

What Makes A City Truly Liveable & Sustainable



Think City's Quest To Revitalise Cities

The Rejuvenation of The Historic Esplanade Seawall

Once a vital defence for Penang,
and now its heritage offerings

Laneway Improvement Programme

How we transformed dilapidated laneways
into vibrant community spaces

Nature-Based Climate Adaptation Programme

Managing climate change
to enhance the quality of life

Making Cities Liveable, Together.

Think City is an impact organisation with the mission of making cities more people-friendly, resilient and liveable. As a regional citymaking organisation, Think City provides policy thinking, management and implementation of place-based solutions, while acting as a catalyst for change in the way cities are planned, curated, developed, and celebrated.

How The Conservation of One City Led To A Nationwide Movement of Change



Think City was established in 2009 by Khazanah Nasional Berhad, the investment arm of the Malaysian government, to launch the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP). George Town, Penang had just been awarded the UNESCO World Heritage Site status, and GTGP's primary focus was to promote community engagement in the preservation and celebration of the city's unique heritage.

The success of the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) projects, the know-how and skills that were developed, and the market confidence stimulated by co-investments have successfully catalysed city-wide urban regeneration.

Over a four-year period, the GTGP disbursed more than RM16 million to 240 grants and special projects, for public realm improvement, conservation, capacity building and content development. The success of the GTGP projects, the know-how and skills that were developed, and the market confidence stimulated by co-investments have successfully catalysed city-wide urban regeneration. The underlying philosophy was that improved liveability would drive economic transformation.

The positive spillover effect from GTGP saw a growth in creating positive social and economic impact with a 97% increase in the number of arts and culture establishments, and more than 100% growth in hotels, F&B businesses amongst others.

In 2014, riding off the success and learnings of the George Town Grants Programme, Think City expanded to Butterworth, Johor Bahru, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Kuching. Today, we have evolved from dispensing grants to actively shaping and supporting other aspects of citymaking, in partnership with local authorities, community organisations and the private sector.

Think City is now working on projects of great scale and level including the new economic zone, Penang Bay and the new Creative Digital District, whilst shaping national policies and developing long-term strategic plans. We continue to contribute towards both policy and practice, locally and globally.



01 Broadway Theatre and shop houses along Jalan Segget, Johor Bahru.
02 Confluence of Klang and Gombak rivers, Kuala Lumpur.

CITIES ARE ENGINES OF GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

No country has grown to middle-income status without industrialising and urbanising¹.

High density localities that are highly liveable will be best placed to attract talent and investment, leading to a virtuous circle.

95%

of urban expansion in the next decades will take place in the developing world².

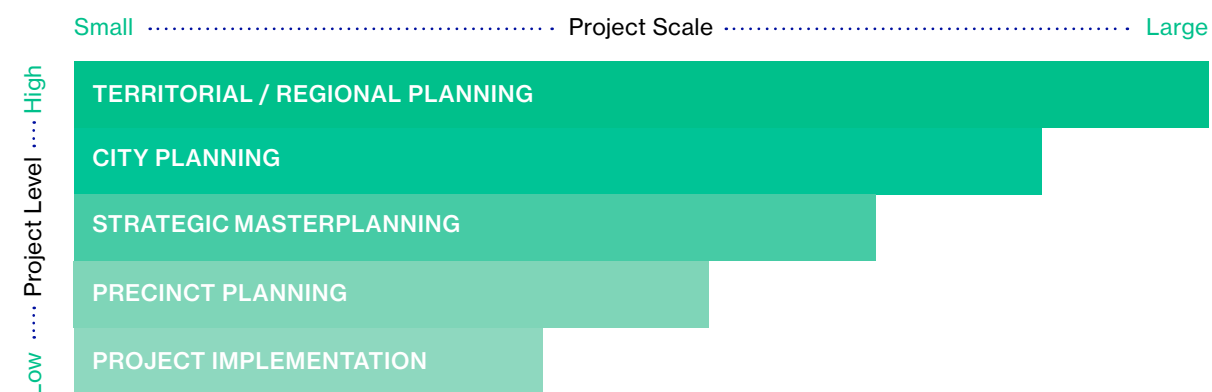
70-80%

of the world's GDP is generated in cities³.

Source: 1 – World Bank Development Report 2009. 2 – www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/. 3 – UN Habitat Report-Implementing the Urban Agenda by Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages 2017

Our Value Proposition

'Think-And-Do Tank' Operating On A Vast Range And Scales



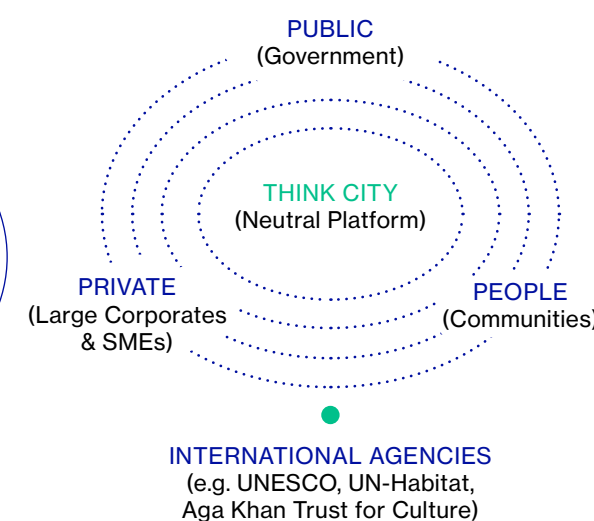
B

Evidence-Based, Learning Approach;
An Experimental Organisation

C

Proven Neutral Platform that Creates Synergy
Between the Public, Private, and People

Discovery
Ideation
Prototype / Pilot
Implementation
Replication



RAPID URBANISATION IS EXERTING PRESSURE ON THE ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC HEALTH

3%

of land is occupied by cities.

60-80%

of total energy produced is consumed by cities.

50%

of humanity, 3.5 billion people live in cities today.

75%

of total carbon emissions is produced by cities.

828

million people live in slums.

80%

of urban dwellers are exposed to poor air quality levels, exceeding World Health Organisation limits.



“While cities enabled citizens to prosper from poverty, it lags behind in providing a liveable and sustainable place.

There are inherent strengths in cities that need to be unlocked, whether it is location, natural endowments or historical urban fabric. This is represented by the buildings, the people, culture and activities that, when combined, create the soul of the place.

The Think City approach is unique for every city. We are inspired on a daily basis by the communities that we are fortunate to work with, that we enjoy spending time in each city to find out its needs, vision, plans, desires of the stakeholders and demands of the citizens, and build a baseline to understand where we are starting from. We crowdsource initiatives to generate momentum, identify collaborations with stakeholders, and augment where the needs are and initiate efforts where there are no takers to ensure that all the different things that make a city great are championed.



HAMDAN ABDUL MAJEED
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Cities need multifaceted skills and capabilities to bring renewal and rejuvenation. As an award-winning regional impact organisation, we have a strong multidisciplinary team that is committed help you and your city reconnect with citizens and places. How can we help you make your city liveable?

We look forward to working with you and the diverse communities around the world to make your cities more lively, meaningful and sustainable.”

The Four Practices of Our Expertise



By adopting a community-first, evidence-based approach, Think City focuses on four main areas of practice: Urban Mechanics, Environment & Social, Strategy & Analytics and Culture-Based Economic Development in Southeast Asia and beyond.

