effect as a "secret arrow." To counter this, a driveway leading up to a front door should always approach in a gentle sweep to help the entrance of wealth.

Superstition? It really doesn't matter. What does matter is that if you are a builder it behooves you to know feng

shui as it relates to building. Whether you believe in it or not, feng shui is seen by millions as an ancient science full of philosophy and practical wisdom.

If you drive through a predominantly Asian neighborhood and you find an empty lot in an otherwise fully developed cul-de-sac, you now know why. Bad fortune comes along the street and hits the last house in the cul-de-sac. Who would want to live there?

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