

9. Presentation by overseas speaker Mr. Fred Kent

After the experience of touring around Hong Kong, there are some comments on the city planning. There is not much humanity in the place. The planning is for cars but not for human being. People are hard to walk around places to places. There is no immediate way to cross the road. It is like places with isolated development. Some areas are devoid and no people linger there. It is also not easy to remain on the ground in public area but staying underground. In the case study of Hong Kong, the result of survey shows that the areas around the waterfront is not good.

There are two levels of planning, one macro and one micro. In the micro aspect, to create destinations through place-making, we should look at existing destinations, create quick-wins and growing public spaces and create excellence iteratively over-time. In macro aspect, to use place-making for large scale planning, there are 10+ destinations, 10+ places within and 10+ things to do. Try to determine development to support destinations, design process to create iconic design within architecture of place, implement iteratively, grow the spaces over time and manage. The bigger idea is about systems change. We always started by fixing a place like creating a new park, but recently we focus on broader issues like downtown, waterfront, campus and transit system. We have to take a smaller idea like creating a park up to a larger idea creating a district, so the micro-up-to-the-macro process can have a big impact.

Here are 9 ways that New York has taken to transform into a city of great places and Hong Kong can take consideration:

- A comprehensive public space agenda
- Balance pedestrians, bicycles, transit and cars
- Streets as public spaces
- Public market program/local economy
- Functional contemporary architecture
- Restructure city agencies
- Waterfront
- Reinvent community planning
- Manage public spaces for public outcomes

There are some other topics which should be taken note on the planning. Firstly, the weakest link is the designers, developers and managers. Secondly, it should be an architecture of “Place” but not a stand-alone iconic architecture. Thirdly, a good place should be with sociability, uses and activities, access and linkages and comfort and image. A good place builds and supports the local economy, nurtures and defines community

identity, fosters more frequent and meaningful interaction, creates improved accessibility, promotes public health and comfort and draws a more diverse population. Fourthly, place-making is creating a place that we care about and want to be. It is the intangible thing we try to make using tangible things. Place-making is also the seed of democracy. Place-making is the process of giving space a story that is shared by many.

How to turn a place around? There are some principles of creating great public spaces:

- Underlying ideas
- The community is the expert
- You are creating a place not just a design
- You can't do it alone
- They always say it can't be done
- Planning and outreach techniques
- You can see a lot just by observing
- Develop a place-making vision
- Translating ideas into action
- Form supports function
- Power of 10 triangulation
- Implementation
- Start with the petunias
- Money is not the issue
- You are never finished

The “Place Game” evaluation process is all about a survey which is done by breaking people into teams, going out to assigned public-space sites and use the form to evaluate, observe, and interview. Then return to discuss the findings with the team and create a mini-presentation to report back to all the other participants. The “game” can quickly collect opinions and come up with a vision within 3 hours. Then, it is the place/community driven approach. First you define the place, identify stakeholders, evaluate it and have a vision. Do short-term experiments, long-term vision implementations and on-going evaluation and approval.

Creating great places or destinations you need the power of 10. That is:

- Hong Kong needs 10+ major destinations
- The Hong Kong Waterfront needs 10 great destinations
- Each place/destination must have 10+ places within and 10+ things to do
- Triangulation or layering of uses to create synergy
- Connect places to create a district
- A district needs 100 - 1000 things to do

And what is a park? A park should be a place where you go to but not just a beautiful design. Take a world's greatest park as an example. Tivoli is a pleasure garden. There are many uses and activities like a bazaar for trading products, a theatre for dance, a restaurant, etc.

There are also some great examples of world's best waterfronts like Helsinki, Stockholm, Sydney and Venice. Although Hong Kong is on the list of not-so-good city waterfronts, Hong Kong is ready to be moved off the list because the passion and time that have taken are impressive and people realize what they need and what they do not have. There are 13 steps to creating great waterfronts:

- Make public goals the primary objective
- Create a shared community vision for the waterfront
- Create multiple destinations: The Power of 10
- Connect the destinations
- Optimize public access
- Ensure that new development fits within the community's vision
- Encourage 24-hour activity by limiting residential development
- Use parks to connect destinations, not as destinations into themselves
- Design and program buildings to engage the public space
- Support multiple modes of transportation and limit vehicular access
- Integrate seasonal activities into each destination
- Make stand-alone, iconic buildings serve multiple functions
- Manage, manage, manage

The primary reason that Hong Kong has a poor waterfront planning is because of the lack of support in multiple modes of transportation and should limit vehicular access. Helsinki is a place which has many things relevant to Hong Kong like the ferry system and the vehicular access is limited. In Sydney, there are 10 power destinations. San Francisco uses the piers very well but with poor road planning. In Paris, different seasonal activities are put into the waterfront. With such a great public space, they can even remove the road usage.

By reviewing all these things above, create a vision for the waterfront. Start with the idea of 10 destinations/10 places/10 things to do. Connect them. Public use should be the primary objective. Complete public access all along the waterfront. Promenades and bike lanes serve the best waterfronts. The best waterfronts have limited roads along them and should have good edge uses.

Concerning the design guidelines, all developments should be proposed with destinations defined and connections planned. Scale of buildings immediately bordering a waterfront should not be towers but a continuous line of 4-8 storey buildings that actively engage the public spaces. Towers, where appropriate should be set back from the waterfront and be on platforms. Access to the waterfront should be at 200- to 700-foot intervals. Stand-alone, iconic buildings needed to be multi-use destinations. Ground level uses should be commercial or public institutional uses that support public activities.

To become great waterfront destinations, there are certain qualities to be achieved:

- Access and linkage
- Connected to adjacent areas
- Range of transportation options
- Edge uses
- Gateways and entrances
- Focal points
- Attractions and destinations
- Choices of things to go
- Triangulation opportunities
- Clustered activity around destinations
- 10+ places
- Identity and image
- Iconic features
- Historic highlights
- Amenities
- Attracts cross-section of use
- Source of local/regional civic pride
- Comfortable places to sit
- Food and markets
- Water uses
- Multiple ways of using or touching water
- Water play
- Fountains
- Pools
- Flexibility in design
- Overlapping and changing uses
- Event Spaces
- Experiment
- Seasonal strategy
- Place management

- Diverse funding sources
- Reach out like an octopus
- Becoming a district
- 10+ Destinations
- With 10+ places and 10+ things to do

What if we built Hong Kong's waterfront around places? That is the question to be thought of.