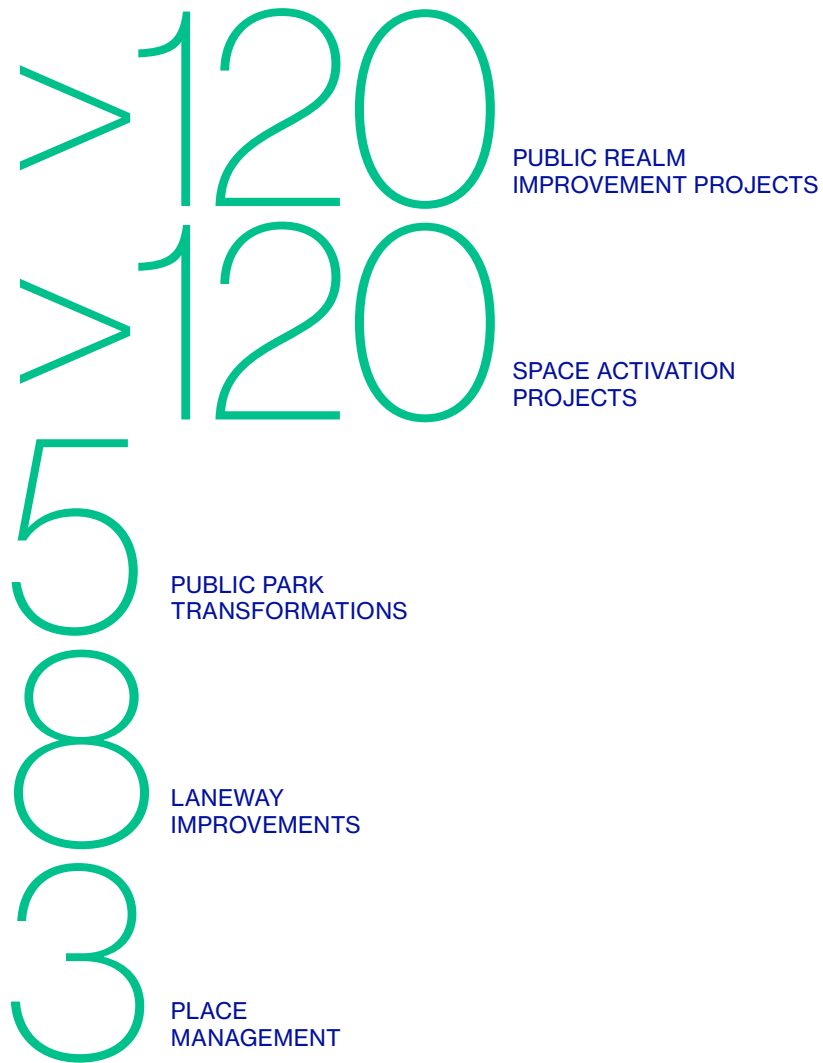


Urban Mechanics



Think City Urban Mechanics was set up to improve the quality of citizens' lives by involving them in participatory civic engagement in urban issues solutions ideation and innovation. These community-based solutions promote a better sense of belonging and ownership of public spaces, and reverse the decline of cities, creating quality places where people want to live, work, play and learn.

Leveraging on our placemaking approach, collaborations with multidisciplinary partners such as local councils and ministries, arts and culture practitioners, technology companies and start-ups, and more, Urban Mechanics works on a variety of projects across public realm improvement such as the upgrading of mainstreets and laneways, green projects, place planning, grant management and implementation. It also includes space activation such as cultural programmes, and place management that creates spaces for communities to hold events and activities of their own.



01 Lorong Yap Ah Loy Laneway Improvement Programme, Kuala Lumpur.



Environment & Social



Think City Environment & Social work looks at the challenges of urban communities in terms of liveability and their resilience towards climate change impacts. Our projects span research, advocacy and designing solutions focusing on social inclusion in public housing, urban safety, health, as well as climate mitigation and adaptation. Our team is pioneering Malaysia's first urban nature-based solutions programme and developing an ecosystem service initiative focusing on mangroves.



02 Badminton training with residents of PPR (public housing) HICOM as part of the Kita Untuk Kita (K2K) Programme.



Strategy & Analytics



Think City's Strategy & Analytics practice generates evidence-led insights to guide urban policy-making, providing input into decision-making for cities at both strategic and tactical levels. This encompasses effective discovery, interpretation, visualisation, and communication of meaningful patterns in data.

We take an innovative, holistic, and multidisciplinary approach in how we advise our clients and communities. Our projects include baseline studies, policy and strategy development, and strategic masterplans across topics as diverse as territorial planning, transit-oriented developments, innovation hubs, low-income communities, and sustainable finance. Our data analytics platform contains public and proprietary data, and aims to democratise information about our cities and communities. When citizens are equipped with a better understanding of where they live, they will be empowered to play an even greater role in shaping their cities.



03 Mapping of creative industries within Greater Kuala Lumpur.



Culture-Based Economic Development

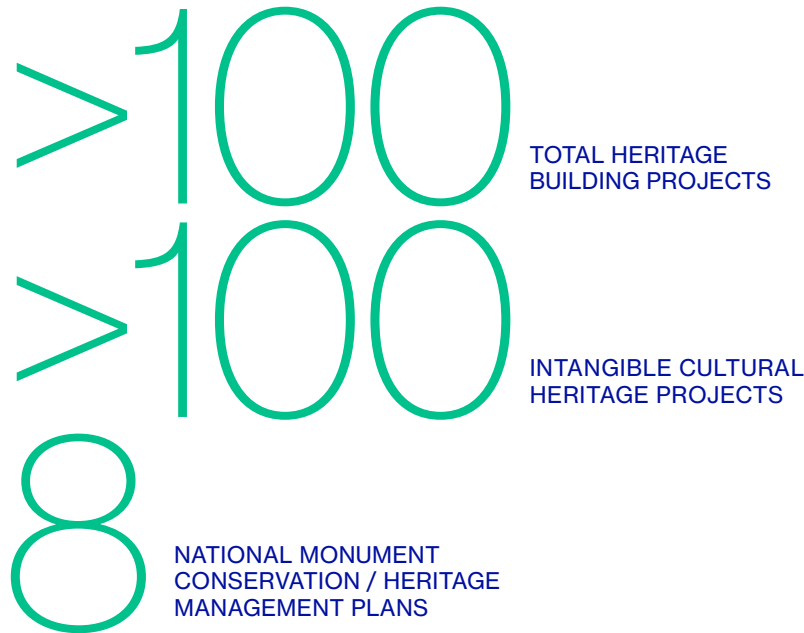


Each city has an important story to tell, and its buildings, artefacts and intangible culture not only connect us to the past, they act as living monuments that serve to educate us. Think City's Culture-Based Economic Development programme aims to build an interconnected network of cultural assets within and between cities, which aims to preserve and leverage heritage as a catalyst for local socio-economic development.

Think City's Culture-Based Economic Development includes work in Conservation and Adaptive Reuse. This includes preparing dilapidation surveys, strategic master plans and conceptual design as the basis of reference for interventions, restoration and adapted space use – increasing the value of heritage assets and connecting heritage building owners to new businesses so that these buildings have new relevance in modern life.

Adopting UNESCO's holistic approach, our work also includes managing historic urban landscapes, which goes beyond physical preservation and focuses on the entire human environment, including all tangible and intangible qualities by integrating urban heritage conservation and social and economic development goals.

The creation of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) helps develop the management strategy for historic assets, sites and places. It explains the significance of the asset and examines how any future use, management, alteration or repair will be carried out in order to preserve that significance.



