

The Placemaking Waterfront Workshop, Hong Kong

May 22nd 2006



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What Makes a Great Place?

PPS PROJECT for PUBLIC SPACES

Place Game

Place Performance Evaluation
A Tool for Initiating the Placemaking Process

PPS is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public places that build communities. We provide technical assistance, education, and research through programs in parks, plazas and central squares, buildings and civic architecture, transportation and public markets. Since our founding in 1975, we have worked in over 1,000 communities in the United States and around the world, helping people to grow their public spaces into vital community places.

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1. Introduction: The Power of Ten

“We at PPS are reminded that creating great public spaces is one of the best ways to engage people in shaping the environment around them. In other words, Placemaking creates meaningful connections between people and their surroundings”

Fred Kent, President, Project for Public Spaces¹

The May 22nd 2006 Waterfront ‘Placemaking’ workshop in Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon was an important experience that showed Hong Kong delegates how to effectively evaluate and brainstorm to create great waterfront areas.

Over 70 participants including, public officials, design professionals, members of civic and cultural institutions, and representatives of private sector interests gathered in the Marco Polo Hotel in Tsim Sha Tsui to create a vision for the Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry Bus Terminus.

The guiding principle behind this workshop was that any great public place has to have ten destinations – that is, ten reasons to be there – and ten ways to get to it – through ten linkages, whether they be to transit stations, jogging paths, water taxis, or across state highways.

The goals of the seminar were to:

- Provide participants with a general overview of the idea of Placemaking and its benefits, and introduce the concept of using public spaces as the infrastructure for developing, or redeveloping an area.
- Train professionals to see their projects in a different light and also to work more effectively with communities.
- Train members of citizen committees who want to improve the spaces in their projects and/or neighborhoods to use the Placemaking process.
- Provide participants with a sense of the value of place, how places operate, and the ability to observe and evaluate what kind of changes can be made to improve a place.

¹ Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is an internationally-recognized nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public places that build communities. At any given time, PPS is active in around 40 communities all over the world.



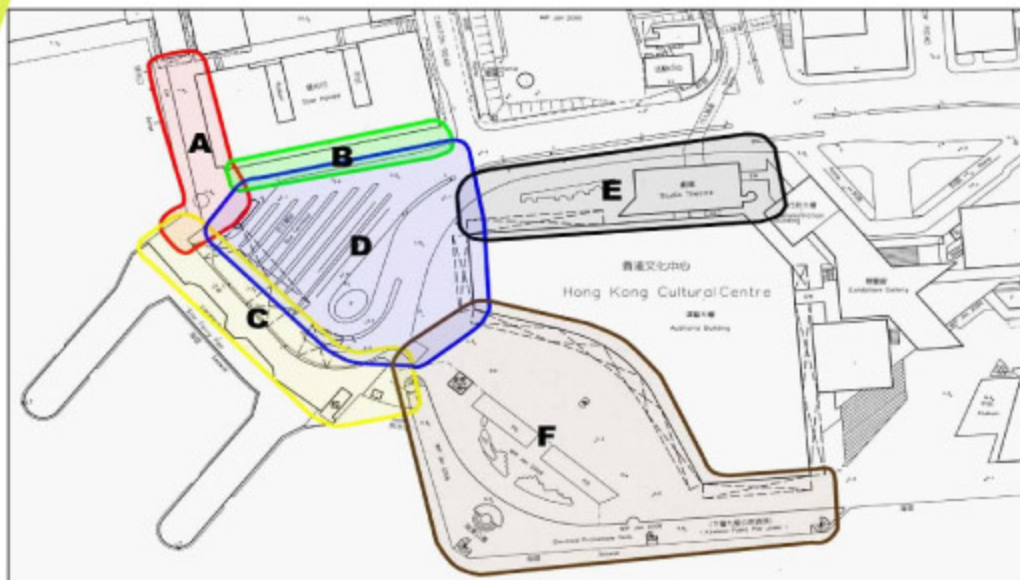
All participants were trained to look at public spaces and their own projects through the eyes of the user and the community, and develop a process that can result in livelier, successful public spaces such as those found in Sydney, Australia, Barcelona, Spain, Paris, France and Boston.

2. The Workshop Process

The workshop began with a presentation by Mr. Fred Kent, Founder and President of Projects for Public Spaces¹, Inc. explaining the work of PPS, the ingredients of what makes a good public space and an overview of what makes a great urban space.

Following Fred Kent's presentation the workshop participants were divided into groups, with each group being allocated one of the six sites within the Placemaking study area. The six sites included:

- The approach to Harbour City
- The approach from the museum cluster along side the Cultural Centre
- The terminal to the famous Star Ferry
- The ground level interface of Star House
- The bus terminus
- The existing piazza in front of the Cultural Center



In addition, each group recorded positive and negative aspects, short-term improvements, long-term solutions, potential funding sources to pay for these improvements, and local partnering agencies that could help implement proposed improvements. Workshop participants also engaged in interviews with people who were using the sites at the time, and brainstormed ideas for the kinds of things they would like to be able to do at the site, how they would get there, the kind of services that would need to be provided, the kind of image they thought the place should have and the kinds of uses they'd like to see added were the site to be redeveloped. Finally the six groups reported their observations and recommendations to the assembled participants.

