

Narrator: One Saturday afternoon, a resident is talking over the phone on the street.

Resident 3 :

(talking over a mobile)

Let's come to my place and enjoy a Netflix movie...

Narrator: When the resident was walking past a shop, he saw a live news report.

TV: (Sound of a fire-engine)

Just about 30 minutes ago, a fire broke out in an old building in Yau Ma Tei, and firemen have arrived ...

Resident 3 :

(Much afraid and cries aloud) Oh no ! I forgot to turn off the stove. My flat is on fire now !

Resident 1 :

**What has happened ? Why is there some noise? Oh ! That's a fire truck !
What's going on ?**

Resident 2 : (Joe, Mr.Chan's son)

There is a big fire over there ! Leave as soon as possible !

Narrator :

All of the residents escaped from the building. They are now at a safe position.

Resident 1 :

Thank God. The fire has just died out.

Narrator

The fire was very violent. Most of the construction materials in the building have been burned down.

Resident 2 :

Oh no! Does that mean we will lose our home ?

We have no place to live in any more...

News reporter :

A fire broke out at a subdivided flat in Yau Ma Tei since the gas stove was not turned off properly. This is the major reason to have caused the residents' flats to be burned down.

Journalist :

Hello everyone! I'm the news anchor of Today's News. Let's take a close look at the fire scene. Let's interview the residents over there!

Journalist :

Hi, may I ask you some questions about this fire case?

Resident 4 : (Mr Chan)

My family live in one of the flats! Actually, it is a sub-divided flat. It's a very small one of only 120 square feet. But my dad has to pay \$6000 a month. Very high rent, isn't it?

Resident 2:

Another thing is it is very unhygienic. The place is so small that we built our kitchen in the toilet. Imagine how bad it can be when we mix what we eat with the waste!

Resident 4:

And we have been worrying that a big fire of this kind may break out some day. And today, we met with our very bad luck finally.

You know, in old buildings, we can hardly find any fire alarms. And the big piles of rubbish always block up the backstairs. This really makes a big problem for us to run for our lives in big fires!

Journalist :

As your flat has been badly damaged in the fire, what is the most difficult problem you have to deal with right now?

Resident 2 :

We have no place to live in right now ! Our home is badly burned !

Resident 1 :

I'm a bit luckier. About two weeks ago, the Housing Department told me that they can offer us one public housing flat in Fanling. Although it's a long distance away when compared with Yau Ma Tei, I hope the better living environment is worth a waiting time of five long years. The rent at \$2000 is also low enough to let us save up some money. The playground is also good for some good recreation activities for my kids.

Resident 2 :

I think the government should increase the number of flats like those in the public housing estates so that those who are facing the unacceptably bad environment can get a faster chance to move into a warm home.

Journalist :

According to the Internet information, the housing problem, especially in areas of urban decay, has been a serious problem in Hong Kong. Hope such problems can be fixed soon. Thank you very much for your time !

Narrator: Five years later...

News reporter :

Hello everyone ! I'm a news reporter for Today's News. Let's begin our program today. The major issue for today is to re-visit the building in Yau Ma Tei, which was badly burnt in a fire five years ago.

Let us follow our journalists, Mary Lee, John Chan, Sita and Moses , and take a quick look there.

Journalist Mary:

I'm in Yau Ma Tei. Do you recognise the building behind me? It is Kam Wah Building__.

After a government redevelopment project, many citizens have been excited to move in and start their new lives here.

Journalist John:

Some of our audience may not know what ‘re-development’ means. Let me explain a little more.

‘Re-development’ simply means to pull down old buildings and replace them with modern buildings. At the same time, roads are widened, and more community facilities and open space are provided.

Journalist Mary:

And by pulling down old buildings, the government can have a good piece of empty land for a completely new plan. They can build taller buildings to allow more families to move in bigger flats. Good planning of facilities is also possible, like setting up fire alarms, power-saving lighting systems, and with more lifts taking residents conveniently to their homes.

Journalist John:

Of course, there are also all the shops, supermarkets, banks, bakeries, restaurants, and many more to make it a self-contained community. Then residents can get almost all the service they need within a short walking distance.

Journalist Mary:

Apart from re-development, there is also urban rehabilitation for keeping the supply of flats in old buildings. Do you know how rehabilitation can play the magic?

Journalist John:

Let me explain in a more easy way. If the old buildings are still in good conditions, we will carry out improvement projects to fix the broken parts, like the windows, water pipes, falling-off cement, and so on.

Journalist Mary:

Of course, the building’s appearance will also look better! And this definitely improves the situation of urban decay.

Journalist John:

In a small area like Hong Kong, there is one more way the government sometimes uses to make more space for building flats. Can you guess what it is?

Journalist Mary:

For sure it's reclamation –the government makes new land by filling up the coastal sea area with sand and mud.

Journalist John:

Bingo. Reclamation lets us have more land so that we can build more houses or buildings for various uses.

Journalist Mary:

Reclamation also provides a gorgeous view ! Since the buildings are built near the sea, it would have a nice view.

Journalist John:

However, we must not overlook the point that if we make land by reclamation, it can mean a very expensive method as filling up the sea means lot of money to spend.

Narrator:

In our presentation today, we have discussed the problems of urban decay and very limited housing supply. Hopefully, through re-development, rehabilitation and reclamation, the situation can be improved.