Balancing Housing Development and Conservation of Urban Identity

Adaptive Transformation of Traditional Residential Areas in the Contemporary Urban Context

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Presentation outline

01 Research problem, objectives and methodology

02 Conceptual framework, reference lessons and the structure of Chợ Lớn

03 Adaptive transformation framework and intervention scales

04 Management instruments, pilot implementation, monitoring and conclusions

Research problem



Traditional residential area of Chợ Lớn: living, commerce and lanes

Housing improvement must sustain the residential, commercial and community structure.

Chợ Lớn needs improvements to infrastructure, safety and residential amenity while sustaining its shophouses, lanes, street networks and commercial livelihoods. Isolated interventions do not address these challenges, whereas comprehensive redevelopment can disrupt the residential structure.

Research requirement

Establish an adaptive transformation framework at the residential-area scale, linking housing improvement with the conservation of urban structure and identity.

Objectives, scope and methodology

Objective

Propose an adaptive transformation framework that enables residential areas to remain operational, improve living conditions and sustain urban identity.

Study area and object

The traditional commercial-residential area of Chợ Lớn, focusing on relationships among shophouses, plots, lanes, blocks and streets.

Methodology

Literature review, references from Singapore and Hội An, morphological analysis and a case study of Chợ Lớn.

1. Literature review
2. Practice-based references
3. Structural identification of Chợ Lớn
4. Proposed framework and monitoring indicators

Conceptual framework

Adaptive transformation treats the residential area as an operating spatial, social and economic system.

Historic Urban Landscape

Identify overlapping natural, cultural, social and economic values. Manage change rather than freeze.

Residential quality and inclusion

Assess amenity, safety, affordability, security of tenure and local livelihoods together.

Urban morphology

Analyse the sequence of dwelling, plot, lane, block and street to identify relationships that should be sustained.

Condition-based intervention

Conservation, upgrading or controlled replacement based on heritage value and technical condition.

Reference lessons: Singapore and Hội An



Singapore: identify retained elements and components open to technical or functional adaptation.

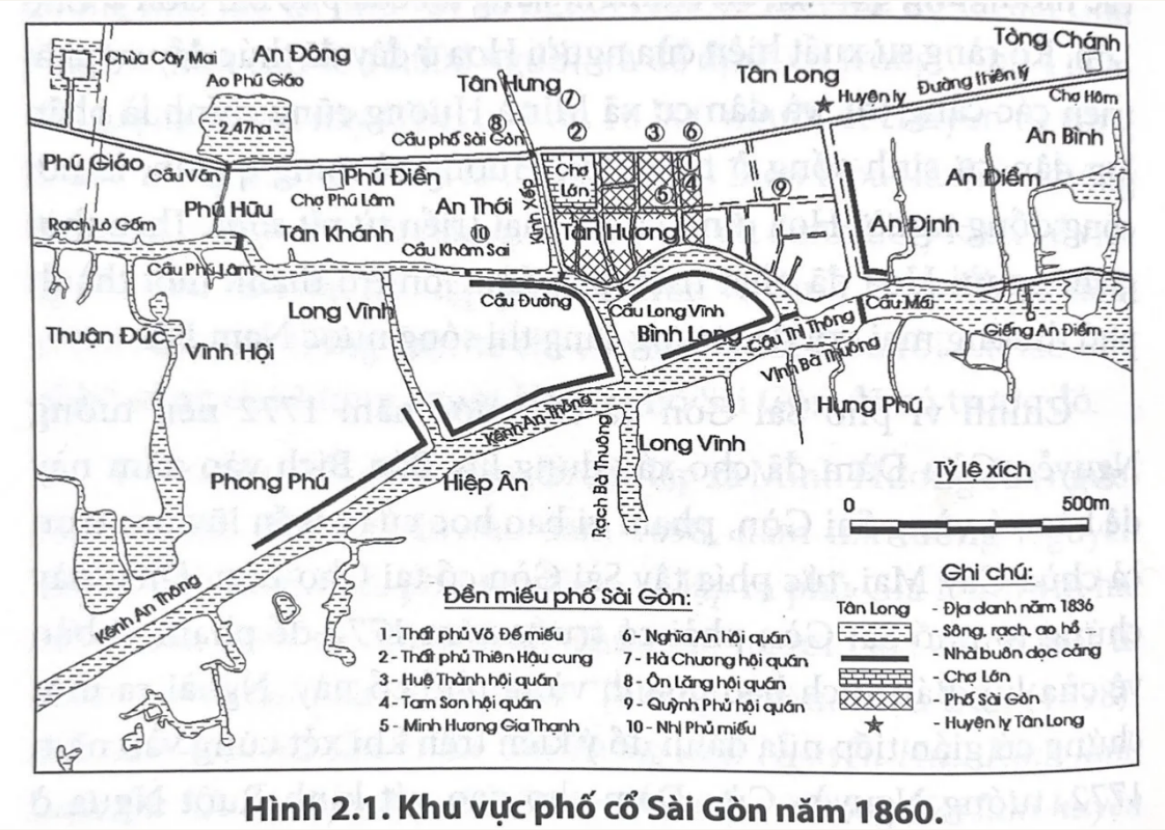


Hội An: manage repairs, uses and tourism while supporting residents' everyday lives.

