

PRESS RELEASE



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Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour

24 May, 2005

Suspend Oil Street Sale: Honour Commitment on Harbour-front Enhancement

Professionals, academics and citizen groups today asked the Government to temporarily withdraw the Oil Street Government Supplies Depot from the Application for Sale List and revise the planning brief for the site before proceeding with a sale.

Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour (CE@H) today explained that the Planning Brief for the site was developed before 1997 and fails to take into account:

1. The Protection of the Harbour Ordinance;
2. The Vision for the Harbour by the Town Planning Board;
3. The Urban Design Guidelines;
4. The Court of Final Appeal Judgment related to protection of the harbour;
5. The set-up of the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee (HEC);
6. The Harbour Planning Principles developed by the HEC.

The timing further indicates that the development intensity for the site was based on housing targets in the late nineties, but has not been adjusted since.

“There is no more reclamation, so we need to take great care of the last remaining land around the harbour. This is the last window of opportunity for the government to rectify the Oil Street site before it commits itself to any developer,” said Mr Albert Lai, Convenor of CE@H and Chairman of the Conservancy Association.

“The Urban Design Guidelines call for stepped building heights and view corridors, Oil Street does not meet these guidelines. What is worse, the design parameters are outdated, forcing the developers towards a bulky podium style development with an obligation to provide refuse access on the harbour side,” said Paul Zimmerman, a Member of CE@H and Convenor of Designing Hong Kong Harbour District.

CE@H believes it is the fiduciary duty of the Government to take into account the significant changes related to the harbour since 1997. The Planning Brief is an administrative document and can be changed under the existing due plan making process for land use zoning. Alternatively, citizen groups will be forced to submit a rezoning request to the Town Planning Board.

The members of CE@H point out that to create a world class harbour, the last remaining water-front land should be used sensibly for the public to enjoy with generous provision of open space and low intensity developments. Otherwise repeated commitments by the Secretary for Planning, Mr Michael Suen, to “return the harbour to the people” will become an empty promise.

The members of CE@H urge the Government to apply the Harbour Planning Principles, the Urban Design Guidelines, and the Vision for the Harbour expressed by the Town Planning Board, to ALL sites around the harbour before further development by sale or by allocation to Government departments.

Citizen Envisioning @ Harbour (CE@H) is an alliance of 18 professional, academic and citizen organizations and calls for integrated planning and citizen participation in sustainable development of the harbour and harbour-front.

Members of CE@H are:

“LIVE.Architecture” programme, Department of Architecture, Chinese University of Hong Kong; Centre of Urban Planning and Environmental Management, Hong Kong University; Hong Kong People’s Council for Sustainable Development; American Institute of Architects, Hong Kong Chapter; Caritas Community Centre-Caine Road; Caritas Mok Cheung Sui Kun Community Centre; Central & Western Development Concern Group; Division of Building Science and Technology, City University of Hong Kong; Hong Kong Christian Service; Hong Kong Council of Social Service; The Hong Kong Institute of Architects; The Conservancy Association; Urban Design Alliance; The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport; Designing Hong Kong Harbour District; Business Environment Council; & Save Our Shoreline

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