

For immediate release – 31.01.08



Proposal by the World City Committee to Save Peel Street and Graham Street Market from Destruction

On Friday February 1st 2008 the World City Committee will submit an alternative plan for the renewal of the Graham and Peel Street area to the Town Planning Board.

Last year, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) revealed a redevelopment plan for the Graham Street Market area in Central, calling for the complete destruction of the heart of this important historic neighborhood and its replacement with large-scale development, comprising four towers on three podiums. This scheme was approved by the Town Planning Board (TPB).

Since the release of their scheme, in light of public concern, the URA has repeatedly claimed that the market will not be affected. This claim is simply inconsistent with the facts; the table below demonstrates that the URA plan does indeed 'kill' the market, and how the WCC alternative will keep the market:

| | <i>Existing</i> | <i>URA Scheme</i> | <i>WCC Alternative</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Hawker Stands | 32 | 10 | 25 |
| Market Shops | 30 | 0 | 30-35 |
| Storage | 7 | 0 | 5-10 |

¹Subject to allocation of shop space after building renovation. Additional storage space provided at new market loading/unloading area at the corner of Peel and Gage Streets.

The URA Scheme

The current URA H18 scheme completely contradicts policies outlined in the URA mandate to “preserve buildings, sites and structures of historical, cultural or architectural interest”. The URA’s outdated approach is to maximize profit through site amalgamation and blanket redevelopment. This is entirely incompatible with the urban fabric of this low-rise historic area, and with contemporary urban regeneration methods as they are practices around the world, from New York to Singapore. If this scheme is implemented the open-air market, which has been in operation for over 100 years and is still a functioning and vibrant community market, will be destroyed. Hong Kong will also lose one of its most visited tourist destinations.

Key features of the approved URA scheme:

- **Four (4) massive towers on large podium super-blocks.**
- **Destroys the open street market and its heritage.**

- **Replaces existing small businesses with upscale chain shops.**
- **Replaces historic street character with reproduction 'old' facades applied to large retail podiums.**
- **Exceeds practical GFA for the infrastructure of the area, in particular vehicular traffic.**
- **Unrealistic and impractical traffic flow arrangements.**
- **Will overwhelm neighborhood in scale and block light, air flow, and view corridors.**
- **Consolidated site ensures only biggest developers can bid.**

The WCC Alternative Proposal

WCC supports the continued resumption of properties in the project area and the fair compensation to owners and residents. However, our alternative proposal will retain large parts of the Peel Street and Graham Street Market, where existing buildings will be upgraded or redeveloped within the existing building envelope. It promotes the revitalisation of the street market by ensuring the space and services required for a vibrant open-air bazaar, including hawker stalls and shops, storage facilities for hawkers, proper drainage, upgrading of street surfaces, and loading and off-loading areas. Properties will be organically and incrementally upgraded, with larger-scale redevelopment on the outskirts of the Market.

Key features of the WCC scheme:

- **Two smaller towers.**
- **Saves the market, and upgrades infrastructure, including hygiene and storage.**
- **Supports the livelihood of small businesses and hawkers.**
- **Allows the continuation of resumption and compensation for residents.**
- **Keeps the old scale, diversity and character of the neighborhood.**
- **Produces sufficient GFA to fund the resumption and upgrading of infrastructure.**
- **Phased implementation ensures continued vitality of the neighborhood.**
- **Better distribution of GFA.**
- **Better management of traffic flow.**
- **Revitalizes the area through sensitive and harmonious development.**
- **Preserves multiple ownership and promotes diversity of uses and architecture.**

It is hoped that the Town Planning Board, whose mission is “to promote the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community”, will see merit in WCC’s alternate scheme - a sincere effort from concerned community groups to stop the destruction of this historic neighborhood. It is hoped that TPB will request URA to adopt this proposal as the concept for the development of H18, the Graham and Peel Street Market area.

The World City Committee (WCC), a volunteer concern group, was created through the realization that a true "world class city" by definition requires the fine balance between urban redevelopment and preservation of culture. Its members are Hong Kong residents, both local and multi-national.

For further information, high res images or to arrange interviews please contact:
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