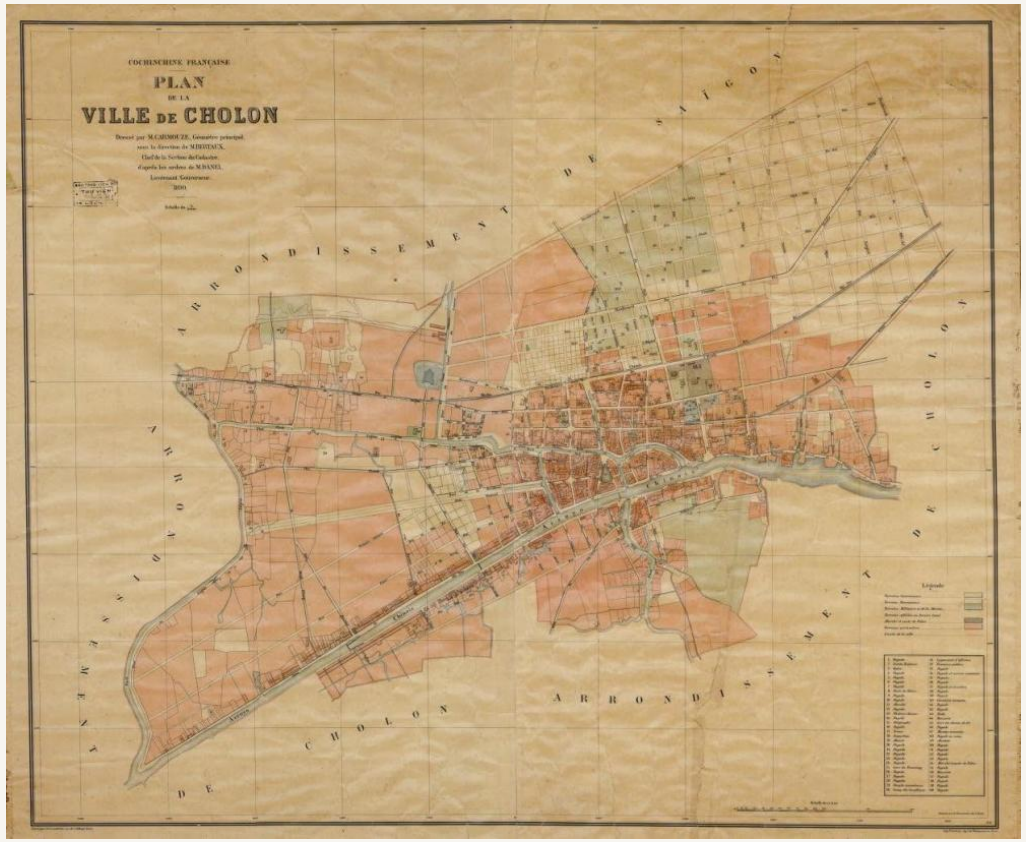
Transferable lessons

Set intervention limits according to value and spatial scale. Assess outcomes through living quality, security of tenure and community vitality.

Chợ Lớn: commercial-residential structure



Hình 2.1. Khu vực phố cổ Sài Gòn năm 1860.



Formative structure

The relationship among waterfront landing places, markets, streets, assembly halls and residential areas creates a continuous urban-commercial network. Housing and commerce remain intertwined.

Structural sequence to be sustained



From waterborne trade networks to the contemporary system of streets, lanes and specialised commercial corridors.

Shophouse
Core unit that combines living and commerce.

Plot
Narrow frontage, deep plot and multiple layers of use.

Lane
Access, goods handling and community interaction.

Urban block
Attached buildings, open space and local facilities.

Street
Specialised commerce, active frontage and primary access.

Market & hall
Community institutions and activity nodes.

Pressures for change and need for adaptation



Lane space in the traditional commercial-residential area

Chợ Lớn faces a dual challenge: upgrading living conditions while sustaining commerce in a high-density area.

Housing conditions

Insufficient daylight, ventilation and amenity. Structural safety, egress and fire safety are difficult to ensure.

Area infrastructure

Lanes and streets are overloaded by goods deliveries, drainage, waste collection and emergency access.

