

Historic Building Appraisal

Nos. 600, 602, 604, 606 / Nos. 612, 614 / Nos. 620, 622, 624, 626 Shanghai Street,
Mong Kok, Kowloon

These shophouses in Shanghai Street are believed to have been built in the 1920s and 1930s. Nowadays, Nos. 600–606, 612–614 and 620–626 are retained as pre-war structures with some recent buildings erected in between. And, it is believed that Nos. 620 – 626 are the oldest buildings among them. The ground floors were used as shops selling building construction materials such as window frames, paint and hardware. The upper floors were used for residential purposes being let at very low rents. *Historical Interest*

Shanghai Street (上海街) was laid out in the 1870s and was once the most prosperous street in Kowloon. It was originally named Station Street (差館街) before 1909, after a police station situated near Market Street (街市街). In 1909, the Government started to name some specified streets in Kowloon after major Chinese provinces and cities that traded with Hong Kong. The Station Street was then named Shanghai Street because of its prosperity, and to distinguish it from the Upper Station Street (差館上街) in Sheung Wan (上環). Shanghai Street was mainly inhabited by Chinese. The shops there were usually related to traditional Chinese trades and livelihood. The shophouses have undergone adaptive re-use.

The Shanghai Street shophouses are good examples of typical shophouses of pre-war times. They are basically three stories high, but additional accommodation built on the roofs makes them look like four-storey buildings. They are classified as verandah type shophouses because they have verandahs at each floor level (now enclosed with glazing) facing the street. The verandahs are supported by columns and project over the pavement forming an arcade for pedestrians. This type of development is now obsolete as it was discontinued after the Second World War. Ornamentation is sparse on the façade being confined to moulded capitals to the columns and lozenge shaped grille blocks forming balustrades to the verandahs of some of the shophouses. Internally, living conditions were cramped with mezzanine floors and cocklofts constructed to form extra bed spaces compounding the overcrowding problem. There were no toilets or bathrooms, all ablutions having to be performed in the kitchens at the rear. *Architectural Merit*

Verandah type shophouses are now rare in Hong Kong due to the prohibition of arcades under the building ordinances. These shophouses therefore have considerable built heritage value as well as social value and local interest. A number of the original building materials and decorations, such as columns supporting the verandahs and balustrades at the verandahs, are retained.

***Rarity, Built
Heritage Value
& Authenticity
Social Value &
Local Interest***

The Shanghai Street shophouses are within walking distance of the Old Kowloon Police Headquarters (舊九龍警察總部), the shophouses at Nos. 190, 192, 194, 196, 198, 200, 202, 204, 210, 212 Prince Edward Road West (太子道西) (both Grade 2), Shui Yuet Temple (水月宮) and All Saints' Cathedral (諸聖座堂) (both Grade 3).

Group Value