

**Statement by Mr Donald Tsang,  
Chief Secretary for Administration,  
at a Press Conference held at 2:30 pm  
on 5 September 2003**

*announcing the*  
**Invitation For Proposals for development of the  
West Kowloon Cultural District, Hong Kong**

Today, I am happy to announce that the Government is inviting proposals from the private sector to develop our very own cultural icon – that is, the West Kowloon Cultural District. We already have an exciting, world-class concept for the site and now we are going to turn that vision into a reality.

2. It is all part of our positioning as Asia's world city. We want Hong Kong to be the most vibrant hub for culture, arts and entertainment in the region. When completed, state-of-the-art facilities will provide residents and visitors with a wide range of cultural and leisure pursuits. Our local artists will also have a creative hive in which to further develop their talent.

3. The magnificent, flowing canopy sheltering the development area will become a new Hong Kong icon. Cultural and commercial facilities on the site will not only draw more tourists to Hong Kong, it will also help us attract more world-renowned performers and add to our attraction as the most cosmopolitan and dynamic international business centre in Asia.

4. We expect the project to bring substantial, long-term economic benefits and, in the short term, provide about 6,000 job opportunities.

5. In keeping with our philosophy of 'small government', we are going to invite the private sector to finance and construct this project. This is the first time we have invited the private sector to build and operate major arts and cultural facilities. We believe that the private sector will be able to run these facilities more cost effectively, and will also enjoy greater flexibility to finance and develop them. We are confident that the private sector will be interested in the project if it is offered as a commercial package that provides enough flexibility to produce a workable scheme.

6. You can see from the picture behind me what we have in mind. This shows the 'Government's baseline' for the site. The future development envisages : –

- performance venues, museums and some residential development in a cultural headland at the western end of the site
- a multi-level complex of entertainment and retail facilities in the middle of the site
- a commercial gateway at Canton Road with high rise developments

- extensive open space for public use comprising a podium park, landscaped terraces and a waterfront promenade
- an automated people mover running from one end of the site to the other; and
- a spectacular canopy.

7. The 'Government's baseline' is intended as a starting point for proponents. But, these parameters are not fixed. Proponents may propose a higher development density or a different mix if they provide acceptable justification and do not compromise the character of our baseline scheme. This provides proponents with flexibility in the design of the main revenue-producing parts of the project, while the canopy limits the intensity of development that can be proposed.

8. I must stress that, while property development is essential to the project's viability, we will not allow the cultural facilities to play second fiddle. There are certain mandatory requirements that must be complied with. Apart from the canopy, these include the provision of the following core arts and cultural facilities –

- a complex of three theatres with seating capacities of at least 2,000, 800 and 400 seats
- a performance venue with a seating capacity of at least 10,000 seats
- a museum cluster comprising four museums of differing themes with total net operating floor area of at least 75,000 square metres
- an art exhibition centre with net operating floor area of at least 10,000 square metres
- a water amphitheatre and at least four piazza areas.

9. We are particularly keen that these core facilities should be architecturally distinguished. We will monitor their operation to ensure that they maintain the highest standard. Proponents may of course also propose additional arts and cultural facilities.

10. Development proposals have to cover the planning, design, financing, construction, operation, maintenance, management, marketing and promotion of the new district. The deadline for proposals is 19 March 2004.

11. We will assess the proposals in accordance with the criteria set out in the invitation document. There will be a process of short-listing and negotiation before selection of the successful proponent by the Chief Executive in Council.

12. We envisage entering into a provisional agreement, and subsequently a project agreement, with the successful proponent, on the basis of arrangements that will include a 50-year land grant.

13. We expect construction to start by April 2006 and that the theatre complex,

the water amphitheatre and the piazzas should come into operation by early 2010, with the performance venue and art exhibition centre by end 2010 and the museum cluster by end 2012. Generally, the phasing of the other parts of the development will be left to the developer.

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