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Don't fill precious open space with more concrete and tiles

■ Winston Chu Ka-sun's insight article "A city losing its lungs" (December 5) provides a blunt and timely assessment of public ill-health in Hong Kong. His appeal for more open space and green parkland echoes and reinforces Hong Kong Alternatives' continuing appeal to the government to turn the site of the proposed West Kowloon Cultural District into a cultural green park.

Christine Loh Kung-wai succinctly points out in "The real value of land" (December 7) that the government's land sales system "has passed its 'sell-by date'". Rather than pursuing a policy of business as usual, she writes, the government should provide more land for environmentally friendly uses, green space and waterfront promenades.

We wholeheartedly agree. As the most densely populated urban centre in the world since the early 1950s, Hong Kong also has the least parkland per person compared with other world cities. Our children grow up trapped indoors 80 per cent of their young lives – in cramped flats, high-rise buildings and sheltered indoor environments.

The people of this city are confronted with many serious public health issues related to air pollution and environmental stress – including asthma and other respiratory diseases, obesity, hypertension and related disorders. A cultural green park in West Kowloon would provide refreshing relief and foster community well-being.

This week, in response to overwhelming public opinion, Financial Secretary Henry Tang Ying-yen shelved the proposed goods and services tax ("Tang pulls plug on GST, saying timing is not right", December 6). Earlier this year, an independent survey found more than 80 per cent of the public favours turning the West Kowloon Cultural District into a cultural green park, with no commercial and residential development. As with the case of a GST, shouldn't the government abide by the wishes of the public at West Kowloon?

It is discouraging to hear the consistent official response that the West Kowloon site must be a mixed commercial and residential development sprinkled with "cultural facilities". Can Hong Kong afford not to follow the mainland's national greening policy?

In "Hong Kong tops survey of world's richest" (December 7), the *South China Morning Post* reports that Hong Kong people have the highest individual net worth in the world. Surely, considering this, building a world-class cultural green park is not an extravagance. Come on, Hong Kong, give our hardworking people a break.

W. H. CHIK, PETER LEE, JOSEPH LEE, KAREN LOH and KEN WAI,
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