

15 June 2007

Members of the Panel on Planning, Land and Works

Subcommittee to Review for the Central Waterfront (including Tamar Site)

Hong Kong Legislative Council

Jackson Road

Hong Kong

Dear Members,

Re: Submission on Central Waterfront - Meeting on Thursday, 28 June 2007

Submission by Bill BARRON Civic Exchange

- Despite much controversy government has proceeded:
 - with the Central reclamation;
 - landmarks such as Queen's Pier and the Star ferry clock tower have been dismantled;
 - a major road will be very near the new waterfront (P2); and,
 - government is still pushing for extensive and often high density development (about 7 million square feet) on and adjacent to the new reclamation.

- While government has been forced to compromise on the original plan for how far the Central reclamation would extend into the harbour, and on the allowable traffic speeds on P2,
 - the remaining plans are decidedly not user friendly with respect to recreational use of the new waterfront.
 - there will be many more buildings near the water (obstructing views), along with another major traffic corridor bordering the open space bring noise, pollution and the risk of traffic accidents.
 - how can we make the development as attractive as possible?

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- This council has one last major opportunity to make the waterfront as user friendly as possible
 - it can require that the waterfront developments are broken into small individual segments.

- Decentralizing the scale and ownership of the waterfront plots will allow the market to be most responsive (and creative) in providing the types of waterfront uses the public truly values, not what government planners decide to give them.

- Consider how the SoHo area developed spontaneously with the coming of the Mid Levels escalator.
 - Would that have been possible if the escalator has been largely bordered by property owned by one or only a few major property developers?

- Waterfront development decentralised in its scale and ownership will allow the market to be most responsive to the public interest.
 - This offers the prospect of not only higher unpriced values (people enjoy wandering through small scale diversified places), but also (as SoHo demonstrated) of the ability to capture high financial returns through a responsive diversities set of service providers.
 - to obtain the highest TOTAL ECONOMIC VALUE (i.e., the combination of priced and un-priced values)

- Again, we ask this council please consider what approach to waterfront commercial space is best for the people of Hong Kong.
 - Do we want (or need) more mall-like developments or more of the vibrancy of a *diverse* outdoor life?

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