

HONG KONG ALTERNATIVES

An advocacy group of concerned Hong Kong residents, unaffiliated with any political group or commercial property developers and are deeply concerned with the current development of the West Kowloon Cultural District. (www.hkalternatives.com)

Is Hong Kong Really Asia's World City?

Not Quite!

A World-Class Waterfront Green Park - Will Help!

A Unique Cultural/Entertainment Revival - Will Help!

The **West Kowloon Site (WKS)** was conceived as part of the new Hong Kong Airport - Western Tunnel Reclamation Project in the late 80's. The SAR Government originally designated the WKS to be public open space - **A Green Park**. Today, however, we are asked to support the WKCD Single-Development approach based on speculative development. What has happened?

The WKS provides one of the most panoramic views of the Hong Kong Harbour. It is too valuable for the SAR Government to auction off the site for developers, and a sizeable silent majority of Hong Kong residents believes that the original plan to develop the WKS into a green park is the most sensible and best long term interest for the legacy of Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Alternatives, an advocacy group unaffiliated with any commercial or political groups and committed to the development of the West Kowloon Site in the best interests of the Hong Kong people, has begun a quiet campaign since early 2005 to appeal to the SAR Government to withdraw the Site from the auction block and replace instead with the following initiatives:

A. Green Park - Design a world-class and sustainable Urban Green Park along the entire waterfront, with plenty of trees, green areas and open space, and with over 80% of the WKS to be designated as Green Park.

B. Cultural/Entertainment District - Allow for progressive development of cultural facilities (Master Plan) in the WKS along Austin and Canton Road to be determined by a proposed Hong Kong Cultural Authority. Included in the Master Plan will be the relocation of the existing Museums of History and Science from Tsim Sha Tsui East to this proposed district. These cultural facilities shall form an integral part of the Green Park and become a vantage point for the locals and tourists alike.

C. No Canopy - Hong Kong already has a world famous landmark; i.e. our natural harbor and skyline. The canopy would be extremely expensive, technically questionable and redundant for a green park. It contradicts all principles of environmental sustainability (The Hannover Principles) and will definitely become a health hazard when insects, birds and animals die and decay under its coverage.

Why an Urban Green Park?

1. High Density Living - As one of the most densely populated urban centers in the world and density of over 50,000 people per square kilometer, Hong Kong residents are constantly exposed to stressful environments. Parks and open space can provide refuge from these urban stresses.

2. Low Urban Park Density - The urban areas of Hong Kong and Kowloon currently have an extremely small ratio of per capita Urban Parkland. Other world cities such as New York or London have over 10 times the amount of per capita Urban Parkland.

3. Environmental Enhancement - Hong Kong is now suffering from increasing environmental pollutions. The tree cover from a green park at the West Kowloon site could remove annually from the air many tons of pollutants.

4. Community/Public Health - Air pollutant abatement can help lowering the incidence of respiratory problems such as asthma, which helps to reduce health risks for children. Parks can help reduce obesity and enhance senior citizen's health and well-being. Parks also facilitate civic activities and help to foster community spirit.

5. Tourism Benefits - Hong Kong is already well known for shopping and commerce, as well as the new home of Disney World HK. The proposed Green Park and Cultural District will become a major new attraction and vantage point onto the city.

6. The Best Interest for the Legacy of Hong Kong - The WKS certainly ranks among one of the most important and invaluable real estates for the last 150 years. For this simple reason the SAR Government must recognize the legacy for the public and agree that it is **NOT FOR SALE.**

Hong Kong - Asia's World City?

A comparative analysis between the urban New York, London and Hong Kong below shows a definite need for more urban parkland.

	Hong Kong & Kowloon	New York	London
Area (sq.km) of urban center	73	57	321
Population (million) of urban center	3.7	1.54	2.76
Population density (per sq.km)	50,000	27,000	8,600
Landmark	Victoria Park	Central Park	Hyde Park
Park area (Hectares)	17	341	251
Population density to park area ratio	2,941	79	34

A West Kowloon Cultural Green Park:

Hong Kong Alternatives present a vision for a park that both residents and visitors can enjoy. We do not propose a specific design, but merely present a concept for what it could be. The world's best landscape designers should be invited to design and create a legacy that will benefit Hong Kong for generations to come.

Greenery:	Amenities:	Cultural Facilities:	Commercial Facilities:
Grass Lawns	Waterfront Promenade	Arena for Concerts/Sports	Public Car Parks
Wooded Areas	Jogging & Cycling Paths	Performance Venue	Cafes & Coffee Houses
Floral Gardens	Water Recreation	Theatres Area	Specialties Shops
Tree-Lined Walkways	Amphitheatre	Museum Cluster	Art Market
Water Features	Exercise Grounds	Art Exhibition Centres	Cultural Club
Ponds	Children's Playground	Opera House	Publications & Copy Rights

Park Funding & Management:

WK Cultural Park can be financed and managed without undue burden to the government. The initial capital costs of the park would be relatively inexpensive in comparison to the proposed canopy. The management of the park can be undertaken by a non-profit organization. Private donation can be in form of money, properties, intellectual rights, art effects and collections. Private endowments can be made for trees, park benches and other amenities and facilities.

