Adaptive reuse in sustainable development: An empirical study of a Lui Seng Chun building in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

Balancing a conflict between cultural heritage and development is an important topic for our society around the world. In many countries, historic buildings are well-preserved for economically viable uses. Lui Seng Chun is a Grade 1 historic building in Hong Kong. It is not only has collective memory for local residents, but also requires particular expertise and care. To encourage cultural tourism and ensure a good adaptive reuse of Lui Seng Chun project, the government has invited non-profit making organizations with charitable status to operate the building through applying the “Revitalizing historic buildings through partnership scheme”. This historic building can be allocated for cultural or commercial uses. Therefore, this paper explores public opinions on governmental measures and the introduction of conservation and revitalization of historic buildings as well as their comments on the reuse plan of the Lui Seng Chun project by conducting a questionnaire survey. Learning from the Lui Seng Chun project, the government should makes effort for protecting our heritage assets and considering public wants, a balance between development and heritage conservation can be achieved as a win-win situation.

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1. Introduction

Over the decades, Hong Kong has been developed from a small fishing village to an international city. Since heritage such as historic buildings bears witness on the development of our city and is a valuable and unique asset of the community, how to strike a good balance between sustainable development and heritage conservation has increasingly been the object of study in recent years. The Hong Kong government has actively advocating cultural tourism, hoping that through heritage conservation can create further attractions for visitors to Hong Kong [1]. For example, the government has introduced a “Revitalizing historic buildings through partnership scheme” for enhancing heritage conservation in October 2007. It bears a clear purpose of adaptive reuse of historic buildings for cultural enrichment that is one of the new directions for heritage conservation in Hong Kong. With this scheme, seven government-owned historic buildings are being selected as the first batch in this revitalization scheme. These revitalization projects can create positive impacts to the local community through injecting new economic activities and providing some sorts of catalytic effects [2]. It also provides diversity of the population movement between the districts, for example, attracting new inflow of people to the areas, thus injecting vitality and a breath of freshness to relatively old districts [3].

The historic buildings, Lui Seng Chun building is one of the seven revitalization projects that the Hong Kong government has invited non-profit making organizations with charitable status to apply for adaptive reuse. Interestingly, out of these seven historic buildings, applications received for the Lui Seng Chun building are the highest with 30 applications, compared to the lowest received project of only 5 for Old Tai O police station project. After thorough screening process, Hong Kong Baptist University has been selected among the applications for undertaking the Lui Seng Chun project. The cost of the Lui Seng Chun renovation project is estimated at around HK$24.8 million and completion in 2012. New Lui Seng Chun building will provide guided tours for introducing the history of the Lui Seng Chun building and for promoting Chinese medicine and healthcare education to the community.

Using a case study of the Lui Seng Chun project, this paper seeks to examine public opinion on the conservation of historic buildings by receiving information from a local perspective. The study of historic buildings can reveal artistic and human
messages embraced as well as illustrate their historic values and significance. The historic buildings can also be preserved for innovative use that transfers into unique cultural landmarks and creates benefits to the community. The most important, the re-vitalize and adaptive reuse can promote active public participation in the conservation of historic buildings and provide buildings a new lease of life for the enjoyment of the public.

2. Historic buildings

A historic building has architectural, aesthetic, historic, documentary, archaeological, economic, social and even political and spiritual or symbolic values; but the first impact is always emotional, for it is a symbol of our cultural identity and continuity as part of our heritage [4]. Historic buildings are symbols of cultural identity and continuity that can always give us a sense of wonder. They also carry various kinds of academic and aesthetic values.

In the United States, a building must has at least 50 years old to be considered as historic, although some jurisdictions have lowered this seemingly arbitrary threshold [5]. New York city is an example, in which significant buildings must be only 30 years old to be considered as historic landmarks. The fact is, buildings of architectural and cultural importance are represented in all decades of history. The merits of a particular property must be individually evaluated in terms of the locale's specific history and development; the individual property's architectural merit and association with important people or events [6].