Incremental change

Ad hoc extensions, extra storeys and subdivision reduce ventilation, overload infrastructure and heighten safety risk.

Social risk

High improvement costs can displace residents and weaken household businesses.

Adaptive transformation analytical framework

01

Value identification

Housing types, plots, lanes, blocks, streets, public space, commerce and community.

02

Needs assessment

Amenity, safety, infrastructure, affordability, displacement risk and pressure for change of use.

03

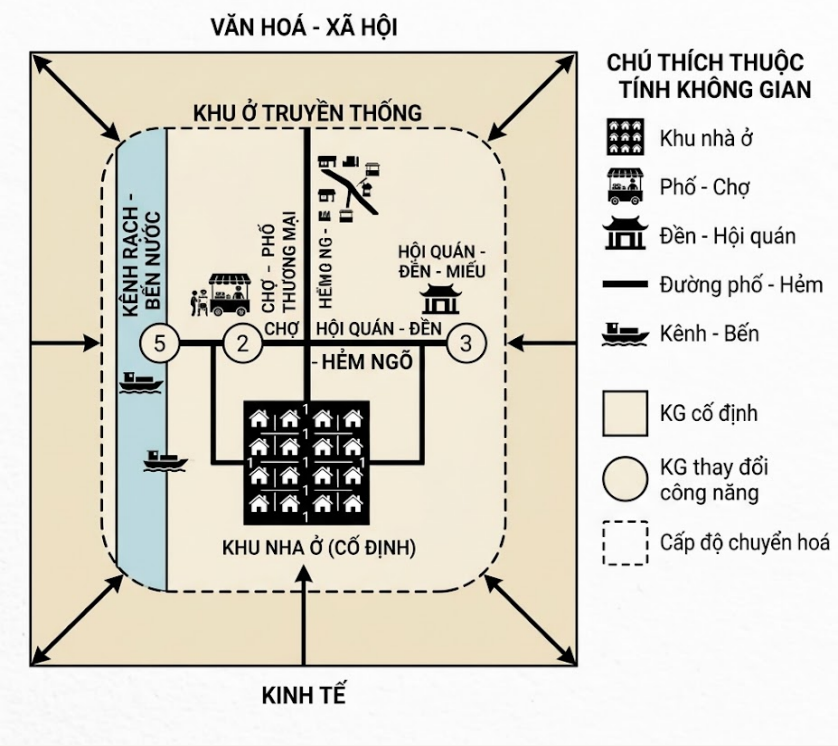
Intervention classification

Conservation, upgrading or conditional replacement based on heritage value and technical condition.

04

Implementation and monitoring

Planning and design, legal tools, finance, community participation and monitoring indicators.



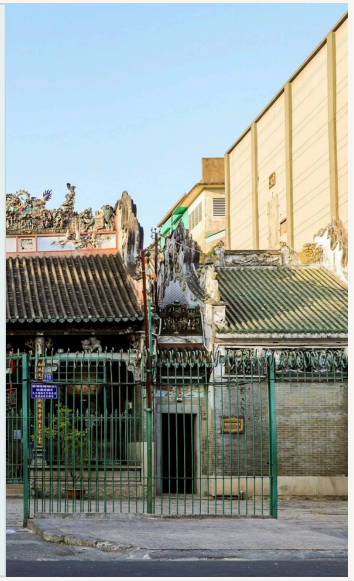
Structural diagram of elements forming a traditional residential area

Intervention classification by housing condition

Within the same residential area, each building requires an intervention level matched to its heritage value, technical condition and role in the street frontage.

Group 1

Technical conservation:
– Architectural-value buildings or key street-structure elements.



Group 2

Strengthening and upgrading:
– Deteriorated buildings with valuable plot, spatial and lane relationships.



Group 3

Conditional replacement:
– Unsafe buildings not feasible to upgrade. Control scale and street relationship.



Shared control parameters: building height, open space, lane access, façades and infrastructure capacity.

Intervention at four spatial scales

1

House

Strengthen structure. Improve daylight, ventilation, sanitation, egress and fire safety.



2

Lane

Ensure fire-service access, drainage, lighting, waste collection and utility stopping points.



3

Urban block

Add open space, goods handling, essential facilities and small community spaces.



4

Street

Control height, façades, signage and goods-handling hours. Improve walkability.



Upgrading individual dwellings must correspond to infrastructure capacity across the whole area, avoiding piecemeal upgrades that overload lanes and streets.

