

# **Task Force on Harbourfront Developments on Hong Kong Island**

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For discussion  
on 21 February 2013

TFHK/03/2013

## **Submission of a Conceptual Proposal for Rationalization and Expansion of Public Viewing Areas at the Central Star Ferry Terminal**

### **PURPOSE**

The Proponents, namely the Café Deco Group, the owners of the Watermark restaurant (the “Watermark”), and The Star Ferry Company Limited as holder of the Government tenancy, would like to submit a conceptual proposal to relocate and expand the public viewing areas in the Central Star Ferry Terminal (the “Terminal”), in order to revitalize unused spaces, to resolve interface problems, and ultimately, to enhance the Terminal as an iconic landmark with more vibrant commercial and leisure spaces for public enjoyment.

### **BACKGROUND**

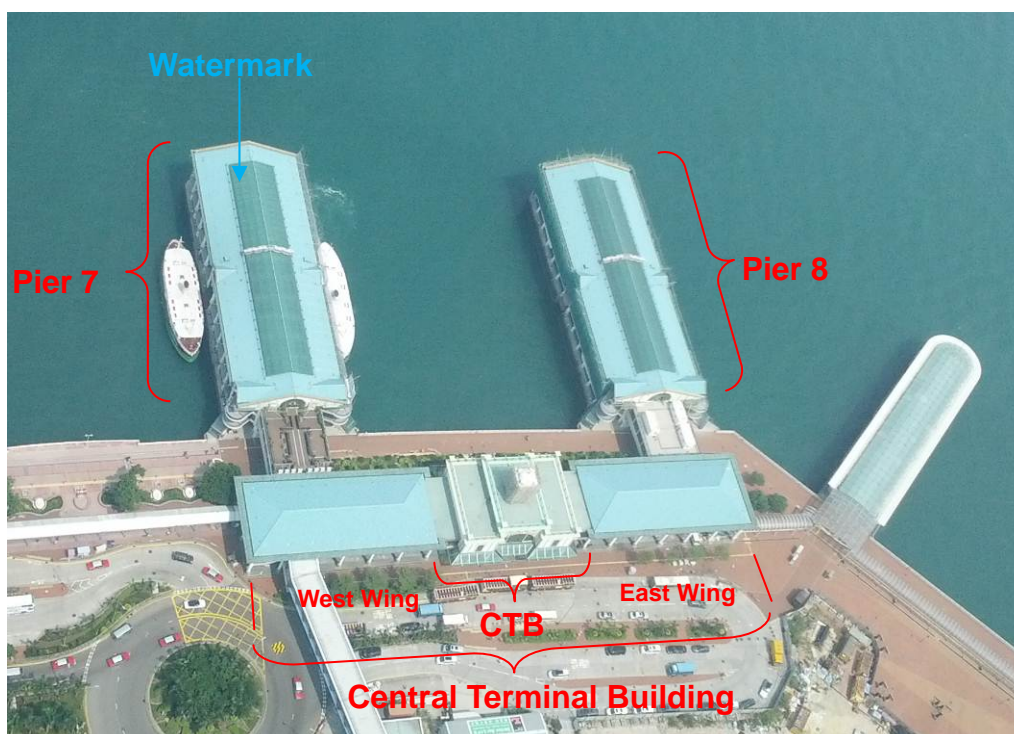
#### **Central Star Ferry Terminal**

2. The present Terminal was built in 2006. It is a popular iconic landmark on the central waterfront. It holds cultural and historical significance as it symbolizes the generations of Star Ferry Piers and Clock Towers that were built and once serviced the Hong Kong community. It also plays an important functional role as a meeting point for tourists and locals who travel and visit attractions on Hong Kong Island, and as a public transport node to cross Victoria Harbor and travel to other islands.

3. The Terminal is made up of the Central Piers 7 and 8, and the Central Terminal Building, which includes the “Clock Tower Building” (CTB), an east and west wing, and connecting bridges (**Photo 1**).

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**Photo 1:** The Central Star Ferry Terminal

## **Watermark Restaurant**

4. The Watermark has operated since the Terminal was opened. It offers an international cuisine, providing a high-quality service to the public, and is well-managed by an international catering company, namely the Café Deco Group.

