

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 **Consensus Building** – The Designing Hong Kong Harbour District initiative has demonstrated that community consensus-building is possible around an issue as complex and controversial as the development of the foreshore of Hong Kong’s Harbour District. The multifaceted and participative research process that Designing Hong Kong Harbour District has embarked on has helped pull together parties from Government, businesses and civil society to engage in constructive dialogue and to reinforce the need to implement a vision of a world class harbour. As two stakeholders summed up:

*“We were pleased to participate in the Designing Hong Kong Harbour District workshop. Specifically, we consider that the workshop demonstrated very clearly the benefit and value of Government representatives, business, professionals and the wider community coming together and working together to build a wide consensus on the Hong Kong Harbour District and to develop positive plans for a way forward. The workshop also demonstrated an excellent mechanism for consensus building that could have wider application to similar issues of genuine concern.”*

*“As a leading local and regional company, we support the need for a sustainable decision-making and planning framework to promote and develop Hong Kong's unique Harbour front. The Harbour must be fully accessible for leisure, recreation and tourism purposes, and this in turn requires strong decision making in terms of future transport, infrastructure and development planning. We are pleased to be a key stakeholder within this consensus building initiative and fully endorse the report's conclusions and recommendations.”*

- 5.2 **Faith in the Future** – The study comes at a time when Hong Kong itself is going through a dynamic process of political reform and debate on governance. Much of the discussions regarding the Harbour and surrounding areas are symbolic of other planning issues affecting Hong Kong’s community. Widespread concern remains as to the legitimacy of the Government’s decisions for further reclamation and the purpose and benefits of such actions, as well as the ability of the existing infrastructure planning mechanisms to deliver on the promise of a world-class Harbour District. Therefore, the process with which the Government proceeds with enhancing the Harbour District and how well this reflects community aspirations, can be an important step in developing a positive political climate and increasing faith in the future.
- 5.3 **The Protection of the Harbour Ordinance** – The Ordinance safeguards the Harbour and has served to kindle controversy, but does not provided

guidance for enhancing Hong Kong's key assets – the Harbour, its stunning views and foreshore areas. Current interpretation rests on what 'overriding need' can be construed as. The danger therein lies that this wording can be used to justify one 'thing' but not necessarily the 'things' which best serve those who wish the Harbour to be a place of enjoyment and beauty for all. Hong Kong will not have a truly world class harbour if adversarial government and community relations are allowed to persist in land-use planning, reclamation, transport infrastructure, and the development and management of public facilities.

- 5.4 **Sustainable Development** – Fundamental to the success of a world-class Harbour is the embedding of sustainable principles in the planning process and the implementation of the public's aspirations. A sustainable planning and development process should be Hong Kong's ultimate goal, and one that befits a world city of today and for the future.
- 5.5 **An Invaluable Asset** – With the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance in place and the water quality improving, the key issue is no longer the Harbour but the foreshore, i.e., the land immediately connected with the Harbour. Hong Kong will need to build capacity to handle an estimated 70 million tourist trips and 9.2 million residents by 2030. Hong Kong is destined to be Asia's world city for global financial and business services that, together with tourism, form the mainstay of our economy. The Harbour District, the Victoria Harbour, the foreshore and adjacent districts, defines our global brand image and is an invaluable asset in building this capacity.
- 5.6 **Aspirations** – Our research indicates overwhelmingly that people want a vibrant and accessible foreshore in the Harbour District. For a number of reasons, Hong Kong has only partially achieved this and there is much more that has to be done to truly effect this change. The time has arrived for the aspirations of Hong Kong's communities to be realised: early and on-going public participation in any plans for the Harbour District is key; a review of transport and land-use policies, strategies and planning mechanisms is long overdue; and a single authority needs to be put in charge of the Harbour District with the mandate to deliver a Harbour and foreshore that people want.
- 5.7 **Space** – Without reclamation, clear choices must be made between property development, surface/elevated transport infrastructure, and public open space for the remaining land in the foreshore.
- 5.8 **Physical Access** – A 'pedestrian first' strategy is required with a goal of ensuring ample, convenient and liberal access to the foreshore areas.
- 5.9 **Visual Access** – Open corridors with visual access to our Harbour and the spectacular views of the surrounding city are needed from as many points as possible. Where possible structures can be removed to open up views from tourism districts.

