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The Conservancy Association

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To: Local News Editor  
From: The Conservancy Association  
Date: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004

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## The Conservancy Association Bids “King Yin Lei” for \$6,000,000

### Press Release

The Conservancy Association (CA) announces today that it will initiate a “Save King Yin Lei” Campaign. It will also submit a bid of \$6,000,00 for the heritage mansion “King Yin Lei.” If CA is awarded the tender, the association will collect the sum from the community to pay for the tender. The house will then be open to community. CA hopes this campaign will enhance the community’s awareness of heritage conservation. Potential buyers of the property should also take note of the conservation value of the building.

“King Yin Lei” is up for sale by tender which closes on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2004. CA is of the view that the building is a heritage mansion with unique character and of high conservation value. Given the recovering property market, CA worries that the new buyer will demolish the property for redevelopment.

The mansion, which sits on a 50,650 square feet site, is at least 68 years old. The site comprises a three-storey “red bricks and green tiles” building, a private garden festooned with bonsai plants, various pavilions and terraces. It is one of the oldest, most spacious, and well-maintained residential building on Hong Kong Island. The house is a model example of mixed-style pre-War residence and displays an intricate oriental design and craftsmanship.

“King Yin Lei” was featured as a backdrop for the legendary TV series “Yesterday’s Glitter” starring Lisa Wong and the 1955 Hollywood movie “Love is a Many-Splendored Thing.” The building has attracted both mainland and overseas tourists to stop by and wonder at the magnificent residence. Tourism Commission should also consider preserving the site as a scenic spot.

“The Conservancy Association sent a letter in April to the Secretary for Home Affairs Patrick Ho requesting him to consider declaring the mansion as a monument, but has not received any reply. CA has to turn to the community for help and the bid was a call to the public for preserving the precious building,” a spokesperson for CA said. The spokesperson also pointed out that the current heritage conservation policy is too passive and lack public input. According to the Antiquities and

Monuments Ordinance, only the Secretary for Home Affairs in his capacity as Antiquities Authority can declare a building as a monument, on condition that Chief Executive has approved of it and the decision gazetted. It all depends whether the Secretary cares or not.

At the recent meeting of the Antiquities Advisory Board, most members agreed that “King Yin Lei” was of high historical and architectural value and worth preserving. However as “King Yin Lei” is privately owned, the Government cannot gain access to the building and grade it. CA hopes the campaign can arouse the owner’s concern in heritage conservation and allow officials of the Government go into the building.

Last October, CA published a position paper on built heritage conservation and proposed four ways in which heritage can be better protected:

1. Planning Control such as new zoning and tightening of the Hong Kong Planning Standard and Guidelines. The result will be to impose more stringent conditions on possible developments related to heritage sites.
2. Government resumption or buy out, it would be an extreme option which can only be used in exceptional circumstances.
3. Public-private partnership.
4. Transfer of Development Rights, conservation can be achieved through transferring the development right elsewhere so that no development eventually takes place in the area.

A Heritage Trust financed by the Government and developers should be setup, with effective public participation.

For details please refer to the original document.

CA also starts a letter campaign today. CA urges the public to write to the owner and the Government, urging them to strike a win win deal in which “King Yin Lei” will be preserved.