

For Information

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

Surveys on Historical Buildings in Hong Kong

Purpose

To inform Members of the progress of the Surveys on Historical Buildings in Hong Kong.

Background

2. A complete inventory on historical buildings is essential in any attempt to formulate a comprehensive heritage conservation policy. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department has been conducting building surveys in the past several years to identify and record pre-1950 buildings. In brief, the surveys serve to:

- (a) build up an inventory of historical buildings as a basis to develop long-term protection strategies;
- (b) provide a list from which the AMO could select buildings of heritage significance for monitoring possible redevelopment plans affecting them; and
- (c) construct archives for research and education purposes.

3. Covering a territory of more than 1,100km² and with a building density which is among the highest in the world, a comprehensive survey of historical buildings in Hong Kong is by no means an easy and short-term task. This has been done with painstaking efforts since 1996 in two stages, details of which are presented in the following paragraphs.

Stage 1: Territory-Wide Pre-1950 Buildings and Structures Survey (1996-2000)

4. Funded by a donation of \$4 million from the Hong Kong Jockey Club, a territory-wide survey was conducted from 1996 to 2000 to take a geographical scan of all surviving pre-1950 buildings and structures in Hong Kong. Renowned local historians and architects were commissioned to participate in the surveys to assess the historical and architectural merits of the buildings concerned.

5. Preliminary assessments were recorded in standard assessment forms, the design of which was endorsed by the Antiquities Advisory Board. Information such as the year of construction, builder's history, architectural style, details of construction materials and decorations etc. was obtained. Written assessments were supplemented by photographic recording to build up survey files on individual buildings.

6. The fieldwork commenced in October 1996 and was completed in June 1999. It was followed by data compilation and post-fieldwork assessment, and by June 2000, a total of 8,803 pre-1950 historical buildings and structures were recorded. A table showing the types and numbers of buildings surveyed is at Annex. By conducting a comprehensive territory-wide search, we have not only confirmed the location and condition of those items which were on loosely organized existing records, but also identified many new entries not recorded previously.

Stage 2: Further Survey on Historical Buildings (2002-2003)

7. The result of the stage 1 territory-wide survey provides a useful basis for identification and preliminary study purposes. However, it is not detailed enough as to enable an in-depth assessment of the heritage value of the buildings concerned. To further this aim and to provide research support for the policy review on heritage conservation being conducted by Home Affairs Bureau, a project-based building survey team was established in November 2002 to undertake the second phase survey. The survey is expected to take about 12 months to complete.

8. The labour-intensive survey involves measurement of building dimensions, drafting of layout plans, photographic recording, oral history and desktop research. Written appraisals are made on the historical and architectural merits of the buildings. Primary research materials, including government reports, wills, genealogical records, maps and historical photos are used in the historical appraisal. Change of ownership, related historical events and figures, architectural styles and craftsmanship are some of the main points of presentation.

9. As at end of May 2003, 402 building appraisals have been completed, covering a wide variety of buildings including 208 urban buildings and 194 rural buildings.

Future Plans

10. It is expected that the present survey will eventually cover about 1,000 buildings in its 12-month span. The findings will enable AMO to set up a comprehensive Monument Record on the built heritage of Hong Kong. The archives will be kept in the future Heritage Resource Centre in Kowloon Park, Tsim Sha Tsui, and will be open for use by students, researchers, planning and building professionals and other interested parties. Plans are also made to digitize part of the records for search on the Internet. AMO and other Government departments will be able to access the records in vetting Environmental Impact Assessment reports and development proposals.

Presentation

11. This paper is presented to Members of the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs for information.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
July 2003

**The Types and Number of Building Surveyed
During the Territory-wide Survey of 1996-2000**

Item No.	Building Type	Total
1.	Ancestral Hall	431
2.	Chinese Temple	169
3.	Commercial	126
4.	Educational	149
5.	Medical	13
6.	Military	10
7.	Religious	43
8.	Residential	6849
9.	Shop House	536
10.	Others	477
	Grand Total	8803