3. Site Context: Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon

Located at the southern most tip of the Kowloon peninsular, Tsim Sha Tsui is one of the key destinations in Hong Kong for tourists and locals alike. The Star Ferry terminal has been a Hong Kong landmark since 1888 and the current site is part of the 1913 reclamation which took place to accommodate the Kowloon Station, the southern terminus of the Kowloon- Canton Railway. Today this area includes many attractions such as the Star Ferry, the railway station clock tower, the cultural centre piazza, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and the beginning of the Kowloon waterfront promenade. There are a number of public piers which are used by private junks, various cruise operators, including an up-market cruise aboard a replica of a traditional Hong Kong junk replica.

The main feature of the site is the Star Ferry, which brings the majority of the visitors to this area. The Star Ferry is a historical icon as well as a popular mode of transport connecting the two sides of the Harbour. The Star Ferry bus terminus serves the community population with over 25 bus routes as well as taxis and mini buses. 60% of all Star Ferry passengers connect directly to one of these modes of transport.

However, this bus terminus is going to be relocated to East Tsim Sha Tsui in 2007 to: '... pave way for the Tourism Commission to develop an open plaza at its present location. Additional pedestrian links will be provided between TST East and other parts of the TST with a view to improving the pedestrian circulation, and enhancing the tourism and economic activities in all parts of TST.'¹

There are currently no published plans, either in vision or layout, for the proposed open plaza. Seeing a necessity for such an important site, one of the most important destination for the Hong Kong waterfront, the Planning Department recommended this site to the Harbour Business Forum as an ideal site to conduct a Placemaking workshop to seek opinions and to gather some ideas about the issues and opportunities for the space. Using this area as a case study for the harbour, participants were able to explore the problems that exist with public spaces along the waterfront and to make suggestions that will help ensure that the new plaza will be a successful public space.



¹ HEC Paper No. 10/2005

Benefits of Good Public Spaces

Project for Public Spaces has distilled qualities that make up a great place into the four following basic ingredients:

1. Activities & Uses

A good place should be full of home grown activities that act as the glue of their communities, drawing people to them for companionship and relaxation. A healthy variety of such uses will attract a variety of people and keep a place lively at all times of the day.

2. Access & Linkages

A good place is visible and easy to get to. People need to see that there is something to do and that others have been enticed to enter. Conversely, if the street is too dangerous to cross, the place won't be well used. Linkages are opportunities to connect different elements so that they create a people-friendly environment that encourages strangers to talk to other strangers as if they knew each other. Easy access to transit is also an important ingredient.

3. Comfort & Image

Good places entice people through well-designed amenities, as seating, shaded trees, bike racks, and bulletin boards. They also entice through good management that keeps walkways clean, paint from peeling, and neighbourhoods safe. Good details can tantalize – they signal that someone took the time and energy to design amenities that are welcoming and that respond to the unique needs of neighbourhood people.

4. Sociability

A sociable place is one where people want to go to observe the passing scene, meet friends, and interact with a wide range of people. Sociability is achieved by working together with the unique, local assets that can be found in all communities, and then combining the above ingredients to make a great place.

PPS believes that paying attention to these qualities will help in the evaluation of the public spaces in your own community and make the changes that can transform them into great places.



4. What makes a great urban space?

1. Transit-oriented

The best urban squares can be reached by many means of transportation: by car, bus, train or taxi. They often serve as transit plazas – where people can grab a bite to eat and sit comfortably while waiting for a bus or train, or transfer between modes.

2. Pedestrian-friendly

Great public spaces are walkable – pedestrians have the upper hand. The low volume of traffic should be slow-moving.

3. Flexible event street

A street running adjacent to or through urban squares should be an extension of the square. It should be paved like the sidewalk and can be closed off for street fairs, markets and other events.

4. A wide range of uses and activities

The best urban squares appeal to a broad cross-section of people – young and old, families and singles. They are attracted not by the space alone, but by the activities, retail uses and events that they find there.

5. Active edges

The building edges are part of the square. They are transparent and at the scale of the pedestrian, with active uses inside that spill out onto the square. For example, cafes and restaurants should have an outdoor presence and storefronts should be colourful, well-lighted and provide outdoor displays.

6. Comfortable: water, shade & trees

People want to stay and sit a while in a good urban square because it provides comfortable seating, with shade and water elements to enjoy. A good urban space should appeal to all the senses.



