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California Measure Would Align Building Rules With Feng Shui

By PATRICIA LEIGH BROWN

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 29 — With a budget deficit of about \$14 billion, California could use a major infusion of positive energy.

So it may be appropriate timing that in this most Asian of mainland American regions, State Assemblyman Leland Y. Yee, Democrat of San Francisco, has introduced a resolution that urges the California Building Standards Commission to adopt standards that would aid feng shui, the ancient Chinese practice of promoting health, harmony and prosperity through the environment.

The resolution, which has yet to pass a committee vote before going to the full Assembly, is meant to encourage planning agencies, building departments and design review boards to provide for the use of feng shui principles, which often touch on the placement of doors and staircases, the position of buildings and the alignment of objects in rooms. It aims to help people live in harmony with nature by promoting the flow of chi, or positive energy, and neutralizing or avoiding negative energy.

"The structure of a building can affect a person's mood," the measure says, "which can influence a person's behavior, which, in turn, can determine the success of a person's personal and professional relationships."

Mr. Yee said: "We need to allow the expression of one's culture. That's why people come to California."

The standards commission typically deals with more mundane concerns, like plumbing pipes. But in California, feng shui is big business. In communities like Fremont and Cupertino, south of San Francisco, feng shui experts often consult with developers on the layout of subdivisions, avoiding placing a house at a T-shaped intersection, which would invite negative energy, or sha, the mouth of the dragon .

"Feng shui is a very major cultural factor," said Irene Jhin, publisher of the Chinese New Home Buyer's Guide, based in Burlingame.

Traditionally, feng shui is believed to have ramifications beyond domestic tranquillity. "If there is harmony in the house, there is order in the nation," says a Chinese proverb. "If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world."