5. The Watermark is located on the P level of Central Pier 7, with only one entrance and access corridor (**Photo 1**). The dining hall, kitchen, and bar are part of the restaurant commercial area and cover a total floor area of about 306m<sup>2</sup> (**Figure 1**). The indoor dining hall itself occupies an area of about 171m<sup>2</sup> and enjoys a 270 degree view of Victoria Harbor.

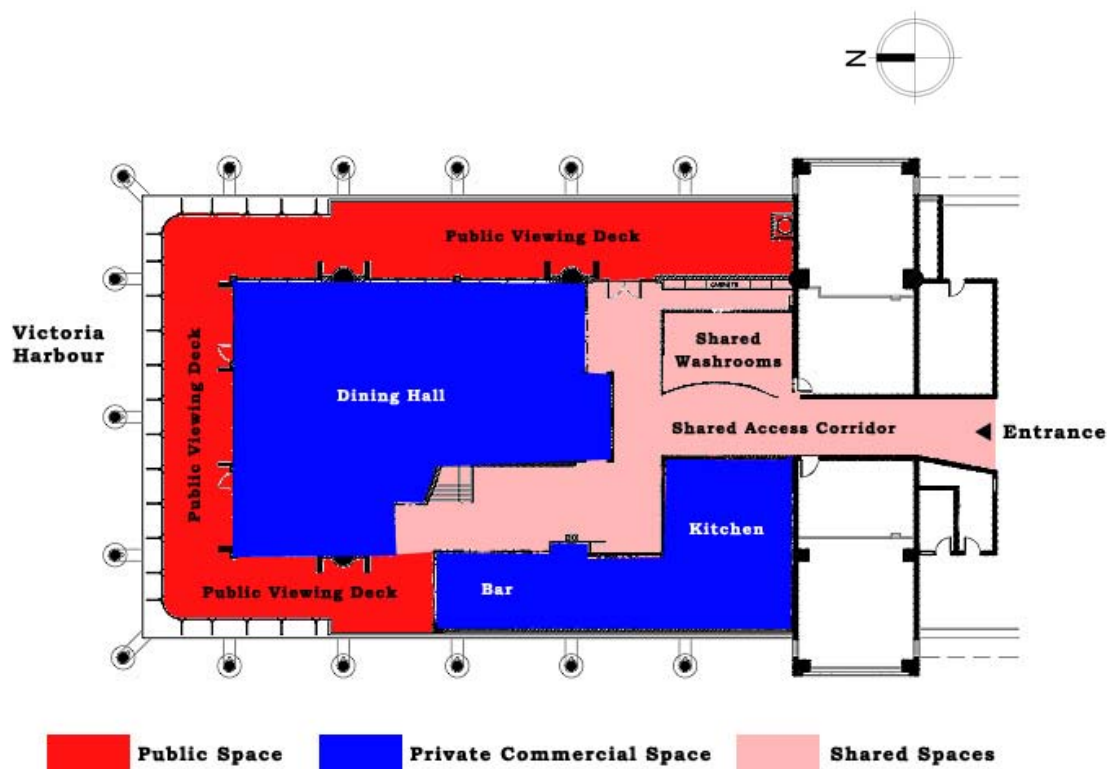
6. The public viewing deck that bound the outer edges of the dining hall is 335m<sup>2</sup> (**Figure 1**). It is designated as a public viewing space and can only be accessed through the Watermark entrance and

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corridors. Right now, there is no seating or tables allowed on the deck, so visitors usually stroll through to enjoy and take photographs of the Harbor scenery (**Photo 2**).

7. The restaurant entrance, washrooms, and access corridors allow anyone to freely enter, move through and linger during opening hours (**Figure 1**). Essentially, these are shared spaces and are used for the operation of the restaurant and passageways for the general public. They make up about 179m<sup>2</sup> of the total floor area. The upkeep and maintenance of these shared spaces are taken up by the restaurant operator.