Historic buildings can provide a tangible connection to the past and contribute to communities' identity and stability [7]. They can allow present-day visitors to experience firsthand on social, economic and aesthetic values of a particular historical period. Many historic structures represent the highest architectural achievements. Some also reveal extraordinary construction technologies and craftsmanship. Many buildings provide a unique perspective on important people or events in history. The integrity of a historic building may be considered in terms of both its architectural completeness and its authenticity in the context of historically significant events, activities or people. The degree of a building's architectural integrity relates directly to how effectively it conveys historic significance [6].

Historic buildings are varied in Hong Kong, ranging from elegant traditional Chinese ancestral halls and Western residences to functional structures such as waterworks facilities. Architectural styles, site selections and building materials as well as building types to be constructed are all governed by social beliefs, traditions, ideas and cultures. In Hong Kong, all the buildings are graded based on the basis of historical interest, architectural merit, social value and local interest that is governed by Chapter 53 - the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (the Ordinance). The Antiquities Authority who had consulted with the Antiquities Advisory Board and obtained the approval of the Chief Executive, by notice in the Gazette, declare a place, building, site or structure to be a monument for protection.

The current grading system categories historic buildings into Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 [8]; (i) Grade 1: Buildings of outstanding merit and feature, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible; (ii) Grade 2: Buildings of special merit and feature; efforts should be made to selectively preserve; and (iii) Grade 3: Buildings of some merit and feature; preservation in some form would be desirable and alternative means could be considered if preservation is not practicable.

3. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings

Adaptive reuse is a special form of refurbishment that poses difficult challenges for designers. Although, changing the class and functional classification of a building will introduce new regulatory conditions and perhaps require zoning consent [9], there are clear economical, environmental and social benefits that can attract this option for developers. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings is considered as fundamental to promote the conservation of heritage and sustainable development around the world.

To determine whether to reuse buildings or to demolish and rebuild, energy and waste disposal costs of new action usually do not include all environmental and social costs [10]. Un-masking these costs can provide strong incentives for a transition to sustainable energy use, less profligate use of new materials, and greater use of existing building stock. Refurbishment is also a greater employment generator than new construction. Refurbishment generates about 25% more employment than new building construction per square metre of floor space as a result of the typical labour-intensive activities involved in renovation [9,10].

4. Historic buildings conservation in Hong Kong

Hong Kong has grown from a small rural community into a modern metropolis in the past 50 years. The main characteristic of Hong Kong's culture lies in the successful blend of east and west. Hong Kong's heritage items are a testimony to our unique past and are irreplaceable. The conservation works of historic buildings provide a legacy for future generation showing how those lived before, and enables new generation to retain knowledge and memories of previous ages. Conserved heritage also forms part of collective memory, which provides a sense of continuity and belonging and helps define our cultural identity [11].

The demand of establishing a comprehensive heritage conservation policy in Hong Kong has been aspired from public's concern. After a review exercise on the policy and related ordinances was conducted by the Home Affairs Bureau in 2004, there has been no further follow-up action from the government on the same subject. One out of twelve Hong Kong's historic buildings proposed to declare have been torn down since 1980. The Antiquities Advisory Board revealed that 54 out of 607 buildings had listed since it was set up in 1980 have been demolished. There are now 496 graded historic buildings and 81 declared monuments left in Hong Kong. However, those graded sites currently have no legal protection against any demolition work carried by the owners [12].

In 2007, the importance heritage conservation of Hong Kong was recognized in the Chief Executive's policy address to protect, conserve and revitalize as appropriate historical and heritage sites and buildings through relevant and sustainable approaches for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generation. The government treasured the sense of place, the sense of identity that this generation has developed and attached to Hong Kong's cultural history and the past and provided an opportunities for the young generation to understand the history of the Hong Kong [13].

To take forward the Chief Executive's pledge, a new adaptive reuse scheme has been implemented on the historic buildings. The scheme aims to achieve dual objectives that historic buildings would be preserved and made available for use in the best interest of the community. It becomes an opportunity to promote active public participation in the preservation and innovative use of historic buildings.

