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URBAN living can be a challenge, especially for those in the B40 group.

Many are forced to reside in older walk-up apartments, which are showing signs of wear and tear over the decades.

The issue of rundown strata properties in Kuala Lumpur is in the news as the government has announced plans to introduce the Urban Renewal Act this year.

Housing and Local Government Ministry Nga Kor Ming said it would ensure systematic, well-planned and efficient urban renewal efforts.

He said the proposed Act would lead to better redevelopment planning for isolated, old and uneconomical areas and turn them into zones that could offer good quality of life to urban dwellers.

StarMetro visited two communities living in very different projects in the city.

One in Sri Petaling is finding it hard to come to terms with impending redevelopment while the other in Salak South is enjoying the amenities and much-larger residential units.

Preserving a way of life

Every morning for the past three decades, Dzulkarnain Ariffin, a 69-year-old retired civil servant, begins his day with a cup of coffee while tending to his garden at Apartment Taman Sri Endah in Sri Petaling.

His neighbour from another block, Vincent Hee, a 55-year-old contractor, indulges in a weekend game of badminton at the neighbourhood basketball court.

Their mutual friend, Norizam Othman, 65, takes a brisk walk around her home every evening after dinner while enjoying the big open space and huge trees in her surroundings.

All three reside in two-bedroom walk-up flats built in 1988, each unit measuring just over 600sq ft.

The proximity to Sri Petaling LRT station, nearby business areas, green space and community sports facilities are hard to beat.

However, a looming redevelopment proposal of their flats on Jalan 5/149B has met with opposition from many of them.

Their concerns stem from the possible 350% increase in population density if the project secures majority approval, which may be a possibility if the Act comes into law.

Taman Sri Endah Management Corporation (Low Cost) chairman Mohd Mokhsin Junaaid said the redevelopment terms were unfair.

The plan entails replacing the existing seven blocks of five-storey walk-up flats on 4.16ha of leasehold land with a 54-storey condominium.

But the land area would be reduced significantly to 0.89ha. The remaining 3.27ha will be for 2,916 freehold units.

It would result in an 80% loss of land area for residents.

Mohd Mokhsin expressed most of the residents' sentiments when he said: "We are not interested in the view, larger living space or swimming pool if it means losing the open space."

Dzulkarnain, who also serves as Sri Endah Rukun Tetangga

High-rise living worries walk-up flat owners in KL

Urban redevelopment is being rejected by residents at one scheme while those at a completed project are happy with new conditions



Apartment Taman Sri Endah in Sri Petaling offers huge open spaces which many residents are unwilling to give up. — Photos: RAJA FAISAL HISHAN, AZLINA ABDULLAH and YAP CHEE HONG/The Star



Mohd Mokhsin says most owners who live in their flats do not want redevelopment.

chairman, fears their green spaces would vanish due to overdevelopment.

He said residents were content with their present place as it was clean and well-maintained.

"The abundance of green space is something we are not willing to sacrifice for high-rise living."

Mohd Mokhsin added that the proposed redevelopment would adversely affect their quality of life.

Another resident, Arun Raj, said the proposed development would further strain the area's infrastructure.

"Already, Apartment Taman Sri Endah is grappling with low water pressure.

"Who knows how things will be once the development is completed?"

Around 40% of residents who own and live in their units are



1 Razak Mansion in Salak South, Kuala Lumpur was officially opened in 2017.

said to be opposed to the redevelopment.

However, the remaining 60% of owners, who have rented out their units, might opt for redevelopment.

"We are worried as the redevelopment would disrupt our lives," Mohd Mokhsin said.

Model of urban renewal

When Anthony Tan, 34, looks

out of his three-bedroom apartment at 1 Razak Mansion, he is greeted by a million ringgit view – PETRONAS Twin Towers, Menara KL, Merdeka 118 and TRX.

He moved into the unit in 2017 as part of the redevelopment of Razak Mansion, which comprised seven blocks of four-storey walk-up flats in Salak South.

The first block of Razak

Mansion was built in 1961, with the second phase of six blocks following in 1963, and the third phase in 1967 inaugurated by then deputy prime minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein.

Decades later, the flats had deteriorated with issues like leaking pipes, cracked walls and low water pressure.

Redevelopment saw the government replacing the aged flats with modern, spacious units

HOUSING and Local Government Ministry is proposing 75% approval from residents for redevelopment projects under the proposed Urban Renewal Act.

However, National House Buyers Association (HBA) is against any "consent threshold", preferring unanimous approval.

HBA secretary-general Datuk Chang Kim Loong reiterated the association's position that any plan for redevelopment, rejuvenation or renewal must obtain the agreement of all parties involved, as each owner's rights are of paramount importance.

