

Market views sought on public-private collaboration for Hung Hom harbourfront project

The Development Bureau (DEVB) launched today (January 22) a market sounding exercise (MSE) to obtain market feedback on the viability of developing the Urban Park site at the Hung Hom harbourfront under a partnership approach between the public and private sectors, as well as optimal uses for the site. The MSE is supported by the Harbourfront Commission (HC).

A spokesman for the DEVB said, "We have been adopting the partnership approach in harbourfront enhancement wherever appropriate. One hugely successful example is the Central Harbourfront Event Space. In support of the HC's vision for a more vibrant and attractive harbourfront, subject to the MSE feedback, we are keen to try out the partnership approach involving tripartite collaboration among the Government, the private sector and the community for the Urban Park site, as an alternative to the conventional design-build-operate approach by the Government."

The spokesman pointed out that as illustrated by overseas examples, the partnership approach, if appropriately engaged, can deliver highly desirable results for harbourfront development. The approach allows both the public and private sectors to do their best. The Government would define service requirements and monitor compliance with reference to stakeholders' views, thereby ensuring that the key social objective of public enjoyment of the harbourfront would continue to be achieved. The private sector, known for its creativity, would meanwhile provide innovative designs and responsive solutions, as well as flexible management modes, making the harbourfront more fun and enjoyable for all.

Located next to the Hung Hom Ferry Pier, featuring magnificent harbour views and surrounded by residential, office, hotel and retail developments, the Urban Park site is a prime harbourfront location planned for a wide range of active and/or passive leisure and recreational uses. With a total area of 2.2 hectares, it is sufficiently large to be developed into a destination space with diverse and innovative activities for all to play, relax and enjoy. A location plan of the site is in the Annex.

The spokesman said, "The Urban Park site is integrated with the 4-kilometre-long waterfront promenade that allows visitors to stroll along the harbourfront from Hung Hom to Tsim Sha Tsui with harbourfront facilities and attractions including the Avenue of Stars, the Hong Kong Museum of Art, the Hong Kong Space Museum and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre on the way. The site is also well served by public transport facilities, and water transportation will be further improved with the re-opening of the Hung Hom-Central ferry route and provision of water taxi services in the near future."

The objectives of the MSE are three-fold: to collect innovative ideas on possible uses of the site including how income received through certain activities would strike a balance between public enjoyment and financial viability; to ascertain the level of market interest towards developing the site under the partnership approach; and to obtain suggestions on key features of the partnership approach in terms of contract duration, the financing and revenue sharing arrangement and more.

"To stimulate as many ideas as possible in the exercise, different private sector bodies including commercial entities, community groups, social enterprises, community-based trusts, special purpose companies and other different kinds of non-governmental organisations are welcome to submit their proposals," the spokesman added.

The responses received will help the DEVB decide on the overall development concept for the Urban Park and the viability of the partnership approach, as well as the key contractual terms and conditions required for a publicly acceptable and financially viable model.

The spokesman said, "We are aiming to derive a partnership approach that can provide highly anticipated facilities that can draw people to the harbourfront and enhance their experience while delivering a reasonable financial return to induce and sustain private sector participation."

At the moment, the DEVB has the following initial ideas for the project:

- (a) The project should adopt a place-making approach to create a sense of place and a quality harbourfront for public enjoyment, bringing people to the harbourfront and catering for their diverse interests. Proposed attractions should complement rather than overlap with uses already available in the neighbourhood;
- (b) The project should minimise visual and noise impacts and other adverse impacts on the surrounding residential development;
- (c) While retaining ownership of the site, the Government may grant a right to use the site for a reasonably long period that can render the project financially viable;
- (d) The operator will be responsible for designing, developing, managing and maintaining the site;
- (e) The project is expected to be self-sustainable on an ongoing basis with the possibility of sharing revenue with the Government based on a predetermined arrangement;
- (f) It is Government's intention to set up a continual monitoring system with some form of public participation to ensure that the site is developed and managed in the public interest; and
- (g) Key performance indicators for monitoring and maintaining high performance could be introduced.

The DEVB will hold a briefing for interested parties on February 14. Interested parties should submit written responses to the DEVB on or before March 21. The MSE is not a pre-qualification exercise for the subsequent competitive bidding for the project. The ideas and suggestions received through the MSE may be used by the Government, in the original form or in a modified form as may be considered appropriate by the Government, in formulating the way forward for the subsequent tender exercise.

Details of the briefing and the MSE are available on the websites of the DEVB (www.devb.gov.hk/en/issues_in_focus/mse_hung_hom_urban_park_development/index.html) and the HC (www.hfc.org.hk). For enquiries, please contact the DEVB's Harbour Office through email at harbouroffice@devb.gov.hk.

While inviting market feedback through the MSE, the DEVB also welcomes views from the general public on the potential uses of the site submitted through the aforementioned DEVB website and the HC website on or before March 21. The views will be taken into account in finalising the overall development concept of the site.