

19 June 2008

Panel on Economic Development
Legislative Council
Hong Kong SAR

CB(1)1979/07-08(02)

Dear Members,

Proposed development of a Piazza in Tsim Sha Tsui

On behalf of ordinary residents of TST I strongly protest the proposal to construct a shopping mall on the Star Ferry TST Piazza.

That the Development Bureau proposes such a plan for a piazza that has a special place in the hearts of Hong Kong people is indicative of its complete lack of respect for the history and culture of our city. With the excuse that 'the objective of the proposed development is to provide a new public open space for use by locals and visitors' bus services are to be moved to Tsim Sha Tsui East, causing great inconvenience to passengers using Star Ferry and adding to vehicular movement in the area as shuttle buses will be needed to connect the new bus station at Wing On Plaza with the ferry terminal.

The general public was quite happy to have the bus station at such a convenient location but this plan was sold to district representatives on the promise that the piazza would provide a landscaped and relaxing environment. **There was never any mention of commercial activities**, other than the provision of refreshments.

That the proposed shopping mall would generate revenue is irrelevant in the context of our government's annual budget. If the cash is needed then there are numerous examples of public overspending that can be addressed. The proposal 6(e) that the private sector could fund and take up management and operation of the piazza is also most troubling in view of the current discontent within the community regarding the management of public open space. The focus would be on generating revenue when maintenance of such a public asset should in fact be covered by annual government expenditure. That is what we pay our taxes for.

TST has already lost two street level public parks, Middle Road Children's Playground and Wing On Plaza Gardens to further so called 'development' plans. Residents have lived for years with construction site conditions for what was promised to be a better urban environment. That we make such sacrifices to accommodate yet another shopping mall in an already shop saturated district is intolerable.

Star Ferry Piazza is public open space. The members of Legco must ensure that this public asset is not encroached upon. It must also be managed as POS, not to line the packets of some property developer. The interests of the community must prevail

Yours faithfully


Mary Mulvihill