

Group proposes 'creativity village'

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An artist's impression of what West Kowloon will be like if the group's plan for moving walkways are adopted. Reducing residential development by one-third would allow more green space and the use of bicycles and moving walkways as the main modes of transport in the West Kowloon cultural district, according to a concern group.

A study released yesterday by the Professional Commons says all the government has to do is to calculate projected land sales a little less conservatively.

The group, describing its vision of an ideal arts hub as "West Kowloon for the people," proposed scaling back the 80,000-square-meter private residential development by a third by scrapping cottage-style houses, and moving the fire service complex outside the site.

The resulting savings in gross floor area could be turned into a 25,000 sqm "creativity village" with more green space.

The group described as too conservative the government's calculation of HK\$18.9 billion land sales for residential blocks, office towers and hotels, which is expected to complement an initial HK\$19.2 billion endowment from the Legislative Council.

The group's chairman, Albert Lai Kwong-tak, said the new estimation allows an additional HK\$1.5 billion revenue leeway to set up a district cultural development trust.

The trust can support long-term funding for district-based performing troupes or artists in areas lacking arts and cultural facilities and connecting them with artists stationed in the West Kowloon hub.

The group criticized the government's plan to balance the books on projected deficits from the arts and cultural facilities, leaving residential development untouched while scaling down core arts facilities and office space for arts groups.

Professional Commons also proposed a low-carbon development strategy that features moving walkways and trails connecting the east to west ends of the site. Pedestrians can stroll through the complex and stop at seven open locations for cultural performances.

Architect Michael Kwok Wing- chun, who took part in the study, said walkways were a better solution to enable people to enjoy the greenery and that performances inside the park setting than the light rail proposed by the government, which only take passengers from one stop to the next.

The proposal calls for the 15 proposed arts and cultural facilities to be opened in three phases, with four all- purpose theaters, public squares and street performance space to come into use in 2012, with the remainder to be finished by 2016.

The group also suggested copying the ``Velo Libre" model of low-cost bicycle rentals in Paris.

Designated daytime pedestrian zones, district cooling systems and energy-efficient buildings are some of the modern planning suggestions given by the group.

The study has been handed over to the Home Affairs Bureau.

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