04 Restoring the historical Fort Cornwallis in Penang.

Flagship Programmes That Are Making An Impact Through Sustainable Development Goals



Leveraging on our four main practices, Think City's work is showcased through our flagship programmes in Environment & Social, and City Programmes. As an impact organisation, our flagships are designed to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Guiding Role of Culture In City Programmes

Our work in City Programmes include exploring the relationship between city design and the diverse users living in the cities, and ensuring sustainable socio-economic development in the city. Our initiatives in making cities liveable include physical conservation work, placemaking, capacity building, public realm improvement, space activation, place management, grants delivery and strategic documents.



THE DOWNTOWN KUALA LUMPUR GRANTS PROGRAMME

The Downtown Kuala Lumpur Grants Programme, supported by the Malaysian Ministry of Finance, aims to fund seed projects that will accelerate the recovery and encourage resilience of Downtown Kuala Lumpur.

Focused on Business Renewal, Community Resilience and Space Rejuvenation, the Grant not only focused on business recovery and sustainability but also aimed to promote joint investments in Downtown KL.



MERDEKA 118 COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME

In collaboration with Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB), the Merdeka 118 Community Grants Programme was conceived to foster greater synergies between the community and the mixed-use Merdeka 118 development. To date, 6 projects have been selected to support local livelihoods while celebrating the area's historical and cultural heritage.



DOWNTOWN JOHOR BAHRU GRANTS PROGRAMME

Realising that grassroots participation is crucial in ensuring a more sustainable local, social and economic development, the Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) and Think City launched the Downtown Johor Bahru Grants Programme. The programme focuses on Arts, Heritage and Culture, and was designed to support community-based initiatives that provide exciting, surprising and meaningful opportunities to rejuvenate Downtown Johor Bahru.



CULTURE ECONOMY CATALYTIC GRANTS

Peninsular Malaysia is a 1.8 million-year-old story of human evolution, migration, civilisation and environmental interaction, with hidden gems and cultural assets that include pre-historic burial sites, and ancient cave paintings. Many more lay waiting to be discovered.

Recognising the potential of economic development in the region, as part of the Budget 2022 initiative, Think City in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance launched the Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants, a RM10 million allocation to boost culture-based economic development in the northern Malaysian region with an early focus on projects in Lenggong, Taiping and Kuala Kangsar.



NORTH SEAFRONT PROGRAMME

The North Seafront Programme, a project in progress that includes 14 initiatives that showcase culture-based urban regeneration, a high-quality waterfront promenade and climate resilience, demonstrates the advantages of a culture-based approach to the sustainable socio-economic development of George Town's valuable heritage and environmental assets. Furthermore, the project will significantly increase the availability of open space in the city and improve public amenities in the World Heritage Site's most significant public concourse area.



FORT CORNWALLIS

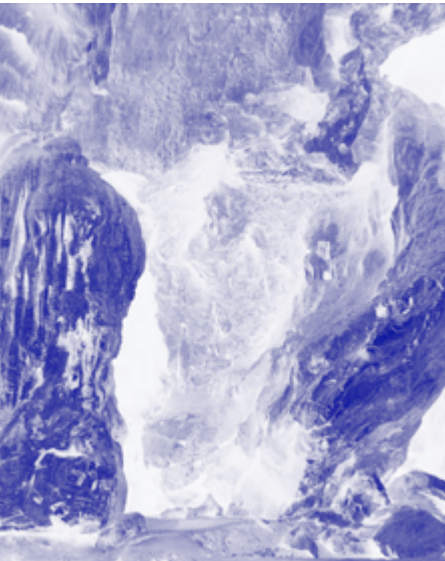
Fort Cornwallis is a listed national heritage site under the Malaysian National Heritage Act 2005. The George Town Conservation & Development Corporation (GTCDC), a collaboration between Think City and Penang State Government's Chief Minister Incorporated, with technical support from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, is working on public realm improvement and a conservation programme at Fort Cornwallis focusing on storerooms restoration and moat reinstatement.

The Fort Cornwallis initiative demonstrates innovative conservation techniques based on local resources and traditional materials, while providing a solid solution to the majority of conservation issues affecting George Town's historic buildings. The entire process involved several stages of work under the advice and consultation of several specialists, including historians, archaeologists, conservation architects, structural engineers, and master builders specialising in traditional construction.

ESPLANADE SEAWALL

The strengthening of the historic Esplanade Seawall is one of the major public realm improvement initiatives aimed at upgrading the northern waterfront area within the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The North Seafront Masterplan envisions an upgraded seawall and an extended and much-improved public promenade in front of the Esplanade.

The rejuvenation project, a collaboration between Think City, Aga Khan Trust for Culture and Penang State Government's Chief Minister Incorporated under the GTCDC, and Penang Island City Council, breathed new life to the first area cleared under Captain Francis Light, who landed at the adjacent Fort Cornwallis. The seawall which was once vital defence for George Town, Penang, today plays an important role in protecting the Esplanade and its heritage offerings.



NORTHERN REGION ARCHAEO TOURISM NETWORK

The Think City programme under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance aims to re-optimize and connect heritage assets into a well-curated network of archaeotourism, heritage, and natural sites as enablers for economic resiliency and socio-economic growth (such as the creation of new jobs and investments), while highlighting the nation's rich heritage and history. This includes strengthening the ecosystem surrounding the sites.

- 01 Lorong Bandar 13, Laneway Improvement Programme, Kuala Lumpur.
- 02 Backlane Cinema at Kwai Chai Hong, Kuala Lumpur.
- 03 Medan Pasar, Kuala Lumpur.
- 04 Merdeka 118 – the second tallest building in the world, Kuala Lumpur.
- 05 Wayang Kulit: Tunas Warisan at Pasar Barokah (Blessed Market), Johor Bahru.
- 06 Istana Kenangan, Kuala Kangsar, Perak.
- 07 Restoration of the Northern Seawall, George Town, Penang.
- 08 Fort Cornwallis, Penang.
- 09 Kajang Cave, Lenggong, Perak.
- 10 Arts On The Move, Masjid Jamek LRT Station, Kuala Lumpur.
- 11 Aerial View of Merdeka Square, Kuala Lumpur.
- 12 K.U.L.S Green Bus Shelter, Jalan Raja Chulan, Kuala Lumpur.



ARTS ON THE MOVE

Arts On The Move, an initiative by Think City was set up in 2016 (in partnership with Prasarana Malaysia) with the aim of bringing a range of high-quality public arts and cultural activities into Kuala Lumpur's rail transport system via the placemaking process, beginning with the Masjid Jamek LRT Station. To date, 10 visual arts installations and 130 live shows have been shown at the station.

KUALA LUMPUR CREATIVE & CULTURAL DISTRICT

Think City and Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL), with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) and Jabatan Warisan Negara collaborated to develop the Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District (KLCCD) Master Plan that aims to create an inclusive, creative, and viable cultural places within the existing historic structure of the area to enhance liveability and visitor attraction.

The KLCCD Master Plan proposes several strategies to realise the KLCCD vision, which include: changing conservation standards, investing in new and creative industries, repopulating the area, public realm improvements, and creating a governance framework. Even though worldwide trends in rejuvenating dying-out city centres have seen mixed success, Think City hopes its holistic approach will facilitate significant social and economic benefits for Downtown KL.



LANEWAY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

As part of our efforts to revitalise Downtown Kuala Lumpur, the Laneway Improvement Programme focused on transforming dilapidated laneways into vibrant community spaces. The programme catalysed community involvement in urban design and public space management, and addressed inner city social problems in the area.