"While some parties may view the proposed Act as a positive step, HBA believes that it is a regressive measure.

"It would result in an unconstitutional piece of legislation that bypasses Article 13 of the Federal Constitution, which guarantees the right to property," he said.

Article 13 states that no person shall be deprived of property save in accordance with law and no law shall provide for the compulsory acquisition or use of property without adequate compensation.

'En-bloc sales contravene right to property enshrined in Federal Constitution'



Chang: HBA believes the proposed Act is a regressive measure.



Kok: A memorandum was sent to the PM dated Oct 18 objecting to the policy.

Chang argued that proceeding with a "consent threshold", also known as "en-bloc sale" based on a majority vote, would result in the dispossession of specific homeowners from their properties.

"Therefore, the proposed redevelopment law would constitute

a blatant violation of Article 13, and enacting such a law would not render it legitimate.

"We hope that the unconstitutional implications of such a law would not be overlooked.

"If we are not vigilant, the potential redevelopment law might even be expanded to

include non-strata landed schemes."

Seputeh MP Teresa Kok also raised similar concerns in her Budget 2024 speech.

"The Prime Minister has announced a plan to facilitate the redevelopment of strata schemes by reducing residents' approval threshold for en-bloc sales from 100% to a level consistent with international practices, such as in Singapore.

"It aims to encourage urban renewal and promote the redevelopment of ageing buildings in the city.

"I have reservations. While it may appear to be a step in the right direction, the fundamental issue is human development, quality of life and sustainability of these projects, considering the well-being of people who have lived there for generations."

Kok added that a memorandum dated Oct 18 was sent to the

Prime Minister last year.

It was signed by 57 residents' associations across 10 districts in Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, along with input from three non-governmental organisations and one higher education institution.

They objected to the new government policy to reduce the threshold for "en-bloc sales" from 100% for redevelopment purposes.

"I support the stance of these RAs and also HBA, as setting a consent threshold of less than 100% would significantly affect the right to ownership which is protected by the Federal Constitution.

"Every development plan and project must receive approval and consent from the owners of every single property in a housing area or in flats and apartments," Kok emphasised. — By BAVANI M



Tan in his spacious unit at 1 Razak Mansion, a redevelopment project which he describes as a success.

with enhanced amenities.

There was little resistance from the inhabitants and on March 15, 2017, 557 original owners received keys to their new homes in 1 Razak Mansion at no cost, while another 101 long-term tenants had the opportunity to purchase units for RM42,000.

Transitioning from a 504sq ft unit to one measuring 800sq ft was a relief for Tan.

"The Razak Mansion redevelopment was an unequivocal success," said Tan, a third-generation resident who is also 1 Razak Mansion's Management Corporation (MC) chairman.

He attributed the success to the decision not to relocate residents and instead construct the new project adjacent to their existing homes.

1 Razak Mansion is considered a model for urban redevelopment initiatives.

The MC recently welcomed urban planning stakeholders to discuss the project's success and how it could help shape forthcoming policies.

The meeting was attended by officials from various depart-

ments, including PLANMalaysia and Kuala Lumpur City Hall's (DBKL) Town Planning Department, alongside a private developer.

"Our experiences, challenges and insights will be crucial for officials compiling data for the upcoming Urban Renewal Act," said Tan.

1 Razak Mansion was a public-private partnership between Impianika Development Sdn Bhd and DBKL on a 13.4ha plot, featuring three 18-storey blocks with 668 residential units.

Tan remembers how the developer made an effort to convince residents of the benefits, highlighting the larger units, among others.

Residents like Loke Bee Ching, 68, and Alice Lim, 70, were thankful for the seamless transition.

"I was grateful that I did not have to move out (during construction).

"It would have been very inconvenient and expensive for me as I would have had to look for alternative accommodation," Loke said.

As she is much older, Lim is

happy to have lifts instead of having to walk up and down flights of stairs as she had to before.

However, residents like 69-year-old Ricky Poon said they missed some aspects of their old premises.

"We had lots of green spaces and old trees surrounding Razak Mansion.

"They were all removed to make way for the development next door," Poon said.

The old Razak Mansion site has been developed into Razak City Residences with 5,748 units of service apartments in 12 49-storey towers.

While thankful for their improved living standards, there is a feeling of nostalgia for what has been lost among residents StarMetro interviewed.

"Progress often comes with some sacrifices.

"I hope that for future redevelopment projects, the government will balance housing needs with environmental consideration.

"Above all, they must engage with the community every step of the way," said Tan.



Norizam (left) and her neighbour Chee Kam Fong enjoy living in the walk-up Apartment Taman Sri Endah.



Poon pointing out photos of the old Razak Mansion, which he looks back with nostalgia.



Residents have put up banners opposing the redevelopment of Apartment Taman Sri Endah.