To protect, conserve and revitalize appropriate historic buildings for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, due regard should be given to development needs in the public interest, respect for private property rights, budgetary considerations, cross-sector collaboration and active engagement
of stakeholders and the general public. The major legislation in related to conservation of historic buildings is the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (A&M Ordinance), which took effect in 1976. Apart from the A&M Ordinance, under certain circumstances, the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO) also allows the government to exercise certain powers in protecting historic buildings from the threat of development. The spirit of the Ordinances allows the authorities to preserve significant historic structures for the public’s benefit and for the enjoyment by future generations.

Adaptive reuse of Lei Yue Mun Fort in 2000 was one of the successful examples showing Hong Kong’s conservation effort on historic buildings. It occupied a strategic position guarding the eastern approach to the Victoria Harbour. Lei Yue Mun Fort, built by the British between 1885 and 1887, was classified as Grade 1 historic building. Designed and built by the Royal Engineers, the Redoubt was the core of the Lei Yue Mun fortifications. In view of its historical significance and unique architectural features, the former Urban Council decided in 1993 to conserve and develop the Lei Yue Mun Fort into a museum of coastal defense to feature the coastal defense history of Hong Kong over the past six decades. The key conservation concept included converting the underground casemates and magazines in the Redoubt into several exhibition galleries; reinstating the entrance of the Redoubt, a part of the ditch wall surrounding the Redoubt and the two caponiers. While the project did not involve major demolition, structural alterations and strengthening works, a large tensile structure was constructed to cover the courtyard of the Redoubt [14]. Some minor new buildings such as lift towers, cafe blocks and service blocks for filling up deficiency of physical site constraints were also constructed. To reminisce the past military features, these new structures were decorated with fair-face concrete finish [14].

5. A Lui Seng Chun project

The site area of the Lui Seng Chun project is approximately 123 m² and located at 119 Lai Chi Kok Road, Mongkok, at junction with Tong Mi Road. The Lui Seng Chun building is a Grade 1 historic building, the main part of the Lui Seng Chun is zoned as “Other specified uses” and annotated as “Historical site preserved for commercial and cultural uses” on the outline zoning plan. The subject zone is for preserving, restoring and converting the Lui Seng Chun building into a local heritage attraction with provision of cultural and commercial facilities for the enjoyment of the public. Any demolition of, or any addition, alteration and/or modification to the existing the Lui Seng Chun building requires planning permission from the town planning board.

The building has undergone a number of repairs, alterations and renovation during its history. The recent repair work carried out by maintenance management branch of Architectural Services Department was limited to arrest the deterioration of the building fabric and prevent further water penetration. The work was not intended to be a restoration project but for returning the building to where it should be. To minimize the intervention to the existing building, repair works only addressed to deteriorated elements for ensuring structural stability and weather tightness of the building previous repairs, alteration and addition works which were in sound condition was not intervened [8].

Mr. Lui Leung, the owner of the Lui Seng Chun building, was born in Taishan county of the Guangdong province. Upon his arrival in Hong Kong, he actively engaged in transport and trading businesses. He was one of the founders of the Kowloon Motor Bus Company Limited. In 1929, Mr. Lui purchased a piece of land at 119 Lai Chi Kok Road from the government and appointed by Mr. W.H. Bourne, a local architect who specialized in designing shop houses to construct the Lui Seng Chun building. The construction works were completed in early 1930s. The ground floor of the building was occupied by a Chinese bone-setting medicine shop named “Lui Seng Chun”, while the upper floors became living quarters for the members of Lui’s family. The name “Lui Seng Chun” was derived from a pair of rhymed couplets, implying Lui’s medicine could bring a patient back to life. The medicine enjoyed a good reputation locally and overseas. Mr. Lui passed away in 1944 and the shop was closed down a few years later. The building was subsequently used as accommodation and let out as tailor shops. In 2000, the Lui’s family proposed to the Antiquities and Monuments Office to donate the building to the government. The transfer of the building was accomplished in October 2003. The Lui Seng Chun building not only bears witness to the history of a well-known family in Hong Kong, but also illustrates the past community life, economic activities and architecture of the territory (see Fig. 1).