5. The Sites: Tsim Sha Tsui



Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui



Cultural Centre, Salisbury Road



Star Ferry Bus Terminus, Tsim Sha Tsui

Site A – Harbour City



Evaluation of Harbour City

This area is the main approach to Harbour City and Ocean Terminal and is heavily used by tourists, local shoppers, and office workers. It marks the entrance of Harbour City and is elaborately decorated during major holidays. It connects the retail and cruise facility with the Star Ferry and the bus terminus which are the main transport nodes serving the area.

The area was recently renovated and the old heavy concrete balustrade and cover were substituted with contemporary metal and glass replacements, resulting in a more open, transparent and unified space taking advantage of the harbour view towards Central and the Star Ferry terminal. The stairs leading to Harbour City have also been opened up with the removal of concrete planters and elevator enclosure. Ocean Terminal management has changed its strategy by programming restaurants to occupy the waterfront retail stores and replacing the windowless façade with floor to ceiling glazing or terraces. The renovations are an improvement but offer only cosmetic adjustments to this space, a more comprehensive strategy would add tremendous value to the facility, the area and the waterfront.

Despite the renovation and its proximity to the harbour, the site was viewed as a transient space and participants "did not feel the space had a social function" nor that it felt like a public space. It scored poorly for comfort. The Star House façade is covered with advertising panels which adds nothing functionally to the space and "there is nothing to do" in front of the building. Its connection to the bus terminus and the Star Ferry was considered very important.

Harbour City 'Place Game' Ideas

Suggested Activities

- Bike rental
- Sidewalk cafes
- Flea market

Short term physical improvements

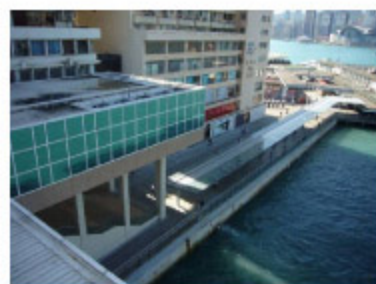
- Increase connection between shops and harbour
- Plant trees
- Seating
- Remove KMB building/billboard
- Stop buses on Sundays

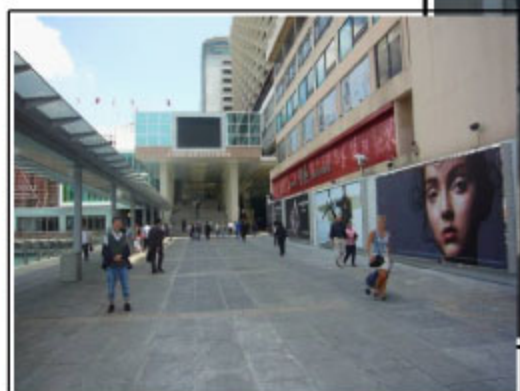
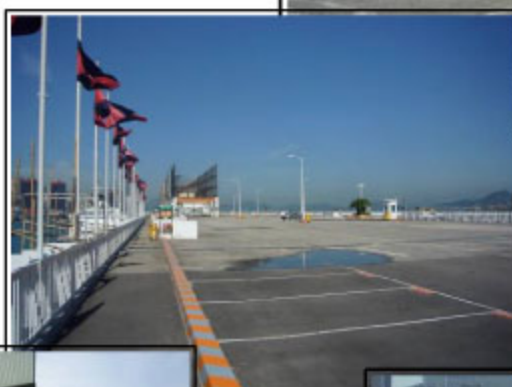
Long Term Improvements

- Pedestrianise all the way to YMCA building
- Cycle lane from site to main harbourfront
- Place cars below ground and allow people to be on top.
- Movable canopy for piazza
- Renew/remove culture centre which is considered an eyesore

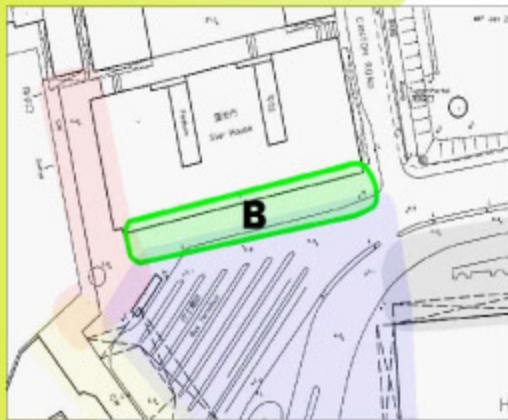
Management

- Improve governance and management of the area through stakeholder participation
- Involve NGOs in the management





Site B – Star House



Evaluation of Star House

Built in the mid 1960s, the 19 storey Star House has the only retail element that directly borders the study area; it also has one of the few retail facilities in Hong Kong that enjoys such close proximity to the Hong Kong waterfront and the Star Ferry. However the building and the facilities it offers are of "low quality", it is "purely commercial without any social aspects (public seating)" and there its no clear overall identity (because of multiple ownership).

