


# Chapter 2


## Repurposing Heritage: Strategies for Active Use of Historical Buildings in Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

*The adaptive reuse of historically significant buildings represents a critical intersection between heritage conservation and contemporary development needs. This research explores the strategies for adaptive reuse. By examining the characteristics that define historical significance, this study contextualizes the adaptive reuse concept within the framework of heritage conservation. Economic considerations, such as cost savings and financial incentives, are analyzed alongside environmental benefits of sustainability and reduced resource consumption. The social and cultural implications are assessed, emphasizing the role of community engagement and the maintenance of cultural value. Architectural and structural challenges are identified, with a focus on integrating current building codes and standards while respecting historical integrity. This research aims to provide a comprehensive framework for adaptive reuse strategies, ensuring the sustainable preservation of historically significant buildings within the boundaries of established conservation guidelines.*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Adaptive Reuse in Architecture

Adaptive reuse involves repurposing old or abandoned buildings for new functions while preserving their historical value, bridging heritage conservation with modern development (Rodrigues & Freire, 2017; National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2023). This approach promotes sustainable urban growth by attracting investment, revitalizing underused areas, reducing environmental impacts, conserving resources, and lowering carbon emissions (Hosagrahar, 2017). It also fosters cultural continuity and social cohesion by maintaining a sense of place and encouraging community interaction (Yung & Chan, 2018; Hwang & Park, 2020). Despite challenges like regulatory hurdles and high costs, adaptive reuse remains a viable solution for cities seeking innovation while honoring the past (Smith, 2019).

While adaptive reuse dates back to ancient civilizations, its prominence grew in the post-World War II era, especially with preservation movements following widespread destruction in Europe. The 1964 Venice Charter emphasized conserving historic buildings, encouraging adaptive reuse (ICOMOS, 2014). The environmental movement in the 1970s positioned reuse as a strategy for sustainable development, conserving embodied energy (Shipley, Utz, & Parsons, 2006).

In recent years, adaptive reuse has gained attention due to environmental concerns, technological advances, and its potential for community and economic revitalization. It conserves embodied energy and reduces greenhouse gas emissions (Bullen & Love, 2019), with tools like Building Information Modeling (BIM) improving planning accuracy and efficiency (Ma & Li, 2020). These projects increasingly involve local communities, preserving historical identity while meeting modern needs (Langston & Shen, 2017), and stimulate local economies by transforming underutilized buildings into mixed-use developments (Yung & Chan, 2018).

## 1.2 Research Background

Due to their traditional design, materials, and historical significance, historical buildings are difficult to retro fit and have fewer options for modifications. Adaptive reuse interventions will be more difficult to implement if conservation aspects are taken into consideration (Kayan B. et al., 2018).

The impact of adaptive reuse on the sense of place and urban conservation in Melaka's historic town, where heritage shophouses have been repurposed as F&B establishments. Holistic approach that considers both heritage preservation and community needs is crucial in promoting sustainable and inclusive urban conservation practices (Man, A. W. K., 2023).

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