13 projects were implemented in four laneways in Downtown KL: Lorong Bandar 13, Lorong Hang Lekiu, Lorong Sisi Yap Ah Loy and Madras Lane. The projects were in partnership with a wide range of project partners, and saw 29 activities carried out involving 1,830 participants, including 282 migrants.



i wish #mylorong is ...

Green with Life

safe!

LOVE ~~ALL~~ FEED ALL

pedestrian-friendly

Bandaraya Bersih
Matlamat Kita.

life, fun FOR "a place to
exciting IALL #LEPAK

lively and vibrant
andalism

like THIS!

BEAUTIFUL
LANEWAY!

ong is
+ GREEN!

lovely



clean

AGREED!
100%



full of
love

colourful
unique

I wish my
Lorong with
marriage like
this!

MOON WAS HERE

Aimi
Alia

Vibrant
Space!
HAD MORE
GREENERY!

-DINA

happy full of surprises. "AWESOME"
ZZBB ARE HERE

well lit

Lets us repeat
this great success
to other Lorongs

Great Job Think City
lit lit!

POSITIVE
VIBES

a place
where
EVERYBODY
feels

WELCOME!!
(Selamat
datang!)

Potato

[a green,
peaceful and
open-minded
place]

A meeting place
to relax and
have a good
conversation!

A PLACE
FOR FRIENDS
TO MEET

#MYLORONG

(something motivating)
Heart in the
Heart of KL!



"MORE GREEN"

full of
CHARACTER

#mylorong

thinkcity



I was here
with Azura
thinkcity



Building Resilience For The Environment and Community

Think City's environment work centres on nature-based solutions to combat the effects of climate change such as flash floods and the Urban Heat Island effect. Our work also covers education and advocacy on climate change.

Our community work is delivered through data-driven and participatory approaches which are constantly being refined and packaged for adoption on a wider scale so that more Malaysian cities can be welcoming and inclusive for all.

27

SOCIAL INCLUSION PROJECTS

6

ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTS

NATURE-BASED CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROGRAMME

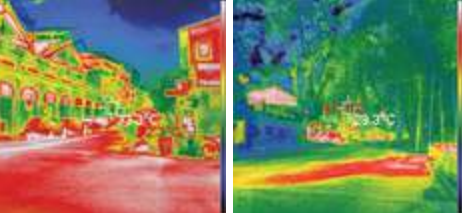
Southeast Asia is one of the regions in the world which will be hardest hit by climate change. The main impacts in Malaysia will be increasing temperatures, increasingly frequent and severe extreme weather events as well as sea level rise.

Over the past 3 years, the City Council of Penang Island, the Department of Irrigation and Drainage, Think City and UN-Habitat have developed a nature-based climate adaptation programme for the urban areas of Penang Island. The programme has already been recognised internationally, and an application in partnership with UN-Habitat for funding from the World Bank's Adaptation Fund has been endorsed and approved for implementation.

The programme will pioneer the use of Nature-Based Solutions in Malaysia. It is designed to be demonstrative with a strong knowledge codification so that it can be scaled in Malaysia and elsewhere in the region. It is structured around four key components addressing the issues of heat stress and flooding whilst strengthening social resilience and institutional capacity.

The urban areas of Penang Island are a lot hotter than the rest of the island with a marked difference of 8°C due to urban heat island effect.

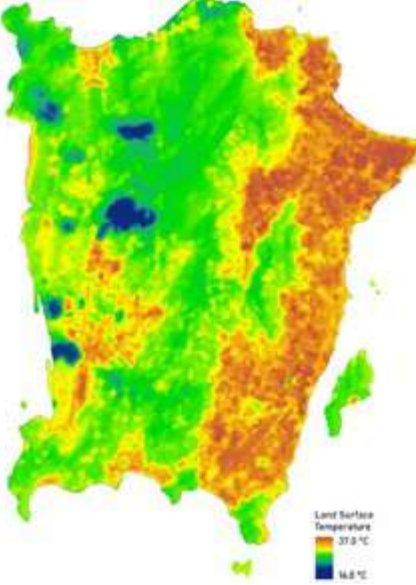
Significantly higher surface temperatures in the World Heritage Site highlights the impact of material selection in urban areas and shading.



Lebuq Queen, George Town

Jalan Brown, Pulau Tikus

MAX 72.3°C
MIN 20.3°C
MAX 41.1°C
MIN 23.2°C



02

Penang's Worst Flood in 2017

159 7 7142
AREAS AFFECTED PEOPLE DIED PEOPLE WERE DISPLACED

RM200m
LOSSES TO MANUFACTURING

RM5.7m
LOSSES TO AGRICULTURE

RM57.7m
LOSSES TO FISHERIES

Programme Objectives



URBAN GREENING

- Tree-lined streets
- Pocket parks
- Greening car parks
- Greening built structures
- Urban agriculture
- Climate-resilient street trees' study



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

- Upstream retention
- Blue-green corridors
- Swales and infiltration wells



SOCIAL RESILIENCE

- Comprehensive social vulnerability assessment
- Youth and schools programme
- Women and girls programme



INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

- Public health programme
- Knowledge transfer platform
- Penang Climate Board

Programme Components

- 1 To support the implementation of nature-based solutions to reduce flooding and overall urban temperatures
- 2 To build the resilience of local communities in response to extreme weather events and disaster
- 3 To empower women, youth, and vulnerable communities through strategic actions
- 4 To strengthen institutional capacity and coordination between different stakeholders in climate-related decisions
- 5 To develop the first municipal climate change adaptation programme in Malaysia



04

PENANG CLIMATE ACTION WEEK

In 2019, Think City hosted the inaugural Penang Climate Action Week, alongside several local partners, with the aim of creating public awareness on climate change, promoting sustainable production and consumption, as well as supporting ground-up climate action initiatives. Various programmes and activities were organised including workshops, talks and a solutions-hackathon, Climathon 2019.



05

RIGHTS TO THE CITY (R2C)

Think City builds partnerships, develops research and liveability assessments, and advocates for a systemic change in how public housing, particularly in Malaysia, is developed and managed in the long term. Rights to the City is a collaborative platform where experts and practitioners collaborate to improve public housing and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities through effective policy recommendations and implementation.

Some of the initiatives under Rights To The City include a community leaders programme and activities for youths at identified public housing; engagements with various stakeholder through the Ecosystem Dialogue which discussed ways to improve the quality of life for people residing in public housing through systems practice methodology; a series of closed-door roundtable discussions relating to mental and physical health, malnutrition, poverty exit, and climate to gain insights on the issues and identify potential solutions through case studies presented; and the publication of a public housing liveability white paper. The programme culminates with the first public housing liveability conference, aimed to ignite discussions in advancing the issue towards a multi-stakeholder approach.

- 01 A typical public housing block in Malaysia.
- 02 Flooding in George Town, Penang.
- 03 Managing Director, Hamdan Majeed presenting the Penang Bay project proposal to the Penang Head of State.
- 04 An engagement session during the Penang Climate Action Week in 2019.
- 05 A typical interior of a Public Housing flat unit in Malaysia.
- 06 Children residents at PPR (Public Housing) HICOM, Selangor.
- 07 Badminton classes conducted at PPR HICOM as part of the K2K Programme.
- 08 Women from PPR HICOM taking part in the walking exercise as part of the K2K programme.



