

Zoning debate divides Bangsar neighbourhood

Businesses warn of economic risks while residents push for preservation

By BAVANI M
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THREE connected roads in Bangsar that are home to vibrant businesses face an uncertain future as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) proposes rezoning the area from major commercial back to residential.

The proposal, which involves 32 lots on Jalan Abdullah, Lengkok Abdullah and Lorong Abdullah, has sparked strong opposition from business and property owners.

They warned that this move could lead to plummeting property values, disrupted investments and a loss of confidence in the city's planning policies.

Representatives of 56% of the affected properties have expressed their disapproval, stating that the change threatens to undermine years of investment.

Many property owners say that they specifically invested in the area because of its major commercial zoning under Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020 (KLPP 2020).

They are appealing to DBKL to consider the long-term implications and make commercial zoning permanent instead of revising it with each local plan.

Notable restaurants on Jalan Abdullah could be adversely affected, along with an aged care facility, legal firms and security services in the area.

"Downgrading the zoning from commercial to residential sets a dangerous precedent that will undermine investor confidence," said Datuk Muhammad Shapiae Mat Ali, a spokesperson for the affected business owners.

"It could open the floodgates for other residents to demand similar downgrades, rendering commercial areas no longer safe for investors," he said.

He further cautioned that the move could leave the area deserted, like Jalan Gelinggang in Bukit Damansara where abandoned houses stand in stark contrast to bustling commercial developments nearby.

Proposed rezoning

The proposed changes were outlined in the draft Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2040 (KLPP 2040) earlier this year, catching many business owners by surprise.

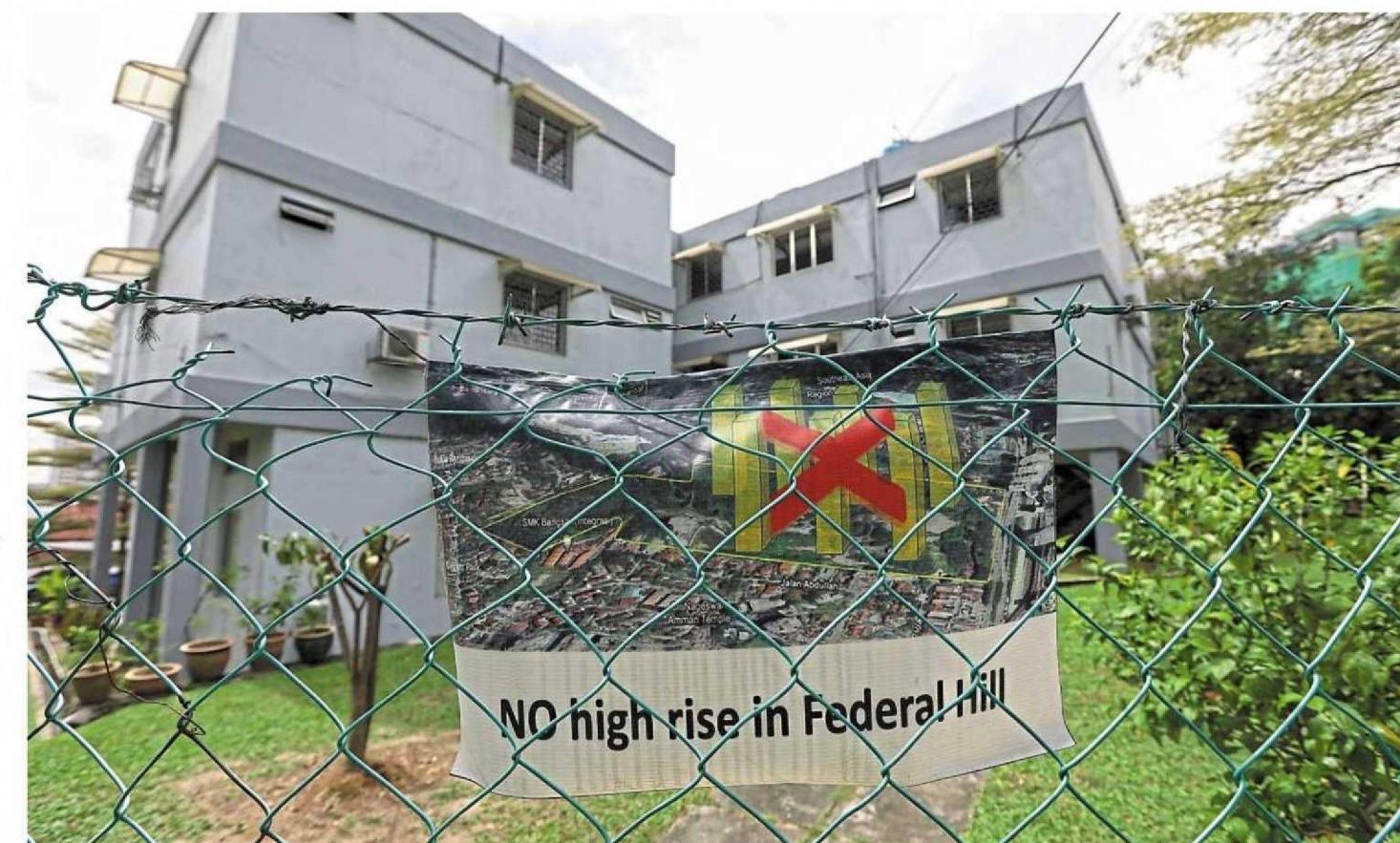
The draft categorises properties on Jalan Abdullah into a few zoning classifications – residential 1, residential 2 and lot amalgamation.