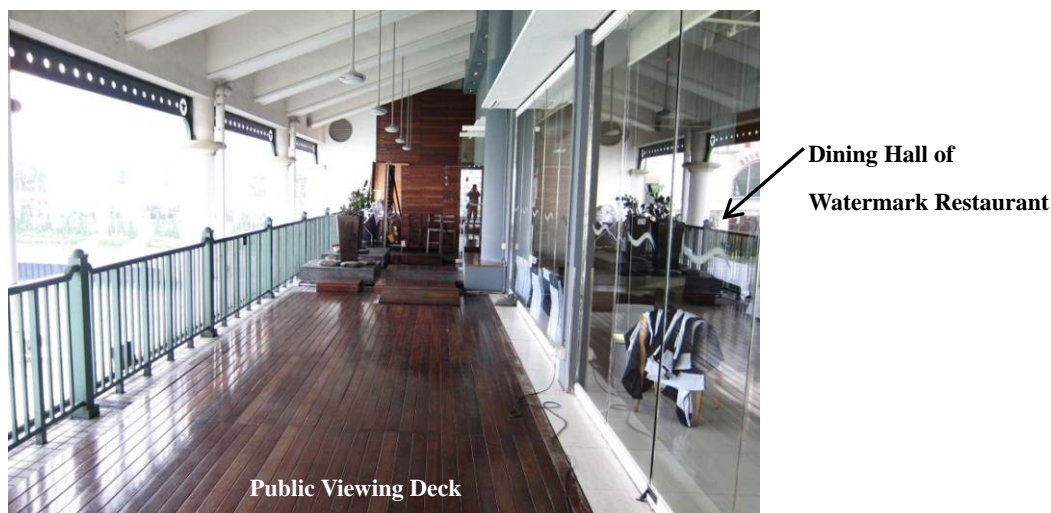
**Figure 1:** Existing Floor Plan of the Watermark

8. The entrance to this area is from a covered public area within Pier 7, which will remain to provide a convenient sheltered area from which the public can view the operation of the ferries and activities on

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the harbor.



**Photo 2:** Existing east side of the public viewing deck at Watermark

## PROBLEMS WITH EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS

### Interface Problems

9. The present shared-use at the Watermark creates interface problems as it is inconvenient, unsafe and disruptive to both the restaurant operation and to the public who use the viewing deck. Some of these problems includes (**Figure 1**):

- (a) The access corridor, which is constantly used by restaurant staff to convey dishes of food and beverages between the kitchen and the dining tables, is used at the same time by the public to walk through to the viewing deck. This often creates congestion, increases potential for accidents, and disrupts the restaurant operation during busy hours;
- (b) When the restaurant holds events such as weddings and private parties, it is disruptive to the patrons when there are members of the public constantly walking through the venue. Likewise, the music and loud noises from these events may be

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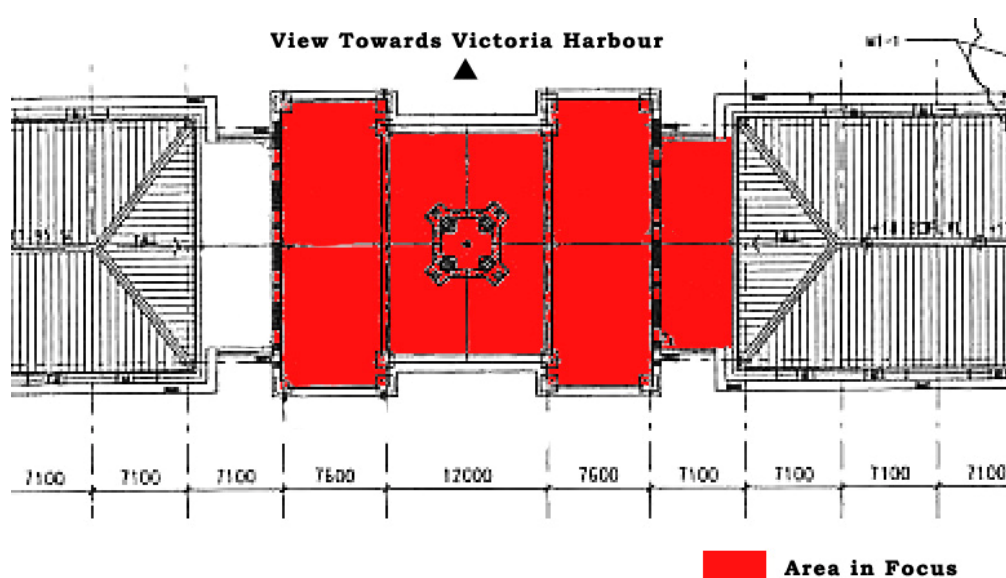
distracting to the public who use the viewing deck area; and

- (c) A sense of privacy is lost as members of the public move through the restaurant and take photographs everywhere.

10. The present location of the public viewing deck has not been properly planned and did not fully take into consideration the interface problems. Any type of food and beverage establishment would find the present arrangement unacceptable and unfavorable for business.

