

# Cultural Facilities: A Study on Their Requirements and the Formulation of New Planning Standards and Guidelines

Executive Summary December 1999



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## ABBREVIATIONS

HKADC = Hong Kong Arts Development Council  
HKAPA = Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts  
HKPSG = Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines  
HKTA = Hong Kong Tourist Association  
RC = Provisional Regional Council  
RSD = Provisional Regional Council  
UC = Provisional Urban Council  
USD = Urban Services Department

## INTRODUCTION

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### *The Study*

The Study on the Requirements of Cultural Facilities and the Formulation of New Planning Standards and Guidelines for Cultural Facilities was carried out in 1998/99. The overall objective of the study was:

'to assess the requirements for cultural facilities up to year 2011 to enable better planning to meet the needs of the community. On the basis of the findings, a Cultural Facilities Framework will be prepared and planning standards and guidelines to guide the planning and provision of such facilities will be formulated.'

### *Scope of the Study*

The study recognises that there is not necessarily a clear distinction between cultural and commercial entertainment activities. "Cultural facilities" in the context of this study refers to dedicated facilities for the accommodation of arts activities including dance, music, theatrical arts, film and media arts, traditional performing arts, visual arts and literary arts. Commercial and entertainment oriented venues such as cinemas and discos etc. are excluded from the study.

Furthermore, only arts museums and arts libraries are considered as cultural facilities in the context of this study. Other museums and libraries have been excluded from the study. Although it is acknowledged that these are also important cultural facilities, their requirements and level of provision are determined by quite different factors and would have to be the subject of a separate study.

### *Study Approach*

The Study was divided into five stages. They were:

Stage 1: Background Studies;

Stage 2: Surveys and Consultations;

Stage 3: International Experience;

Stage 4: Demand Assessment and Identification of Key Issues; and

Stage 5: Formulation of Planning Framework and Guidelines.

It is important to recognise that the analysis and recommendations of the study draw mainly on the results of the consultations with stakeholders<sup>1</sup>, surveys of households and cultural facility users, case studies of provision in other cities and a forum discussion with stakeholders on the study's preliminary findings and recommendations. In this sector of activity the views of these groups have been particularly important and cannot be substituted by market, financial or other quantitative analyses.

<sup>1</sup> *Organisations consulted included providers of cultural facilities, professional performing companies, representative organisations of the arts community, relevant Government bureaux / departments, quasi-public agencies and professional organisations.*

## FACILITY PROVISION IN HONG KONG

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### *Policy on Cultural Facilities Provision*

The study commenced by reviewing existing policy on the provision of cultural facilities. It should be noted that it is not the purpose of this study to make recommendations on changes in cultural policy, which remains the responsibility of the policy agencies. The formulation of a framework for cultural facilities provision has been based on existing arts and cultural policies.

At present the Home Affairs Bureau is the main policy bureau responsible for matters related to culture and cultural facilities provision in Hong Kong. However, most existing cultural facilities are managed by the Provisional Urban Council (UC) and the Provisional Regional Council (RC). These Councils have independent budgets and their own Five Year Plans on cultural facility provision. Consequently, their facilities provision policy is largely project driven, focussing on immediate needs identified in their respective areas.

In the course of the Study, the Government announced that the UC and RC would be wound up and a new system of Municipal Government would be adopted. The Government further elaborated its support for the development of the arts, culture, sport and recreation as well as preservation of our heritage in the Policy Objectives delivered in October 1999. With respect to the development and management of cultural facilities:

- a Culture and Heritage Commission will be established in January 2000 to advise Government on overall cultural policy and on funding priorities for culture and the arts;
- a new Leisure and Cultural Services Department will be established in January 2000 to take up the Provisional Municipal Council's duties in respect of the arts, culture, sport and recreation;
- private sector initiatives will be introduced and the possibility of contracting out or corporatising some cultural services and venues will be pursued; and
- the three UC performing companies<sup>2</sup> will be corporatised.

There is a need for a further review of the development framework after the new cultural administration structure has been established and overall cultural policy has been reviewed.

**Most existing cultural facilities are managed by the two Municipal Councils.**



Sha Tin Hall Town Hall (Source: RC)



Hong Kong Cultural Centre (Source: HKTA)

<sup>2</sup> Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Dance Company and Hong Kong Repertory Theatre

## Provision of Cultural Facilities

### Existing Provision

At present Hong Kong has 23 major cultural facilities where cultural activities are carried on regularly (Table 1). Of the 23 facilities, 13 are provided and managed by the UC through its executive arm, the Urban Services Department (USD), and 6 facilities by the RC through the Regional Services Department (RSD). There are only 4 non-Government operated venues.

**Table 1: Major Cultural Facilities in Hong Kong**

Name	Description	Managed by
Hong Kong	Cultural Centre	Cultural Complex USD
City Hall	Major	Civic Centre USD
Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA)	Educational Institute	HKAPA
Hong Kong Arts Centre	Private Facilities	Hong Kong Arts Centre
Fringe Club	Private Facilities	Fringe Club
Hong Kong Coliseum	Sports/Events Stadium	USD
Queen Elizabeth Stadium	Sports/Events Stadium	USD
Hong Kong Museum of Art	Museum	USD
Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre	Museum	USD
Space Museum	Museum	USD
Science Museum	Museum	USD
Hong Kong Arts Library	Library	USD
Sheung Wan Civic Centre	Community Arts Centre	USD
Ngau Chi Wan Civic Centre	Community Arts Centre	USD
Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre	Community Arts Centre	USD
Ko Shan Theatre	Community Arts Centre	USD
Tsuen Wan Town Hall	Major Civic Centre	RSD
Tuen Mun Town Hall	Major Civic Centre	RSD
Sha Tin Town Hall	Major Civic Centre	RSD
Tai Po Civic Centre	Minor Civic Centre	RSD
North District Town Hall	Minor Civic Centre	RSD
Lut Sau Hall	Minor Civic Centre	RSD
Sun Beam Theatre	Private Theatre	private company

The majority of the facilities are multi-purpose in design. The Cultural Centre and HKAPA have the highest quality purpose-designed theatres and concert halls. The Arts Centre has smaller, good quality theatres and the Ko Shan Theatre has been refurbished to provide quality venues suitable for musical and theatrical events. The Visual Arts Centre is the only dedicated facility for visual art. Most of the facilities also include exhibition galleries, rehearsal rooms, dance studios, lecture rooms and workshop space.

There are few 'alternative spaces'<sup>3</sup> for experimental works and contemporary arts compared with the number of traditional performing/exhibition venues. Occasionally, certain non-dedicated facilities are used for cultural activities. These include the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, open spaces, shopping malls, lobbies of office buildings as well as private and public housing estates. There are also a number of commercial art galleries.

