

Heritage Protection

The proposal of demolishing a number of Chinese-style buildings, so called 'tong lau' in Wing Lee Street had aroused controversies. Some of the people claimed that these buildings should be demolished as soon as possible due to its hindrance to the economic development. I think it is absurd since these people didn't understand the whole picture of how old buildings assisting the growth of economic development instead of hindering it with their undeniable and irreplaceable practical value. I will explain it in the followings.

Many old buildings themselves are attractions, some may be owing to their distinctive architecture and some are because of the well-known story behind the buildings. I think if the government or the private developers can make use of this point, they would find the above characteristics economical and profitable. Government or private developers can simply refurbish and renovate the old buildings. With the renovation, the original marvelous architecture would be more eye-catching and appealing. Then, the Tourism Development Department can promote the unique old buildings through the official website or TV advertisement. This can add more new attractions to Hong Kong, which had been commented to have too little scenic spots, and at the same time, facilitate the tourism development, as well as the economic development. In short, the old buildings do not worth being sacrificed for the sake of economic development when the buildings themselves have so much distinctiveness and value. Most importantly, it is profitable which contradicts with the supporters of demolishing the old buildings. This just depends on whether the government or the private developers can make good use of the buildings' distinctiveness and uniqueness. Refurbishing the old buildings can assist the growth of the economic development that it has its practical value and we should not demolish these valuable old buildings but try our best to preserve them.

Besides, it is not a must to use tons of money to remove the old building and rebuild another one for economical development when the building itself has potential for economic development. The government or the private developers can revitalize the old buildings and fully utilize the building. Take the Murray Building in Stanley as example, it is a good model demonstrating the effectiveness of revitalization. This can retain the old buildings which attract more foreign visitors, and also can build some shops and practice several economical activities there. Besides, this can resolve the chief constraint of Hong Kong's economical development - that's the inadequate and limited land. In short, except demolishing the old buildings with economical development, which will make the economic activities even more flourish.

Last, whenever speak of 'practical Value', most people will instinctively link it to economic and they become realistic. I would like to remind those people that we can use other aspects and approaches to interpret 'practical value' instead of being solely economic - oriented. There are many buildings containing precious and unique cultural value or even are symbols of history. Academically, it is essential to show them to the students to deepen their impression after visiting the building in person. Also, there are also some old buildings with unique architecture. From the viewpoint of art, it is much more precious and vital than the economic development. It will also stir the Hong Kong architects' inspiration. In short, I think when we talk about practical value, we should be all over and consider different aspects but not only narrowly focus on economical development.

In conclusion, I think sacrificing the meaningful and invaluable old buildings for the sake of economical development is absolutely shallow. While it is no doubt that we should maintain the growth of economic development, renovation and revitalization will be good countermeasures to ensure the growth of economic development without sacrificing our precious old buildings. Thus I believe that demolition of old buildings for economical development is definitely unnecessary.