

## VIVA BLUE HOUSE (We 嘩藍屋)

*To Continue the Tong-lau Way of Life with All Its Diversity and Sense of Community*

### BACKGROUND



The Blue House Cluster is a unique collection of three tenement buildings dating from the 1920's and 50's on Stone Nullah Lane in Wan Chai. Blue House itself is listed as a Grade 1 historic building with Yellow House as a Grade 3 and Orange House not yet graded. Throughout the life of the buildings, they have mainly been for residential use with a range of commercial uses at ground level. However, during most of their history, a range of cultural and community uses also prospered. The Cluster is at the heart of a district rich in history and community human capital. It is thus, a paradigmatic mixed-use

tenement cluster, housing a well integrated living community. It radiates the best spirit of a Tong Lau (唐樓) neighborhood and is an invaluable living specimen of the Tong Lau way of life.

### MISSION STATEMENT

*Our mission is to conserve Hong Kong's living heritage: to encourage people to share their time, skills and experience to benefit both themselves and others and, by doing so, to conserve a community way of living that is relevant to and valued by future generations.*



## OBJECTIVES

**Viva Blue House** is the first project of its kind, a constantly evolving story on local culture, a demonstrative research and educational tool, a beacon for sustainable communities to come.

- **Better living** – improve the living standard of the staying tenants of the Blue House cluster and to promote community participation.
- **Share & Exchange** - encourage residents and stakeholders to share their time, skills and experience to benefit both themselves and others.
- **Preservation and Inheritance** – preserve integrated living tangible and intangible heritage of mixed use Tong Laus, and to share its architecture, living culture and history with the next generation.
- **Sustainable Development** – offer job opportunities to the deprived and self-sustaining in the long run through the operation of the two innovative social enterprises.
- **Demonstrative Model** – proposes a bottom-up, community-led and sustainable regeneration models which integrates culture and heritage into development.

## FIVE CORE PROGRAMS

The co-existence of all these multifunctional spaces is the characteristic of the Blue House Cluster. Therefore, 5 core programs will be launched to demonstrate how historical continuity can be well served through usages compatible with the existing community ecology.

- **House of Stories** – a cultural and social innovation unit to systematically record, research, develop and exhibit stories in creative and diverse formats which are open to the public and tourists.



- **Existing Resident Housing and Engagement Unit** - a sustainable, innovative and people-oriented rental policy for the residents and other units through participatory planning.

- **Good Neighbour Scheme for new tenants** – an open and fair process to identify potential new tenants who will enrich the human capital of the Blue House Cluster. Target tenants including *1) Local craftsmen, 2) Professionals with different expertise, 3) Artists & cultural workers, 4) SE or business operators, 5) People with needs to live in Wanchai*. New tenants are expected to actively participate in the project and contribute their skills and knowledge to the development of **Viva Blue House**. Also, they are required to pay market rent to ensure the project's financial stability.
- **Social Enterprise Unit (Dessert House and Vegetarian Restaurant)** - Two innovative and affordable restaurants that can define the unique characteristics of locally hand-crafted quotidian cuisine, as well as create jobs and bring in additional income.
- **C.O.M.E. Hall** - a community economy and community service center based on a barter system for non-marketable skills and resources. This helps to create accumulative, value-adding social, material and human capital and transform them into a supplementary, buffer economy for the community.

## **DESIGN & TECHICAL ASPECT**

This cluster of buildings represents a rare assembly of well preserved examples of pre-Second World War urban tenement houses (tong-lau). However, the existing tong-laus have 50 – 90 years old history and their fire safety and sanitary provisions are not up to the present day standards. The key issues imposing big constraints as well as initiatives to design opportunities.

- **Phased Construction to retain existing tenants**  
In order to fulfill the majority wishes of existing residents to stay and witness the renovation of the Blue House Cluster, as well as to maintain their social ties during the renovation period, the construction is proposed to take place in two phases.
- **Co-existence of residential, cultural, and social enterprise programs**  
Traditional tong-laus are mixed use and our plan proposes the Blue House Cluster embrace a range of different uses. We have 18 residential units for existing and new tenants. We will preserve two units as common living room for tenants to witness the congested living conditions of our past generation. There will be a traditional dessert restaurant and a vegetarian restaurant. The

remaining 8 units are dedicated to cultural and community programs.

- **Retention of Architectural Authenticity**

All the facades facing the main streets as well as the internal wooden structures are historical relics, and will all be carefully preserved. To make a balance between minimum intervention to the relics and modification for new uses, we have proposed the following measures:

1) Provide new toilets and kitchens at the rear space of every unit to every tenant so as to raise their living standard.

2) Modify the window at the rear wall of every unit to a fire escape door, and build a network of escape passages and staircases at the rear facades of the building cluster so as to allow tenants to evacuate safely to the open ground in case of fire. Moreover, we have also installed a new lift tower to the convenience of the elderly.

3) We have taken the opportunity of using the functional fire escape also as a medium of social space. By surrounding the passages around the once left-over open space, we can activate it to a courtyard of social memory.

- **Landscape Plan**

All the three trees within the site are preserved. In order to have a more pleasant environment for the tenants and public, more greenery design and measures is provided in the architectural design.



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