The Lui Seng Chun building is a four-storey building and identified as a typical “Kee-lau” or “Tong-lau” (Chinese tenement). This type of two-to-four-storey residence integrating Chinese and Western architectural styles together was very popular in the early 20th century in Hong Kong. The building facade reflects the neoclassical style which is characterized by a square-shaped frame and a row of decorative balustrades in front. The deep verandahs help preventing rain from flooding the house, block sunlight and keep the indoor areas cool. This together with the stone plaque marked with the name of the medicine shop installed at the top of the building are all typical architectural features of pre-war Chinese tenements. The main facade of the building was lavishly decorated with classical Italianate designs, one of which is the “broken pediment” at the shop. The curved front elevation was designed to make better use of the narrow strip of land restricted by the road junction. In terms of structure, the external walls of the building are made of plastered red brickwork with columns and beams of reinforced concrete. The Lui Seng Chun building is regarded as the representative of ‘Kee-lau’ of the pre-war period in Hong Kong.

In 2008, the Development Bureau of the Hong Kong government has introduced a new scheme namely the “Revitalizing historic buildings through partnership scheme” which allows non-governmental organizations to apply for adaptive reuse of selected government-owned historic buildings. The Lui Seng Chun building is being selected as one of these buildings. On 17 February 2009, the research team in Hong Kong Baptist University has been selected among 30 applications for undertaking the Lui Seng Chun project. It was proposed to transform the historic the Lui Seng Chun building into a Chinese medicine clinic to be named “Hong Kong Baptist University Chinese medicine and healthcare centre – Lui Seng Chun”, blending healthcare services, education and exhibition facilities. While conserving the heritage and architectural merits of the Lui Seng Chun building, the Centre aims to provide comprehensive Chinese medicine and healthcare services to the community, for enhancing public knowledge of Chinese medicine and helping train professionals in the field. In addition, the conversion will turn the building into a historical and cultural landmark.

The cost of the Lui Seng Chun renovation project was estimated at around HK$24.8 million and completion in 2012. The centre offers a wide range of quality Chinese medical services to the public, from internal medicine to bone-setting, nap apathy and acupuncture. The centre also organizes periodic Chinese medicine exhibitions and healthcare talks to the public. Internship positions will be made available to, and training courses run for Chinese medicine students and practitioners. The centre also provides guided tours for introducing the history of the Lui Seng Chun building and promoting Chinese medicine and healthcare...
education to the community. The itinerary of these tours includes Hong Kong Baptist University’s Dr. & Mrs. Hung Hin Shiu Museum of Chinese medicine and The Bank of China (Hong Kong) Chinese medicines centre for providing visitors a comprehensive understanding of Chinese medicine and its practice in Hong Kong. In terms of heritage conservation, Hong Kong Baptist University has retained, as far as possible, the original look of the building and most of its typical architectural features, including the “Kee-lau” (Chinese verandah) design, decorative balustrades, doors, windows, floor tiles and the stone plaque marked with the name of the old family shop “Lui Seng Chun” installed at the top of the building. After revitalization, the ground floor of the building has been used for exhibitions and the sale of herbal tea and medicine. A reception area, pharmacy store and preparation room will be located on the first floor. The second and third floors have mainly been used for consultations while part of the verandah of the first to third floors used as exhibition areas. A Chinese medicinal herb garden is built on the rooftop of the building with other green measures, such as photovoltaic and rainwater collection systems.