### **Unused Spaces**

11. The roof-level of the CTB is an unused space with a prime viewing location (**Photo 3**). The area in focus covers four platform areas, with a floor area of about 578m<sup>2</sup>, which presents a great opportunity for a public viewing space (**Figure 2**). Its high vantage point provides panoramic views of the Harbor and surrounding cityscape. The space would also allow the public to get close to and appreciate the clock tower (**Photo 3**). Furthermore, it is situated at a central location of the Terminal, where a lot of people would be able to conveniently access.



**Figure 2:** Existing Roof-Level Plan of the Clock Tower Building



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**Photo 3:** Existing Roof-level of the Clock Tower Building

## **PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS**

12. With the above concerns, the Proponents have looked for alternative arrangements that would work best for both the operators and the public. The following measures are proposed:

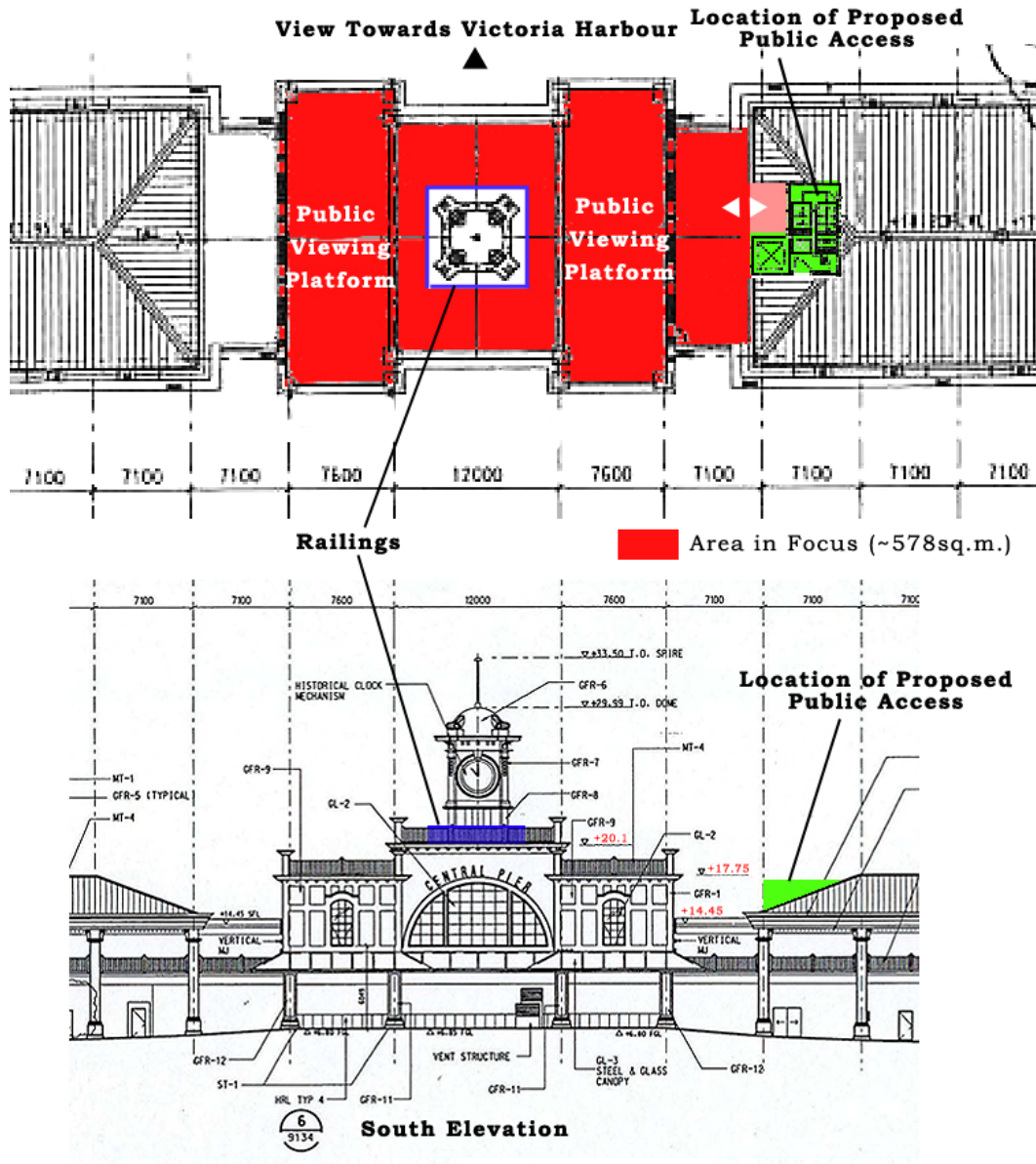
### **Relocate Public Viewing Areas to the Roof of Clock Tower Building**

13. The public viewing deck at Watermark is proposed to be relocated to the roof-levels of the CTB, as a “public viewing platform” (**Figure 3**).

