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Hong Kong government pledges consultation on controversial Avenue of Stars revamp

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The Leisure and Cultural Services Department has pledged to submit a report to the Harbourfront Commission and come up with plans to consult the public on the management and design of the expanded Avenue of Stars, after commission members criticised the plan.

The promise came more than a week after the Town Planning Board conditionally approved an application jointly submitted by the department and a non-profit subsidiary of New World Development, which has been managing the existing 440-metre site since 2004. The new plan to extend the avenue eastward by some 500 metres has triggered a public outcry over the private developer being allowed to continue managing the area until 2035 without an open competition. There is also unhappiness that the waterfront site will be closed for three years.

At a meeting of the Harbourfront Commission today, New World's senior project director, Jeff Tung Jing-kong, briefed members on the latest progress of the plan, with a summary of its earlier consultation with the commission and stakeholders such as the Tourism Board and Yau Tsim Mong District Council.

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But members complained that there had not been a public consultation. "You've spoken to a limited number of stakeholders, but not the community," said commission member Paul Zimmerman.

Commission chairman Nicholas Brooke echoed this view. "We have stressed time and again the importance of engagement with the public."

Responding to members' criticism and requests, the department's deputy director, Dr. Louis Ng Chi-wa, said the proposed 20-year contract with the company would not be signed this year and that the department would "continuously consult the public".

But Ng declined to comment on whether this amounted to delaying the plan. He had said earlier that both sides hoped to strike a deal within this year.

There was also criticism during the meeting of the details of the plan. Professor Becky Loo Pui-ying said it was the first time that members had been told that proposed new buildings would be up to nine metres tall. She suggested that the structures should be limited to one floor only without a canopy.

I can say the railing is part of Hongkongers'

Loo and Zimmerman also objected to the developer's proposal to remove the existing railings along the Tsim Sha Tsui East promenade - a facility popular with courting couples.

collective memory

Professor Becky Loo

"As someone who grew up in Hong Kong, I can say the railing is part of Hongkongers' collective memory," Loo said.

But Tung rejected the criticism, saying: "Nowadays the railing looks very unattractive... We are trying to minimise the obstruction of the harbour view." But he added that he would consider members' views.

More on this:

[Lights out for Avenue of Stars as iconic Hong Kong site set to shut down for three years despite public outcry](#) [2]

[What do Hong Kongers think of a new development project coming to the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront?](#) [3]

[Hong Kong Avenue of Stars expansion won't feature luxury shops or posh restaurants, top officials says amid outcry](#) [4]

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