

Historic Building Appraisal
Ex-Western Fire Station
Nos. 12 Belcher Street, Kennedy Town, H.K.

This four-storey building, Ex-Western Fire Station (前西區消防局), was the first fire station built in Kennedy Town (堅尼地城). It was constructed in **1923** and at first managed by the Sanitary Department (潔淨署, which was set up in 1908 and renamed as Urban Service Department in May 1953). Only a small portion (ground floor and basement) was used by the Hong Kong Fire Brigade (香港消防隊) as a temporary fire station, i.e., Kennedy Town Sub-Fire Station (堅尼地城消防分局). The upper levels were staff quarters of the Sanitary Department. *Historical Interest*

The building was renamed Western Fire Station (西區消防局) in 1937 with reinforcement in fire services equipment. It remained in use as a fire station until the 1950s when the fire station moved to a new location leaving the whole building to the Urban Service Department. Since 1991, the building was rented to Po Leung Kuk (保良局) as a home for the elderly, namely, Po Leung Kuk Chan Au Big Yan Home for the Elderly (保良局陳區碧茵頤養院).

The building is built in a stripped down **Neo-Classical** or **Neo-Georgian** style which was popular in the 1920s. The ground floor storey facing Belcher's Street (卑路乍街) consists of grooved rusticated stonework with six large openings for five engines and a pair of voussoired bull's eye windows at each end which is an unusual feature. The upper part of the front façade consists of regular rows of shuttered windows separated by plain horizontal band courses. There is a wide projecting cornice at parapet level. The brickwork to the upper storeys of the façade has unfortunately been painted over. *Architectural Merit*

Internally the building appears to have undergone extensive modernization, but externally the building retains its original appearance apart from the paint to the brickwork (which could be removed). It is not a particularly rare piece of architecture but it is well maintained and has built heritage value. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

As an early fire station it has local interest, and its use by the Urban Services Department and the Social Welfare Department also the Po Leung Kuk for community services purposes gives the building social value. *Social Value & Local Interest*

The Ex-Western Fire Station is standing at the toe of a formed slope, facing to the Belcher's Street backed by groups of trees. The area is mainly made up of aged buildings of 1950s to 1970s. There is a disused air-raid shelter *Group Value*

on the slope toe at the back of the building. The shelter's opening is blocked.

As the building has been used for many purposes it has proved to be *Adaptive* adaptable and no doubt a further suitable adaptive re-use could be found for it if *Re-use* the Po Leung Kuk ever move out.