

Preliminary Response on West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) Project

This is a preliminary response by The Professional Commons on the Government's proposal for the WKCD Project. At this stage we would focus on the potential problems related to the proposed development mix and planning parameters:

1. Development mix not optimised

Traffic and activities generated by performing arts facilities usually peak in the evening. So are those generated by residential uses. The proposed gross floor areas (GFAs) for core arts and cultural facilities (CACF) together with residential development in WKCD would account for more than half of the total GFAs and would likely result in less vibrant daytime activities and subsequently lesser amount of financial return for the retail/dining/entertainment facilities. The current proposed development mix may not be the most conducive to the vibrancy of the District.

2. No allowance for Creative Industries

Creative industries should be encouraged in the WKCD as this would be a source of innovation, in addition to the generation of potential talents for the arts community. Yet most of these firms are small and medium enterprises. Unless special zoning are imposed the high rental of grade A office buildings to be developed in the district would become a deterrent to these industries. Special design and planning areas would be necessary to encourage development of office complexes that are suitable for such creative talents.

3. Public aspiration for quality open spaces

The provision of open space for public enjoyment should not rely on the private sector. Options should be explored to allow for more quality public open space which should not be dispersed and be provided at

ground level to guarantee actual provision and access to the general public.

4. Accessibility to old districts

Easy connections between WKCD and its neighbouring districts will encourage cultural diversity through contributions from local district-based arts and cultural groups as well as enhance the usage of facilities through a better audience flow. Direct and easy connections with its not so affluent neighbouring districts such as Tai Kok Tsui, Mongkok, Yaumatei and Tsim Sha Tsui, however, require coordinated planning at an early stage. Innovative and environmentally friendly means of access in the form of free people movers (conveyor instead of fixed track), shuttle service by emission-free vehicles, cycle tracks, promenades, barrier-free pedestrian facilities with landscaping as well as shades should be incorporated in the Master Layout Plans.

5. Phasing to allow for organic growth

It should be recognized that the demand for cultural facilities will likely change over time. It may be necessary to consider a more gradual phased development of the CACF so as to allow for more flexibility and opportunities for future fine-tuning and incorporation of more updated design and concept for the future. As small and medium size venues are currently in short supply, it is plausible that the development of this type of venues can be expedited.

The Professional Commons are currently conducting further research on the above-mentioned issues as well as other cultural and institutional issues. We shall issue a comprehensive alternative proposal before the end of the consultation period.

The Professional Commons
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