Money Issue:

The money issue has been in the forefront of the SAR Government and has invoked considerable community concern. As such, some logical comments are in order.

The alleged building cost of HK\$ 3 billion for the canopy is grossly inadequate, as we have observed from the public exhibitions of the four major developers who had spent time and money to tender for the WKCD project. All of the four proposals have disproportionately over-designed on building plot ratios with expectation of the excessive costs involved in building and maintaining the canopy. As yet, nobody has been able to come up with a realistic figure for consideration and discussion in the Legislative Council, not to mention the maintenance cost, the potential health hazards and other negative environmental impacts. These are simply not financially qualifiable.

It has been argued that the Hong Kong SAR Government is not prepared to miss the opportunity for generating at least HK\$25 billions net revenue from selling the WK site. We feel that a responsible Government should have the vision and wisdom in planning and decision-making based on the macro economy of Hong Kong as opposed to most developers whose major concern is profit maximization on project-to-project basis. Hong Kong is not short of money and lands. When is the Government going to release the Kai Tak airport site for multipurpose usages? How much revenue will the Government get from selling the lands around the new MTR stations and proposed new satellite towns along the main road to the airport and Disneyland? How do you assess the value increase of the properties and property sites adjacent to a world-class green park, which will be the legacy of Hong Kong?

And by providing a good and healthy environment, we shall attract further investments and money will stay in Hong Kong one way or another.

Cultural Authority:

A Cultural Authority shall be formed to oversee the West Kowloon Cultural Green Park development, to work with both public and private sectors and to determine how to develop and integrate the green park and cultural/entertainment facilities for the best interest of Hong Kong. Of course, this Cultural Authority must be fully recognized and endorsed by the Chief Executive and the SAR Government.

THE HONG KONG ALTERNATIVES APPEAL :

1. That the West Kowloon Site (WKS), one of the most valuable parcels of land in Hong Kong, should not be auctioned off for property development. Instead it should be developed for the best long-term interest of Hong Kong people.
2. **That 80%** of the WKS should be developed as a world-class and sustainable Urban Green Park along the entire waterfront for the Hong Kong people to use and enjoy.
3. **That 20%** of the WKS should be for a Cultural/Entertainment District progressively developed along Austin and Canton Road as determined by a proposed Hong Kong Cultural Authority. These facilities, within easy reach of public transport, will form an integral part of the Urban Green Park and become a vantage point for residents and tourists.
4. That the proposed Canopy is unnecessary since the Hong Kong Harbour is already a world famous natural landmark. The canopy would be extremely expensive, technically questionable and redundant for a green park. Moreover, unlike the proposed canopy, a green park would become more attractive as it matures and ages.
5. That the Three Consortia jointly support the integrated West Kowloon Cultural Green Park Proposal as a legacy for the people of Hong Kong.

CONCLUSION :

Living in the concrete environment of Hong Kong, we do need an oasis with trees, flowers and grasslands where we can be in touch with nature, relax and appreciate the beauty of our spectacular harbour view and magnificent skyline.

Presented by :

Hong Kong Alternatives

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For more information on the West Kowloon Cultural Green Park proposal,

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The Canopy Is A Costly Vanity and A Health Hazard

The people of Hong Kong are entitled to have an alternative choice other than the canopy. We, Hong Kong Alternatives, propose a West Kowloon Cultural Green Park for the people of Hong Kong.

We definitely don't want to have a monstrous canopy which is a health hazard to the public and is against all principles of environmental sustainability (Based on the Hannover Principles). The canopy blocks the sun's ultraviolet light which is the most powerful natural disinfectant. Beside being prohibitively costly, it is destined to be demolished and disposed within 10 years after it is built, if the government fails to disinfect the area when millions and billions insects, birds and animals migrate to the space under its shelter and die and their bodies degrade there every week, month and year because the area will be plagued with moulds and insects in our hot and humid summer months. If it survives the first 10 years, it is commonsense to expect that the maintenance cost will increase yearly and its novelty value will fade. (Somehow I think the novelty will fade way before the 10 years are up – for example, look at the Millennium Dome in London – no one really mentions it now... and now look! The British are stuck with maintaining it and are still considering leaving it up for longer. It would make an interesting study.)

I have myself talked to several hundred people after we, the H.K. Alternatives, launched a website to campaign for an Urban Green Park at the WKCD site. I am very well aware of the fact that over 80 percent of the people I spoke with were in favour of a green park and the majority of them instantaneously dismissed the canopy as a total waste of money. That is my first hand information and I would suggest to everyone to ask the same question: "What would you prefer to have in the legacy of Hong Kong, – A giant canopy or an urban green park at the WKCD site?"

After all, the canopy is a costly vanity. We can't sell it when its vanity value runs out. A WKCD green park will be forever in the legacy of Hong Kong. Let us all do away with evils and follow the path of benevolence for the betterment Hong Kong.

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