### Future Provision

All the committed and potential developments are those proposed in the current plans and programmes of the two Municipal Councils (Table 2). These new facilities are predominantly purpose-designed facilities for selected artforms. In addition, the Feasibility Study on the New Performance Venue undertaken by the Hong Kong Tourist Association has been completed. In a wider context, opportunities for provision of arts and cultural facilities in the development of the waterfront of the Central and Wanchai reclamation, and West and South East Kowloon reclamations will be considered by the Government. The distribution of existing and committed facilities are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

[\[Table Summary\]](#)

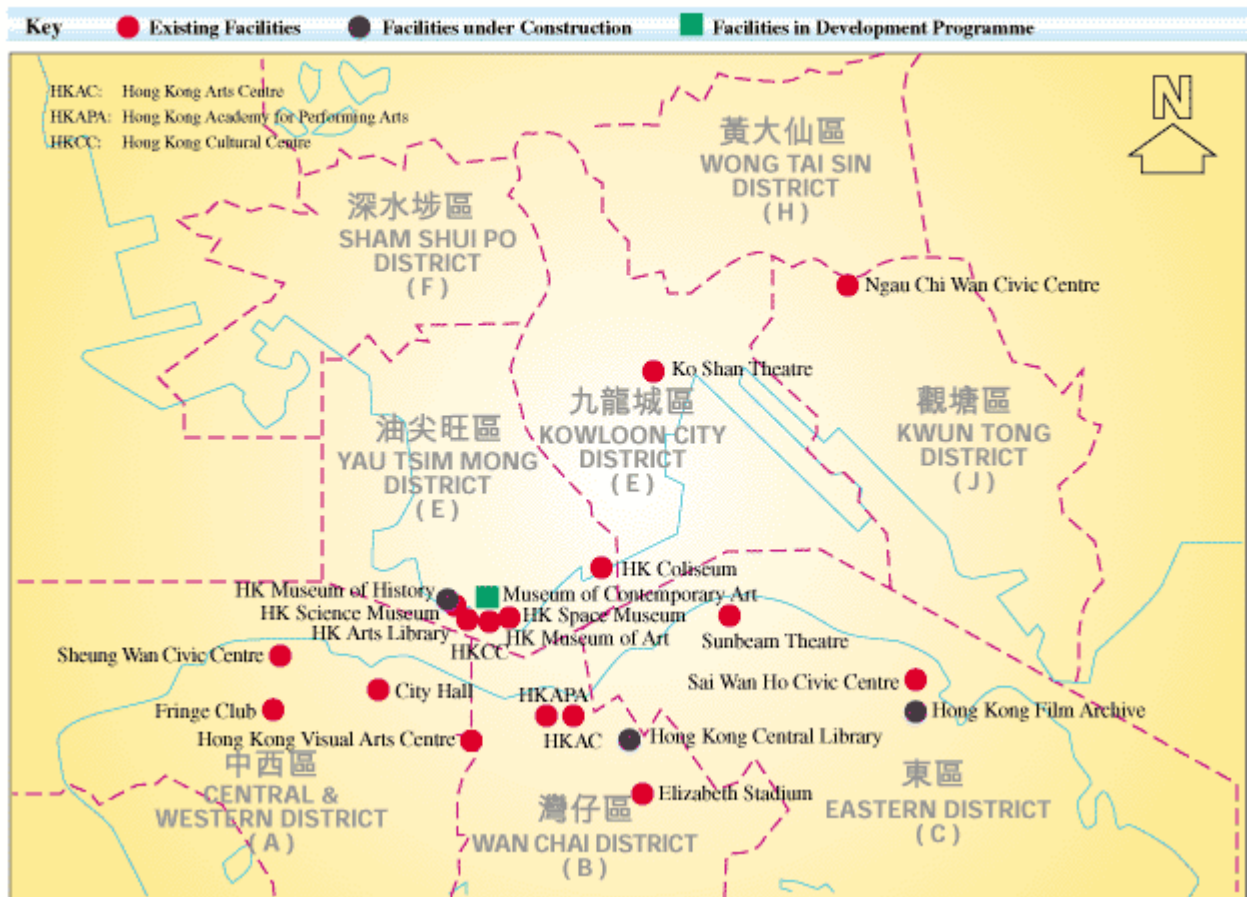
**Table 2: Committed and Potential Cultural Facilities Developments**

Project	Provision Agency	Status
Kwai Tsing Theatre	RC	Completed in 1999
Yuen Long Theatre	RC	Under construction
Hong Kong Museum of History	UC	Under construction, partially open
Hong Kong Heritage Museum	RC	Under construction
Hong Kong Central Library	UC	Under construction
Hong Kong Film Archive	UC	Under construction
Museum of Contemporary Art	UC	In development programme
Regional Indoor Stadium	RC	In development programme
New Performance Venue	HKTA/Private Sector	Proposal
1000 seat theatre	UC	Proposal
Two 800 seat theatres	UC	Proposal
400 seat Studio Theatre	UC	Proposal
Four civic centres in Tai Po, Sai Kung, Tung Chung and North District	RC	Proposal

