



香港建築師學會  
The Hong Kong Institute of Architects

20 November 2010

By Post

Our Ref. : BLA/WKCDPE2/AK/cw/1011

Hon Henry TANG Ying-yen, GBM, GBS, JP  
Chairman  
Board of the WKCD Authority  
7/F, 98 Caroline Hill Road  
Causeway Bay  
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Tang

**Stage 2 Public Engagement Exercise for  
West Kowloon Cultural District Development**

We noted the launch of the stage 2 public engagement exercise for West Kowloon Cultural District Development seeking public views on the Conceptual Plans for the WKCD on 20 August 2010.

The Institute is pleased to submit our written views to respond to the stage 2 public engagement exercise. Please find enclosed the paper for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Anna Kwong MH FHKIA  
President

c.c. Prof Hon Patrick Lau, Member, Legislative Council (Architectural, Surveying and Planning)



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**THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
VIEWS AND VISION OF WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT  
Stage 2 Public Engagement Exercise Celebrate West Kowloon : Create a Vision Together**

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (The Institute) has been a proponent of good quality architecture and urban designs in Hong Kong. We highly support the development of WKCD which would have profound benefit to Hong Kong.

The Institute welcomes with great appreciation of the Government's respect to public opinions and various measures to enhance transparency and obtaining support from the community in preparation of Conceptual Plan and Development Plan of the WKCD Project. It has always been the local architects' common wish that people in Hong Kong can appreciate more the value of quality urban design featuring organic integration with art and culture.

The Institute was faithful and consistent in advising the Government in the past with regard to overall planning and development strategy of the WKCD Project. However, We would hold an impartial position to the three concept plans publicized at the Stage 2 Public Engagement Exercise. Instead, we would like to reiterate below some general observations and suggestions for your consideration:-

**1. Long Term Art Policy**

The ultimate success of WKCD would depend largely on the software. The hardware could only provide a desirable environment to support the activities and operation. The Institute believes that for the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities to be genuinely meaningful and socially functional, their contents are much more important than the physical being of the facilities. Overall well being of the society vests with a genuine and effective long term Art Policy without which the so called world-class arts and cultural facilities would turn to be an empty shell. Art and Culture take years and even decade to be developed, collected, nourished and is a self-cultivating process.

**2. Incremental Approach – Strategic Phasing Planning for the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities**

From urban planning point of view, our city, like anywhere else in the world, is an organic growing conglomerate responsive to dynamic social needs that will vary with life style at different times.

As such, The Institute sees the need to have a thoughtful and practicable Phasing Plan allowing mapping out the cultural facilities stage by stage to catch up the prevailing social needs. It is, as a matter of fact, more desirable and appropriate to design and carry out constructive and focused consultations with the public and the stakeholders in an orderly and step-by-step manner, back up by well founded research at different stages according to an overall Development Plan.

Therefore, what is needed to be considered, and to be confirmed now, is not just the Master Layout Plan but a 'Phasing Plan Strategy' by way of an Incremental Approach. We acknowledge



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the needs of creating a critical mass at Stage One to make the whole district vibrant and energetic. Yet the proposed Two Stages Development with 9 major exhibition/performing venues (from page 11 of the questionnaire published by the WKCDA) to be completed within a short period of 5 years time (2015 – 2020) may require further scrutinization.

### 3. Greater WKCD and Connectivity with the Existing Urban Fabric

The Concept Plan Consultants are restricted to work within the site boundary of WKCD. WKCDA's vision shall be more comprehensive to go beyond the physical boundary of WKCD to examine the challenges and opportunities of the surrounding context.

#### i. **A Walkable City**

The success in urban design hinges on how refined we weave the WKCD with the existing urban fabric of the unique Mongkok-Jordon District, the established shopping and cultural zone at Tsim Sha Tsui, and the land parcels and water front beyond the WKCD boundary. The "Greater WKCD" concept underlines the prime importance of a visionary 3-dimensional urban design with good command and strategy on pedestrian and vehicular accessibility and connectivity, and with the insight of extending the master planning of WKCD beyond the physical boundary of the cultural district.

The proposed pedestrian networks indicated in all three concept plans do not seem to be adequate for facilitating the following:-

- Integration of the whole Mongkok- Yau Ma Tei- Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) District with the WKCD to make a walkable city.
- Connectivity, from both physical and planning point of view, among WKCD and existing cultural facilities at TST and Central to weave a cultural matrix for the whole HK city.

The Pedestrian connections through subway and footbridge put the WKCD at a great risk of being isolated from the Kowloon City, restricting its future growth and expansion. Whilst we understand that the pedestrian connectivity has been severely restrained by the planned highways system around the site on which the concept plan consultants may not have the authority to alter, it would be worthwhile to critically review with the government authorities concerned on the technical feasibility of modifying the highway system to facilitate better pedestrian connectivity to the district.

#### ii. **To Reclaim the waterfront**

The unique location of the WKCD along the waterfront has offered good opportunity of expansion. With appropriate reclamation, other parts of the Kowloon Peninsula, from Kai Tak to Sham Shui Po could be connected alongside the harbour as a highly accessible piece of land for all to enjoy.

#### iii. **Work Closely with Other Government Departments**

Various government departments and the MTRC have presented to us the transport systems being planned for the West Kowloon District. Before further implementation of the WKCD project,



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it is of vital importance that the WKCDA should collaborate with them to optimize phasing of the WKCD, to ensure that all the essential infrastructures are provided to connect the cultural facilities built for access of the public.

#### **4. Separate Design and Construction Contracts for Iconic Facilities**

WKCDA has the flexibility to decide on the procurement approach for the arts and cultural facilities in WKCD. International and local design competitions should be launched to obtain the best designed iconic facilities. Construction for these facilities should be pursued under separate design and construction contracts. According to the Financial Advisor, even if the design and construction of the facilities are procured in two independent contracts, there will not be significant difference in the cost of works.

#### **5. Local Professionals and Art/Cultural Expertise should be involved as much as possible**

Members of the Institute have been exporting our professional expertise and resources to major Asian and Far East cities. WKCD should be taken as a show case to demonstrate the competence and professional expertise of the local professions, to serve as a platform for local architects, other related professions and art/cultural sectors and to widen their exposure and experience. The Institute strongly believes that the Government owes a duty to the local community that such a rare opportunity of the WKCD is not solely taken up by non-local interests under the pretense of international prestige.

The Institute and its members are obliged and well prepared to offer more assistance and advice on the government's execution of the initiatives especially on the organization of design competitions, which is considered of prime importance to the success of the WKCD. Please feel free to contact HKIA for anything we can be of assistance.

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November 2010