06

K2K AKTIF BERSAMA

K2K Aktif Bersama (which is Malay for 'being active together') Think City's active lifestyle pilot programme in partnership with Citi Foundation, was designed to address the COVID 19-amplified stress levels among urban poor communities living in the local public housing scheme (Projek Perumahan Rakyat).

K2K was a collaboration with the local community to create and develop tailored solutions to help address their social, economic and infrastructural needs. This holistic approach to public housing renewal was anchored around the benefits of walking, and supported by talks and workshops designed to improve physical and mental health, while strengthening social networks and community leadership.



08

9
PROJECT PARTNERS

250
ADULT AND CHILDREN PARTICIPATION

92%
REPORTED BETTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBOURS

47.6%
HAD INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



09



01



03

Think City Institute: Equipping Citymakers To Create Impact



As cities around the world are undergoing an unprecedented period of physical, social and economic transformation, past solutions are quickly proving inadequate. Increasingly, new approaches are required for cities to level up.



01

Think City Institute (TCI) builds on a decade of knowhow, experimentation and expertise derived from our knowledge networks. The Institute was launched in February 2020 at the World Urban Forum 10 in Abu Dhabi, and poised as the knowledge repository for the organisation.

Through its work, TCI aims to build networks of advocates committed to making their cities more liveable, resilient, and sustainable. Citymakers in Malaysia and the world have access to Think City's wealth of knowledge which includes a combination of accredited coursework, research fellowships and publications, with a focus on our four main practice areas – Urban Mechanics, Environment & Social, Strategy & Analytics and Cultural-Based Economic Development.

TCI's courses are all impact driven and are curated in partnership with leading subject matter experts from around the region and the world. Our partners include UNESCO, The Getty Conservation Institute, Global Development Incubators, Heritage Strategies International and more. Capacity building courses being developed are targeting specific levels of city management – be they mayors, department heads, senior managers as well as emerging talent in both public and private sectors – to help them better serve the needs of their city and its residents.

Since its inception two years ago, TCI has reached over 8,000 participants from 70 countries through symposia, workshops, courses and webinars. Examples of the Institute's work include:

1 The Heritage Symposium & Workshop

Supported by Citi Foundation, the Symposium was organised around the theme “Unlocking the Potential of Cultural Heritage”, and was aimed at encouraging the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage as a tool for urban regeneration. Roundtable discussions from global experts were supported by contributions from stakeholders, communities and civil society, with the recommendations and conclusions feeding into an online Historic Neighbourhoods Toolkit that would become a resource for those involved in the field to enable the preservation and promotion of Malaysia's cultural heritage.



03

- 01 Syed Al-Attas Mansion, George Town, Penang.
- 02 Masjid Jamek and the confluence of Klang and Gombak rivers, Kuala Lumpur.
- 03 Seven Terraces, George Town, Penang.
- 04 Shoplots at George Town, Penang.



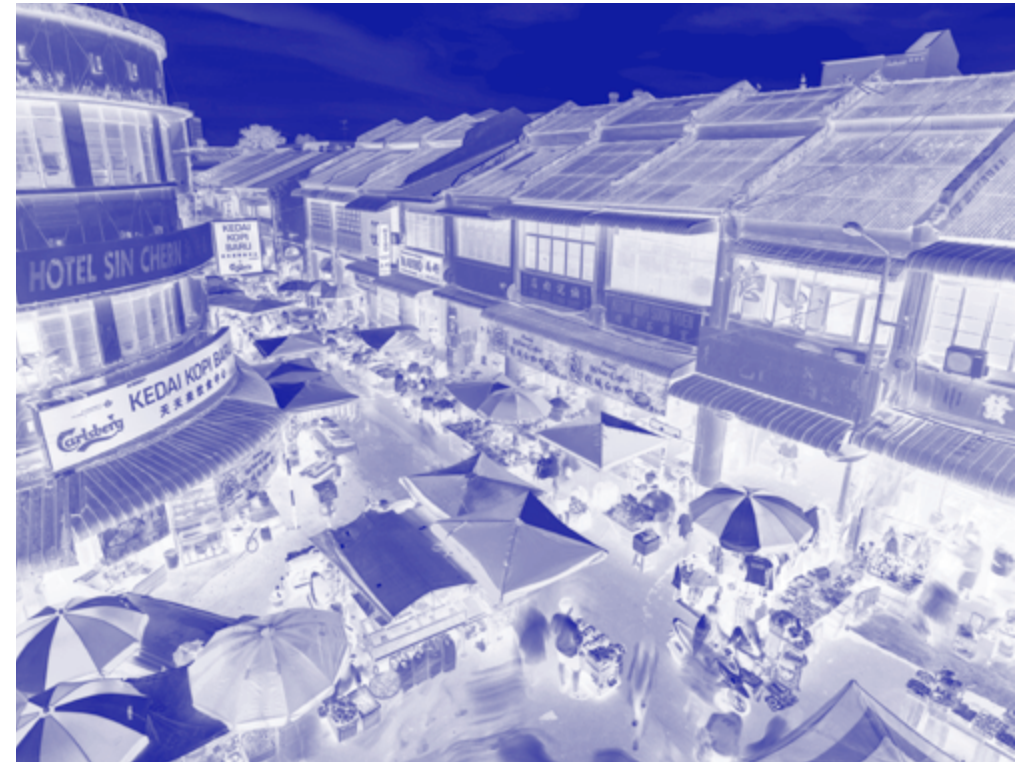
02

2 Sustainable Heritage Management Foundation Course

The current pandemic and other pressures such as climate change, economic slowdown, and conflicts require rethinking approaches to heritage management. Beyond conservation-related objectives, cultural heritage managers are now also grappling with mobilising heritage for sustainable development, as defined by the Sustainable Development Goals.

Confronted by these new realities, the heritage profession in the Asia-Pacific region is increasingly under pressure to adapt itself, by upskilling and reskilling to meet these new demands. In response, UNESCO has developed the Competence Framework for Cultural Heritage Management in order to establish professional standards that are holistic, interdisciplinary and multidimensional.

The inaugural “Sustainable Heritage Management Foundation Course” was developed in partnership with UNESCO Bangkok and the Asian Academy for Heritage Management. This course offered participants exposure to fundamental principles, innovative tools, good practices and on-the-ground case studies for sustainable cultural heritage management, focusing on the five Core Competences defined under UNESCO's new Competence Framework.



04

3 Old Cities New Challenges

Cities need to compete with each other to attract talent and investment. Cultural heritage has been identified as one key aspect in making a city unique for talent and investors, and increasingly both city governments and private developers are looking to unlock the potential of their heritage assets, and how they might help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This is a significant shift in priorities.

Old Cities New Challenges 2021, developed with the Getty Conservation Institute was aimed at planners and architects, as well as other professionals working with urban heritage assets. This impact-driven course was created to provide participants with a fuller understanding of conservation methodologies and effective, practical tools and techniques for the conservation of historic places in urban contexts, while contributing to the career development path of the participants.

4 Urban Resilience Masterclass— Low-Cost Housing

Adequate housing is an issue faced by cities all around the world. While public housing projects have created dividends for its occupants, there is an urgent need to halt and reverse the decline of liveability in public housing, accelerated further during the pandemic.

This course, run with CityNet, examined the resilience and sustainability of public housing schemes and how they might be improved. Considering the complexity of the issues this course focused on verticality, management systems, health and wellbeing, and engagement by utilising case studies in low-income housing with live tutorials and discussions outlining efforts and challenges on improving liveability and strengthening the resilience of communities living in low-cost housing.