<sup>3</sup>space for 'Alternative' usually independent, arts activities

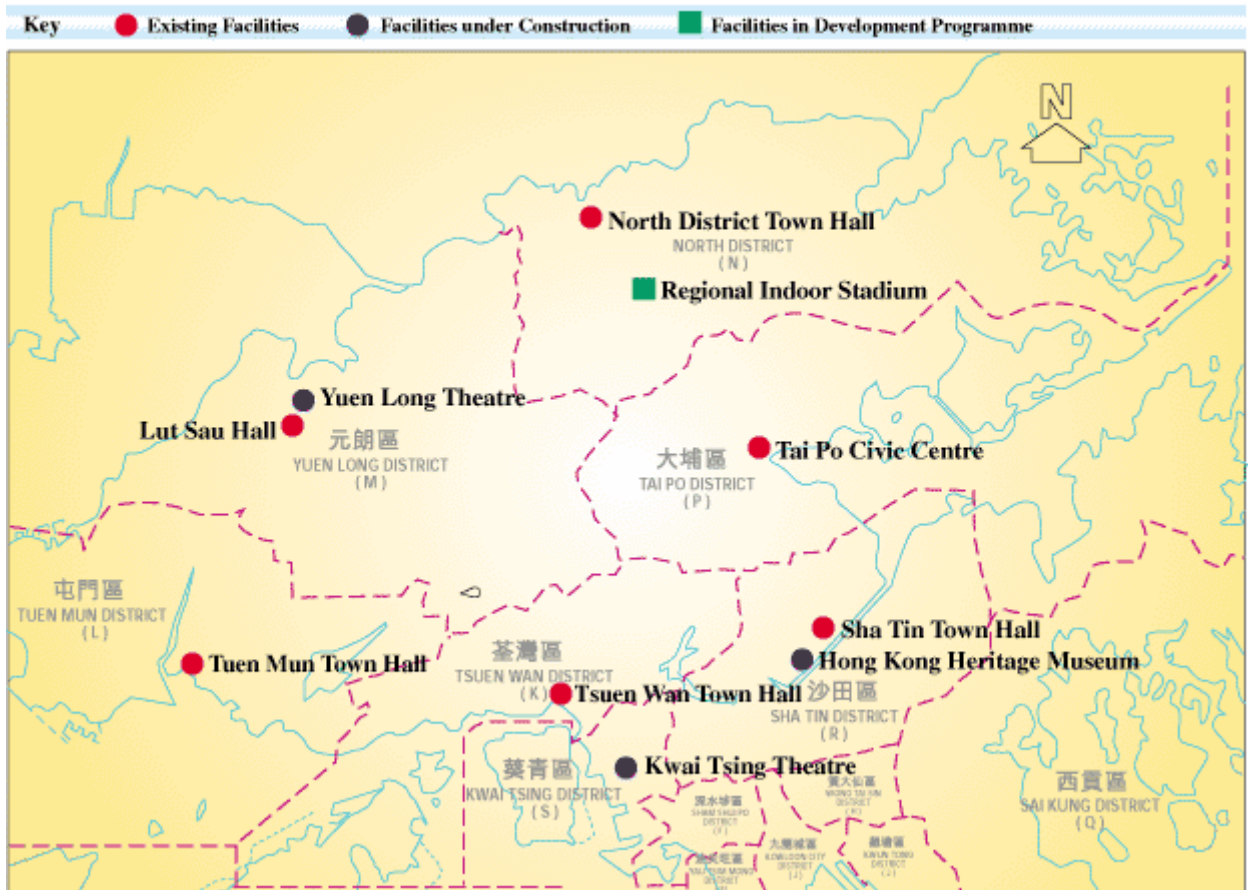


**Figure 1: Existing and New Cultural Facilities in Hong Kong Island and Kowloon**



[\[ Text Version \]](#)

**Figure 2: Existing and New Cultural Facilities in the New Territories**



## ***Use of Existing Facilities***

A detailed analysis of the usage of existing performing and exhibition facilities for performances and events showed that large venues (1,000 seats and above), particularly those in the city centre, are very well utilised. Most venues are approaching saturation point. Small to medium-size performing venues (less than 1,000 seats) in the city centre are also reasonably well utilised. However, not all of this use is for cultural purposes, particularly of sports stadiums and lecture halls in museums. Public exhibition venues are also reasonably well utilised. The UC and RC are the main users of their own performing and exhibition venues.

Analysis of the use of ancillary facilities for rehearsals, practice, workshops, lectures and seminars shows that rehearsal rooms and dance studios are reasonably well utilised. Music practice rooms, lecture rooms and conference rooms which are less well equipped are much less popular. Most of these facilities are used by hirers. The three function rooms at those minor civic centres in the New Territories which have very high usage rates are heavily used by schools and community groups which share the facilities with the RC.

### **New cultural facilities are predominantly purpose-designed facilities for selected artforms.**



Kwai Tsing Theatre (Source: RC)



Yuen Long Theatre (Source: RC)

The best attended venues are the Cultural Centre, City Hall, Arts Centre and the HKAPA. Among these four facilities, the attendance rates were highest at the private/semi-private venues - the Arts Centre and the HKAPA. This is primarily related to the policies of the two Municipal Councils to present a balance of cultural programmes in their venues. The Arts Centre and the HKAPA which are managed in a more private manner tend to invite more commercial programmes to secure higher box office income. The study also found that, even for the Cultural Centre which is the most popular public venue, the capture rate<sup>4</sup> was only 10% of the resident population for year 1996/97.

An examination of the use of the 15 most popular community centres/halls shows that, with a few exceptions, community centres and halls are rarely used for cultural activities.

**The Arts Centre & the HKAPA which are managed in a more private manner tend to invite more commercial programmes**



(Source: Arts Centre)



(Source: HKAPA)

<sup>4</sup> Capture rate is the percentage of the population attending one presentation in a selected venue in a year



## SURVEYS, CONSULTATIONS & INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES

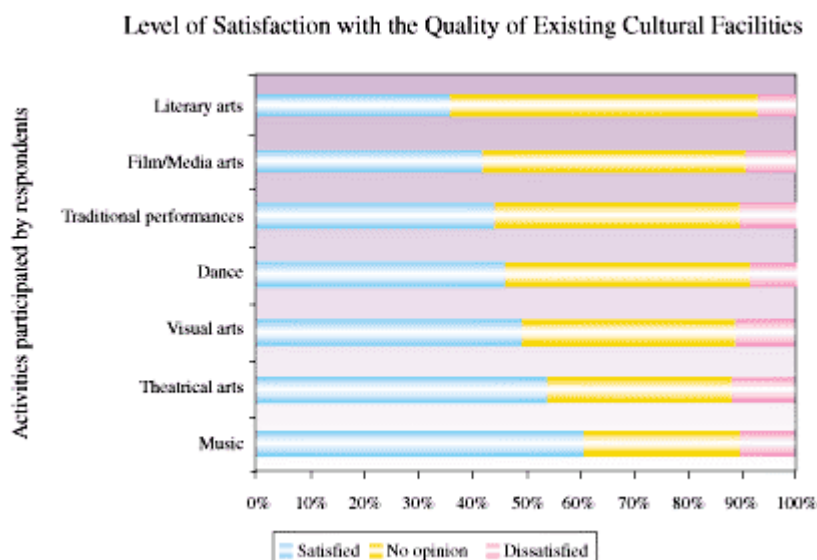
The study carried out two surveys (i.e. Survey of Public Attitudes and Survey of Facility Users), a series of structured interviews with key stakeholders and a discussion forum. These surveys and consultations were intended to solicit the views of the providers and users of cultural facilities, the arts community, the general public and relevant professional organisations. Over 800 local residents and 400 cultural facility users were interviewed and more than 45 relevant stakeholders in the arts community were consulted to collect information on their views, habits and aspirations on cultural facilities in Hong Kong. The interviews were conducted between mid 1998 and early 1999 and the discussion forum was held on 12 December 1998.

In the light of the particular experience of Hong Kong the consultants were also asked to carry out a short international research and case study exercise to compare the experience of other cities in Asia, North America and Europe. This was carried out in December 1998 and January 1999.