6. Research methodology

To examine the public opinion of adaptive reuse for the Liu Seng Chun project, a questionnaire survey and face-to-face interviews were conducted. In the questionnaire, the questions sought the respondents’ opinions about the physical, social and financial aspect of the Lui Seng Chun projects. To understand how the society reacts with the project, the questionnaire was distributed to public who live or work near the Lui Seng Chun project. About one thousand questionnaires were dispatched at nearby residential and commercial buildings and three hundred and twelve questionnaires being returned with the response rate of 31.2%.

In addition to the survey in gathering further information relating to the questionnaire survey and the public opinion on the adoptive reuse of the Lui Seng Chun project, thirty of the questionnaire respondents from questionnaire are kindly provided their opinion about the adoptive reuse of the Lui Seng Chun project through the face-to-face interview.
7. Results and discussions

Majority of respondents were in the age range 21–30 (about 53%), followed 31–40 (about 26%), 41–50 (about 12%), 11–20 (about 3%), 71–80 (about 3%), 51–60 (about 2%) and 61–70 (about 1%). About 59% of the respondents were male and about 41% were female. Regarding their occupation, about 62% of the respondents are working in construction field while 8% are business owners and remaining 30% are included as others.

The survey results on the physical aspect of the Lui Seng Chun project were summarized in Table 1. Around 80% of the respondents agreed that the facilities in the Lui Seng Chun project should be preserved for historical and cultural conservation. They also opined that all additions or alteration works have to be first considering whether it will affect the historic values of the Lui Seng Chun building. Any commercial organizations want to build up its customer-based through marketing, such as hanging up signage or billboards for attracting public’s awareness, certain limitations or requirements have to be required for approval. This eventually should create unfavorable business situation for organizations and in turn reduce the interest of those organizations. The Lui Seng Chun building is not an ideal building for pure business operation under the definition of adaptive reuse of historic building.

95% of respondents agreed that it is government’s responsibility to monitor the progress of the project and monitor all facilities or proposed additions, alterations and modifications that are not deviating from the original proposal. Public are relying on the government for protecting the historic buildings and expecting the government to keep close track on similar projects.

Over 70% of the respondents were of the view that the Lui Seng Chun building is situated in an unfavorable location for commercial aspects. It has no nearby parking areas and no obvious drop-off points for the public transport such as bus and taxi. With this limitation, it is extremely difficult to pursue the building as a tourist attraction. In addition, traffic around the buildings is heavy during most of the day with buses and trucks as well as cars and these roads thus effectively isolate the Lui Seng Chun building from the rest of the neighborhood. Majority of respondents have considered if the government is eager to develop the Lui Seng Chun building as a medical facility or a tourist spot, surrounding areas has to be restructured.

Around 90% of the respondents agreed that a reuse plan of the building should be adopted for ensuring project design and restructuring are harmonized the surrounding environment. Actually, the surrounding areas of the Lui Seng Chun building can hardly develop any commercial business plans, as it is a remote and quiet area with limited business transactions in the district of Sham Shui Po.

Table 2 summaries the survey results on the social aspect on the Lui Seng Chun project. There is no doubt that the public is very much agreed on the adaptive reuse of the Lui Seng Chun building. Majority of the respondents (88%) supported that the Lui Seng Chun building should be revitalized. It is indicated that the “Revitalizing historic buildings through partnership scheme” launched by the government is on a right track and Hong Kong people also showed their support and agreement on this scheme.

About 21% of the respondents expressed that the idea of transforming the Lui Seng Chun building into a Chinese medicine clinic is feasible while about 40% of the respondents against it, in addition, about 40% hold a neutral opinion on this transformation. It can be inferred that the set up of a Chinese medicine clinic is not strongly welcomed in the local community. During the interview, more than 50% of the respondents that the clinic will aims to generate profit and therefore may not create the best benefit for the local community. Public’s worries about the future use of historic buildings may cause by their lacking of update information regarding to the plan, which further indicates that the government should keep the public posted on the service to be provided in this new clinic.