5

Think City's evidence-based approach enables our clients and stakeholders to develop a more nuanced and granular understanding of issues within their cities and communities. It encourages new ways of seeing the city—with diverse perspectives and through multiple lenses—towards greater clarity and a holistic view of the intricacies of place and people.

Developing Insights From Data To Elevate Our Cities & Citizens

We take an interdisciplinary approach and are always striving towards innovative processes to facilitate a grounded and well-rounded appreciation of what goes on in our cities, why they behave in the ways they do, and how they can do better.

Our place-based strategy enables us to understand, finance, regenerate, and create innovate places for people. In line with our evidence-led methodology, the Think City Strategy & Analytics team generates insights to guide urban policy-making, providing input into decision-making for cities at both strategic and tactical levels. A snapshot of our work is outlined below.



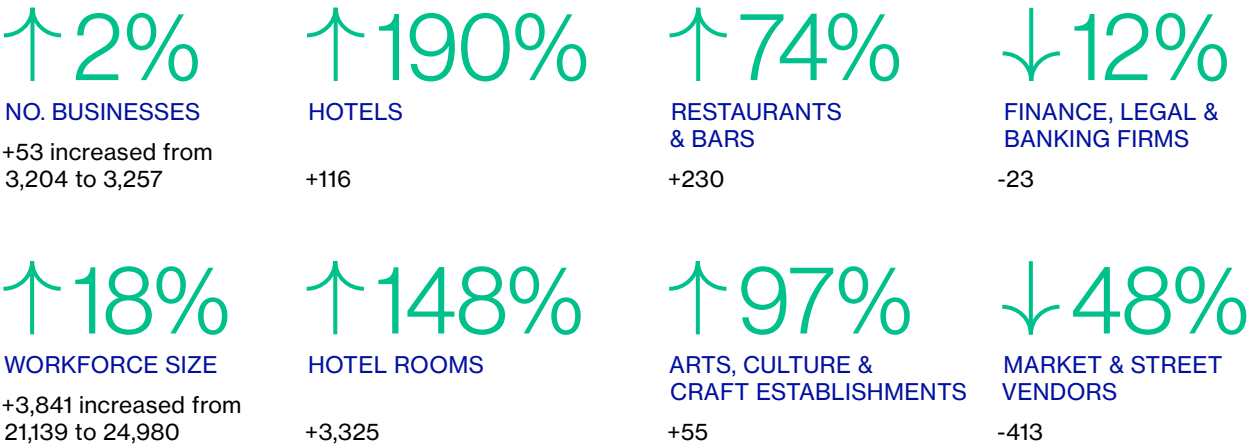
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1 The George Town World Heritage Site

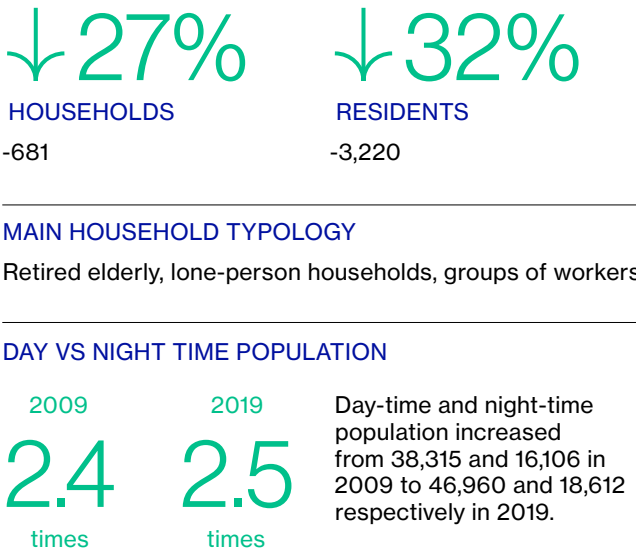
The George Town World Heritage Site (GTWHS), a living historic city, has undergone significant change since its inscription by UNESCO in 2008. In 2009, Think City pioneered the methodology for a population and land use census of the GTWHS, which was repeated in 2013 and 2019. This study enabled an accurate understanding of the GTWHS's issues, tracking of changes, measurement of impacts, assessment of policy instruments' effectiveness, and design of recalibration measurements. This comprehensive database which captured 6,713 entities in 5,403 buildings in 2019 has now been analysed to provide an account of the socio-cultural and economic changes in GTWHS since 2009.

The census revealed that the George Town World Heritage Site's land use and socio-economic make-up changes significantly between 2009 and 2019 due to a combination of local investments, policy interventions and broader industry shifts. The site's heritage and cultural characteristics underpinned a process of urban revitalisation with more businesses, more tourists and a larger day-time population. The loss of residences and reliance on tourism however created new vulnerabilities, and these were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated mobility restrictions. The report validated key build back better efforts needed to diversify the economy, invest in public cultural assets, improve comfort and liveability and repopulate the heritage site.

Economic Changes Between 2009 – 2019



Demographic Changes Between 2009 – 2019



2 Urban Redevelopment Framework for Transit-Oriented Developments

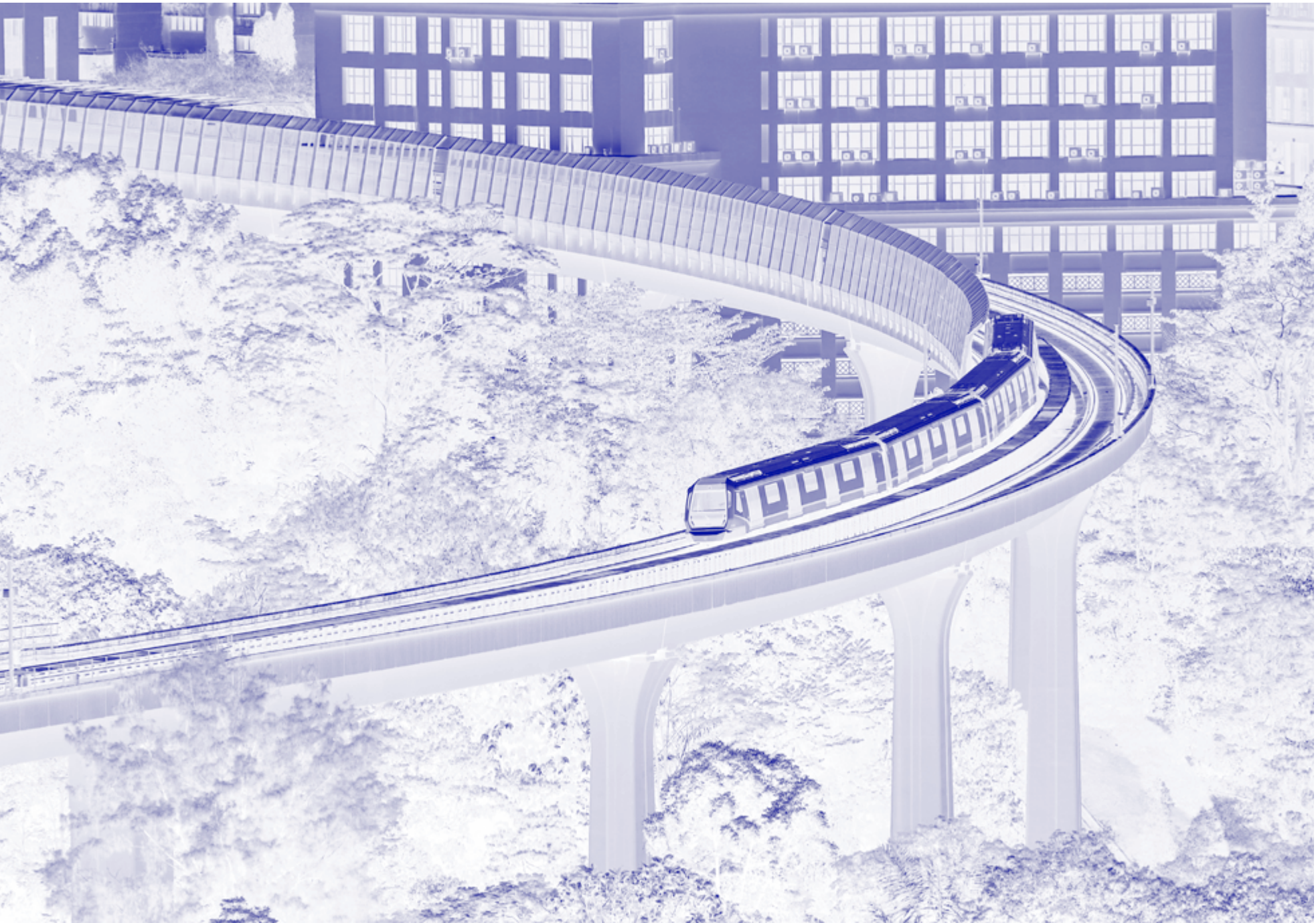
Think City created an urban redevelopment framework to support decision-making for potential transit-oriented developments (TOD) and value capture for a proposed transit station. The framework utilised an integrated three-pronged approach to enhance value, explore economic growth areas, and stimulate holistic transit-led regeneration of the transit station and its surrounding TOD.

