

Take stock of the market



Tuesday, November 1, 2005

Contradictions on hub

The modification of the West Kowloon Cultural District project, announced by the chief secretary, reveals that many of the government's conclusions appear contradictory ("Arts hub carved up to satisfy the public, says Hui", October 8).

First, look at the single-development approach. While the government claims that the majority wants to move ahead with one of the three development proposals, it also acknowledges that the majority wants to scrap the single-development approach.

These results are in conflict. It is untenable to advocate one of the three proposals, and yet strongly disagree with the overall development model. When asked which of the three proposals should go forward, if any, the results from submitted comment cards showed that about 10 per cent selected none, while the phone survey results showed that almost 85 per cent selected none, or said "don't know" or "no comment". This inconsistency hardly lends clear support for moving ahead.

The more insightful result is the public's negative reaction to the single-developer model. This indicates that given a choice, it would prefer none of the three proposals, but rather an alternative not based on a speculative commercial development model.

Questions regarding the canopy and interpretations of the results are consistently flawed. The survey questionnaires were written in such a way as to lead towards a positive response to the canopy.

For example, consider this question: "Covering over 50 per cent of the area of WKCD, the canopy provides not only the landmark but also a more comfortable environment underneath. Would you support having the canopy if the cost is within 20 per cent of the total project cost?" The results would be different if the question were phrased: "The canopy creates an eyesore for the harbour and also a public health hazard underneath. Would you support having the canopy?" (See also "Canopy poll misleading", October 26). Most important, the survey revealed that 80 per cent of respondents answered either "don't know" or "no comment" when asked which of the three canopy designs were preferred.

If the government truly wants to take this project forward on the basis of public opinion, then the consultation and surveys are, most

unfortunately, unreliable. On this basis, Hong Kong Alternatives for a Culturally Integrated Green Park offers the best and viable alternative - a legacy for all people, rich and poor alike, locals and international visitors, for generation after generation.

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