Besides the chinese medinic clinic, there was another option – specialist retailers. Not surprisingly that up to 64% of the respondents disagreed with the idea of transforming the Lui Seng Chun building into a specialist retailer. Though the experience gained from a Shanghai Tang retail outlet in the Pedder Building, Central, it is a good example of a specialist brand using the historical presentation of its premises for adding values to its branding presentation; however, successful models in Hong Kong are still limited. In addition to the location constraint, it seems that the public is not confident that the Lui Seng Chun building can be a successful case.

Nevertheless, when asking the respondents’ opinion about another option - transforming the Lui Seng Chun building into an exhibition centre, about 92% of the respondents showed their agreement. The responses from the public revealed that the local public is very much wishing the Lui Seng Chun building can be used for non-profit generating activities, such as an exhibition centre displaying the history of that district for collective memory, but not favor to reuse the building as a specialist retailer or a Chinese medicine clinic. A good example of converting a historic building into similar purpose is the conservation and redevelopment of the Lei Yue Mun Fort into a museum of coastal defense which features coastal defense history of Hong Kong over the past 600 years [15].

It is not surprised that more than half of the respondents from the questionnaire disagreed that commercial organization should scheme and bears the total responsibilities for the entire revitalization of the Lui Seng Chun project. Around 70% of the respondents from the questionnaire survey believed that non-profit organizations should scheme and totally be responsible for the revitalization of the Lui Seng Chun project. This shows a clear picture that the public are hoping for the revitalization project of the Lui Seng Chun to be undertaken by some charitable or non-profit-making organizations instead of commercial uses. Through

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<th>Table 1 Physical aspects on the Lui Seng Chun project.</th>
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<td>The objective of the proposed additions, alterations and/or modifications of the facilities should be preserved for history and culture.</td>
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<td>The government must closely monitor the progress of the project and ensuring all facilities meet requirements.</td>
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<td>From commercial aspect, the Lui Seng Chun building is in the worst location scenario</td>
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<td>An appropriate reuse plan should be adopted to respond to the natural context and to integrate with the surrounding areas</td>
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face-to-face interview, majority of respondents also strongly believed that commercial organizations would only put priority on making profits and generate public awareness on their brands, therefore conservation of the building as well as offering good and economic service to the public will be ignored. As a result, they are favor to the idea of the government to monitor the progress of the project and would like to have non-profitable generating activities.

Regarding the schedule of restoration works, about 73% of the respondents opined that the Lui Seng Chun project should not be further delayed because it has been left unused for many years, while there is another 23% hold a neutral opinion. While a majority of people are excited to push the government in starting the project as soon as possible, still a number of people are indifference. The government should put additional efforts on education for promoting the importance of historic building conservation.

Regarding the history and cultural value of Lui Seng Chun Building, over 92% of the respondents agreed that it has form part of their collective memory. Local residents have developed a special sense and long term of belonging to that area and Lui Seng Chun building can represent their local culture, history and de-

mercial organization should totally responsible on the scheme for the revitalization of the Lui Seng Chun project. 

Non-profit organizations should totally responsible on the scheme for the revitalization of the Lui Seng Chun project. 

The Lui Seng Chun building has been left unused for many years and development should not be further delayed or halted.

The Lui Seng Chun building forms a part of your collective memory, which provides cultural continuity and a sense of belonging.

The Lui Seng Chun building is a typical ‘Tong-lau’ building in Hong Kong. It can provide a legacy for future generation.

The project reuse should achieve Hong Kong people’s will

It enhances the pride and identity of the local citizens

It is suitable that the Lui Seng Chun building will be open to public rather than for commercial purpose

Table 3
Social aspects on the Lui Seng Chun project.

Table 3
Financial aspects on the Lui Seng Chun project.

Financial assistance should be provided to support the non-government organizations for the starting cost of the first two years of operation.

The rent of the Lui Seng Chun building should reflect as market rate

An independent financial assessment by an academic institution will help the public to understand the financial consideration of the project.
tourism, in which 57% of the respondents hold a strongly-agree viewpoint. The finding is a bit different from a consultancy report issued by the Oval partnership Limited, where it cited that the Lui Seng Chun building is a remnant; an isolated building that has lost its original historical context and sites out of context with the current setting of the neighborhood. They also stated that only truly determined tourist would want to see it and he/she would be the most interested in the façade only.