Star House 'Place Game' ideas

Short Term improvements

- Add public covered seating
- Remove bus stops along pavement
- Provide sun umbrellas
- Increase attractiveness by greening
- Provide info booths

Long Term improvements

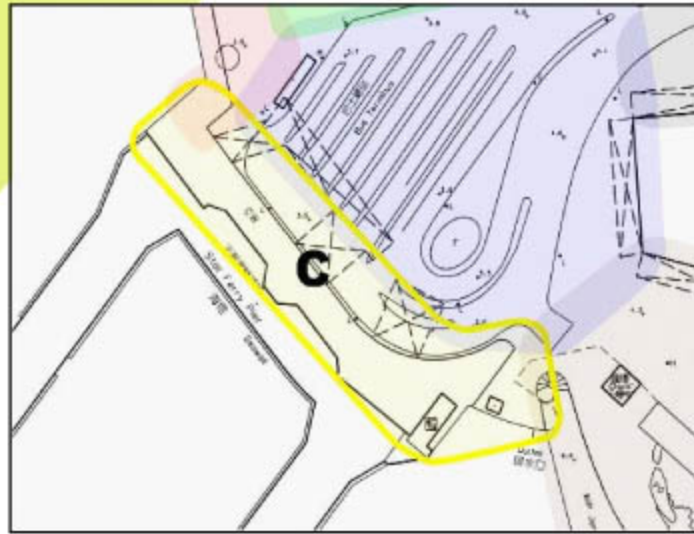
- Relocation of bus terminus – turn space into a piazza and provide shuttle linkage to new terminal
- Active management and provide activities – festivals etc.
- Install landmarks – fountains, sculptures that relate to Chinese culture, railway heritage etc.
- Redesign Star Ferry to allow views to harbour from site
- Avoid footbridges

Suggested Activities

- Provide bandstand for street performances – Art and music etc
- Flower market or show
- Provide flexible spaces
- Al fresco dining



Site C – Star Ferry Pier



Evaluation of Star Ferry Pier

The Star Ferry was voted '50 places of a lifetime' by the National Geographic Traveller Magazine. However the utilitarian Star Ferry terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui, with its close proximity to the adjacent bus terminal, has never been allowed to express this role as one of Hong Kong's key tourist destinations. In terms of design, the concourse is "disorganized" with no clear meeting places, has poor signage and is non-transparent; it offers no Harbour views or any sense of arrival the first thing that greets alighting passengers is a makeshift newspaper stand. The building is low, dark and made of low quality materials.

The positive traits are its proximity to the harbour. The site does have good transport options and the recent improvement to the pavement alongside Star House is a step in the right direction. Its central location to a large variety of destinations in TST, its easy access and most importantly its historical importance which is a big attraction to tourists.



Star Ferry Pier 'Place Game' ideas

Short Term Physical improvements

- Increase roof height and introduce skylights
- Varied landscaping with hard and soft features
- Remove unsightly items such as police booths and recycling bins and reprovion
- Improve signage
- Relocate Star Ferry offices to let space of upper level to be used more effectively
- Increase variety of uses in building

Long Term

- Replan in totality with other sites
- Remodel building to be more transparent and allow use of roof level for cafes and viewing platform.
- Source higher quality retail tenants
- Remove or replace covered walkway with more transparent and light design
- Link to MTR via Cultural Centre

Suggested Activities

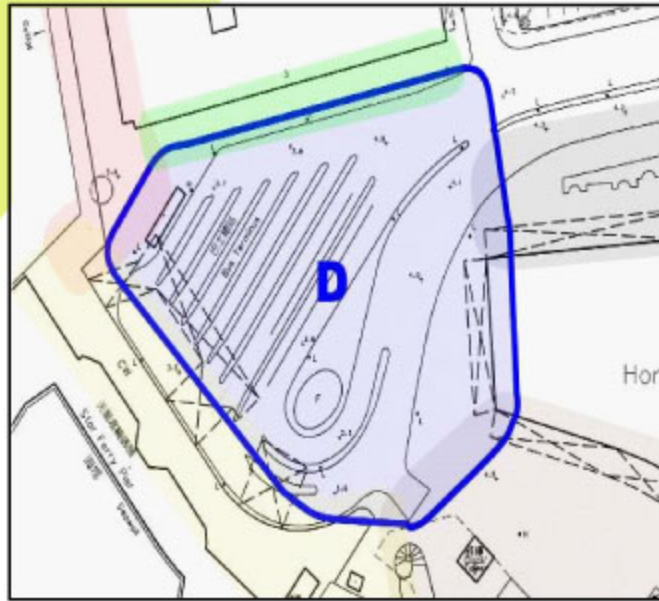
- Special events e.g. markets on weekends and allow buskers by amending bylaws

Implementation agents

- Stakeholder involvement during design stages
- Management via a Harbour Authority
- HKTB
- Wharf/Cheung Kong (majority landlord in area)



Site D – Star Ferry Pier Bus Terminus



Evaluation of Star Ferry Pier Bus Terminus

The bus terminus is the main feeder transport for the Star Ferry. 60% of the ferry's passengers transfer onto a bus (over 25 bus routes), minibus or taxis. The terminus provides a convenient access for the passengers but its scale and its function dominate the space which has the effect of limiting surrounding spaces from becoming attractive places. The transport also decreases the air quality of the area.

