

Appropriate Re-use of the West Wing

Examples of appropriate, sensitive re-use

By Government Hill Concern Group

From “Government Hill” to “Governance Hill”?
An alternative proposal regarding the development of the Government Hill

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The following are synthesized notes made after a public engagement workshop on the future development of “Government Hill” held on 11 December 2010, organized by “The Professional Commons” and the “Central and Western Concern Group”

Options for the Future Use of West Wing, CGO

- The West Wing should primarily be a site to nurture governance capacity. Perhaps, a brainstorming session among different organizations could be organized to deliberate on an appropriate mode of governance of the building.
- Rules and regulations shall be developed surrounding:
 - ☐ Who should be governing the place and for how long?
 - ☐ Who is entitled to establish office? For how long?
 - ☐ What activities are allowed, etc.
 - ☐ Barriers gating the CGO should be removed.
- NGOs shall be invited, especially those to do with international and local civic engagement/civil rights, or social enterprises or corporate social responsibility units, to set up offices in the current building of West Wing, CGO.
- To respect the heritage and historic mission of the site, the function of offices located in West Wing should preferably be related to the nurturing of governance capacity in Hong Kong.
- West Wing can also be used to provide a venue for public hearing and function rooms for NGOs.
- West Wing can provide viewing facilities for the public to review archived public records.
- Students could also learn about the craft of governance in the various venues, through the organizations of exhibits and workshops from different organizations.
- Activities held in West Wing should involve public participation and generate synergy among the operations of the different organizations having offices there. A balanced representation of different kinds of NGOs should be maintained.
- Necessary works should be conducted to lower the carbon footprint of all the CGO buildings.

Social Enterprise in the West Wing

Here is a commercial example one example of a use that is "appropriate in terms of significance" which also contributes greatly to the development of Hong Kong and is commercially viable.

A Hub for Social Enterprises.

Social enterprises are businesses trading for social and environmental purposes. They need office space, but are able to be flexible and do not need permanent space, especially at the start-up phase. Working out of the same Hub will allow social enterprises to network with each other and learn by sharing similar problems and solutions. The business model of The Hub has already proven to be very successful in 12 global cities across four continents as "places for people who change things."

A site in Central is critical to the success of The Hub by providing space near professionals, like bankers, consultants, lawyers and accountants, who can then easily volunteer their time after work to mentor and advise aspiring social entrepreneurs, who will in turn create more job opportunities for Hong Kong people through social enterprises. Investors in social enterprises include high net worth individuals, family offices, fund managers, financial institutions and public companies and the majority of them are located in Central as well. A site in Central will therefore facilitate dialogue and networking opportunities for these investors to meet with social enterprises and social entrepreneurs.

Using part of the West Wing in this way will contribute greatly to the development of Hong Kong, specifically creating jobs while at the same time addressing social and environmental needs of the community.

Conclusions

Our recommendation, which are also those of the Government's consultants are:

1. The entire site of the Central Government Office has extraordinary heritage value and is, perhaps, the last such historic site left in Hong Kong.
2. As such, the entire site should be zoned as an Historic Area and properly protected from insensitive, inappropriate use and re-development.
3. An exhaustive study of all appropriate, sensitive re-uses of the West Wing should be considered before any other options are considered.
4. Strictly commercial use of any part of the site is inappropriate.
5. If, and only if, there are financial pressures, and no other sensitive, appropriate re-use of the West Wing is found after exhaustive study, could redevelopment even be considered.
6. Since there is no financial pressure - there is no reason to redevelop any part of the site at present.
7. The most appropriate use of the site is to continue to use it for Government Offices.
8. If Government chooses not to use the West Wing as offices, an exhaustive study into the re-use of the West Wing site should be conducted.