

**Design Responses to Public Views on the New Central Harbourfront**

(submitted to Harbour-front Enhancement Committee  
Task Group on Urban Design Study  
for the New Central Harbourfront on 31 January 2008)

**1. Background**

This Paper summarizes the public views and comments on the new Central Harbourfront received in the course of the Stage 1 Public Engagement exercise of the Urban Design Study for the New Central Harbourfront (the Study) and from other channels, and the responses from the Study consultant. The responses would be incorporated in the Refined Urban Design Framework Plan (RUDFP) and the Master Layout Plans (MLPs) which will be presented for public discussion in the Stage 2 Public Engagement.

The summarized public views and comments include those previously expressed by various stakeholders and concern groups on the Central Harbourfront before the commencement of this Study (**Appendix**), the public views collected in the Stage 1 Public Engagement ended in June 2007, and those presented in the entries of "International Planning and Urban Design Competition on the Central Waterfront of Hong Kong" organized by Designing Hong Kong.

**2. Previous Public Views before Commencement of the Study**

**2.1 Spectrum of Public Views**

A wide spectrum of public views on the future development of the new Central Harbourfront have been expressed through various channels. However, there is some general consensus in the following aspirations which are in line with the Harbour Planning Principles (HPP) and Harbour Planning Guidelines (HPG):

- To create a harbourfront with open spaces that can be enjoyed by the public
- To lower the density, building mass and building height of the new developments at the waterfront
- To enhance vibrancy of the waterfront by enhancing mixes of uses and activities
- To enhance accessibility to the harbourfront
- To respect the historical buildings or structures

Although there are some voices opposing to any form of reclamation, majority of the public accept that the planned Central and Wan Chai reclamations can provide land for the most vital transport link on the northern shore of Hong Kong Island to alleviate traffic congestion on existing road networks. While some members of the public proposed zero developments on the reclaimed land, most agreed that developments with appropriate density and scale and serving the public and tourists could enhance the vibrancy and attractiveness of the area.

## **2.2 Major Public Views and Alternative Proposals**

Major public views on the New Central Harbourfront are summarized below.

### **2.2.1 Urban Design Objectives**

The public generally considers that the urban design objective of the New Central Harbourfront should be based on providing an urban space for the people. It should proactively preserve the buildings/ structures with historic or community significance. More attention is called for the pedestrian space and less focus on vehicular space.

### **2.2.2 Enjoyable Waterfront Setting**

One of the major common concerns in the community is to create an enjoyable waterfront. Vibrant developments along the waterfront and some street-level open air activities are generally acceptable. It is also emphasized that the building height of any development near the waterfront should be low and of a human scale. To enhance the setting, shelters or flexible covers should be provided along the harbourfront promenade.

### **2.2.3 Vibrant Land Uses and Attractions**

Some are concerned about the lack of vibrancy after office hours if the harbourfront is designed only with limited activities and it will not be an attractive destination for residents and tourists.

Besides, there is a concern that the proposed promenade lacks some points of attraction. It is therefore proposed that some activities should be provided to make the area a “must see” destination for residents and tourists.

### **2.2.4 Extensive Open Space**

There is a call for creating extensive open space at the harbourfront. A multi-level open space system which provides a green outlet for leisure, entertainment, cultural and retail activities is proposed.

### **2.2.5 Accessibility to Waterfront**

The public generally agrees that good accessibility to the waterfront for the public is crucial to ensure that the promenade area is popular. Some members of the public have commented that the ground level of the reclaimed land is dominated by Road P2 and public transport interchange rather than vibrant activities. Some are concerned that there would be little activities at street level as the pedestrian connectivity to the waterfront is broken up by the roads.

### **2.2.6 Scale of Development**

The public is particularly concerned about the scale of development of Site 3. Some propose that Site 3 should be re-configured into smaller parcels with ground level access. It is considered that a giant retail complex would only attract world brands which will crowd out the local offerings that tourists favour, and small block sizes will encourage developments of more human scale and interests at street level and provide opportunity for multiple uses and multi-players to promote competition and prosperity.

Besides, some concern groups have strong reservation over a large scale development as it will block view from the hinterland to the waterfront and deprive pedestrians of ground level connections. Some comment that the development at Site 3 may also create the problem of poor air quality. The public also emphasizes the sustainability of the overall development.

### **2.2.7 Compatibility with Surrounding Developments**

The public considers that the future development at the new Central Harbourfront should be compatible with the surrounding developments, particularly the Tamar development and the future waterfront promenade.