The proposed relocation of the bus terminus to Tsim Sha Tsui East (approximately 900m away) may fundamentally change the nature of the entire area and its facilities. Star Ferry's role as a main transport mode for commuters may decrease along with the function of the terminal building as just a transport facility; this will become more of a symbolic landmark. The vacated space's role will be core to the redevelopment of the area and was the driver for this workshop. The current impression of the site is uncomfortable with pedestrian safety and air quality a major concern. The site has good accessibility but "difficult to get through", "messy but convenient". There is also a lack of activities besides its core function.



Star Ferry Bus Terminus 'Place Game' ideas

There are three proposals regarding the future of this key site,

1. **Focal Point for Commuters** - Retain as Bus Terminus
2. **Public Square Concept**
 - Create a unique public space by allowing NGOs to use as a 'clean conscience' civic square for their advocacy activities, this may require unique management system
 - Can also allow commercial elements into the space for a more 'standard' space
3. **Compromise Concept**
 - Retain but reduce transport element
 - Become more of a "Boulevard", instead of a square.
 - Innovate environmentally friendly public transport system e.g. tram / monorail

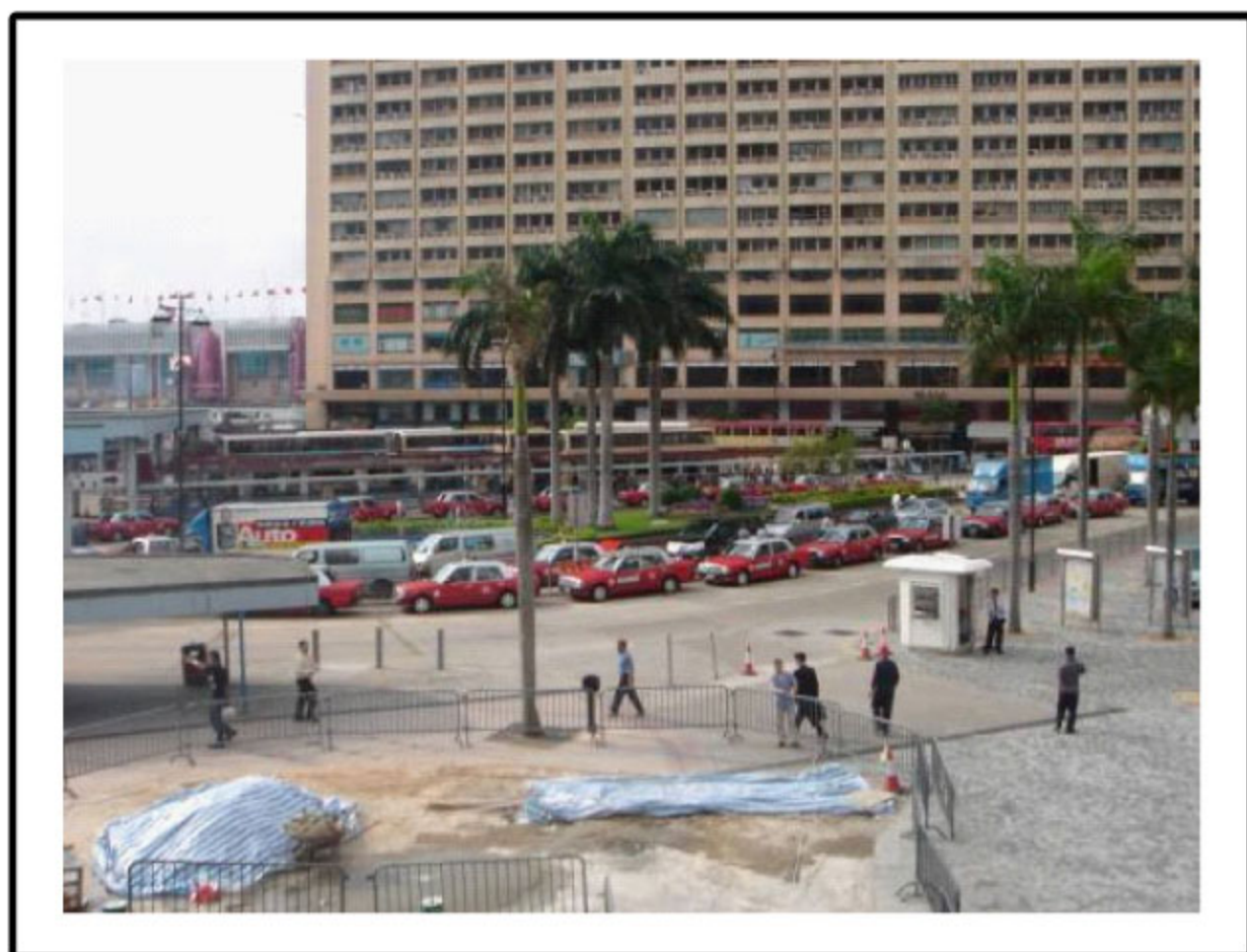
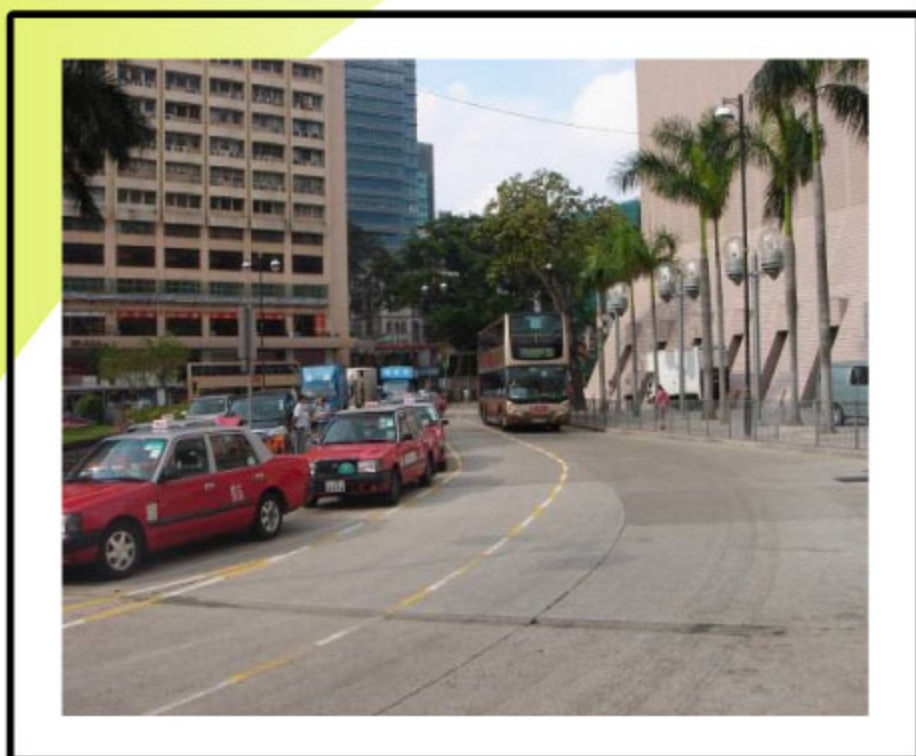
Long Term

