

PHYSICAL development in Kuala Lumpur must be balanced with social needs to ensure the city remains liveable and inclusive for all generations. And Kuala Lumpur's rapid growth must be accompanied by adequate support systems such as education, public amenities and infrastructure for local communities.

This viewpoint was shared by the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories), Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa.

"Without a doubt, rapid development in Kuala Lumpur will continue to expand but the need to align development approvals with the readiness of supporting infrastructure such as schools, clinics, road networks, public transport pressure and green spaces must be considered from the earliest stages of planning.

"The siloed approach between developers and local authorities must be replaced with comprehensive planning that considers the overall impact on the area," she said in a recent *Bernama* article.

A case in point: Sri Endah Flats

While the minister's vision for inclusive and sustainable growth is commendable, the true test lies in how her words translate into action, especially in urban renewal projects impacting vulnerable communities, such as residents of the Sri Endah Flats in Taman Sri Endah, Seri Petaling.

Sri Endah Flats is one of the 139 sites identified by Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) for redevelopment under the upcoming Urban Renewal Act or URA.

However, residents are raising red flags over what they perceive to be a top-down approach lacking transparency and community engagement. Among the voiced concerns that residents have raised include:

- > A lack of transparency in planning and execution.
- > Forced eviction or relocation with inadequate compensation.
- > Unfulfilled promises of facility upgrades.
- > Gentrification and densification.

While redevelopment is often touted as good for the public, it should not come at the cost of displacing or burdening low-income communities that are already living in substandard conditions.

The area's existing infrastructure is already stretched thin. Taman Sri Endah's roads, drainage, utilities and public transport were never designed to support a high-density, high-rise development. Schools such as SMK Seri Saujana, SMK Bandar Baru Seri Petaling and SK Bandar Baru Sri Petaling 2 are already grappling with traffic and congestion, and the proposed development would exacerbate these issues.

Landlocked and overbuilt

Plans have reportedly been submitted to replace seven blocks of five-storey flats, comprising 689 units in total, with a massive 54-storey multi-tower development of 3,605 units.

This drastic increase raises serious questions:

- > Will setback regulations and fire safety access be respected?

Cut the rhetoric, make the talk real



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Honorary secretary-general of National House Buyers Association (HBA)

- > Will the scale violate height or density limits?

- > How will it affect sunlight, airflow and surrounding liveability?

Many fear that redevelopment could lead to gentrification, pricing out current residents:

- > Will existing residents be offered 1-to-1 replacements with equal or better terms?
- > What safeguards exist to prevent

unfair displacement?

- > Previous examples, like Kampung Kerinchi and Pekeliling Flats, show broken promises and marginalisation post-redevelopment.

Despite claims of inclusivity, many residents report no meaningful engagement or referendum regarding redevelopment plans. This undermines the Federal Territory Ministry's commitment to participatory planning.

It also contradicts DBKL's Local Plan mandates which professed that community feedback should be conducted for major developments. Bypassing this process risks both legal challenges and public backlash.

Environmental and social impact

The scale of the proposed development calls for independent assessments such as the Traffic Impact Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and Social Impact Assessment. Yet, many residents say there has been little transparency around these critical evaluations. Concerns include:

- > Soil stability and safety of a

54-storey build.

- > Impact on flood risks and water tables.

- > Overburdened waste management and utilities.

- > Potential fragmentation of existing communities.

- > Affordability of future maintenance charges and sinking funds.

- > Risk of project delays, abandonment or becoming sick housing schemes.

If the government is serious about safeguarding vulnerable communities, it must also ask: Who bears the cost if this project fails?

A key principle of equitable redevelopment is consent.

Under Malaysia's Draft Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2040, urban renewal is encouraged to be owner-initiated, not developer-driven. The Strata Management Act 2013 (Section 111) mandates quorum and voting thresholds for such decisions.

In short, if redevelopment is not driven by the owners through their joint management bodies, management corporations or residents associations, it cannot be considered self-initiated. It becomes displacement by

another name.

Even the Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association has stated that urban renewal should be owner-led.

Talk is cheap without accountability

Urban redevelopment must be built on trust, transparency and action, not high-sounding rhetoric. Statements like "no one will be left behind", "we will ensure balanced, inclusive development" or "green spaces and local communities will be prioritised" are only meaningful if implemented on the ground.

In Sri Endah's case, a major developer has already obtained a no-objection letter from DBKL despite serious concerns about infrastructure, density and displacement. If this is allowed to proceed unchecked, it sends a clear message: Community voices don't matter.

If the Madani government is truly committed to equity, sustainability and inclusive growth, it must ensure transparent planning, genuine community engagement, one-to-one housing replacement on fair terms, independent oversight of impact assessments and prevention of overdevelopment that outpaces infrastructure.

The affected residents, whether they are owners, tenants or occupiers, must also be empowered to speak up and claim their rights. As a nation, we must measure development not by how tall our towers rise but by how fairly we treat those who live in their shadows.

When words fail to match reality, rhetoric becomes noise. Let's ensure developments work for the people, not against them.

This article is co-written by TSE Management Corporation (Low Cost) chairman Mohd Mokhsin Junaaid.



Sri Endah Flats is one of the 139 sites identified for redevelopment but residents are raising red flags. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star