This integrated framework provided city leaders and decision-makers with options for a master planned TOD that would optimise land use around a station, catalyse a financially viable development, and generate social and environmental gains.

3 Land Value Capture

Land Value Capture (LVC) ensures that benefits generated by infrastructure projects contribute towards funding those projects. Several case studies were used as international benchmarks for LVC best practices. These case studies from transit, TOD, and regeneration projects highlight common challenges and demonstrate how thriving, inclusive developments can be achieved via innovative place-based mechanisms, thoughtful design, and community engagement.

- 01 Campbell Street Arch, George Town, Penang.
02 Improving mobility and connectivity within cities.



02

4 Land Surface Temperature

Increases in temperature, linked to climate change and urban expansion is a growing challenge for the liveability of cities, human health, and urban wildlife. The results of a land temperature study conducted revealed marked increases in the peak land surface temperatures of five Malaysian cities over several decades. Think City used remote sensing technology (satellite imagery) to map the extent of the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect in Malaysian cities. The land surface temperature (LST) was calculated based on thermal energy radiated from the surface of the earth.

Among the five cities studied, there was a 1.64°C increase in Kuala Lumpur city centre's surface temperature between 1989 and 2019. The hottest areas identified were the heavily developed city centre, Bukit Bintang, Pudu and North KL. While the increase of 1.64°C may seem insignificant, it indicates a slow yet steady rise in the city's peak temperature and is representative of the global climate change.

On the other hand, there were a few locations that decreased or steadied in temperature in 2019. Based on satellite data and Think City's 2019 LST observation, park reserve areas such as KL Forest Eco Park and Taman Botani Perdana, and public spaces and gardens in Mahameru and Kuala Lumpur city centre were observed as the cooler areas in the city.

Urbanisation is known to increase the effects of Urban Heat Islands (UHI). There is a 30-year difference between Kuala Lumpur city centre's LST observations from 1989 and 2019, and it can provide insights for urban strategists on how cities can become climate-adaptable through nature-based solutions.

Kuala Lumpur City Centre: Land Surface Temperature



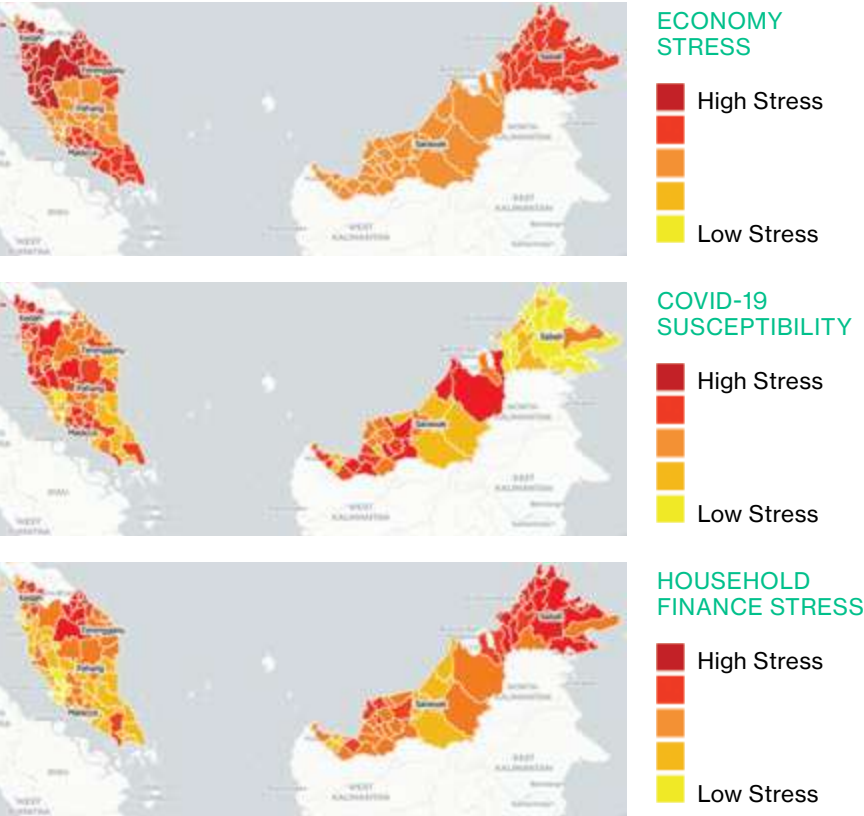
Modelling Potential Impacts of COVID-19

As COVID-19 was rapidly spreading, the question of how we could anticipate its potential effects and strengthen resilience for our most vulnerable communities begged answers. Think City produced an Atlas of Community Resilience to visualise the most vulnerable people and places using spatial and multi-criteria analysis to simulate the potential impacts of COVID-19 in Malaysia.

The Atlas aimed to help users swiftly comprehend the complexity of impacts by overlaying multiple dimensions of socio-economic-health data to profile site-specific vulnerabilities and identify under-supported communities. The selected vulnerability indicators were chosen through observing economic, social, and medical needs published in research articles, broadcast in media, as well as through discussion with local experts.

The intention behind the Atlas of Community Resilience Atlas is to contribute to the development of national, state, and local response strategies that increase the resilience of vulnerable communities in Malaysia through effective resource allocation.

THE ATLAS OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE



01

Territorial Planning— The Malacca Straits Diagonal

The Malacca Straits Diagonal (MSD) is a new territorial vision for Peninsular Malaysia. The MSD advocates balanced growth and prosperity to avoid the outcomes of one dominant Supercity at the expense of other regions and/or uncontrolled urban sprawl. The MSD promotes a network nation of Supercities and Territorial Diamonds with each region specialising to form a networked nation of polycentric cities.

