

South China Morning Post
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Monday, February 6, 2006

West Kowloon change

It was heartening to read "Government should build cultural park" (February 2). Following our letter of January 19, results of the independent survey by the University of Hong Kong - commissioned by Hong Kong Alternatives and Designing Hong Kong Harbour District, as a public service - were revealed in a press conference on January 23.

The results were stunning. They showed that Hong Kong's silent majority has rejected the government's and three consortiums' plans for the West Kowloon Cultural District. About 59 per cent of respondents did not know that the site was originally zoned for a cultural green park. Once told this, over 80 per cent wanted to revert to this plan for developing the site into a green park with cultural facilities.

When asked about the two options for developing the site - "cultural plus leisure facilities, including a large green park" versus "mixed cultural facilities plus residential and commercial development" - over 80 per cent of respondents preferred the former and only 11 per cent opted for the latter. About 42 per cent of respondents endorsed the idea of a grand canopy as a landmark, but when told of its height and coverage, the support dwindled to only 24 per cent. Fifty-six per cent opposed having a canopy.

And when told the true economic cost of building the canopy, more than \$40 billion, plus \$10 million in annual maintenance, the support shrank drastically to 12 per cent, while the opposition rose to 77 per cent.

Last October, the government said that in its survey about 50 per cent indicated support for the canopy.

That figure apparently did not provide respondents with the complete picture. Such as: is Hong Kong Asia's "world city"? Over 60 per cent said that Hong Kong is still far behind New York, London, Sydney and Vancouver. About 90 per cent resoundingly supported the development of a more environmentally friendly, green, urban centre. The most important finding was that most respondents do not want the government to sell this very valuable parcel of harbourfront land to developers. Instead, they want the government itself to develop a culturally enriched green park.

TONY CHAN, W. H. CHIK, JOSEPH LEE, PETER LEE, KAREN

LOH and KEN WAI for Hong Kong Alternatives



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