

An Overview of House Renovation Trend in Malaysia

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Abstract: A house is one of the basic of human needs as it provides shelter and comfort for us to live through the lives. When owning a house, researchers can see every sort of renovation done to the original house after quite some time because when a family expand either by growth or being economically stable, they would want a better place to live in. Researcher can see the renovation trends in Malaysia are really popular even at a glance because looking at some areas in Bandar Baru Bangi, there is hardly a house that is still in its original state. This study will conclude an alternative to guide the house buyer with renovation works while still abiding the law.

Key words: House buyer, renovation, terrace house, flexible floor plan, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

A place to live in is the basic needs of a human being that can shelter us from rain and scorching blaze from the sun. According to the famous Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in 1943, shelter or a house is one of the important basic human needs aside from food and water. Therefore, one should at least have a place to live either for themselves or for their family. However, economic state that is unstable nowadays is making it impossible for all to own an asset or their own house. The increasing house price is due to 3 reasons which is the ever increasing population, high urbanisation and also the economic state (Aziz, 2010). There are also developers who raised the house price that is much higher than the market price but reasoned it out to be because of the increased in cement price which is not really true. The cement's price has minimum effects on the whole cost of building and it is inappropriate to increase the actual market house price as stated by Mohammad Sahar Mat Din, the President of the Real Estate Developers' Association in Selangor to Utusan Malaysia.

In the 2013 Malaysian Budget, Datuk Seri Najib Razak has allocated a sum of more than RM 1 billion for the peoples' housing which is said to give fair chance to the low and middle income group to own a house. Comparing to the 2012 budget, researcher can see the increase of allocation for the housing sector in 2013 showing that it is important for a house to be built with a reasonable price. The conventional house construction takes time to

construct and more money used compare to the Industrialised Building System (IBS) that is more sustainable, cuts time and saves money. The new concept such as flexible housing and the use of green inner-wall for space can lessen the house price. Therefore, it appears to be more affordable for the low and middle income group to own a house according to their affordability and taste because they can design it to their liking.

CREATIVITY IN REMODELLING EXISTING HOUSE FLOOR PLAN

Flexible housing gives the home owners to decide the design of their house that reflects their life style and configuration. Economically, that specific kind of housing can maintain the value, avoiding hidden cost in arrangements, renovations and repair (Friedman, 1999). Flexible housing cost less to renovate than the conventional housing as what Loo Chern Wah has concluded. The definition of flexible housing that was determined by Jeremy Till and Tatjana Schneider, are housing that can adapt to the changing needs of users which is by design a broad definition. This definition also includes the possibility of choosing different housing layouts prior to occupation, as well as the ability to adjust to one's housing over time. The potential to integrate new technologies over time to adjust to changing demographics or even to completely change the use of the building housing to something else are technically what makes flexible housing too (Till and Schneider, 2005).

For the flexible housing floor plan concept, the use of sustainable green inner-wall is introduced to cut the cost of wet construction such as cements and bricks. There are several construction methods and material criteria for the sustainable green inner-wall, such as being sound proof, fire resistant have strength, humid resistant, lightweight, fast installation, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) concept and others (Tawil *et al.*, 2012). This sustainable inner-wall can be integrated well with the flexible housing floor plan because home owners' can renovate and redesign their house interior according to their taste and needs without much cost. By educating the house, owners to be creative with their floor plan, it can help them save money and help save the environment together for a better future.

HOUSING RENOVATION

The need for affordable housing (particularly evolving home) can be based on Malaysian culture itself where Malaysians tend to renovate, even before entering the house. This is supported by a study case by Saji (2012). According to the study, there is a need to provide just a basic house unit for people and allow them to renovate legally. This is better than illegal house renovation that is currently being done by owners which to some extent might give negative implication to their safety and health aspect. In Fig. 1-3, researchers can see the renovation made by the people living in Bandar Baru Bangi. Even, 1 storey terrace house was renovated and the owner turn it into a 2 storey terrace house which is illegal by law (Fig. 2). These terrace houses were conventionally built, so it does not actually have a strong base to support a second storey.