14. The roof-level platform already has railings installed at the edges and there is enough space for circulation and amenities such as seating and tables. To ensure that the clock structure is not damaged and for the safety of the general public, railings are proposed to be installed around the structure (**Figure 3**). At present, there is only one stairway access, which is used solely for the maintenance of the clock tower (**Photo 4**); however, the Proponents proposes to carry out upgrading works to provide public access to the platform.

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**Figure 3: Proposed Arrangements at Roof Level of CTB**

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**Photo 4:** Existing staircase to roof-level for maintenance of Clock Tower

### **Upgrading Works at the Public Viewing Platform**

15. There is a lot of potential to make the viewing platform into a high quality public viewing space, so it is worthwhile to upgrade its accessibility for the public. In particular, the existing elevator and staircases at the first and ground floor could be extended up to the platform roof-level (**Figures 3** and **4**, and **Photo 5**). The extended elevator would help to provide greater convenience to members of the public and accessibility to the elderly and disabled persons.

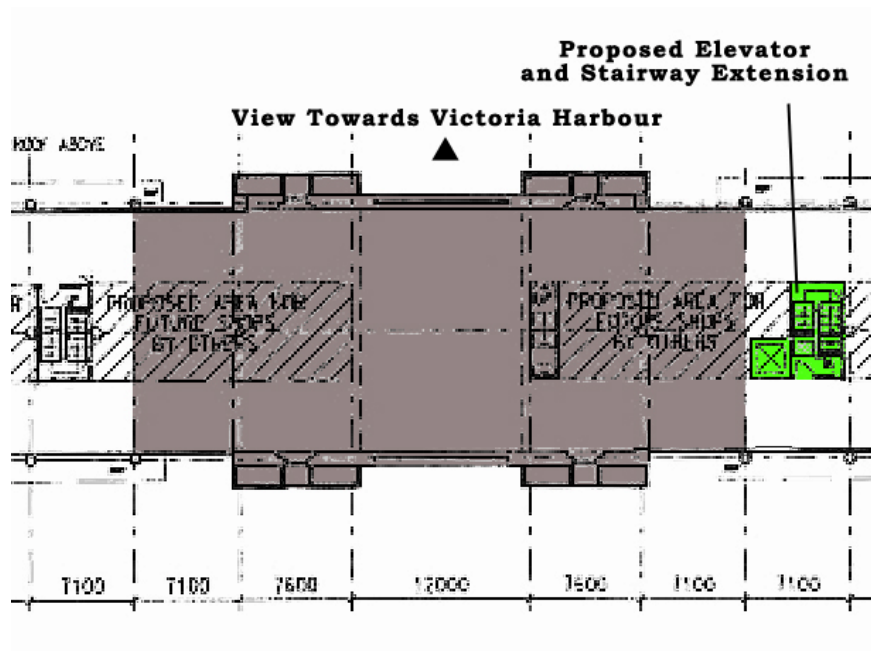
16. The above proposed extensions and other upgrading works, such as connecting the platforms of the proposed viewing area at the CTB (**Figure 3**), would be further explored in the detailed design stage. At that stage, the detailed design of the elevator extension and the responsibilities for implementation will be identified. There will be significant general public benefit arising from this proposal as the numbers of people using the viewing deck will be much greater than those using the current arrangement. Watermark has indicated that they are prepared to consider contributing towards the cost of implementation, noting that it will be beneficial to them as well as to the general public, the Maritime Museum, the Hong Kong Tourism Board



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and the new harbour foreshore park.