### **2.2.8 Development at Ferry Piers**

Ferry services operators are concerned about the possibility of improving Central Ferry Piers to enhance the long-term viability of ferry operation, for example, by allowing some commercial activities which can be enjoyed by public. A sector of the community considers that the piers should be made available for public use such as for non-profit making organizations to provide services.

### **2.2.9 Heritage Concerns**

The public has shown concerns on the preservation arrangements of the old Star Ferry Clock Tower and Queen's Pier.

## **3. Public Views in the Stage 1 Public Engagement**

The Stage 1 Public Engagement of this Study commenced in early May 2007 and officially ended on 30 June 2007. Views received up to early September 2007 were also included for assessment of public views received for the Stage 1 Public Engagement. Details of the public views and suggestions received are collated and analyzed in a full report being finalized.

### **3.1 Urban Design Considerations for the Study Area and Key Sites**

Public opinions on the urban design objectives/issues, sustainable design criteria, and the major urban design considerations for the key sites were not controversial, and differences in opinions were only on the priority order of various criteria and

considerations. Various design considerations for each key site have been suggested by the public. The following are the major considerations which are common to all sites:

- (a) Harmony of development with the surroundings
- (b) Careful control of building height, footprint and massing
- (c) Imposition of urban design control
- (d) Vibrancy of the sites
- (e) Enhanced pedestrian linkages
- (f) Visual connectivity
- (g) More greening
- (h) Water-related activities and water features to be provided at the promenade
- (i) Natural shading along the promenade

### **3.2 Alternative Concepts for Re-assembling Queen's Pier (QP) and Reconstructing the old Star Ferry (SF) Clock Tower**

There were diverse public views on the arrangements for re-assembling QP and reconstructing the old SF Clock Tower. Some preferred locating them at their original locations, while some suggested other locations or no re-assembling or reconstruction at all. There was support for re-assembling QP at a waterfront location and with the pier function revived, and for locating the reconstructed SF Clock Tower at the new Central waterfront to create a visual linkage between the harbour and the city.

## **4. Ideas and Concepts of the Entries of "International Planning and Urban Design Competition on the Central Waterfront of Hong Kong"**

The "International Planning and Urban Design Competition on the Central Waterfront of Hong Kong" was organized by Designing Hong Kong in mid 2007. The competition had received 82 nos. of entries from which 4 finalists were selected to the second round of competition.



(left) MLP of finalist no. 501; (right) Model of finalist no. 501<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The MLP and model photos are extracted from website: [www.designinghongkong.com](http://www.designinghongkong.com)



(left) model photo of finalist no. 502 (right) Perspective of the Promenade (finalist no. 502)



(top) MLP of finalist no. 503 (bottom) model photo of finalist no. 503<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The MLP and model photos are extracted from website: [www.designinghongkong.com](http://www.designinghongkong.com)



(left) model photo of finalist no. 504 (right) MLP of finalist no. 504<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.1 Common Design Opportunities and Design Issues

Although there are different focus and diverse design concepts and ideas in the entries, common design opportunities and issues are also found in many of the submissions:

- A vibrant waterfront with diversity
- Large amount of enjoyable public open spaces
- The harbourfront as a green unifying edge to the harbour and CBD
- Enhanced accessibility between the harbourfront and the hinterland
- Green and sustainable design

The competition organizer has set out “*innovative, yet practical and feasible*” as the prime assessment criteria. While some entries show innovative planning and design concepts, some of their proposals may not be feasible or may be very difficult to implement. The innovative ideas, however, have been carefully considered in the Study and some would be incorporated into the MLPs prepared for public discussion in the Stage 2 Public Engagement.

#### 4.2 Design Merits

With an overview of all the entries and a more detailed review on the four finalists’ submissions, their design merits are identified as listed below:

- A vibrant waterfront with diverse activities for public enjoyment
- Enhanced accessibility
- Visual corridors
- Natural topography (e.g. undulating landscapes)
- Maximized greenery
- Reduced massing and footprints
- Intimate human-scale open spaces
- Place making
- Water elements

<sup>3</sup> The MLP and model photos are extracted from website: [www.designinghongkong.com](http://www.designinghongkong.com)

## **5. Design Responses to Public Aspirations**

Although there is general consensus on the urban design objectives and issues, diverse design ideas have been received.

