

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)936/12-13(04)

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## **Panel on Home Affairs**

### **Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 15 April 2013**

#### **Conversion of Yau Ma Tei Theatre and Red Brick Building into a Xiqu Activity Centre**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the conversion of Yau Ma Tei Theatre ("YMTT") and Red Brick Building ("RBB") into a xiqu activity centre ("XAC") and summarizes the major concerns expressed by Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members on the subject.

#### **Background**

2. In December 2008, the Administration briefed the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") on its proposal to convert two graded historic buildings in Yau Ma Tei, namely YMTT (Grade II) and RBB (Grade I), into the XAC. Because of its cinema layout, YMTT was considered suitable for conversion into a small-scale performance venue for xiqu activities with RBB for supporting uses. Details of the proposed project, including the project scope and the site plan, are in **Appendices I and II** respectively.

3. According to the Administration, the proposed conversion of YMTT and RBB into the XAC would not only put the two historic buildings into adaptive re-use, but also help to achieve the Government's policy objectives in preserving and promoting Cantonese opera as well as relieve the shortage of performing and practising venues faced by the Cantonese opera sector. The Administration also expected that the converted YMTT and RBB would become a landmark and cultural tourist spot in the Yau Tsim Mong District. After deliberations, the Panel supported the proposal for submission to the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") and the Finance Committee ("FC") for

approval and urged its early implementation.

4. The proposal was endorsed by PWSC at its meeting on 21 January 2009. FC subsequently approved at its meeting on 13 February 2009 a funding of \$186.7 million in money-of-the-day prices for the conversion of YMTT and RBB into the XAC.

### **Members' concerns**

5. The major concerns expressed by Members at various committees of LegCo (including the Panel meeting on 12 December 2008, PWSC meeting on 21 January 2009 and FC meeting on 13 February 2009) on the Administration's proposal to convert YMTT and RBB into the XAC are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### Relocation of public toilet, refuse collection point and street sleepers' shelter adjacent to YMTT

6. Members in general considered that the public toilet, refuse collection point ("RCP") and street sleepers' shelter ("SSS") beside the proposed project site at YMTT were incompatible with the future XAC. They urged the Administration to relocate the three public facilities expeditiously, so as to create a better cultural atmosphere and enhance the surrounding environment of the proposed XAC. The Administration was also requested to include the site to be vacated by the three public facilities in the overall planning of the proposed XAC, enhance coordination among different bureaux/departments for the reprovisioning of the facilities, and report to the Panel regularly on the progress of the reprovisioning arrangements.

7. The Administration advised that it had planned to reprovision the public toilet in situ and relocate RCP and SSS as the Phase II development of the proposed XAC. Since the public toilet adjacent to YMTT was partly intended to serve the Yaumatei Wholesale Fruit Market ("YWFM"), the Administration considered it appropriate to reprovision the toilet facilities at its original location with enhanced design after the relocation of RCP and SSS. The Administration's initial plan was to develop the vacated area into an open piazza to enhance the linkage between the converted YMTT and RBB as a cultural heritage ensemble, providing opportunity for outdoor promotional activities and improving the overall environment in the vicinity. A small annex building could be added to provide supporting/extension facilities to the converted YMTT. While the Administration would make efforts to identify suitable sites for and expedite the relocation of RCP and SSS, the conversion works of the proposed XAC would commence as soon as practicable as it would take time to

implement mitigation measures for conservation of YMTT and RBB which were graded historic buildings.

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

8. Some Members were concerned that the activities at YWFM which usually started in dusk would have adverse impact on the traffic and pedestrian flow near the proposed XAC. The Administration was called on to work together with the operators of YWFM to address the problems of road obstruction and slippery road surface caused by the YWFM activities and put in place effective street and traffic management measures to ensure the safety of the patrons of the proposed XAC and other pedestrians.

9. According to the Administration, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") had held meetings with the YWFM operators to build up understanding to facilitate road access for the construction vehicles, market operators and the general public during and after the construction period. For the Theatre proper, the pedestrian flow was expected to concentrate at the section of Waterloo Road between YMTT and Nathan Road MTR station, which would be less affected by YWFM activities that usually commenced at late night. The Administration assured Members that it would communicate and work closely with the YWFM operators on the traffic and street management in the area and the relevant government departments, including the Police and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, would continue to take necessary enforcement actions to mitigate the traffic and environmental nuisance caused by the YWFM operations. The Yau Tsim Mong District Office would continue to take a leading role in coordinating inter-departmental efforts.