In Nurdalila's study, when one alters the space within the house which commonly happens to be the space near the exit in regards of cultural symbols and physical characters of the house. In Jayanti (2007)'s article, she quoted that the additions (house renovations) were articulating the sense of belongingness and source of self-identity. People who lack economic power to move to a bigger house or adequate one can make a significant impact on the distribution of space expressed through the household activities (Lawrence, 1990). Alternatively, they adapt the space to their changing needs, growing children and expansion of families (Altas and Ozsoy, 1998; Tipple and Tipple, 1991). It is common knowledge that the kitchen area is one of the favorite renovated spaces (Omar *et al.*, 2010) and the living room is a substantial space in the house that most residents had intended to modify.

Other than using the idea of a flexible floor plan, the home owner can also extend their home upwards and renovate the ground floor area according to their economic affordability. Basically, the idea is to provide



Fig. 1: The 2 storey terrace house in Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor



Fig. 2: The 1 storey terrace house that has been renovated into 2 storey in Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor



Fig. 3: The 1 storey terrace house in Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor

them with a base that could legally hold an upward structure of the second floor unlike the conventional built of terraced house such as the case where the developer only build a 1 storey terraced house and it does not have a base to build the second storey.

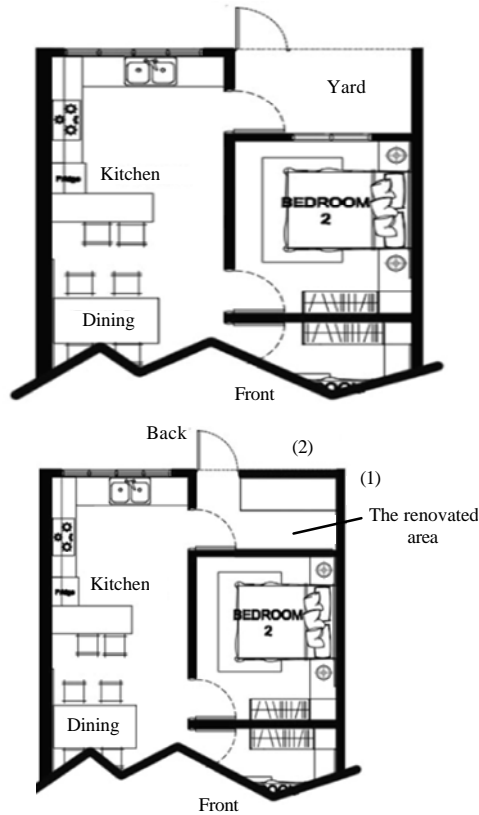


Fig. 4: Example of renovation works in a terrace house

In terrace housing, the most common area to be renovated is the kitchen area. The yard or the small area behind the terrace house that is usually in the original floor plan from the developer is the most common extension because of the fact that it is placed near the kitchen area. As shown in Fig. 4 for the example of a terrace house that is renovated to be the extension of the kitchen. It is done part by part because the owner will put an awning at first because of budget constraint at it is a suitable place for hanging clothes since terrace houses does not have a large area in the first plan. After sometime, the owner will surely renovate that particular area either for wet kitchen or maintained as an area for hanging clothes. What the owner did not realized is the need of authority's approval on their renovation because the wall in between 2 houses in area 1 is already built. Therefore, they only build a wall in area 2 replacing the fence.

CONCLUSION

Researchers have high hopes that this study would benefit the developers and researchers to go in depth on the readiness of the house owners regarding this flexible floor plan designed house concept. Moreover, there are many things to explore with this concept because of its

sustainability and it is also a fresh idea to be introduced to the Malaysians. Researcher want to educate the people on how to be creative with their own floor plan so that they can save their money and time thus having a designer look to the interior of the house using this flexible floor plan idea. Researchers would also like to develop a guideline of pre-approved plan for renovations purpose to be given to the housebuyers before they enter the house.

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