### Main Findings of Surveys

- the level of participation in cultural activities is very low: less than 20% of the local residents interviewed has participated in cultural activities in the past year and on average they spent less than 12 days on artform activities. The majority of them participated as members of an audience or as visitors to an exhibition;
- among the local residents who had not participated in cultural activities, the main reasons for not participating are the lack of time, interest in cultural activities and knowledge about activities;
- the majority of people participate in cultural activities on Saturdays, Sundays and to a lesser extent, on Fridays, mainly in the evenings. The pattern of participation of people attending arts courses are not significantly different from that of those attending performances or exhibitions;

### The majority of Hong Kong residents and users of cultural facilities are satisfied with the quality of existing cultural facilities



- music and the theatrical arts are the most popular cultural activities;
- Hong Kong Cultural Centre and City Hall are the most popular cultural venues;
- the most popular venues are concentrated in Central, Wanchai and Tsim Sha Tsui;
- on average about \$200 - \$300 were spent on the most recently visited cultural event but most spent much less than this average value. Most respondents believe the present price structure for cultural activities is reasonable. Opinion is divided on the range of price increases which respondents could tolerate;
- the most important factors influencing participation in cultural activities are transport accessibility (i.e. proximity to rail stations and other public transport), marketing and promotional support provided by the facilities and the quality of the facilities;
- the majority of the residents and users felt that the existing cultural facilities are satisfactory in terms of quantity, quality, accessibility and supporting facilities provided. However, marketing and promotion support were the factors most often mentioned as being inadequate; and
- the level of participation in cultural activities tends to be higher for people who are better educated, have professional jobs and have higher incomes.

### ***Main Findings of Consultations with Stakeholders and Consultation Forum***

- The wide range of organisations consulted concurred on many issues but conflicted in some important areas. Generally, there was perceived to be an overall sufficiency in the aggregate quantity of space but a wide range of specific deficiencies in key facility areas, sectors and in specific locations - both in terms of the allocation and operation of existing facilities and the development of new facilities. Specifically:
- There was a strong view that high quality elite arts facilities at accessible locations are under-provided. Some of the arts groups and commercial organisers of international events believed that allocation policies for existing facilities by the UC and RC could be improved to meet their needs for the longer term booking periods they require. They also wanted more opportunities to influence the design and management of facilities.

The arts community feels that high quality elite arts facilities at accessible locations are under-provided.



Cultural Centre Concert Hall (Source: UC)



( Source: HKAPA)

There is a need for more flexible arts space or "alternative" space for non-mainstream arts activities.



(Source: Arts Centre)



(Source: Arts Centre)

- The number of high quality purpose-designed venues available was considered to be inadequate, especially in the 600 to 1,000-seat range. Some groups criticised the large number of multi-function venues as being the wrong size and design to cater for their needs. However multi-function venues were built primarily to meet a wide range of community needs and facilities currently under construction or proposed by the two Councils are more purpose-designed.
- There is limited provision of home base facilities for professional performing companies and semi-professional arts groups. Many consultees stressed that the lack of home base facilities, which would help them build up their identity and audience loyalty, has limited arts development in Hong Kong.
- Some arts groups advocated the need for more flexible arts space or "alternative" space for non-mainstream arts activities. More flexible arts space will allow artists to have better control of their facilities and encourage networking. It was believed that such a demand could be met by providing more "converted space" and encouraging better use of non-dedicated facilities for arts activities.
- Consultees also identified the need for more rehearsal and workshop venues. Other under-provided supporting/ancillary facilities include storage space, car parks, loading/unloading facilities, catering outlets and themed retail shops.
- The lack of facilities for arts education was also emphasised by the consultees. Consultees felt strongly that the provision at local level, i.e. community centres, is too low in quality and poorly managed.
- Some of the groups consulted pointed to the need to reach out and interact with the community. They wanted more opportunities to perform and display their work in public "non-dedicated areas" such as parks, streets and shopping malls etc.

The need for more rehearsal and workshop venues, arts education facilities and other supporting / ancillary facilities was also identified.



Ceramic Studio  
(Source: Arts Centre)



Dance Studio (Source: RC)



Dark Room (Source: Arts Centre)



Parking Facilities  
(Source: Sino Land)



Rehearsal Venue  
(Source: Arts Centre)



Catering Facilities  
(Source: Viceroy Restaurant & Bar)

- There is broad agreement among consultees that both the strengths and weaknesses of the present pattern of cultural facility provision derives from the existing pattern of public sector ownership. To establish a better balance, mechanisms are needed to involve the private sector in the provision of cultural facilities, whilst recognising that this is difficult to achieve and may bring over commercialisation.

Although most organisations and individuals consulted have emphasised the contribution to the cultural life of Hong Kong which can be made through the better use of existing facilities, it should be stressed that this study is focussed on new development, re-use and renewal opportunities. Irrespective of the proposed changes in the roles and responsibilities of the UC and RC, this study does not include recommendations on the further improvement of existing facilities or their existing or future management. This will remain the responsibility of the owners and managers of these venues.

## ***Issues and Lessons from International Experience***

An international research exercise provided comparative information from nine cities. Four of these cities, Singapore, Sydney, Manchester and Boston, were visited and examined in more detailed case studies.

The research and case studies examined some of the issues which had been identified as significant in shaping cultural facility provision in Hong Kong including:

- the ownership and management of existing facilities;
- roles of public agencies and organisations in the development process;
- the use of planning standards and facilities/area plans; and
- funding regimes and strategies.

In practice, city experience varies substantially depending primarily on the level of historic and cultural development and the cultural and ethnic mix of the cities. Certainly cities cannot be compared simply by their size or economic wealth, or by using population or economic based standards. Most emphasised the need to be market led or actively supply led. Though many of the same issues can be identified, solutions were often very different and raised other issues for Hong Kong. However some useful lessons and best practice can be drawn from these cities.

### ***Comparison of Existing Facilities, their Ownership and Management***

By comparing the size of dedicated cultural performance venues, we have noted that Hong Kong's profile is clearly different from almost all other cities. There is a greater concentration of major venues in the city centres or arts districts of all of these major cities than in Hong Kong.

Also no city shows the level of domination of ownership and operation by the public sector as does Hong Kong. Indeed, in nearly all cities the private sector operate most venues - either by the performing companies or by specialist management companies - and, with one or two exceptions, there is virtually no involvement of government in the operation of performing companies.

Many cities have recognised the unique contribution of cultural development to the "livability" and the economic development of the city.