- Connect to sites E, F ("cultural spill"); B (Boulevard) etc.
- Replan and organise existing elements
- Use 'cultural' function and enhance
- Potential to have a combined solution from the 2 options above

Management

- For a community 'civic square' – community management
- For commercial square – district council and/or shop operators
- Create a sense of ownership in all cases.





Site E – Cultural Centre / Salisbury Road



Evaluation of Cultural Centre/ Salisbury Road

This area currently feels like the left-over space from the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. It is a thoroughfare and has no physical or visual connection to the Cultural Centre or the Studio Theatre directly adjacent. The covered but open area is good as shelter and offers opportunities for activities but currently it is dull with limited lighting and no activities available despite the amount of space it occupies. The relocation of the bus terminus, and the redevelopment of the former Marine Police HQ directly opposite will affect this space immensely and it is key to include this area if it is not to continue being a left-over and wasted space.

'Place Game' ideas

Short Term

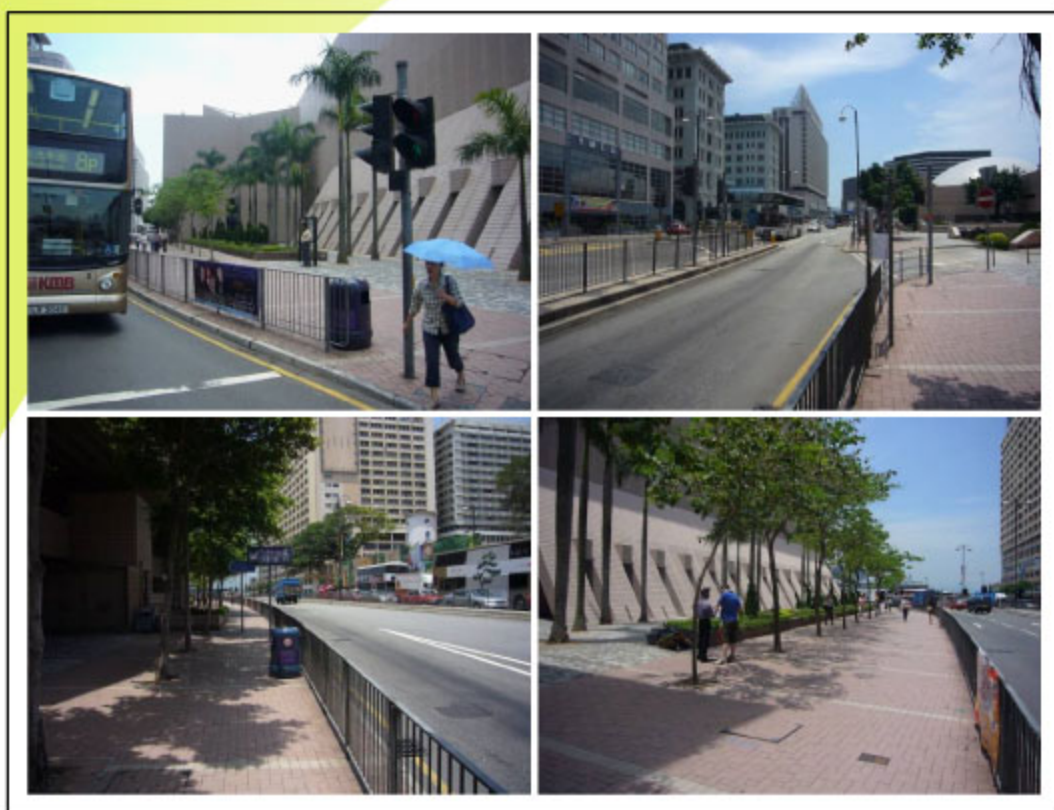
- Use planter as noise buffer from traffic
- Refurbish "buttresses" of cultural centre – but retain shelter function
- Add more decorations, banners, seating, landscaping, exhibition space,
- Remove buttresses
- Kiosks for snacks
- Enhance lighting
- Covered area can be used as exhibition space

Long Term

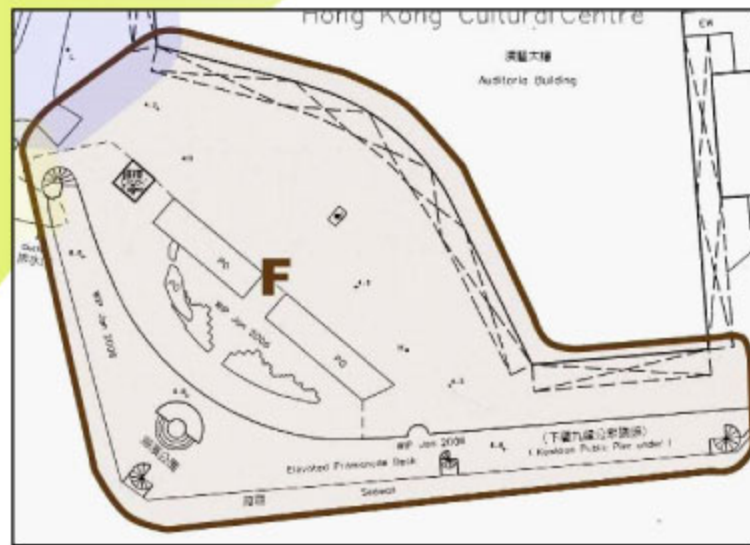
- Remove Cultural Centre
- Replace cultural centre red coloured tiling
- Consider intangible benefits
- Raise cover structure
- Diversify management
- Brighten up exterior
- More landscaping

Management partners

- Management rota around various local groups:
 - Local schools
 - Cultural Groups
 - NGOs
- Provide resources for groups via Harbour Authority



Site F – Cultural Centre Piazza



Evaluation of Cultural Centre Piazza

The Cultural plaza is a large plaza with a central water feature, palm trees and elevated deck along the waterfront and overlooking the public piers. The main attraction is the Clock Tower and this section of the waterfront enjoys one the best views across the harbour and the Star Ferry. The plaza and its facilities are currently undergoing a cosmetic renovation with the upgrading of the finishes to the plaza flooring and the elevated promenade deck. There is now seating around the plaza with makes the space more welcoming.

