

Press Release

CONCERNED CITIZENS UNVEIL ALTERNATIVE MASTER PLAN FOR CENTRAL HARBOURFRONT AND TAMAR

Plan aims to create a vibrant, living waterfront, befitting a world city

HONG KONG, 3 May 2006 – A group of concerned citizens today unveiled an alternative vision for the Central Harbourfront including Tamar. The plan fully satisfies the Government's specifications and will not cause significant delays in the planning and development of the area.

The parties involved in preparing the plan are Paul Zimmerman, Christine Loh, Markus Shaw and Peter Wong. The group unveiled an initial "concept plan" and stakeholders will be asked for input before a formal proposal will be made to the Government and the Legislative Council.

Paul Zimmerman said the plan encompasses the same gross floor area (GFA) as currently proposed for the Central Government Offices and Legislative Council, as well as for the commercial developments on the Central (Extension) Outline Zoning Plan. It also includes many green open spaces, a Central Wanchai Bypass and it accepts the current reclamation as given.

"We have mixed the land uses, prioritized the ground level, and split the developments and open spaces into smaller projects in order to create an exciting and vibrant environment for residents and visitors alike.

"This will make Hong Kong's Central Harbourfront a world class experience on a par with other iconic city destinations such as Xintiandi in Shanghai, Darling Harbour in Sydney and Pier 49 in San Francisco," he said.

Christine Loh said in order for the area to attract residents and visitors, the design briefs for the Tamar site, including Central Government Offices, Legco buildings and public space, need to be drastically altered.

"The planned buildings are monolithic stumps on top of a podium surrounded by major highways and fronted by a massive empty space. You just cannot approach them on foot, and there is little reason for people to go there.

"Our plan calls for the government buildings to be reconfigured into smaller units with ground level access, to convert a massive sun-blasted square into smaller shaded public spaces, and to ensure access and activities throughout the day and weekends.

"Another key aspect is that instead of a high capacity thoroughfare, P2 is to be an 'Ocean Boulevard' aligned with trees, providing exciting view corridors to the harbour and back into the city, interrupted only by stimulating architecture, and which can be crossed primarily at grade supported with some elevated all-weather walkways.

“To make this a reality, we must stem development, minimize vehicular traffic from the outset, and ensure an early implementation of the MTR Northern Island Line and include a tram shuttle service for short distance transit in the area,” she said.

Markus Shaw said: “The Government is still very far from having made a convincing case for moving its offices to Tamar. It is the responsibility of members of the Legco to represent the community and hold the Government to account on this issue, which involves billions of public money; we urge Legco members to take this responsibility seriously.

“Notwithstanding this, with this concept we show that by doing simple things like reshuffling developments, decreasing plot sizes and reducing ‘P2’, we can create an exciting harbour-front with business opportunities for both large and small companies, many new permanent jobs, as well as many architecture, engineering and construction jobs. The concept is more economically optimal as well as bringing many social and environmental benefits.

“We are trying to create a Central Harbourfront area which future generations will applaud and treasure. It would be an immense tragedy if this opportunity is missed.

“The changes are simple and not difficult to achieve, and would not even involve undue delays, but it does require trust, a different mindset and a ‘can-do’ mentality,” Markus Shaw concluded.

The group outlined a clear process to move forward.

Various legislators, opinion leaders and Government officials have already been consulted and other stakeholders will be seen in the next few weeks. Public comments will be collected at events organized by the Central and Western District Council on May 7 and May 21. A meeting with the Chief Executive’s Office has also been sought.

All views will be incorporated into an updated plan. The group has written to the Chairman of Legco’s Planning, Lands and Works Committee requesting a meeting to present the outcome before the Public Works Subcommittee considers the funding of developments on Tamar.

“For Tamar, we urge Legco to approve funding for the design of Tamar first, and to approve funding for the development after it has seen a detailed master plan and 3-dimensional model for Tamar including the adjoining areas and roads. This is similar to the controls the Town Planning Board has over the new commercial sites.

“For the remainder of the Central (Extension) Outline Zoning Plan including P2, the groundscraper, festival market and the water-front promenade, a review of urban, marine and transport plans is required. Although the Government has promised that the Planning Department will commence a

review in July, we must make sure that this is not limited to the planning briefs of a few selected buildings,” Paul Zimmerman explained.

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