**Figure 4:** Proposed Arrangements at first floor of CTB



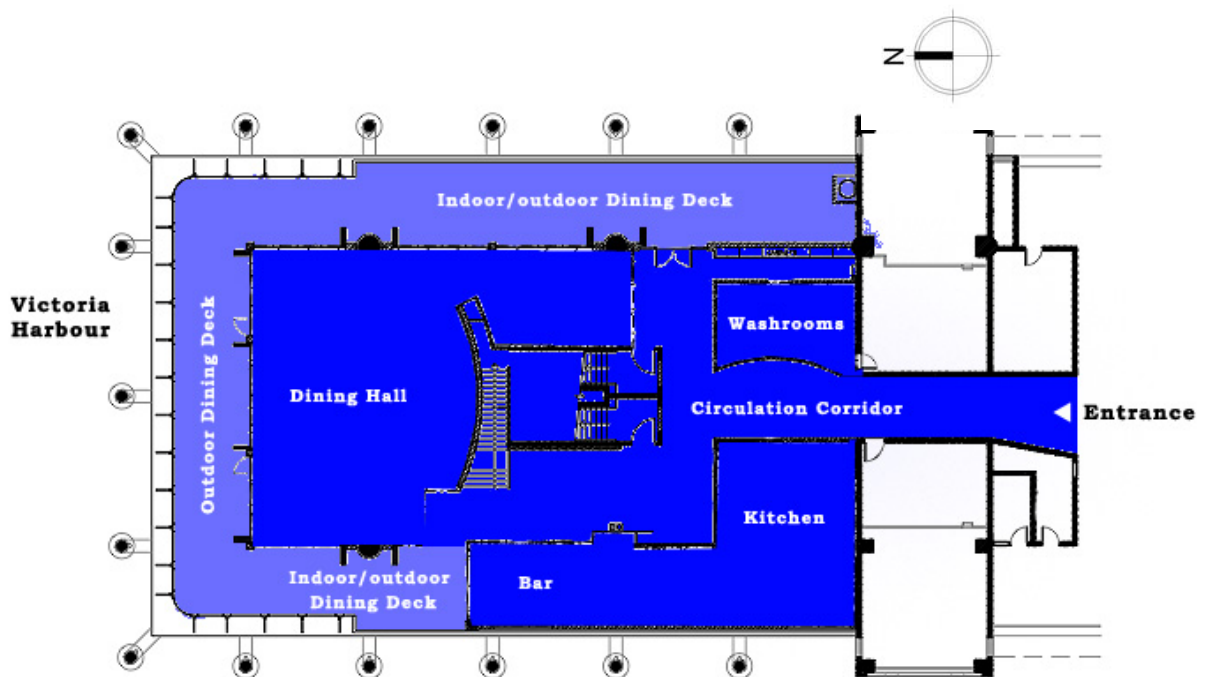
**Photo 5:** Existing elevator and staircase at the first floor proposed for extension

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## Conversion of Public Viewing Deck to Watermark's Operation

17. The existing public viewing deck at the Watermark level is proposed to be converted into part of the Watermark's operation. This would allow the restaurant to better utilize the space for al fresco dining areas with a unique scenic view on the waterfront (**Figure 5**). The upgraded extra space would allow the restaurant to operate more efficiently. It would also provide a better environment for patrons (who are also members of the public) to make use of the outdoor eating area. Provision of proper restaurant tables and chairs would also increase the capacity of the area to accommodate people, much greater than the existing public viewing deck arrangement. The parts of the deck along the sides of the pier could be semi-enclosed with glass so as to avoid any potential air quality issues arising from the star ferries berthing alongside. The front portion would remain open for alfresco dining.



**Figure 5:** Proposed floor plan arrangement of the Watermark

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## **BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Creating a Vibrant Community Node**

18. The proposed public viewing platform at the roof-level of the CTB would help create a vibrant community node. It is at a prominent and central location. It would be complementary with the commercial shops, where visitors can enjoy food and beverages at the shops on the 2/F and conveniently go up to the roof-level to sit down in the public platform to enjoy the view. There would not be any interface problems as the public and private commercial spaces are well-defined and separated. Many of the retail shops in the CTB have been of limited viability because of relatively low pedestrian flows. The proposal would encourage more people to use the central portion of the CTB.

### **Upgraded Services of the Watermark**

19. The conversion of the public viewing deck to the private operation of Watermark would allow the public (including locals and tourists) to enjoy a unique dining experience at a prime location of the waterfront. There would no longer be any interface problems and the restaurant operations would run more efficiently.

### **Upgraded Public Viewing Spaces**

20. The public viewing platform at the CTB is a more suitable location and higher quality than the existing public viewing deck at the Watermark. This is based on the following:

- (a) Visitors would find that access to the viewing platform is clearly identifiable and would not be affected by interface problems;

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- (b) The entrance to the platform is closer to the commercial shops and activities;
- (c) It offers a higher vantage point and more views of the Harbor and surrounding cityscape;
- (d) It has a larger open platform area for people to move around;
- (e) There will be amenity seating and tables provided;
- (f) The platform contains the clock tower, which would allow the public to appreciate it up close, instead of only observing it from a far distance; and
- (g) It will be more easily accessible by a staircase and elevator, and it's at a more convenient central location to get to.

### **Making Use of Unused Spaces**

21. The prime viewing space on the roof-level of the CTB would be best converted from the present unused and empty state, to the proposed public viewing platform, as it would provide an additional prime waterfront viewing location and leisure space for the public to enjoy.

### **No Management Cost to the Government**

22. The management of all the new public viewing spaces would be taken up by the operators or Proponents, at no cost to the Government.

### **Overall Increase in Quality Public and Private Viewing Spaces**

23. The swapping of public-private spaces will produce 578m<sup>2</sup> of new public viewing space at the top of the Clock Tower Building, and 335m<sup>2</sup> of new private dining space at the viewing deck of the Watermark.

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The new public viewing spaces at the CTB will adequately compensate for the conversion of the public viewing deck in Watermark. In fact, this new arrangement would provide 243m<sup>2</sup> (i.e. 578m<sup>2</sup> – 335m<sup>2</sup>) more quality public viewing spaces than the existing context. A summary of the relocation of public-private viewing spaces is presented in **Table 1** below:

**Table 1: Relocation of Public-Private Viewing Spaces**

	Existing		Proposed/ New		Change
	Public Viewing Space (m <sup>2</sup> )	Private Dining Space (m <sup>2</sup> )	Public Viewing Space (m <sup>2</sup> )	Private Dining Space (m <sup>2</sup> )	Public Viewing Space (m <sup>2</sup> )
Watermark	335 (viewing deck)*	171 (indoor hall)	0	335 (indoor/outdoor dining deck)	-335
CTB Roof Level	0	0	578 (viewing platform)	0	+578
<b>Total</b>	335	171	578	335	<b>+243</b>

**Remarks:**

\* Excludes 179m<sup>2</sup> of shared-access space through Watermark to viewing deck. Floor areas are approximately calculated.

**Ensure Sustainable Operation of the Terminal as a Landmark**

24. The proposal would lay the foundations for the sustainable operation of the Terminal as an iconic landmark with integrated commercial, tourism-related and public space facilities for the public to enjoy. It would encourage better pedestrian flows and improve the commercial viability of retail outlets on the level 2 of the CTB.

25. As the surrounding area becomes more developed and accessible with the completion of the Central-Wan Chai Reclamation Phase 3, as well as further development of commercial, community facilities and open spaces along the waterfront promenade, the



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Terminal would need to cater to the rising demand for high quality commercial and public spaces. In this respect, the present proposal would enable the sustainable operation of the Terminal.

26. Moreover, any improvement in rental income achieved through the processes in this proposal would be used by the Star Ferry Company to cross-subsidize the operation of the iconic Star Ferry services.

### **WAY FORWARD**

27. With the completion of the reclamation and opening of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum in Pier 8 in early 2013, now is an appropriate time to review the existing arrangements which were put in place when Piers 7 and 8 were the only public facilities on the waterfront. There are now many additional areas and locations from where the public can view the harbor.

28. Should the Task Force consider these conceptual proposals acceptable, then a section 16 application would be submitted to the Town Planning Board and other necessary approvals would be obtained.

### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

29. The Task Force is invited to:
- (a) Support-in-principle the relocation of public viewing spaces from the Watermark to the unused spaces at the roof-level of the CTB, providing a more suitable location and higher quality public viewing area to the public;
  - (b) Support-in-principle the upgrading works necessary to carry

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out and implement the proposed relocation and expansion of public viewing spaces; and

- (c) Accept in principle that the proposed relocation and expansion of public viewing areas and revitalization measures would contribute to the sustainable operation of the Star Ferry Terminal as an iconic landmark.

**Masterplan Limited on behalf of  
Café Deco Group and The Star Ferry Company Limited  
February 2013**