One of the main issues with the site is the interface between the plaza and the Cultural Centre. The building has a series of non-structural (as the workshop was informed by a former member of the Cultural Centre development project team) 'buttresses' around the entire perimeter of the building. The main function of these features seems to be to offer a sheltered pathway around the building. However the design of these elements made the spaces unattractive and allows no opportunity for any additional activities to compliment the plaza. The architecture of the Centre is closed and introverted and offers

Best about this place

- Centrally located
- Sea view
- Transport hub
- Clock tower
- Good place for people gather together but the design has yet to improve

'Place Game' ideas

Short Term

- Not 'cultural' – make better use of cultural centre
- Transient space, not place for staying – more uses to provide more (10+) activities
- Clock Tower isolated – create activities at clock tower or other corner spaces for aggregating people
- The place is big – break down into smaller places/spaces than makes the place more intimate
- Invent use for the curved façade of the cultural centre
- Provide more, and improve quality of, street furniture or cafés
- More greening

Long Term

- Rebuild/major refurbishment of Cultural Centre
- Remove the fins/butresses around the edges of the cultural centre for more open space and replace with functions that provide activities for place - food and beverage, shopping, etc.
- Connect with the waterfront better by providing more at-grade spaces / terraces / platforms
- Amalgamate surrounding elements – Cultural Centre, clock tower, and promenade
- More greening

Management and Partners

Allow local community groups, education institutions, NGOs to assume management of the spaces on a rota, bringing different aspects of the communities that use this space and also provide much needed space for these organizations to promote their causes.



6. Conclusion

"The opportunity is too great to go with a plan that is only part of the vision" Fred Kent,
Founder and President of Project for Public Spaces¹

Tsim Sha Tsui needs to attain 'World Class' status in the minds of people who know and think about Hong Kong. Attaining that status would put it on a par with Piazza San Marco in Venice, Central Park in New York, or the Campo de Fiori in Rome.

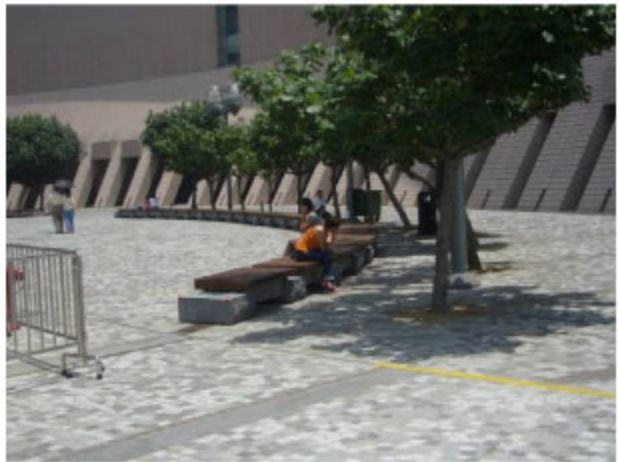
The participants did an exceptional job of assessing the existing conditions and defining a broader vision based on the realization that this site needs to be the most important destination on Kowloon, and possibly Hong Kong as a whole. The group and possibly others should be brought back periodically to act as a sounding board for this most important effort.

The impact of creating such a destination would be huge not just for the cultural center but for the larger area around it including the world famous hotels and some of the other public buildings that are part of the cultural complex.

Suggested next steps include:

- Meetings with the stakeholders on the site and within the adjacent area.
- Examine other ferry terminal sites in places like Sydney, Australia, Vancouver, Canada, San Francisco, California, and Stockholm, Sweden.
- Examine destinations that are part of other great waterfronts.
- Extraordinary places have ten great places with ten things to do in each. Define, within the area, the potential 10 destinations with 10 things to do in each place.
- Refine the vision with the above input, develop a plan for implementation including experiments, infrastructure and concept design.
- Review findings and seek more input and buy-in from larger public.
- Review with original Placemaking workshop attendees and stakeholders
- Define a public/private development/management organization to carry on the implementation.





Workshop Participants

Experts

	Fred Kent	Founder and President	Project for Public Spaces
	Josh Kent	Project Manager	Project for Public Spaces

Participants

Category	Full Name	Position	Company
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Business	Wang Xing	Principal Urban Designer	Atkins China Ltd.
Business	William Chan	Marketing Officer	Crystal Computer Graphics Ltd.
Business	Cecilia Cheung	Senior Marketing Officer	Crystal Computer Graphics Ltd.
Business	David Li	General Manager	Crystal Computer Graphics Ltd.
Business	Raymond Chan	Senior Planning Engineer	Gammon Construction Ltd.
Business	Edward Yeung	Construction Manager	Gammon Construction Ltd.
Business	Leng Yen Thean	Assistant General Manager	Harbour City Estates Ltd.
Business	Anthony Ip	Director	Iconopolis Ltd.
Business	Thomas Yip	Director	Iconopolis Ltd.
Business	Michael Arnold	Managing Director	Jardine Matheson
Business	Lee Yuet	Principal	Lee Yuet & Associates
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Government	Teresa Fong	Manager - Environmental	Housing Department
Government	Lawrence Cheung	Chief Leisure Manager	Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Government	Steve Chan	Member	Harbour Enhancement Committee
Government	Heidi Chan	District Planning Officer	Planning Department
Government	Vincent Cheung	Town Planner	Planning Department
Government	Robert Tsang	Town Planner	Planning Department
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Government	Wylie Ho	Manager	Tourism Commission
Government	Daisy Wong	Senior Manager	Tourism Commission
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