- 5.10 **Vibrancy** – More than enhancement or beautification with trees and benches, vibrancy is about the availability of entertainment, retail, food & beverage, hospitality, accommodation, arts, culture, sports, in addition to open space such as parks and promenades.
- 5.11 **Affordable vibrancy** – Tourists will follow the residents (note Stanley, Temple Street, and Sai Kung Waterfront). Care must be given to ensure that development of the foreshore does not preclude free or affordable ‘vibrancy’.
- 5.12 **Active Harbour** – Public marinas, boat clubs, shelters, moorings, piers, launches, boat storage facilities, fishing piers and boardwalks are required east of the Star Ferry along both sides of the Harbour, to promote the development of water sports and other activities.
- 5.13 **Footprint of Roads** – Given the limited space available and the domination by transport infrastructure, it is critical and logical to reduce the space used (‘footprint’ and ‘waterprint’) for surface and elevated roads in the foreshore.
- 5.14 **Roads only Scenario** – Under the current interpretation of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance it appears that Government is adopting a narrow perception that only reclamation for transport infrastructure can pass the ‘overriding public needs test’. Combined with a policy of the ‘highest engineering standards at the lowest cost’ and building infrastructure for overcapacity, the ultimate outcome is a sterile waterfront, a harbour without activity, and a foreshore consisting of only transport infrastructure. A clear policy is required that takes a wider view of “public need” to steer Hong Kong away from this scenario. Enjoyment of a high quality pedestrian waterfront by the public should be able to meet the “over-riding public need” test as easily, or easier, than the need to reclaim for roads and cars.
- 5.15 **Transport Modes** – Current financing and ownership models for the different modes of transport favor vehicular traffic. A sustainable development of the foreshore, and the evaluation of all reasonable alternatives, must therefore specifically include a review of the modal split and related policies.
- 5.16 **Process and Independent Experts** – A clear process needs to be agreed for the testing of all reasonable alternatives, including the appointment of Independent Experts. This will ensure that reviews are truly independent rather than a promotion of existing plans or prevailing views of certain Departments.
- 5.17 **Public Participation** – Community wide participation, including the business community, is required for idea formulation, planning and implementation to ensure that there is consensus on mature solutions, and that the potential for conflict is reduced. For such consultations to be genuine, early involvement (in both practical and psychological terms),

including the setting of agendas and briefs, is required. Continuous public participation is needed during the implementation stages.

- 5.18 **Institutions** – It is strongly recommended that a statutory body is responsible for foreshore development such as a ‘Harbour District Authority’ with a board composed of different stakeholders, full control over areas of land, power over all facilities and infrastructure within its domain, and with clear guidelines on consultation, participation, adjudication, mediation and appeals. This body must report into a single authority at the highest level of Government responsible for land-use and transport planning.
- 5.19 **Town Planning Ordinance** – Issues identified in the study can be taken into account in the current review of the Town Planning Ordinance.
- 5.20 **Integrated Planning** – A ‘visual’ strategic planning process is recommended defining a social, economic and environmental framework for the Harbour District as a whole, which serves as a brief for planning individual areas. Such planning should cover adjacent districts and not just the foreshore.
- 5.21 **Leisure harbour** – By declaring a long-term vision for the Harbour west of the Star Ferry as the working harbour, and east as the leisure harbour (traffic limited to Cruise liners, ferries, military vessels, sailing and fishing craft and the occasional barge when needed) all different Departments, together with the various community groups, can work towards a common goal.

5.22 In addition, a wide variety of recommendations were collected during the research process. Examples listed below are some of these suggestions.

**Central and Wanchai** – By moving the extension of the Convention and Exhibition Centre, and the new Government Offices to North Point/Quarry Bay, Kai Tak or elsewhere, the planned 13 lanes of road around the Grand Hyatt and the 6-lane P2 can be reduced significantly.

**North Point/Quarry Bay** – We recommend to commencing a feasibility study into submerging the Eastern Island Corridor. With the northern edge of the current road as the new harbour-front, significant land values can be created to fund this conversion.

**Taikooshing** – A wide underpass is recommended under the highway to connect with the Quarry Bay park, and the development of a public boat club and related facilities in the park.

**Kwun Tong** – Submerging the Kwun Tong Bypass can create a better connection between Kwun Tong and Kai Tak, giving living, working and leisure in Southeast Kowloon the full benefit of the harbour.

**Tsimshatsui** – Redeveloping the restaurant facilities of the Cultural Centre and ultimately consider removing the space and arts museum to create a visual corridor from Nathan Road.