Affordability and inclusion

Residents

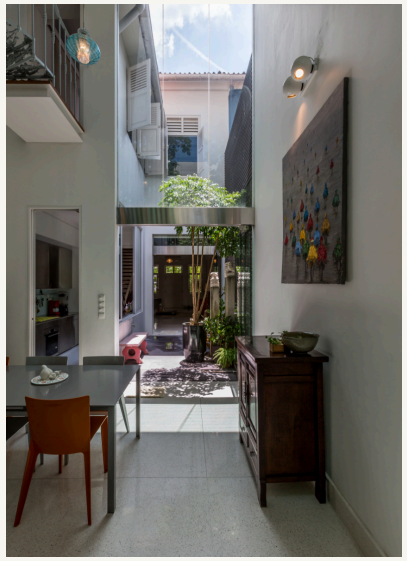
Engage from the option-development stage. Provide technical advice, appropriate credit and the conditions to remain after intervention.

Tenants and small business households

Treat as policy beneficiaries. Provide temporary accommodation, transition support or on-site rehousing where necessary.

Upgrading succeeds only when residents retain security of tenure, affordable housing costs and the means to sustain their livelihoods within the area.







Financial and technical support must be combined with controls on post-intervention rent escalation and land-value uplift.

Management instruments and implementation arrangements

Existing-condition survey

By dwelling–lane–block unit: technical condition, residence, commerce, infrastructure access and values to be conserved.

Refurbishment guidelines

For each street: intervention limits, safety, building height, open space, façades, signage and ground floor.

Infrastructure programme

Drainage, fire safety, lighting, waste collection, goods handling and community spaces.

Implementation partnership

Public authorities, owners, tenants, communities, credit institutions and investors participate through a clear mechanism.

Annual monitoring across five indicator groups: 1. living quality; 2. affordability; 3. resident retention; 4. safety and infrastructure; 5. retention of spatial structure and characteristic livelihoods.

Adaptive transformation framework for Chợ Lớn

1. **Identify**
   Spatial value and needs
2. **Classify**
   Intervention level and limits
3. **Intervene**
   House, lane, block and street
4. **Safeguard**
   Affordability, tenure and livelihoods
5. **Governance**
   Rules, resources and review

Balancing housing development and urban identity through affordability, inclusion and sustainability.



Relationship among socio-economic space, residential space and transformation

Pilot directions for Chợ Lớn



The shophouse is the intervention unit linking lanes, streets and household livelihoods.

Pilots should be organised by dwelling–lane–street clusters to measure technical, social and commercial outcomes together.

Priority locations

Lương Nhữ Học, Triệu Quang Phục and Hải Thượng Lãn Ông.

Pilot content

Survey, strengthen and improve homes and lane infrastructure.

Outcome assessment

Monitor living quality, affordability, security of tenure and capacity to sustain livelihoods after intervention.

Matrix for selecting intervention levels

Intervention level is determined by the combined assessment of heritage value, technical condition and capacity to sustain occupancy.

High value · sound condition

Conservation with technical upgrading. Limit change to core structure and identity-defining elements.

Moderate value · deteriorated condition

Strengthening, refurbishment and amenity upgrading. Retain the plot–lane–street relationship.

Low value · unsafe condition

Conditional replacement. Control building height, open space, access and infrastructure capacity.

The matrix makes decision-making transparent, avoiding uniform interventions across all buildings and areas.

Implementation pathway

01

Documentation and agreement on scope

Survey dwellings, lanes and blocks. Identify values, risks and needs. Establish priorities with owners, tenants and business households.

02

Pilot implementation and resource mobilisation

Establish a package of technical, infrastructure and resident-support measures. Phase investment and organise construction to minimise disruption to living and commerce.

03

Evaluation, adjustment and scaling

Review costs, safety, living quality, resident retention and livelihoods. Finalise refurbishment guidelines for each street.

Implementation should operate through intervention clusters rather than individual buildings alone.

Post-intervention monitoring indicators

Living quality

Daylight, ventilation, sanitation, structural safety, means of egress and fire safety.

Affordability

Capital costs, rents, operating costs and the level of household support.

Security of tenure

Share of residents, tenants and business households able to return or remain after intervention.

Spatial structure

Degree to which the dwelling–plot–lane–block–street relationship is maintained.

Livelihoods and community

Capacity to sustain household businesses, community ties and characteristic activities of the area.

Residents contribute information, track outcomes and provide feedback throughout the full upgrading cycle.

Conclusion

Adaptive transformation provides a basis for upgrading traditional residential areas without separating housing quality from urban structure and community livelihoods.

01. Intervention unit

Shift from individual buildings to housing–lane–block–street sequences.

02. Conditions for sustainability

Residents can participate, remain in place and maintain livelihoods.

03. Implementation instruments

Intervention classes, guidelines, infrastructure, finance and monitoring.

Pilot in Chợ Lớn before transfer to other traditional commercial-residential areas.

Thank you for your attention

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