Sydney Opera House

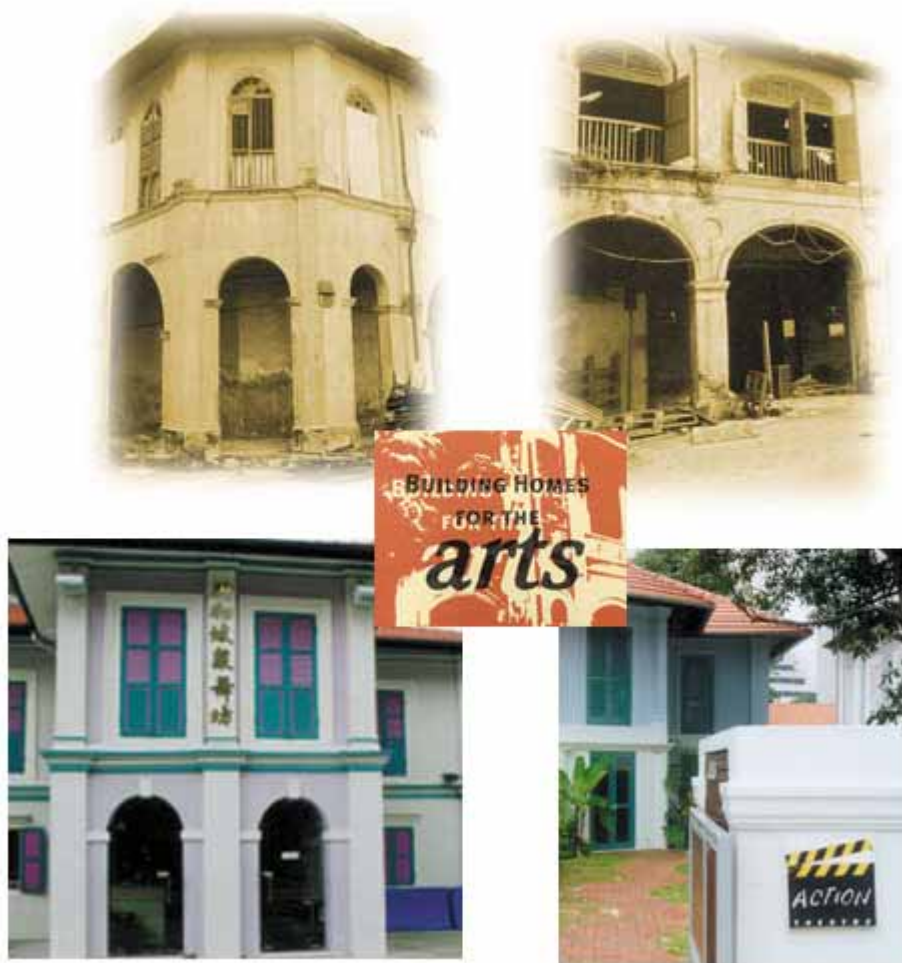
<sup>5</sup> *Boston, Lyon, London (South Bank), Manchester, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney, Tel Aviv, Tokyo*

## ***Review of the Types and Roles of Agencies and Organisations Responsible***

However, the level of involvement of the public sector in the arts as a whole in these cities is universally high. Even in cities such as Boston and Tokyo where the private sector is responsible for most facility development and operation, there is still a wide range of public organisations involved in 'administering' the arts. Some cities have up to three tiers of government departments involved in cultural administration - excluding planning and development authorities. In this respect, Hong Kong's high level of public involvement and funding is delivered through relatively few layers of government and the HKADC.

The most significant role of government in these cases is in the planning and development of facilities. Many of these have recognised the unique contribution of cultural development to the 'liveability' and, therefore, the economic development of the city. Major urban renaissance programmes and area renewal strategies in these cities have invariably incorporated significant cultural developments.

Arts Housing Scheme - Singapore National Arts Council believes that conservation buildings for the arts can help revitalize some old districts culturally and economically.



(Source: National Arts Council)



## *The Use of Planning Standards and of Facilities/Area Plans*

With two exceptions, the study has not identified any cities which adopt universal population or economic standards for cultural facilities provision. The two exceptions identified are:

- Shanghai which sets indicative population based quantitative objectives through the 5-year plan system.
- Singapore's National Arts Council and Urban Redevelopment Authority have adopted a 'benchmarking' system. A benchmark is derived by comparing the experience and actual levels of provision achieved by a 'target' city - in this case the City of Glasgow in the UK.
- The experience of cities in facilities plan making shows a range of different approaches:
- Only Singapore prepares a statutory plan for cultural facilities which is part of a comprehensive statutory planning system. Sydney has prepared a very comprehensive Facilities Plan but not adopted it formally. Nevertheless, it is used to guide area development plans and development control.
- Cultural Facilities Area Plans have been prepared by Sydney, Singapore, Manchester and Boston on a more or less comprehensive basis. The Boston Midtown Cultural Area Plan is an Action Plan for implementation of development within this area which is a statutory part of the development control system.

Boston Midtown Cultural Area Plan is an action plan for implementation of development.



(Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority)

- Investment programmes for cultural areas based on statutory or non-statutory plans have been a feature of development in Sydney, Manchester and Singapore and have been proposed for London (South Bank). Most of these have formed part of urban renewal or economic development programmes where cultural activities are expected to play a significant role.

### ***A Comparison of Funding Regimes and Strategies***

Development funding for cultural facilities has attracted a wide range of different initiatives. Direct public sector development funding is still common in cities such as Tel Aviv, Lyon and Singapore. However, an increasingly popular approach is to set up joint public/private development partnerships. This approach attracts private sector contributions to commercial projects and cross subsidises the costs of infrastructure and cultural projects.

Perhaps the most creative use of private sector funding for development has been the use of planning controls, planning gain mechanisms (increased plot ratio, transfer of benefits to other sites), and land assembly by the public sector which requires developers to build or refurbish cultural facilities at their own cost as part of a mixed development.

Refurbishment of the Royal Exchanges as a modern theatre is a 'flagship' development in the renewal of Manchester City Centre.



Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester

## MEETING NEEDS FOR CULTURAL FACILITIES

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The study has examined the structure and determinants of the future demand for cultural facilities. However, an underlying principle of the approach to assessing future demand is that the demand for cultural facilities is primarily driven by public policies on the arts and led by the supply of facilities. Unlike other sectors of development activity, the results of the policy review, surveys and consultations, and all international experience, show that the demand for cultural activities is the result of much more complex interactive factors.

The factors determining needs identified by the residents and stakeholders consulted in this study include:

- demand for cultural performance and exhibition venues is not measurable from audience participation alone but also from artists needs, the promotion of arts education, the need to nurture audiences and development of local budding artists;
- demand is therefore primarily policy driven through the promotion of the arts, arts education, artistic development, tourism development, and the desire to position Hong Kong as the Asian centre of arts and culture. As such, the demand for facilities is primarily supply-led. This places a particular onus on the supply of facilities to be well market researched and/or to be justified by a clear policy commitment;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the present pattern of cultural facility provision derive from the existing pattern of public ownership and management of facilities. Hong Kong has not set out to encourage private sector involvement. By providing a subsidised public monopoly, it has effectively discouraged private sector competition; and
- research has emphasised that there are a wide range of cultural facilities in Hong Kong and the levels of demand for these types of facilities are different. Some of them are very well utilised but some are not. Most of the differences stem from the quality and geographical distribution of facilities.

