

## **NOTE FOR PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **Supplementary Information on 57RE – Conversion of Yau Ma Tei Theatre and Red Brick Building into a Xiqu Activity Centre**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

At the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) meeting on 21 January 2009, Members generally supported the proposed Conversion of Yau Ma Tei Theatre (YMTT) and Red Brick Building (RBB) into a Xiqu Activity Centre (XAC) while they have requested supplementary information on the following issues –

- (a) feasibility of expanding the seating capacity of the proposed XAC, and the relocation of nearby public toilet, refuse collection point (RCP) and street sleepers shelter (SSS);
- (b) street management measures and coordination of traffic at the Yau Ma Tei Wholesale Fruit Market (YWFM);
- (c) measures for crowd management and dispersal at the proposed XAC; and
- (d) qualifications of the theatre consultant engaged for the project.

We set out in this note the above requested information for Members' reference.

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## THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

### Possible expansion of the setting of YMTT, and relocation of public toilet, RCP and SSS

2. We are planning to re-provision the public toilet and relocate the RCP and SSS as the Phase II development of the proposed project. Since the public toilet adjacent to the YMTT is partly intended to serve the YWFM, it is considered appropriate to re-provision the toilet facilities at the same site with enhanced design after the relocation of RCP and SSS. It is initially suggested that the area be developed into an open piazza to enhance the linkage between the YMTT and the RBB as a cultural heritage ensemble, providing opportunity for outdoor promotional activities and improving the overall environment of the vicinity. A small annex building can be added to provide supporting/extension facilities to the Theatre, such as additional dressing area, rehearsal room, storage space and toilet facilities for the theatre and for the vicinity, so that the foyer of the Theatre can be expanded. Some covered area in the piazza can also be considered to make room for audience gathering before performances and relieve the pressure on the small foyer in the Theatre.

3. Upon finalisation of the re-provisioning arrangement and subject to availability of funding and site, it is expected that about 24 months would be required before the works for the piazza with small annex block can commence, assuming no substantial effect on the existing YMTT which may warrant a separate Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA). A tentative work schedule is at the Enclosure.

4. In fact, the number of auditorium seats could not be increased even if the dressing rooms are relocated to the adjoining site. This is because it is not feasible to set back the stage due to the presence of the arch and flanking walls which allow insufficient headroom and space for Cantonese Opera performances. The preservation of the arch and flanking walls is one of the major mitigation measures proposed by the HIA<sup>1</sup> endorsed by the Antiquities Advisory Board to protect the YMTT, which is a graded historic building. In addition, the proposed set-back of stage and relocation of orchestral pit would also affect the auditorium structural floor, stage facilities and the underground fire services facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> With reference to the HIA report, the major mitigation measures designed to protect the historic buildings YMTT and RBB are summarised as follows - (a) on-site structural monitoring system should be installed to ensure integrity of the historic buildings; (b) architectural design should be carried out in such a way to keep the original expression of the architectural features and minimize intervention to existing fabrics; (c) new architectural elements should be compatible to original fabric and understated in design; (d) new building services installation should be neatly placed and concealed by screens; and (e) preservation of the arch and flanking walls of the original stage.

5. Regarding the inter-departmental efforts in relocating the RCP and SSS, the Yau Tsim Mong District Office (YTMDO), Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and Social Welfare Department (SWD) have been jointly identifying suitable relocation sites according to the physical specifications and catchment areas of these facilities. The sites that have been considered include the nearby sitting out areas and the site at the junction of Reclamation Street and Shek Lung Street. However, objections have been or are envisaged to be raised by the neighbourhood of the above locations. The above mentioned departments are currently studying the feasibility of relocating the two facilities to the space underneath the Ferry Street Flyover (the section between Tung Kun Street and Pitt Street), which is subject to the technical issues involved which are now being examined by relevant departments.

6. To expedite the process, an inter-departmental meeting led by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs involving FEHD, Lands Department, Planning Department and SWD has been set up and will inspect the possible sites for relocation on 11 February 2009. We will continue to consult the stakeholders, including the YTM District Council, and report to the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs regularly on the progress made.

7. We will consult the sector and the relevant local organisations to see how the Xiqu Activity Centre can, upon its completion, complement with the community and the cultural and arts activities taking place in the vicinity, such as the West Kowloon Cultural District and the open areas in Temple Street and “Banyan Tree” in Yau Ma Tei where we can find traditional Cantonese operatic singing performances, in order to further promote the overall development of Cantonese Opera.

### **Street management measures and coordination of traffic at YWFM**

8. LCSD has had meetings with the YWFM operators to build up understanding to facilitate road access for the construction vehicles, market operators and the general public during the construction period. For the Theatre proper, the pedestrian flow is expected to concentrate at the section of Waterloo Road between the YMTT and Nathan Road MTR station, which will be less affected by the Fruit Market activities that usually commence at late night. Relevant government departments, including the Police and FEHD, will continue with necessary enforcement actions, with a view to mitigating the traffic and environmental nuisance caused by the operation of the YMT Fruit Market in the neighbourhood.

9. YTMDO will continue to take a leading role in co-ordinating inter-departmental efforts.

**Measures for crowd management and dispersal at the proposed XAC**

10. For preservation of the historic building elements, the maximum number of persons that could be accommodated in the foyer, which has a net waiting area of about 45 square metres, is 30. The foyer area is already the maximum that can be provided within the existing building envelope of the graded historic building and this is the best compromise of the site constraints and the operational needs.

11. In view of the constraints, the XAC management may commence admission earlier to ease the pressure in the foyer, until the Phase II expansion of the XAC becomes available with the relocation of the adjacent RCP and SSS.

**Qualifications of the theatre consultant engaged for the project**

12. The Theatre Consultant engaged for this project is Allied Environmental Consultants Ltd (AEC). The consultant has over 10 years' experience in stage lighting, engineering and audio-visual design for performing arts venues. AEC's portfolio covers a number of performing arts centres in Hong Kong and overseas, including concert halls, theatres and studios. The theatre consultancy services started from the sketch design stage until the completion of the maintenance period of the construction contract, covering a period of about 4 years.

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**Tentative work schedule for Phase II development of the Xiqu Activity Centre<sup>1</sup>**

<u>Steps</u>	<u>Approximate number of months</u>
1. Defining the scope of the project	Approximately 4 months including consultation with the District Council and stakeholders on annex facilities to be built at the vacated site
2. Examining the technical feasibility of the project	3 months
3. Preparation of sketch design; consultation with the District Council; and preparation of detailed design and working drawings	10 months
4. Preparation of tender document; consultation with the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs and submission of funding application to PWSC/FC	3 months
5. Tender exercise	4 months
6. Commencement of works	24 months from Step 1

<sup>1</sup> The work schedule is based on the following assumptions that - (a) no substantial building structure is involved; (b) no major utilities diversion is required; (c) the site will be available for demolition as programmed; (d) funding approval for demolition works and capital works item is secured; (e) no HIA is required; and (f) the schedule does not include the reprovisioning of the RCP and SSS, details of which will be worked out after suitable sites are identified.