#### Arrangement for admission of patrons

10. Members noted that the foyer of the converted YMTT could only accommodate 30 persons while the auditorium in it would have a maximum seating capacity of 300. Concern was expressed that the small foyer area of the converted YMTT would not be adequate to house all the audience before they were admitted to the auditorium and the lack of waiting area would be very inconvenient to the audience, in particular elderly fans of Cantonese opera.

11. The Administration explained that unlike concerts or other performances, admission arrangements for Cantonese opera shows were more flexible in that audience could enter the auditorium early and any time even after the shows started and they did not have to wait outside for long. The foyer area of the converted YMTT was already the maximum that could be provided within the existing building envelope of the graded historic building and the best

compromise of the site constraints and the operational needs. In view of the constraints, the XAC management might commence admission earlier to ease the pressure in the foyer. After the relocation of the adjacent RCP and SSS, part of the vacated space could also be used to make room for audience gathering before the shows started.

### Function and seating capacity of the proposed XAC

12. Some Members considered that its small size, particularly the dressing room, would limit the function of the proposed XAC and enquired about its targeted users/hirers. There was a view that in addition to Cantonese opera, the proposed XAC should also cater for other kinds of xiqu and related cultural activities and be open to primary and secondary schools for organizing operatic activities. Concern was also expressed that the limited seating capacity of the converted YMTT (only 300 seats) would not bring about any notable effect in the promotion of Cantonese opera. The Administration was urged to consider extending the proposed XAC to the site to be vacated by the three public facilities and relocate some of the facilities in the backstage and foyer of the converted YMTT to the extended area, in order to provide for a larger audience.

13. According to the Administration, the proposed XAC would be a permanent base for xiqu activities and serve as a training, rehearsal and performance venue for budding artists and groups. While it was a small-scale venue due to the limited usable space of the site area, it would be equipped with all necessary facilities. Given that YMTT was a Grade II historic building the building structure of which could not be altered, and having regard to the requirements for the stage and orchestral pit which had posed constraints on the number of seats in the auditorium, the proposed design with some 300 seats was already the maximum that could be achieved under the existing building constraints.

### **Recent development**

14. The XAC, which has been formally named as YMTT, officially opened in July 2012. It is managed by LCSD and has the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong as its Venue Partner, which is entitled to priority use of the venue facilities.

15. According to the latest progress report on the reprovisioning of RCP, SSS and the public toilet adjacent to YMTT provided by the Administration to the Panel in October 2012, a site at Hau Cheung Street had been identified for the relocation of RCP and SSS and the Architectural Services Department ("ArchSD") had awarded the project consultancy agreement for the relocation

project. The Community Building Committee of the Yau Tsim Mong District Council was consulted in late July 2012 on the preliminary design of the facilities at the new site and members in general supported the project. ArchSD and the Project Consultant were proceeding with the detailed design of the project and preparing for the tender process. As regards the reprovisioning of the public toilet, the Administration advised that having considered the needs of the public and the users of YWFM and the fact that no suitable site in the vicinity could be identified for its relocation, the Administration planned to reprovision the public toilet at YMTT Phase II project site after the relocation of RCP and SSS.

16. Before seeking the funding approval of PWSC and FC for the proposal, the Administration will consult the Panel on the proposed relocation of the Shanghai Street RCP and SSS for the Phase II development of YMTT at the Panel meeting on 15 April 2013.

### **Relevant papers**

17. A list of the relevant papers on LegCo's website is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
9 April 2013

**Conversion of Yau Ma Tei Theatre ("YMTT")  
and Red Brick Building ("RBB") into a Xiqu Activity Centre**

The project involved conversion works of YMTT and RBB to provide the following facilities –