The following summarizes the major design responses that could be incorporated:

### **5.1 Vibrancy and Diversity**

The urban design framework has been refined to provide design corridors and precincts each with different characters and activities to enhance the vibrancy of the new Central Harbourfront. A refined Urban Design Framework Plan (UDFP) is being drawn up and will be presented for public discussion in the Stage 2 Public Engagement. The promenade design would particularly take into consideration the mix of activities for public enjoyment.

### **5.2 Extensive Open Space**

Extensive open spaces are planned in the Study Area, with consideration of the existing provision in the hinterland. A Landscape Strategy Plan (LSP), which identifies new and existing open spaces is being drawn up and will be presented to the public in the Stage 2 Public Engagement.

The proposed open spaces have also been reviewed to enhance the intimacy and scale, which are found as an aspiration from some competition entries.

### **5.3 Enhanced Accessibility**

Multi-level pedestrian linkages for enhanced accessibility to the harbourfront are already taken into consideration. A Pedestrian Network Plan (PNP) in a mix of at-grade walkway, elevated walkway and subway is being proposed for presentation to the public in the Stage 2 Public Engagement. The PNP has also taken into consideration the location of public transport, drop-off areas, etc. Although enhanced accessibility is a key design issue, public parking is not encouraged in the Study Area.

In order to enhance the east-west connection along the promenade, the scope for an environmentally friendly transport system would also be proposed. Tourists and locals alike, and in particular children, the elderly and disabled persons, can benefit from this environmentally friendly system for sightseeing. Natural shading has also been factored in the promenade design.

### **5.4 Visual Corridors**

View corridors have been proposed in the refined urban design framework to preserve visual permeability from various significant locations to the harbour. The refined design concepts of the various key sites have been taken into consideration. Visual analysis has been conducted to ensure that the visual impact is minimized.

## **5.5 Reduced Massing and Footprints**

The development parameters of all key sites are being reviewed. Consideration is being given to reducing the development intensity in terms of massing and footprints in the MLPs. Design control mechanisms will be incorporated into the planning/design briefs of all key sites.

## **5.6 Compatibility to Surroundings**

The MLPs would be prepared in consideration of the surroundings to ensure compatibility. Apart from visual analysis, an Air Ventilation Assessment is being conducted to ensure the new developments at key sites 1-4 will not cause adverse impact to air ventilation. The promenade design would also take into consideration the winning design of the future Central Government Complex at Tamar.

## **5.7 Maximized Greenery and Sustainable Design**

Green open spaces are planned as much as possible. Green roofs are adopted and planned in all building developments in Sites 1 to 6 while landscaped decks and terraces would also be provided at Site 3.

## **5.8 Natural Topography**

Undulating lawns and urban mounds along the promenade would be considered as one of the alternatives. The landscape would be designed to look like a natural topography, forming a strong image to the waterfront. The landscaped promenade would provide a series of public anchoring spaces as key destinations and magnets.

## **5.9 Place-Making**

A Ferry Plaza and other feature plazas are planned at the end of the design corridors to act as attractive anchoring spaces and public realms in the waterfront promenade.

## **5.10 Water Elements**

Water features are proposed along the promenade and the Statue Square Corridor. A water feature would also be considered at the re-assembled Queen's Pier to symbolize the original harbour setting. Suggestions to restore a large waterbody around the re-assembled pier however are not feasible due to conflict with the planned underground infrastructure.

## **5.11 Alternative Concepts of Re-assembling QP and Reconstructing old SF Clock Tower**

Two alternative concepts are being prepared and would be incorporated in the MLPs for public discussion, to respond to the two major streams of public concerns.

**6. Next Step**

Various design proposals including the MLPs, refined UDFP, PNP, LSP, etc., will be submitted to the TGUDS at a separate working session.

**Aedas Limited  
Planning Department  
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**Previous Public Views on Planning for the New Central Harbourfront  
before the Commencement of the Study**

**List of Commenters**

1. The then LegCo Panel on Planning, Lands and Works (PLW Panel)
2. Harbourfront Enhancement Committee (HEC)
3. Harbour Business Forum (HBF)
4. The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
(Centre for Environmental Policy & Resource Management and Architectural Projects Unit,  
Department of Architecture)
5. Designing Hong Kong Harbour District (DHKHD)
6. Civic Exchange
7. Central and Western District Council (C&WDC)
8. Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour
9. Hong Kong Policy Research Institute (HKPRI)
10. Action Group on Protection of the Harbour
11. Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA)
12. The Conservancy Association
13. Media Reports