**There is a need for commercial cultural facilities for major international performances.**



Proposed New Performance Venue (Source: HKTA)

## ***Need for New Cultural Facilities***

Drawing on the above, the study has concluded that the priority needs for new facilities are as follows:

- commercial cultural facilities for major international performances which are also significant tourist attractions;
- purpose-designed medium scale performing venues of 600 to 1,000 seats;
- private sector provision of small scale performance studio venues with 100-300 seats;
- at community level, there is a demand for space for preparatory activities such as studios, workshops, classrooms and small rehearsal and performance space. Whilst the quality of the space can be modest, a high degree of freedom in usage without rigid procedures and restrictions is important;
- ancillary space for storage, set and prop making, a 'scrap store' etc.;
- 'alternative' space for non-mainstream arts activities (contemporary art galleries, black box theatres, workshops etc.);
- greater use of streets and open space to encourage interaction in the community through public arts. Similarly wider use of shopping malls and other public spaces should be made; and
- showgrounds and temporary sites for short term performances and events.

## ***Adequacy of Existing and Planned Provision***

- The study considered whether the existing and planned supply of facilities in current plans and programmes is likely to be adequate to meet this level and pattern of demand. The main gaps identified included:
  - suitable venues for world class performances. The proposed development of a new, high quality performance venue for international performances has been advocated strongly by the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA) to fill this gap;
  - the need for more informal or 'alternative' space, and flexible 'art space' for installation arts and contemporary arts is not addressed by the committed developments and proposals;
  - there is generally an insufficient provision of supporting facilities proposed. The principal gaps are restaurants, car parking and loading/unloading facilities, bookshops, souvenir shops, box offices, information kiosks, etc. which are important for the creation of a better cultural experience; and
  - lastly, existing and proposed provision of community level facilities such as venues for classes, rehearsals and practices, workshops, small scale performances and exhibitions falls short of the arts community expectations.

## KEY PLANNING ISSUES FOR THE PROVISION OF CULTURAL FACILITIES IN HONG KONG

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The analysis of the use of existing facilities, future needs, the experience and views of survey respondents and stakeholders in Hong Kong and international experience highlighted in the international research and case study exercise raise some key planning issues which will be an important basis for preparing a framework and revising the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG).

- In view of the multiplicity of roles performed by most facilities it appears that a broad planning framework, which distinguishes between community needs and the needs of commercial and professional performers, is required.
- There is universal agreement that accessibility is the most important locational requirement of cultural facilities, and that this directly influences the level of participation by artists, audiences and the community.
- Facilities meeting community needs should be located near homes to encourage community participation and networking. Good access in terms of proximity to transport systems, workplaces and homes, as well as accessibility by the elderly and the disabled is required.
- The other key locational issue for the framework raised by stakeholders is the importance of agglomeration of cultural facilities. Agglomeration may be achieved through either the 'horizontal' or 'vertical' integration of activities and facilities. Horizontal integration gathers together different types of facility with a similar role. The existing scattered distribution of facilities has been noted and stakeholders believe that quality arts facilities should be gathered at central locations to create an agglomeration in the form of an 'arts district'. Vertical integration encourages agglomeration of different types of facilities for one or a few related artforms at one location e.g. a dance centre with venues for performance, rehearsal, training and research etc. all under one roof.
- The increasing demand for more informal, alternative, rehearsal, performance, workshop and exhibition space can often be met by the temporary use or conversion of 'non-dedicated' facilities, such as open space, promenades, school halls and space in buildings which were not expressly designed for cultural purposes such as commercial, industrial, residential and community or government facilities, at a low cost.
- Most stakeholders emphasised the lack of facilities for arts education particularly in schools, and the importance of arts education to the future development of participation and appreciation of the arts.

**Accessibility is the most important locational requirement of cultural facilities.**



# A FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURAL FACILITIES PROVISION

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## *Approach to the Framework*

All of the work of the study has pointed to the need for a clear framework - and a 'vision' - for cultural facilities provision in Hong Kong; a framework which should be closely integrated with broader arts and cultural policies. However, the framework should be as flexible as possible providing a structure and principles for development but not a rigid plan or programme for action. It is also important to recognise that the framework for Hong Kong's cultural policy and facilities provision is changing and will continue to change. Changing attitudes to the arts; the emergence of young independent artists with new views and approaches to the use of facilities; and, most significantly, the proposed changes to the Municipal Councils which own and operate so much of the existing stock of facilities, mean that there is an opportunity for a new approach to cultural facilities provision which is more visionary.

## *Framework Themes*

All of the relevant organisations in Hong Kong should move towards providing and adopting an integrated framework for cultural facilities provision. We have recommended an approach to framework building around five important "themes":

- a structure for cultural facilities planning and development;
- development of new cultural facilities: a supply-led approach;
- stimulating private development of new facilities;
- encouraging the use of non-dedicated facilities; and
- locating cultural facilities: an 'Arts District' approach.

## *THEME 1 : A Structure for Cultural Facilities Planning and Development*

A Cultural Facilities Framework should be based on a broad structure for provision. This framework would be primarily aimed at planning and implementation of new development and the better use of non-dedicated facilities, but will also take account of the role and distribution of existing facilities. The framework would provide guidance on development up to 2011 but should give direction thereafter subject to:

- an interim review being carried out after the Culture and Heritage Commission and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department have been established for 2 to 3 years; and
- the proposals and development programmes of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the HKADC and other relevant organisations.

It is important that the framework should focus on the different needs of users rather than functions of facilities. It should make a simple distinction at two levels between:



- **Territorial Needs:** meeting the cultural needs of all Hong Kong residents, visitors, elite professional and other artists and performing companies which serve the territory as a whole. Territorial Needs can be met anywhere within the territory provided that they are in easy public transport commuting distance of all of the resident population of the SAR. Thus, it is the main performing venues in the urban area and the Town Halls which would meet this requirement;
- **Community Needs:** meeting the cultural needs at the community level of residents, schools, community groups, local performing groups, voluntary associations and other special interest groups and societies. The framework also implies a level of community accessibility normally close to the residential districts which they are intended to serve. At this level it is the Town Halls, Civic Centres, Community Centres and schools which would meet these needs.

## ***THEME 2 : Development of New Cultural Facilities: A Supply-Led Approach***

The analysis of existing and proposed provision shows that there is provision to meet most territorial needs. However, at the community level provision is insufficient and the quality is unsatisfactory. The provision of suitable facilities and the upgrading of facilities, particularly at community centres, is a priority.