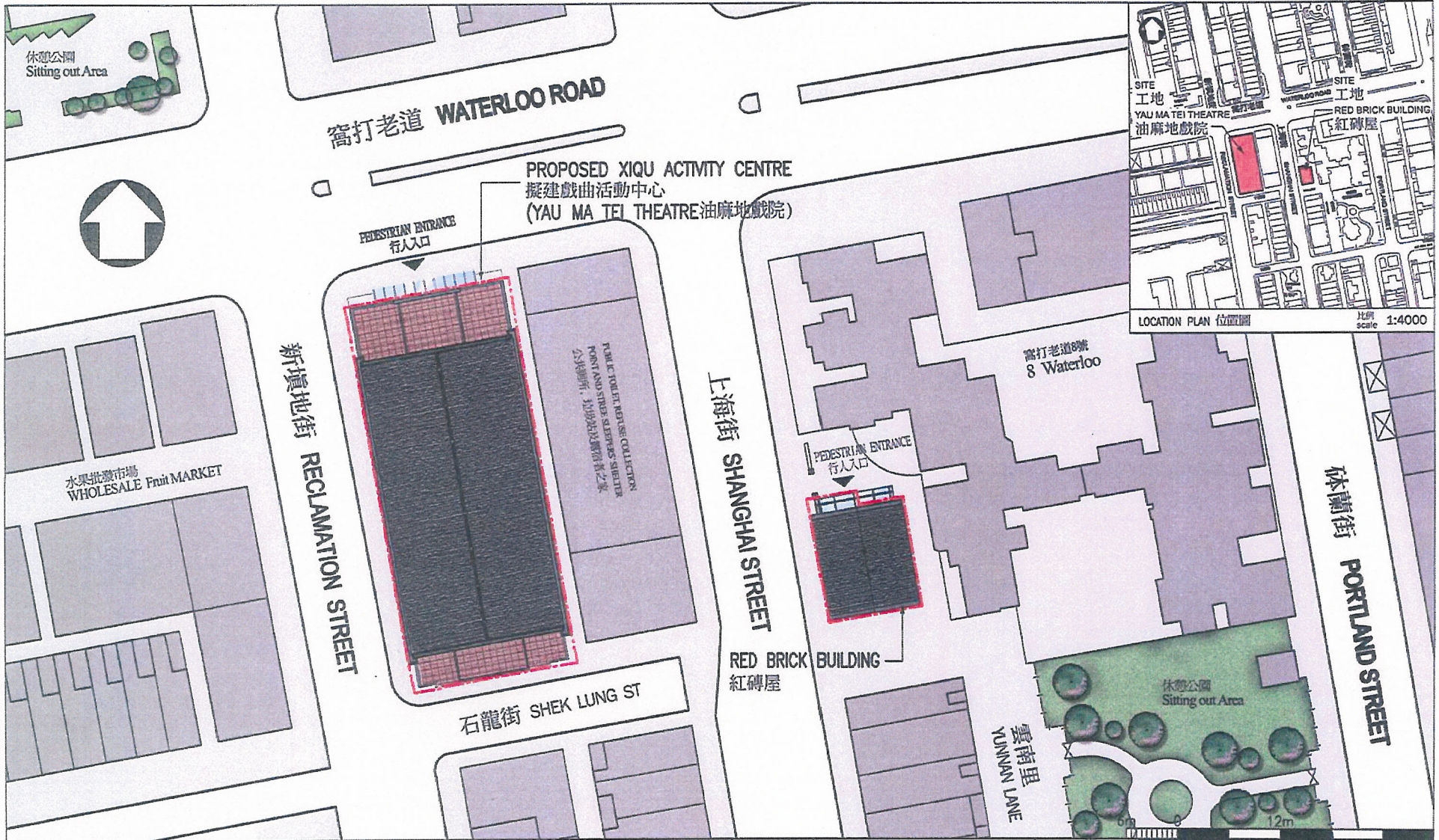
YMTT

- (a) A stage with an orchestral pit suitable for small scale Cantonese Opera performances;
- (b) an auditorium of about 300 seats;
- (c) a lobby with a box office;
- (d) a backstage with dressing room and make-up area;
- (e) an audio visual and lighting control room;
- (f) other facilities, including toilets, barrier free access, safe room, cleaner room, plant room, etc.

RBB

- (g) two multi-function rooms which may be used for small scale rehearsal, practice, workshops, lectures and meetings;
- (h) management and booking offices; and
- (i) a souvenir shop and other supporting facilities.

*Source: LC Paper No. CB(2)427/08-09(05)*



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	approved K.C. KING	date 14/11/08	office ARCHITECTURAL BRANCH	

ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
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## Appendix III

### Relevant papers on Conversion of Yau Ma Tei Theatre and Red Brick Building into a Xiqu Activity Centre

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Home Affairs	12.12.2008 (Item VI)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">CB(2)427/08-09(05)</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Public Works Subcommittee	21.1.2009 (Item 6)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">PWSC(2008-09)60</a> <a href="#">PWSCI(2008-09)20</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Finance Committee	13.2.2009 (Item 2)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Home Affairs	---	<a href="#">Administration's progress report on conversion of Yau Ma Tei Theatre project (CB(2)58/12-13(01))</a>

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