Under residential 1, properties numbered 23 to 37 are allowed to build up to three storeys.

For residential 2, properties numbered 11 to 21, as well as those on Lorong Abdullah and Lengkok Abdullah, can have buildings up to 15 storeys high.

For lot amalgamation, where three lots are merged, structures exceeding 15 storeys are permitted.

"This unprecedented move has caused significant concern among business and property



A house owner in Jalan Abdullah hangs a banner in protest of high-rises being built in his neighbourhood. — Photos: YAP CHEE HONG/The Star



Muhammad Shapiae says downgrading the zoning sets a dangerous precedent.



Lim invested RM2.8mil to develop his property into an elderly care centre.



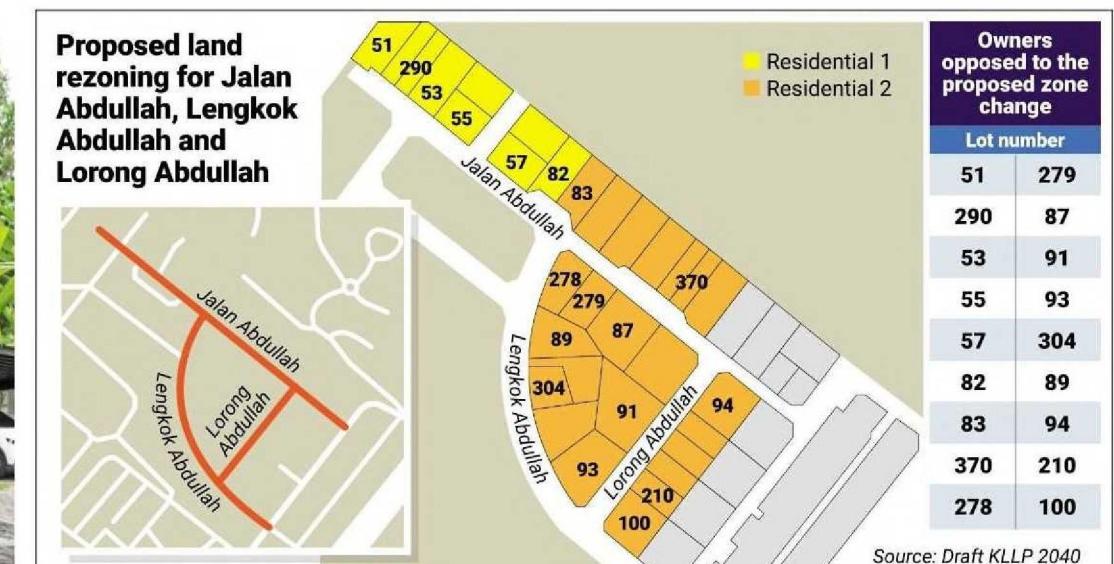
Ksharmini has opposed efforts to commercialise her neighbourhood for years.



Fahmi says the shift from major commercial to residential was requested by the residents.



During lunch hour, the road is often filled with cars as people come to enjoy a meal at the various eateries in the area.



Source: Draft KLPP 2040

original residents.

"There is an urgent need for DBKL to consider the implications of its planning decisions," said Ali.

He said this area should be protected as a heritage site, given its historical significance.

"The existing infrastructure for electricity and water is already strained and roads here cannot accommodate increased traffic."

"Flood risks are also high because of the limited capacity to expand the drainage system," he added.

Ali also pointed out incidents of inadequate fire hydrant performance during recent fires, which required water tankers to be brought in.

Just a short distance away is a low-density, 180-unit residential suite tower as well as an upcoming project featuring apartments and office buildings.

During lunchtime, the area is particularly congested, with cars parked on both sides of the roads as people visit the popular restaurants.

While some restaurant owners have hired parking attendants to manage the situation, traffic remains hectic on busy days.

Police were also observed issuing summonses to vehicles that were illegally parked.

StarMetro reached out to

Lembah Pantai MP Fahmi Fadzil, who said his office had not been contacted by business owners opposed to the rezoning.

However, residents in favour of reverting to residential had been in constant communication with his office.

"The shift from major commercial to residential was requested by the residents," said Fahmi.

The draft KLPP 2040, launched in January this year, outlines the capital city's vision, focusing on land use planning and development intensity in line with the goals set in the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2040 (KLSP 2040) in accordance with the Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982.

The public was invited to submit their objections and feedback on the draft until April 15.

The draft KLPP 2040 is expected to be gazetted by the first quarter of 2025.

Impact on businesses

Bungalow 37 restaurant owner Datuk Seri K. Mohan expressed frustration, noting his significant investment in transforming a 14,500sq ft ageing bungalow into

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