It is not the purpose of the Framework, however, to set out a demand based development programme or a series of standards to be met at the territorial or community level. The work of the study has emphasised that the development of new cultural facilities, particularly at the territorial level, must be policy and supply-led based on :

- the aspirations and proposals or other development and investment programmes of organisations such as the future Culture and Heritage Commission and Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the HKADC and the HKTA; and
- individual project feasibility and viability studies which should be prepared for all major public sector investments.

The framework should therefore not prescribe a specific development programme. Instead it should provide a structure and guidelines within which the proposals of the promoting organisations can be evaluated. However, in view of the deficiencies which have been identified at the community level, this study recommends that studies should be carried out on the development, expansion and improvement of arts facilities at community centres and elsewhere in the community. The followings should also be considered:

- increased joint provision and shared community use of facilities with schools; and
- improved quality of provision and management of facilities for and by community arts groups.

### **THEME 3 : Stimulating Private Development of New Facilities**

The Framework should recognise the need to increase private sector participation in the development of cultural facilities. Initial development appraisals carried out for the study show that the use of development consents and 'planning gain' mechanisms would improve the viability of public, and some private, developments and encourage developers to include cultural facilities in mixed developments.

Specifically it is recommended that for territorial level facilities:

- feasibility studies for cultural facilities should consider the opportunity for private participation in development through mixed commercial/cultural developments or in CDAs;
- planning gain mechanisms such as relaxation of plot ratio limit, GFA exemption, bonus plot ratio, linked sites or in situ exchange of sites or plot ratio should be considered particularly in 'Arts District' areas; and
- public and private sector contribution levels are set to achieve a reasonable market rate of return, following what is elsewhere termed 'open book' appraisal methods which would allow both the developer and the planning authority to share and agree on information on costs, incomes, returns and any subsidies or other contributions made by government.

The objective of the 1999 Policy Objectives to introduce private sector initiatives is consistent with the proposed cultural facilities framework to promote private sector involvement in the provision of cultural facilities. Moreover, the objective to corporatise performing companies implies an increase in the demand for home based facilities.

**Developer (Ipoh Garden) worked with the Sydney City Council to restore and redevelop the Capitol Theatre in 1992.**



(Source: Capitol Theatre)

### **THEME 4 : Encouraging the Use of Non-dedicated Facilities**

The adoption of a cultural facility provision framework and relevant planning standards and guidelines can make a significant contribution in encouraging the use of non-dedicated facilities for cultural activities, i.e. buildings or spaces built for a different purpose but which lend themselves to less formal types of performances and exhibitions and preparatory activities. The study has emphasised the increasing demand for 'alternative space' and informal performance and exhibition of non-mainstream activities.

Building standards for such activities are much more basic than for formal exhibition and performance and can be adapted to the type, size and condition of space available. Indeed, an unusual building or space can help to shape the performance itself. Permanent or even short term occupation of such facilities for as little as 6 months can be useful as long as the artists can have more direct control over the use of the space and opportunities for networking and building up identity.

At present in Hong Kong, the use and re-use of building and spaces for purposes for which they were not originally designed and dedicated is heavily circumscribed by planning, building, lease and licensing regulations compared with other cities. The objective of the framework and the planning guidelines, therefore, should be to encourage the use of non-dedicated space including heritage and listed buildings; to identify agencies for implementation and assess willingness to consider use for cultural purposes; and to identify mechanisms by which cultural use could be prioritised and implemented.

**The use of non-dedicated facilities for cultural activities should be encouraged**



Singapore Stamford Arts Centre in a converted school  
(Source: Singapore National Arts Council)



Sydney Theatre Company and Sydney Dance Company  
in converted warehouses at Walsh Bay

**Incidental or temporary use of public space and streets for performances and exhibitions should be encouraged**



Tamar site is temporarily used as a showground by the  
HKTA



Street Performance (Source: Hong Kong Youth Arts  
Festival)



Traditional Chinese Opera in Victoria Park  
(Source: Hong Kong 1996)



Arts Exhibition in landmark

A wide range of non-dedicated buildings and spaces have been used for arts purposes elsewhere and there are some examples in Hong Kong. They include:

- use of industrial premises for the preparation of performances and exhibits e.g. sculpture workshops;
- Use of residential and commercial premises for art studios, rehearsal and workshop facilities;
- incidental or temporary use of public space in e.g. housing estates, office developments, schools, exhibition centres, public parks, waterfront promenades and streets for performances and exhibitions; and
- conversion and reuse of disused industrial, residential and Government buildings to create an arts centre or arts village.

Such opportunities, however, are limited by land and building regulations and other legal requirements such as the Places of Public Entertainment Ordinances (Cap. 172). The framework and planning guidelines should generally seek opportunities to promote good practice and mechanisms used in these examples and find further opportunities for such use particularly in Arts Renewal Districts.

### ***THEME 5 : Locating Cultural Facilities: An 'Arts District' Approach***

The consultations and surveys have emphasised the importance of the agglomeration of cultural facilities, arts activities generally and, in particular, the supporting services, entertainment, hotel and retail/restaurant facilities which will provide the critical-mass to encourage greater participation by residents and visitors. This 'horizontal' agglomeration of facilities has been referred to as an 'arts district' approach. A key element of the framework would be an 'Arts District' designation for selected districts in Hong Kong to promote this agglomeration.

Most of the existing and proposed major facilities are in areas of relatively new, formally planned development. Whilst this provides an 'arts district' opportunity for prominent 'flagship' sites and a planned approach to infrastructure, such areas do not provide a more 'fine-grained' opportunity for small scale facilities and the reuse of non-dedicated facilities. An arts district approach is also possible by encouraging change of use, urban renewal, pedestrianisation, etc. in existing areas where the residents and commercial community are establishing a cultural 'street-life'.

It is therefore recommended that two types of Arts Districts can be established in Hong Kong:

- Cultural and Entertainment Development Districts; and
- Cultural and Entertainment Renewal Areas.

## Cultural and Entertainment Development Districts

The objectives of establishing such districts would be:

- to include a wider variety of formal and informal facilities for culture and entertainment within walking distance in one district;
- to form a basis for marketing the area as a cultural and entertainment venue so as to add value to those facilities and related commercial facilities; and
- to give the area priority in terms of public investment programmes and planning and development mechanisms to encourage cultural development.

### West Kowloon Reclamation is a potential Cultural and Entertainment Development District.



(Source: HKTA)

It is recommended that Planning Department carries out more detailed studies of the comprehensive planning and designation of Cultural and Entertainment Development Districts. Two potential areas have been identified for study:

- **West Kowloon Reclamation** anchored by the development of the New Performance Venue proposed for the waterfront. This area provides the opportunity for the comprehensive planning of a new arts district with possible link to the existing Tsim Sha Tsui Cultural Centre area including the former Marine Police Headquarters building which is a declared historical building.
- **Wanchai to Central Waterfront** anchored by the existing cultural developments from the Convention and Exhibition Centre, Arts Centre, HKAPA, the Tamar Open Air Venue to City Hall. The objective here would be to 'knit together' these venues through the comprehensive planning of the district using the opportunity of the remaining Central and Wanchai reclamation.

## Cultural and Entertainment Renewal Areas

The objectives of establishing renewal districts of this type would be:

- to include a wider variety of formal and, in particular, informal facilities for culture and entertainment within walking distance in one district;
- to encourage the use of a wide range of non-dedicated buildings to provide a variety of different types of cultural accommodation;
- to form a basis for marketing the area as a cultural and entertainment venue so as to add value to those facilities and related commercial facilities;

- to give the area priority in terms of public investment programmes and, in particular, planning and development mechanisms for the use of non-dedicated buildings and informal use of open space to encourage cultural development.

It is recommended that Planning Department also carries out more detailed studies of the comprehensive renewal, planning and designation of Cultural and Entertainment Renewal Areas. Two potential areas have been identified for study:

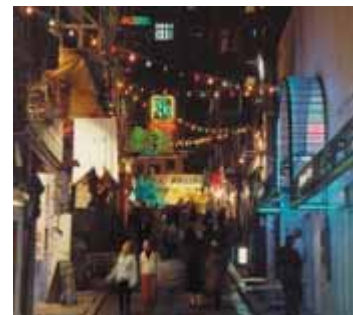
**Lan Kwai Fong and the Hollywood Road/Escalator to Western** area based around the existing and emerging dining and entertainment districts of Lan Kwai Fong and Soho, the Fringe Club and Sheung Wan Civic Centre, the private art and antique galleries, shops and markets and the Western Market.

**Yau Ma Tei** area based around Broadway Centre, Temple Street street performers, emerging HKADC arts studios and proposals for a dance centre and the Yau Ma Tei Theatre. The area already attracts a wide range of residents and some visitors to areas such as Temple Street.

The planning issues to be considered in both types of area include:

- the required critical mass of cultural and entertainment facilities supported by mixed commercial, hotel and residential uses;
- opportunities for increased pedestrianisation and direct pedestrian connections to public transport facilities;
- comprehensive planning for landmark buildings and streetscapes providing opportunities for informal street and open air performance;
- planning for complementary private and public development including themed dining and retailing, cinemas, museums and galleries, public art integrated into commercial and residential development, regional parks and local open space, arts village and arts market areas;
- planning for new small scale cultural and entertainment facilities supported by mixed commercial and residential uses;
- identification and prioritisation of 'surplus' publicly owned building stock held by government departments for reuse for cultural purposes; and
- application of standards and mechanisms adopted in the revised HKPSG Chapter 3 to encourage private sector (including artist's) conversion of non-dedicated buildings.

**Lan Kwai Fong / Soho area is a potential Cultural and Entertainment Renewal Area.**



(Source: Lan Kwai Fong Association)



# HONG KONG PLANNING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR CULTURAL FACILITIES

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## *Principles for Revising the HKPSG*

The existing HKPSG Chapter 3 (Section 9) is limited in scope and the framework principles outlined above suggest that there is a requirement for the Guidelines to be extended and updated in order to implement the Framework.

In line with the framework approach, the Guidelines should be based on less prescriptive guidelines unlike the standards used for most other sectors of development.

## *Outline Contents of the Revised HKPSG*

### *A Framework for Provision Standards*

It is recommended that the Guidelines for facilities provision be based on a simple hierarchy to address the needs of different user groups at two functional levels:

- at the territorial level; and
- at the community level.

The provision of cultural facilities should be supply and policy-led taking into consideration the needs of different user groups. Need assessment will not be based on fixed population or social/economic related standards but should take account of:

- existing provision of similar or related cultural facilities by the public and private sector;
- cultural policies and policies influencing the needs for cultural facilities;
- development plans and programmes of the main providers;
- opinions of residents and visitors collected by surveys and consultations with community groups; and
- consultations with the arts community and facility providers.

### *Planning Guidelines for New Development*

The development of cultural facilities to meet these needs will be undertaken by the public and, increasingly by the private sector. It is recommended that such development conforms with key planning guidelines including those in the following areas:

- **Locational Guidelines**

- accessibility in terms of the proximity to urban areas, residential areas, tourist attractions, hotels, retail facilities, schools and other community facilities, etc.;
- principles of facilities agglomeration;
- environmental considerations in terms of the sensitivity to polluting uses and the potential impacts on other sensitive users;

- **Traffic and Transport Guidelines**

- accessibility to public transport facilities;
- provision of loading/unloading facilities;
- provision of parking facilities;

- **General Design Guidelines**

- external design guidelines;
- internal design guidelines;
- provision of specialised facilities;
- special needs of the disabled and the elderly;

- **Guidelines on Provision of Service Facilities**

- facilities for rehearsals, practices, workshops etc.;
- facilities for storage and set/prop building etc.;

- **Guidelines on Provision of Ancillary Facilities**

- box offices etc.;
- restaurants, bars etc.;
- retail and entertainment facilities etc.;

### ***Policies and Guidelines for the Use of Non-Dedicated Facilities for Cultural Purposes***

A significant contribution can be made to the development of the arts by setting out planning guidelines for the controlled use, or change of use, of non-dedicated facilities, including heritage and listed buildings, for cultural activities, taking into consideration building and fire safety standards and practices and land use compatibility. The formulation of advisory guidelines is recommended for the cultural use of:

- planned and, where possible, existing commercial developments indicating areas suitable for use and purpose of use;
- planned and, where possible, existing residential estate and building areas indicating areas suitable for use and purpose of use. The Housing Authority is to be consulted concerning provision in Housing Authority Estates;
- existing and conversion of vacant industrial/warehouse buildings;
- existing and conversion of vacant government owned buildings. Arrangements are to be agreed by the Government Property Agency and the Lands Department; and
- public areas including pedestrianised areas, selected parks and gardens, and selected 'urban space' for temporary/occasional use.

### ***Guidelines for Selecting and Planning Arts Districts***

Two types of Arts Districts can be established in Hong Kong:

- Cultural and Entertainment Development Districts; and
- Cultural and Entertainment Renewal Areas.

It is recommended that potential districts should be identified and detailed studies and implementation planning carried out. More specific guidelines, drawing on the general guidelines on the location and design of cultural facilities, the provision of supporting/ancillary facilities, the use of non-dedicated facilities etc., should be prepared to set out the principles for the selection and planning of the arts districts.