

Government Hill Compendium



by
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Introduction

Members of the Government Hill Concern Group, professionals and concerned individuals have conducted in-depth research and studies on the history, architecture, planning, and environment of the Central Government Offices and the Government Hill. The results are included in this compendium which aims to

1. Provide professional appraisals on the heritage, architecture, planning and environmental aspects relating to the Central Government Offices
2. Assess the possible damage to this heritage site by the government proposed redevelopment scheme
3. Establish the planning and architectural merits of conserving the CGO site and the need for setting up a special protected area
4. Enrich public information about the historical value and significance of the CGO and Government Hill as a whole
5. Map out the public aspirations to conserve Government Hill
6. Propose possible new uses for CGO West Wing

Historical records reveal that the name “Government Hill” first appeared in 1841 – it was a site with clear physical boundary and the name has been in use ever since. Today, the entire Government Hill area is Hong Kong's best preserved and possibly the last remaining heritage precinct.

At the time the present Central Government Offices were opened in the 1950s, they were prominent architecture which reflected the building style and technology of their times.

The site of the Central Government Offices has immense social significance. It is associated to the people of Hong Kong in diverse ways and it weighs heavily on our collective memory.

In 2006, at the time when the administration urged for public support for its relocation plan to Tamar, it made a public statement that Government Hill would be conserved. Clearly, members of the public have a reasonable expectation for a decent conservation of this heritage site, and this sentiment was reflected in a 2006 report, a recent public opinion survey and the submissions by NGOs to the government. It was commonly regarded that this site should not be sold to a developer and should be kept for public use.

In a detailed appraisal of the architectural value of the West Wing by professionals with deep understanding of modern architecture, we learn that this modest office building is in fact a representative of a strong Hong Kong design tradition.

The government's redevelopment scheme will wipe out a significant half of the site – the proposition by heritage consultants for a special protected area can never be realized if a large chunk of Government Hill is sold to a private developer.

By maintaining the site in the public domain, the spacious West Wing can in fact accommodate a variety of public uses – many good ideas had been collected from a public design charette. It is vitally important that members of the public be further engaged in formulating a plan for making the best and appropriate use of West Wing.

The government's proposed large-scale redevelopment scheme will have serious environmental impact on Central District, in terms of waste creation, wiping out existing greenery, a worsening heat island and canyon effect, as well as causing serious traffic problems for the area. Environmentally speaking, conserving West Wing will be a good move for sustainable development of Central District.

Appropriate, sensitive reuse of the site that respects its role in serving the Hong Kong people and honoring the historic nature of the site is key recommendation of the Government's consultant.

The compendium is divided into 4 sections:

1. Professional Appraisals
2. History & Cultural Significance
3. Government's Pledge and Public Aspirations
4. Appropriate, sensitive re-use of the West Wing