

# Kowloon City District Urban Renewal Forum

---

For information  
on 28 February 2012

Paper No.: DURF KC/01/2012

## **The Vanishing Tong Laus: Case Study on Conservation and Adaptive Reuse of Historic Shop Houses in Kowloon City and Other Districts in Hong Kong**

### **Summary**

Pre-war “Tong Laus” (唐樓), a unique type of local urban dwellings, are disappearing fast in Hong Kong during the rapid urban renewal and redevelopment processes. What are the different terms and cultural significance of those “Tong Laus” remaining in our city?

2. This presentation aims at giving a brief introduction on different terminology and origin of “Tong Laus”, “Tenement Houses” and “Shop Houses”. It will also present some typical examples of local Tong Laus remaining in Kowloon City and other areas in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, to demonstrate the building typology, preservation conditions and the meaning of cultural heritage value retained in these local urban dwellings.

3. This presentation will also introduce selected local and overseas examples of restored Tong Laus or shop houses, either carefully designed or spontaneously altered, to illustrate various approaches of conservation and adaptive reuse of historic shop houses, providing insights of finding ways of conserving the local Tong Laus and streetscape in Hong Kong’s old urban area.

4. The cases of shop houses included in this presentation are based on the author’s survey and studies of over hundreds old shop houses existed in Hong Kong and other Asian cities, over the last 12 years. Many of these Tong Laus or shop houses located in Kowloon City have been lost since first recording in 2000.

**Eric C M Lee**  
**Conservation Architect**  
**February 2012**