About 46% and 43% of the respondent agreed and hold neutral opinion respectively regarding government’s provision of financial subsidy for non-profit organizations in operating the Lui Seng Chun building for the first two years of operation. The public is willing to grant reasonable funding and support by the government to the charitable organizations and ensure the project can smoothly and successfully operate.

About 37% of the respondents are neutral towards the question on whether rental price of the Lui Seng Chun building should reflect its market value. This shows that people are more concern on its conservation and usage instead of this rental price. This result is consistent with the question regarding government subsidy. The public is not keen to require this project to generate profit for the government or organizations, and they are not expecting the government for leaving it solely to Hong Kong Baptist University without providing any government subsidy or supervision.

About 75% of the respondents thought that asking an independent organization in providing a financial audit or assessment could allow the public to understand the financial situation of this revitalization project. Obviously, it is the government’s responsibilities and the public’s right to know how the cost is being spent with detail expenses.

8. Direction towards the adaptive reuse and revitalization of the historic building

The results above clearly demonstrated that Lui Seng Chun building is not suited for business development, it is still a valuable asset for the majority of Hong Kong people as is their collective memory. Hence, most of the people are willing to spend money for preserving it, and people believed that it will create additional career and business opportunities for local community. Also, most of the people are already eager to visit the Lui Seng Chun building when it is open for public in the future, therefore this indicates that the Lui Seng Chun building has great potential to be developed as a tourist spot. Conservation is most people’s expectation; however, insufficient marketing and promotion by the government was one of the obstacles for attracting the tourists. Local community disliked converting the Lui Seng Chun building into a Chinese medical clinic while most of them favored an exhibition centre. Regrettably, the government’s final decision did not receive majority’s support. At the same time, some of the respondents still hold neutral opinion about the Lui Seng Chun’s conservation proposal, thus, the government should enhance its promotion on historic building conservation through education.

Noteworthy, the experience learning from the Lui Seng Chun building could reveal the key factors leading to the successful revitalizing projects. Fig. 2 shows the key factors under the physical, social and financial aspects. In the physical aspect, the key concerns are (a) will the additional and alteration works affected the historic value of the building? (b) how to ensure the project design and restructuring harmonized to the surrounding environment. General public believed that all the construction works should be monitored by the government departments. In addition, the location of the historic building is another key concern. For instance, if the building is far away from the centre business district (CBD), public transport should be arranged for attracting the tourist. Regarding the social aspect, two questions related to (a) do the public agree on the commencement of revitalizing projects? (b) will the revitalization of building form part of memory of society and enhance the pride and identity of local community?, should be consulted with the general public before the commencement of the projects. Lastly, regarding the financial aspect, the public is much concerned about the business and job opportunities has been created to the local community through the revitalizing projects.

Fig. 2. Factors leading to the successful revitalization of historic buildings.
9. Conclusion

The Lui Seng Chun building is a target historic building being analyzed in this paper. Questionnaire survey was conducted to explore public opinion on governmental measures and the introduction of conservation and revitalization of historic buildings as well as their comments on the reuse plan of the Lui Seng Chun project. Unfortunately, the Lui Seng Chun building is described as a building of relatively low commercial potential with high heritage and preservation expectations. Cost related to the necessary works required to issues appropriate to the high preservation issues, providing a very difficult commercial scenario for any tenant seeking for profit making. The general public shows a high level of sensitivity towards the use of this disappearing historical building, and may perceive non-profit use more appropriate than disposing of the building in a manner applied to ordinary non-heritage related buildings. Through the survey results, three aspects leading to deliver a successful revitalization projects was retrieved. To avoid the quern pier case, the government’s decision cannot obtain support from the public. If the government provides efforts for saving our heritage assets and listen to what public wants, there must be some ways to achieve a win-win situation.

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