

18 July 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Brian, a Year 1 university student from the United States. After reviewing the documents released to the public, I must say that while developing low income housing is a good gesture, this will simply amplify and exacerbate the poverty problem, rather than solving it.

As far as I can tell, the current plan involves creating government housing in Sheung Shui (上水), where the government is developing low income housing. When I examined a map of the surrounding area, I couldn't help but notice that the proposed development sites were not located in a way such that it would be easy to reach the rail stations.

When I discussed the Sheung Shui situation with one of my family friends (he has far more real estate and HK experience than I do, having grown up in the States), he mentioned that with the proposed number of occupants (70 000, if I remember correctly), there would be only approximately 6 500 jobs, which would mean that more than 9 in 10 people would have to commute for a job. However, this makes it worse. Because this housing project is directed towards lower income residents, the fact that it is not only difficult to get a job, but also difficult to commute out of Sheung Shui to reach a place with more ample opportunity, this would simply create a vicious cycle of families not being able to pull themselves out of poverty.

To elaborate on my last paragraph, this is a more thorough description of the situation I'm describing. This project is targeted towards lower-income residents, who are not very financially well off. By moving them all into this place in Sheung Shui, the government is effectively cutting them off from ample opportunity. However, these families are not just the working class; they also have children to raise and nurture. By transporting these people here to a place where they have limited and inconvenient access to outside jobs, and thus effectively trapping them in a place where less than 10% of them will be able to get jobs, this is dooming the next generation to this same fate. Their parents will not be able to get enough money to raise them well, and they will be left in a life of poverty. No matter how nice the surrounding area for this project is, nothing is more important to address poverty than to give poorer people a place where they will have easy access to means that will make their life better, whether it be a place with an abundance of jobs, or a place where they have access to places with jobs.

My proposal is to either propose legislation that promotes job growth in the Sheung Shui region (which may be difficult as the New Territories are not that developed, as far as I know with my limited US knowledge), or better, to leave the Sheung Shui area completely and find a more central location with more accessible transport. To pull these people out of poverty, the solution is not to just give them a house somewhere with land so that they have a "roof over their heads". The government needs to get land near bus terminals, MTR stations, or light rail lines, in places where these people will be able to reach more urban areas with more jobs easily. This current plan is simply going to make the problem worse for these family's progeny and future generations to come. We need to address this by giving these people the means to support themselves.

*"Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Give him a fishing pole and feed him for a lifetime."*

In a nutshell, this is effectively the theory I'm proposing. The current plan is a temporary solution for a long-term problem. Though my solution needs refining, with my limited experience, this is what I propose.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian

