

**For discussion on
22 February 2008**

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Subcommittee on Heritage Conservation**

Preservation of King Yin Lei at 45 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the latest position regarding the declaration of King Yin Lei (including the associated buildings and its garden) (the “Building”) as a proposed monument on 15 September 2007 (L.N. 175 of 2007 refers) and seek Members’ views on the preservation proposals.

BACKGROUND

2. The declaration of the Building as a proposed monument was made by the Authority (i.e. Secretary for Development) on 15 September 2007 after consultation with the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) under section 2A of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53). The purposes of the declaration are to give the Building temporary statutory protection from further damage (the Building faced an immediate threat as some works had been carried out at the site to remove the roof tiles, stone features and window frames of the Building), to allow a period of up to 12 months for the Authority to consider in a comprehensive manner whether it should be declared as a monument and to discuss with the owner feasible options for preservation of the Building. Unless it is withdrawn earlier, the proposed monument declaration will expire after 14 September 2008.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

3. Subsequent to the proposed monument declaration, the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) has engaged experts both locally and from the Mainland to assess the heritage value of the Building and the scale of damage to the Building, and to advise on possible restoration options. An expert recommended by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, Professor Tang Guohua of the School of Architecture and Urban Planning of Guangzhou University, was commissioned to conduct a heritage and architectural assessment of the Building and to recommend how the Building should be restored. Professor Tang reckoned that based on the information on the original architectural appearance now in hand and current restoration techniques, the

original appearance of King Yin Lei could be restored up to 80% while its heritage value could be basically recovered. Translation of the summary of Professor Tang's assessment report is at **Annex A**.

4. Meanwhile, the AMO has in the past few months successfully gained access to the Building with the consent of its owner and has been able to obtain detailed information through on-site inspections. The Building's present and previous owners have also provided the AMO with historical documents including old building plans and photographs showing the original layout and appearance of the Building. The information, together with Professor Tang's assessment report, have enabled the AMO to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the heritage value of the Building to ascertain whether it merits declaration as a monument under the Ordinance. AMO considers that the heritage value of King Yin Lei reaches the threshold that justifies its declaration as a monument under the Ordinance. The gist of the AMO's assessment is at **Annex B**. Separately, the owner has also confirmed, through his representatives, his agreement to carry out and fund the restoration works of King Yin Lei under the supervision of AMO.

DECLARATION AS A MONUMENT

5. After considering the AMO's assessment of the heritage value of the Building, the Authority consulted the AAB at its meeting held on 25 January 2008 on her intention to declare the Building as a monument under section 3(1) of the Ordinance. Members of the AAB unanimously supported the proposed declaration. Although the 12-month period of the proposed monument declaration will not lapse until September this year, we will now proceed to take action to declare King Yin Lei as a monument. In accordance with the Ordinance, the Authority will seek the Chief Executive's approval for the declaration of the Building as a monument by notice in the Gazette.

DISCUSSIONS WITH THE OWNER

6. The Government's heritage conservation policy recognises the need for economic incentives in order to encourage and facilitate private owners to preserve historic buildings in their ownership. After several rounds of discussion with the owner's representatives, Government has reached an understanding with the owner on a preservation option. Under the proposed arrangement, the owner will surrender the whole site of King Yin Lei to Government, while Government will grant an adjacent site of man-made slope of roughly the same size as King Yin Lei (about 4,700 m²) to the owner as exchange for new residential development. This site will be subject to the same development parameters as King Yin Lei, i.e. a plot ratio of 0.5 and a three-storey height restriction.

7. The site we are considering granting is a man-made slope with slope stabilisation works undertaken in 2002 to the west of King Yin Lei. Although it is currently zoned as “Green Belt” under the Peak Area Outline Zoning Plan, it is a man-made slope with little vegetation. For details, please see the layout plan and relevant photos at **Annex C**.

8. The owner plans to construct five residential houses on the new site within the permissible plot ratio. The proposed development will not adversely affect the density, traffic load, landscape and greenery of the area or the vista of the neighbourhood. As the proposed development involves rezoning the new site from “Green Belt” to “Residential (Group C) 1”, approval from the Town Planning Board will be required. It is also subject to agreement by the concerned departments in accordance with the established procedures. We will seek approval of the Chief Executive in Council for the proposed non-in-situ land exchange in due course.

9. Following the discussions with Government, the owner has already submitted an application under section 12A of the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131) to rezone the existing site of King Yin Lei from “Residential (Group C)1” to “Other Specified Uses” annotated “Historical Building Preserved” and at the same time, to rezone the new site from “Green Belt” to “Residential (Group C)1”. The rezoning application has been published for public inspection on 1 February 2008 and the Town Planning Board has scheduled to consider the rezoning application at its meeting on 18 April 2008.

ADAPTIVE RE-USE

10. Once the declared monument of King Yin Lei comes under Government ownership, we plan to consult the public and devise proposals for its revitalisation. Our guiding principle is to put King Yin Lei to adaptive re-use and turn it into an attraction for local residents as well as tourists. We understand the public’s desire to have access into King Yin Lei to enjoy its architecture and to learn about its history. We will certainly plan the future preservation and revitalisation plans along this direction.

ADVICE SOUGHT

11. During previous LegCo discussions on heritage conservation, Members have expressed support for some form of transfer of development right as a means to help preserve historic buildings in private ownership. We believe that the case of King Yin Lei is an important illustration of our commitment to

heritage conservation and would be grateful for Members' support for the way forward. Members are invited to comment on the above.

Development Bureau
February 2008

(Translation)

**Summary of the Report on Site Investigation and Restoration Options
King Yin Lei at 45 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong**

History and background

King Yin Lei at 45 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong started to be built in 1936 on a slope overlooking the sea at the Mid-Levels of the Victoria Peak. Site formation and a stone retaining wall resulted in a flat piece of land on which stands a magnificent private residence owned by a Chinese. In the British colony of Hong Kong in the 1930's, it was most remarkable for such a house rich in Chinese architectural features to be found on this prime site at the scenic Mid-Levels which was predominantly occupied by the British. This signifies historically the undeniable rise in the status of the Chinese merchant class in the British colony at that time. The residence has had three owners, with the name "King Yin Lei" being given by the second one.

The environment and architectural features of King Yin Lei

2. The complex comprises a main building, an annex block, a garage, a subsidiary building, a pavilion, a swimming pool, etc. Situated at the hillside and facing the sea, the complex is surrounded by rich greenery. Due to geographical constraints, the architect designed the main building to be slightly (7.2 degrees) tilted to the north east to avoid facing due north, and the entrance of the complex orientated at east 32.4 degrees south to signify the *fung shui* idea of "the purple *qi* coming from the east"(紫氣東來). The main building has a spacious semi-circular fore courtyard situated on a 23-metre-deep slope augmented by a stone retaining wall over 11 metres in height. Protruding out of the hill, it is an auspicious *fung shui* setting of "being the champion" (獨佔鰲頭). In the centre of the fore courtyard was a "half-moon pond" (now reclaimed) commonly found in traditional villages in southern China, which would mean to bring wealth to the owner. Located at the left (west) of the main building is a subsidiary building, while an annex block is right at its back to the left. A garage is at the left of the annex block and a pavilion is at the back of the main building a bit to the right. Further to the right side across the driveway is an in-ground swimming pool.

3. The whole setting of the site is that there are two portions, which are separated by a boundary wall. The front portion consists of the main building, the annex block, the garage, the subsidiary building and the fore courtyard, forming the "inner residence". The rear portion consists of the pavilion, the

garden and the swimming pool, forming the large “outer yard”. There is a “poultry area” to the left of the rear part in the front portion, where an old kennel for the dog of the mansion’s first owner as well as some poultry cages can be found. On the wall of the old kennel there is a small memorial plaque, and on the cage posts there are historical marks of the designer and the manufacturer.

4. The main building follows the traditional “three-hall two-verandah” (three-sided courtyard house) layout commonly found in southern China, which means there is one central hall and two wings with an open area facing south. A screen wall is built at the south of the open area to form an internal courtyard. Different from traditional courtyard houses, the wings are slightly tilted away from the central house, instead of being perpendicular to it. At the southern part of the first level of the central house, an octagonal area of the main hall protrudes into the internal courtyard so that the main entrance chamber is enlarged. It reminds us of the practice of erecting a pavilion in front of the main hall found in some traditional upper-class residences in southern China.

5. The annex block has two storeys with a number of parallel rooms connected by a verandah, which reflects the simplicity of modern residential designs in the early years. The second level of the main building and the annex block are connected by a kitchen and a passageway, which ingeniously separates the living areas of the masters and the servants while the masters can still enjoy the convenient service of the servants. A food hatch used to deliver dishes from the kitchen on the first level to the round hall (dining hall) in the main building can still be found inside. The first level of the two-storey garage is for car-parking and the second level is for residential purpose. Its roof is a classical Chinese luding roof (a four-sloped roof with a flat central portion). The single-storey subsidiary building with classical Chinese pyramidal roof in quadrangular shape and humpbacked roof is about 20 metres long and connected by corridors to the square-shaped pavilions at both ends. The one-storey hexagonal pavilion has two entrances and a classical Chinese double-eaved pyramidal roof in hexagonal shape.

6. The upper structure of the house is made up of brick walls, reinforced concrete floor slabs and roof boarding. From the damaged beams and columns, it can be observed that there is more sand and less cement in the aggregate. Small diameter steel bars are used and the cement grading is low with possible mixture of lime. Limited by the construction equipment then, the concrete was not properly compacted, leading to the formation of honeycomb. But the floor slabs are as thick as 200 mm and a grid pattern supporting system is used for the beams of the main halls on various storeys. For the round chamber to the west of the first floor, a concentric radiating pattern is in place. Such structural designs have served to enhance the load carrying capacity of the floors, in addition to making the coffer ceiling attractive.

7. Adding er-shui-er-zhu-er-mao-yi-cai (二水二鑄二鉚一彩) to the traditional san-diao-er-su-yi-shui-yi-cai (三雕二塑一水一彩), the modern architectural decorative craftsmanship of southern China include stone carving, brick carving, wood carving, plastered sculpture, pottery sculpture (i.e. glaze pottery after glazing), exposed and polished green brick with silky joint, terrazzo, shanghai plaster, cast copper, cast iron, copper rivet, iron rivet, painting and stained glass. Except brick carving, exposed and polished green brick with silky joint, cast copper and cast iron, all the other types of traditional craftsmanship can be found in the complex.

8. The main chamber and the two wings of the main building have hip and gable roofs, considered to be roof features of big houses in traditional Chinese architecture. As the roof surface is large and slanting, torrential rain can crush the ground with water splashing to the walls and verandahs, causing undesirable impact. In the early period of republican China, intercepting drains were set on the roof above the walls to carry water to the exposed and concealed drains at wall corners, greatly reducing the volume of rain water on the ground. Concealed down pipes are used in this complex, which has the advantage that pipes are not seen on the walls, but has the disadvantage that when blockage occurred it would have been difficult to clear. The house also has a good buried outdoor drainage system which is still functioning.

9. Since the Mid-Levels used to be the residential area of rich people in Hong Kong, the security design was one of the strictest of its kind. There was a secret compartment on the second floor of the east wing of the main building. Enclosed by four walls, the compartment has an entrance on the eastern wall where a secure safe door is installed. There is an ante-room at the entrance where tiny holes are opened at the eastern and western wall eaves for ventilation. Known also as “the safe room”, this secret compartment is heavily secured.

Description of damage sustained

10. The whole roof surface and the main ridge, gable ridge and corner ridge were originally covered with green-glazed pan tiles and roll tiles, ridge-end ornaments, pearl, porcelain figurines of immortals and mythical animals in simplified form, following ancient Chinese palatial style. All such features have been removed and broken into pieces. The style of internal and external enclosing walls is in line with that of the complex, with the walls made of red fair-faced brickwork and the top covered by green-glazed features. Currently the top of the enclosing walls at the southeastern entrance (altered at a later stage) and the poultry area have been basically kept intact, but nearly all glazed materials covering the inner gate and the enclosing walls have been destroyed.

11. Columns, corner beams, cantilever purlins and Chinese bracket sets under the eaves were originally made of pale yellowish-brown terrazzo. Currently apart from the columns and cantilever purlins being kept intact, most column heads and part of the Chinese bracket sets under the eaves have been smashed. Plaster mouldings were originally pasted onto the beams and pre-cast terrazzo onto the architraves. Nearly all of them have now been broken and some architraves have been damaged to the extent that the steel bars of the concrete are exposed.

12. The walls are externally made of red fair-faced terrazzo brickwork. The outer verandah is furnished with plaster mouldings at the wall eaves and granite dados. The inner side of the walls is plastered white, with wooden picture rails at the top and wooden skirting at the bottom. There are plaster mouldings at the wall eaves of the main hall. The red-bricked walls have remained intact apart from the partial damage sustained at the north elevation. Granite dados have remained in good condition. White plaster of inner walls is basically undamaged, but lots of picture rails have been removed. The skirting remains largely intact. All plaster mouldings at the wall eaves have been removed. Made of red fair-faced brickwork, the enclosing walls have not been damaged.

13. The original floor paving of the main hall on the first floor of the main building was white marble, with a black-and-white Swastika pattern on the periphery. The paving has now been completely destroyed. Only a small portion of marble has been left in the passageway. The floor of the western round chamber and the eastern room was originally paved with large pieces of white mosaics laid in an arc-shaped radiation pattern. The paving has now been completely destroyed. The original floor paving of the chambers and rooms of the two wings was wood parquet tiles, which has remained intact except for a small damaged portion. The floor of the bathroom in the eastern chamber, paved with green ceramic tiles, remains in good condition. The floor of the one in the west, originally paved with small white square mosaics, however, has been completely destroyed. The original floor paving of the outer verandah, being coloured small square mosaics, has largely been damaged.

14. For the second level of the main building, the original parquet flooring of all the chambers and rooms formed by small pieces of wood has remained largely intact, with the exception of only a small part of it having been damaged. The flooring of the veranda and balcony, finished with coloured small square mosaics, has been removed entirely except an area of about 2 square metres at the balcony. While the flooring of the bathroom in the east has been replaced with modern marble, the original flooring of the one in the west, finished with pink tiles, has remained in good condition.

15. The original flooring on the third floor of the central chamber and the rear veranda at the main building, finished with small white hexagonal mosaics, has been completely removed. The flooring of the rooms on the two sides and the front balcony, finished with Canton tiles, has been well preserved. Natural cracks are found to have occurred on the terrazzo platform in front of the door. The original flooring of the entrance hall and the kitchen on the first floor, finished with small white hexagonal mosaics, has been completely removed. The same happened to the flooring of the entrance hall and the kitchen on the second floor, finished with square units composed of red and white octagonal cement bricks and small white hexagonal mosaics respectively.

16. The flooring of the passageway and the first and second levels of the annex block, all finished with square units composed of red and white octagonal cement bricks with the exception of the toilets, has been completely broken into pieces. The flooring of the subsidiary building and the pavilion, with small coloured mosaics laid in grid pattern, remains intact on the whole, as does the plain cement surface of the first level of the garage. The rooms and the verandas on the second level, paved with square units composed of red and white octagonal cement bricks, have been preserved in good condition.

17. Basically in the palatial architectural style of the Qing dynasty, the construction of the granite railings of the veranda on the first level of the main building is complete with balustrade posts and capitals, handrails and panels with cloud-shaped bracket having vase decoration fitted in-between, terraces and drum-shaped dropping belt stones on the two sides. The 20 capitals of the verandas in the north, east and west have all been broken. The verandas in the north and west both have a handrail being torn down. A drum-shaped dropping belt stone in the north veranda has also been destroyed, while a dropping belt stone is missing and a balustrade post has been removed.

18. Apart from the entrance door and the rear doors on the two sides of the screen wall of the internal courtyard, each outer door of the main building that opens outwards to the veranda comes with double doors. The inner door is a stained glass door in an iron frame while the outer door is a split sliding gate fitted inside the wall. The inner doors have all been removed, but the iron gates fitted inside the walls have suffered no damage with the exception of one. The entrance door has adopted a triple-door design. It consists of an outward-opening lattice door made of iron with rivets arranged in the character “壽” (longevity), an iron sliding door fitted inside the wall in the middle and a set of wooden doors that opens inwards. All the three layers of the door have now been removed. Only some residual parts of the outer door can be found. There are three types of windows, namely triple windows, double windows and single windows, most having been damaged.

Value Assessment

19. The value assessment of historical buildings is dynamic, based on information comprising the present condition of the buildings and written records.

Historical Value

20. King Yin Lei can be classified as a modern building. In terms of historical value, both the first and the second owners of the residence were renowned figures in Hong Kong. Its first owner Mrs. Shum Li Po-lun (岑李寶麟) was the daughter of Mr. Li Po-chun (李寶椿), a famous merchant in Hong Kong who made great contributions to many social welfare causes including medical services and education. Mrs. Shum's husband was a Chinese medicine practitioner who practised in Australia. There remains in the house a cast iron tool for grinding Chinese medicine, possibly left behind by Mr. Shum. Its second owners were Mr. Yow Qhei-man (邱子文) and his son Mr. Yow Mok-shing (邱木城). The father commenced the business of manufacturing traditional Chinese traditional dried fruit sweets and was known to local people as the "King of Dried Plums". His son is a famous businessman who is devoted to public charities, having made significant contributions to education. He has been appointed as Chairman of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, a Justice of the Peace and a Director of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce.

21. Hong Kong was a British colony. In more than a century of its modern architectural history, British colonial style architecture played a dominant role. The result was an eclectic mix encompassing weatherproof verandas into British architecture to suit the climate of South-east Asia. Around the 1930s, the building industry in Hong Kong developed slowly because of world economic and political problems, while its architecture began to be influenced by the international styles. It was around the same time that the republican government on the mainland of China advocated what was called "the intrinsic Chinese architectural style". A large number of educational, religious and government buildings having a blend of both Chinese palatial style architecture and advanced western building and structural technology emerged. However, private residences lavishly built in the style of Chinese palatial architecture were a rarity. It was remarkable indeed when such a mansion appeared in a prominent location at the Mid-Levels where British style buildings predominated. The house was therefore a distinctive construction standing out from the rest, bearing witness to the architectural history of Hong Kong and that of China, and providing life evidence for the study of architectural and social histories.

22. In addition, King Yin Lei at the Mid-Levels in Hong Kong is the only surviving example of Chinese palatial architecture built in early 20th century and which manifested the concept of "predominantly Chinese with Chinese and

Western elements nicely combined” (中西結合，以中爲主)。 Few buildings of a similar kind in other parts of Hong Kong could compare with King Yin Lei in terms of its excellence in architectural design, exquisiteness in craftsmanship and diversity in building materials.

Artistic Value

23. The artistic value of King Yin Lei is manifested in the overall architectural style and craftsmanship of the house. Roofed by traditional Chinese green-glazed tiles and surrounded by an external wall made of red fair-faced brickwork, it embodies the idea of “predominantly Chinese with Chinese and Western elements nicely combined”. The simplified version of ridge-end ornaments, immortals and mythical animals represents a style adopted in the then pseudo-classic architectural design of avoiding the elaborate decorations of Qing dynasty imperial buildings. The design concept of “style rather than layout” adopted by the architect represented the continuation of earlier attempts by Chinese pioneers to seek a blend of national layout and western architectural technology. In addition, the architect adopted the principle of differentiating the primary and the secondary, as reflected in the appearance, material and decoration of individual buildings and even each storey of the buildings. The architecture and its setting have fully shown that the architect was a master in understanding Qing dynasty structural layout, as he designed the house adopting the idea of having old, modern, Chinese and Western elements nicely blended but with predominantly modern and Chinese artistic concepts in mind.

24. King Yin Lei is also characterized by its first class craftsmanship. From the accuracy in the setting-out survey to the meticulous finishing in the decorations, they could only win the admiration of modern craftsmen. The 50 standardised windows at the main building on both storeys are impressive, being all of the same width and having almost the same distance apart. The terrazzo, in particular, is smooth and even in colour, arranged in straight lines and seamlessly connected.

Scientific Value

25. The scientific value of King Yin Lei is manifested in the scientific and technological principles involved in the site selection, orientations, adaptation to geographical and climatic conditions and the blend of modern architectural structure with ancient architectural layout. Although the building has been constructed for 70 years, no deformation or subsidence of foundation, structural cracks or tilting has been observed. This illustrates fully the scientific value involved in the architectural design and construction technology. By studying the architectural features of King Yin Lei, including its staircases, railings, doors and windows, we will be looking at a real-life example that shows the norms of Hong Kong architecture 70 years ago.

Social and Humanistic Value

26. The social and humanistic value of a historical building is reflected in the historical memory of the people and the display of original information. Due to the outstanding and specific architecture of the building, a Hong Kong TV drama entitled “Delightful Dream of the Capital” was shot on location there. A Hollywood film “Love is a Many Splendoured Thing” also chose the building for their scenes. If the residence can be preserved, the memory of Hong Kong people can be kept. In addition, the location, orientations and landscape arrangements of King Yin Lei provide good teaching material for the study of *Feng Shui*. The site also has tourism potential, as it offers a nice view of the Victoria harbour from the Mid-Levels.

Value after Restoration

27. The damage done to King Yin Kei has largely been confined to architectural features and decoration. The architectural layout, structure and main construction materials remain undamaged. Historical information about the architectural craftsmanship for the restoration works can be obtained by analysing the removed broken features and their associated traditional craftsmanship. The architectural layout, architectural structure, construction materials and the building craftsmanship of the heritage building have remained. Lost historical materials have mainly been some decorative materials and artistic features. If such materials can be made to order, or if we can find some historical pictures of the features or find the fitting features of similar buildings of the same period as models, the lost features can then be produced. With the available information about the original state and current technology, 80% of the original artistic appearance of the house can be restored. Its heritage value can also be basically revived.

Feasibility of Restoration

28. Apart from making reference to available photos, patterns of ridge-end ornaments, mythical animals, tile ends and drip (tiles) of glazed roof tiles, decorative patterns of damaged beam heads and bracket sets at the front of the eaves as well as joint brackets and architraves under the eaves can be found from remnants and traces at the scene. Methods of construction and styles of most doors and windows, different flooring materials and styles, and the original appearance of damaged railings can also be known. What have not been found from the present scene are models for the wooden entrance door of the main building, the rear doors of the internal courtyard and the double-layered wooden sliding door.

29. Many of the traditional materials are rarely produced now, as they are no longer used in modern times. In some cases the craftsmanship has been

lost with the passage of time. Materials that would be rather difficult to produce are red brickwork, coloured mosaics, stained glass and cement tiles. Rarely used nowadays, the craftsmanship involving terrazzo will be difficult to master. The repair of the dents to the walls made of red fair-faced brickwork will also be a difficult task for the craftsmen.

30. Works that are recommended to be done at the present stage include: (1) Clear up the site and pay attention to collecting useful historical information and repairable features with photos taken for record purpose; (2) Full waterproof treatment for the roofs and remove any remaining mortar there (after photo-taking and recording the positions of the tiles), clean the roofs, inspect and repair cracks, apply waterproof materials and apply waterproof cover; (3) Appeal to the public for acquiring old photos and historical drawings of the complex to enhance authenticity of restoration works; photos or drawings of the wooden door of the main building, staircase handrail end, double-layered sliding door and detailed features of the folding doors would be particularly needed.

**Heritage Assessment of King Yin Lei at 45 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong
by the Antiquities and Monuments Office**

Historical value

The Building has strong association with two famous families. It was built in 1937 by Mrs Shum Li Po-lun (岑李寶麟), the granddaughter of Mr Li Sing (李陞) and the daughter of Li Po-chun (李寶椿), both were notable merchants and philanthropists in Hong Kong. The husband of Mrs Shum Li Po-lun is Mr Shum Yat-chor (岑日初). Mr Shum was Director of Xinhui Commercial Association in Hong Kong (僑港新會商會董事) during the 1930s and 1940s. He also devoted himself to educational and social welfare activities. For example, he donated generously towards the establishment of Ai Ren Babe Nursery (愛仁育嬰院) and Gong Yu Primary School (公餘小學) in his home place. From 1978, the Building became the property of the Yeo (邱) family which is one of the famous merchant clans in Hong Kong. Mr. Yow Mok-shing (邱木城) was appointed as Chairman of Tung Wah Group of Hospitals in 1979, and donated a large sum of money for building secondary schools in memory of his grandfather and uncle. He was also appointed as a Justice of the Peace in 1981 and appointed to the Board of Directors of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce Limited (香港潮州商會會董). All these names are still familiar to the general public of Hong Kong, reflecting their high social status at the time and the legacy they had left behind through their philanthropic acts.

2. The Building is important in signifying the historical development of Hong Kong. As one of the luxurious historic houses located along the hillside of Hong Kong Island, the Building reflects the rising status and growing wealth of the Chinese community in Hong Kong. It also represents an earlier phase of Hong Kong history when the upper-class residential area took shape in the Mid-Levels.

Architectural value

3. The Building was built in the “Chinese Renaissance”¹ style that was

¹ After the first batch of Chinese who studied architecture overseas returned in the 1910s, they joined foreign architectural enterprises, and later became partners or even opened their own companies. With this background, they were able to design Western, Chinese or East-meets-West styles. During the 1920s, Chinese government began to call upon Chinese to revive traditional culture, and a belief that Chinese architects should mix Eastern and Western architectural knowledge to enhance the characteristics of traditional Chinese architectures started to spread. Many talented and creative Chinese architects of the time applied their Western knowledge to design taller buildings with traditional elements, like dragon-and-phoenix patterns on the ceiling, and are termed as Chinese Renaissance Style. (Reference: “The legacy of Chinese architects”, China Daily, 1 April 2004.)

very popular between the 1920's to 1930's in Hong Kong. It is a fine and unique example of the style that generally features a Western floor plan with lavish Chinese decorations and architectural elements (such as *zhongxi jiehe*, *yizhong weizhu* 中西結合, 以中爲主). It is roofed by two hip-and-gable roofs (歇山), one for the central loft and one for the main wings, with hip roofs. On the other hand, there is Western architecture's influence in the structure, materials and plan of the Building. The Building is an outstanding and unique example of such a style as it combines the Chinese and Western architectural influences in a very sophisticated manner.

4. The Building demonstrates superb construction technology and craftsmanship in Hong Kong's early colonial period. For instance, a comprehensive surface water system is designed to run underneath in order to prevent washing off the surface and the retaining walls. Moreover, reinforced concrete was used to replace the traditional wooden structural roof members in the early part of this period. Apart from such advanced building techniques, traditional construction methods can also be seen throughout the Building, including an impressive glazed tiled roof, incorporating finely designed traditional Chinese ornaments. The roof is enhanced by Chinese bracket sets, completed with a concealed drainage system, decorated ridges and overhanging eaves, which reflects construction excellence in the pre-war period.

5. It is also found that the building materials used in the Building, for instance, stained glass windows, ceramic wall tiles, hardwood block flooring in main rooms, glazed ceramic tiles to roof, etc. are all in superlative quality. Some building materials are the same as those used in outstanding historical buildings in Mainland China, e.g. roof tiles, floor tiles, demonstrating a close connection between the Building and Mainland China in that period.

6. The Building is considered to be a valuable display of artwork that is fully decorated by fine traditional Chinese motifs and architectural decorations constructed in concrete. For example, Chinese brackets sets (斗栱), lintel (額枋) with grano finished pattern similar to *Wo-Sai* Painting (和西彩畫) and joint brackets (雀替) are adopted at the under-eaves along roof edges. Timber-framed windows with Chinese pattern metal muntins and grano finished window casings are adopted on the elevations. The big round window on the courtyard wall is very appealing and is a further feature of the glamorous style of the Building. Although damage has been done to these decorative works, some original features can still be found and remain intact. In view of the richness and details in Chinese architectural features, this historical residence could most probably be defined as an outstanding architectural work constructed in Hong Kong's pre-war period. Finding another piece of detailed artwork of such a high quality elsewhere in Hong Kong would be extremely difficult if not impossible.

Integrity and Authenticity

7. In assessing the heritage value of the Building, two important factors should be taken into consideration – namely, integrity and authenticity. In terms of authenticity, the Building today still retains its original design and physical setting. Although some old style furnishings, interior walls and roof tiles have been partially removed or damaged, the overall structure, layout and silhouette of the Building remain intact with little alteration to the façade and elevations. As for the garden, except for some stone-carved handrails and decorative lightings that had been demolished, the remaining parts (including carved fences and plants within the garden) are generally undamaged. The damage has not significantly affected the overall setting of the structures and the elegant layout of the site. The integrity is on the whole preserved.

8. According to Professor Tang's assessment, the architectural features have suffered damage to different extents, but the damage is mainly confined to the decorations and finishes. The basic layout and structure of the Building have not been damaged, and the foundation and base of the building complex are safe. By studying the demolished elements and making reference to corresponding traditional craftsmanship, the damaged parts of the Building could be restored. The original appearance of the Building could be restored up to 80% based on the information on the original architectural appearance now in hand and current restoration techniques.

Rarity

9. The “east-meet-west” construction methods have made the Building quite a rarity in Hong Kong and an obvious piece of valuable built heritage. It is a rare surviving example of Chinese Renaissance style that reflects the design and construction excellence in both Chinese and Western architecture in Hong Kong's pre-World War II period. There are not too many buildings in Hong Kong characterising the Chinese Renaissance style.

Social Value

10. The Building is a popular spot for taking photographs by visitors. The vast and picturesque Building is an icon which will remind people not only of the luxurious life of the Chinese elite class, but also the history of prominent Chinese families which was an integral part of the success story of Hong Kong. The social value of the Building also lies in the role it played in the film heritage and entertainment industry of Hong Kong. The mansion has been featured in films of international renown such as *Soldier of Fortune* (1955), *Love is a Many-Splendoured Thing* (1955) and a locally produced television series *Jinghua chunmeng* (京華春夢, ‘Delightful Dream of the Capital’) (1980). These

examples reflect the high scenic character of the site.

**Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
February 2008**

Layout plans and relevant photos of the site to be granted to the owner of King Yin Lei for land exchange

Aerial photo of the sites



Layout plan of proposed development



View on the man-made slope as at January 2008



Layout of proposed development



Aerial view showing new houses covering up the man-made slope without affecting view of residential and institutional buildings



New houses helping to cover up man-made slope and enhance cityscape