A Supercity is a global city consisting of a metropolitan network of cities. A Territorial Diamond is a network of middle-sized cities linked by a communication and mobility infrastructure that connect built-up spaces and rural spaces. As a synergistic city network, the Diamonds of smaller cities and towns can be greater than the sum of their parts.



Scenario Planning

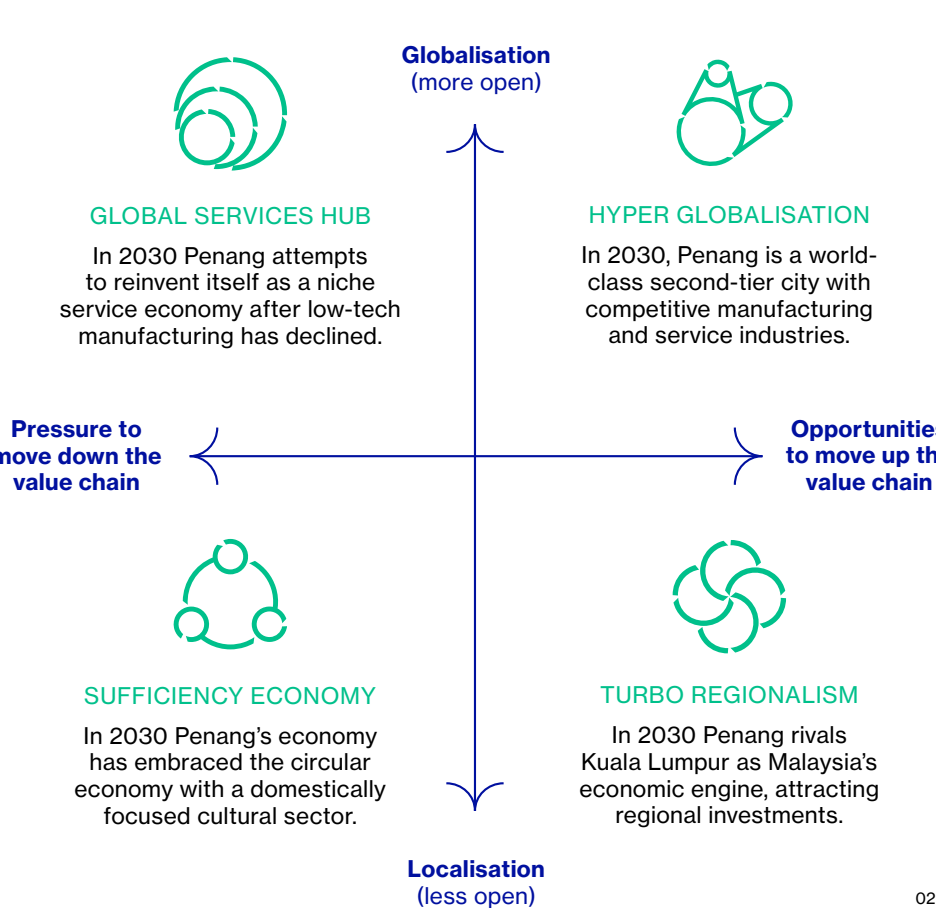
The future is uncertain, but scenario planning can help make sense of possible futures.

Think City conducted a scenario planning exercise on Penang's future, focusing on how Penang should upgrade the economy to raise household incomes, a response to Theme B of the Penang2030 vision.

The objectives of scenario planning include identifying important strategic uncertainties and how they might play out to anticipate possible futures and develop resilient policies across a range of possible futures. This would enable holistic analysis and systems thinking, raising awareness that future alternatives can be shaped.

Two key scenario drivers that have high uncertainty and high potential impact were identified, i.e. first, whether the world will become more globalised or more localised/ regionalised, and second, whether Penang could move up the value chain or if there would be downward pressure instead. Using these scenario drivers, four potential scenarios for Penang's economic future were identified.

We also proposed eight recommendations for Penang that are not meant to be prescriptive but are suggestions for leaders to future-proof Penang's economy in line with the Penang2030 vision.



02

The Cities Investment Facility & Cities Investment Portal



The Cities Investment Facility (CIF), powered by Dual Key, is an innovative, multi-stakeholder initiative centred on unlocking investment in urban infrastructure projects in low- and middle-income markets that have traditionally struggled with project preparation and bankability. CIF aims to direct a significant amount of capital towards financing infrastructure projects that are inclusive, aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and masterplan-integrated.

The Cities Investment Portal (CI Portal) is the first entry point into the CIF. It is an online subscription-based platform that hosts and tracks the progress of sustainable development infrastructure projects that have been admitted into the CIF, as they make their way through development towards bankable, construction-ready status.

Think City manages the CI Portal, working to actively curate, recruit, and evaluate projects that enter the CI Portal.

- 01 Mapping potential impacts of COVID-19 on the economy, infection susceptibility and household finances amongst Malaysians.
- 02 The four identified scenarios for Penang in 2030, with the scenario drivers shown on the axes.
- 03 A lone man cycles along one of the empty streets in Penang. (Photo Credit: Kelvin-zyteng, Unsplash)
- 04 The empty streets of Kuala Lumpur at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Photo Credit: Kenny Loh)



03 & 04

Our Services, Network and Partners



Think City is a project delivery partner and venture builder with a range of services designed to create people-friendly, resilient and liveable cities.

Our Services

- 01 Urban Intelligence
- 02 Place-Based Strategies
- 03 Planning and Design
- 04 Urban Regeneration and Redevelopment
- 05 Heritage Conservation and Adaptive Reuse

- 01**
Generating insights from conventional and innovative data for evidence-based decision making.

02
Policies and strategic documents to guide urban planning and development.
- 03**
Holistic and multidisciplinary approach to urban master planning.

04
Strategies and programmes to bring new life to historic and brownfield landscapes.
- 05**
Conservation and culture-based interventions to drive sustainable development.

OUR PARTNERS

International Organisations
Aga Khan Trust for Culture
Alliance Française
AusHeritage
Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA)
ARUP
British Council
Bandung Creative City Forum
CityNet
Embassy of France in Kuala Lumpur
Fundación Metropoli
Fraunhofer Center for International Management and Knowledge Economy (IMW)
Getty Conservation Institute
International Network of Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism (INTBAU)
Mott Macdonald
The Japan Foundation
PlacemakingX
The Prince's Foundation
Project for Public Spaces (PPS)
Safetipin
South East Asia Creative Cities Network
Space Syntax
UNESCO
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
UN-Habitat
World Bank Malaysia

Community & Civil Society Organisations
Badan Warisan Malaysia
Downtown Kuala Lumpur Collective
Downtown Johor Bahru Collective
Johor Area Rehabilitation Organisation (JARO)
Klang Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCCCI)
Multimedia University, Malaysia
Penang Institute
Penang Heritage Trust
Persatuan Warisan Makam Dato' Koyah
Perunding Pinang
Taylor's University
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
University of Reading, Malaysia

Government
Batu Pahat Municipal Council (MPBP)
City Council of Penang Island (MBPP)
City Council of Seberang Perai (MBSP)
Council of The City of Kuching South (MBKS)
Department of Heritage, Malaysia (JWN)
Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority (FAMA)
George Town Conservation & Development Corporation (GTCDC)
George Town World Heritage Inc.
Ipoh City Council (MBI)
Iskandar Investment Berhad (IIB)
Iskandar Puteri City Council (MBIP)
Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA)
Johor Bahru City Council (MBJB)
Johor State Government
Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL)
Kuala Kangsar Municipal Council
Lenggong District Council
National Landscape Department (JLN)
North Kuching City Hall (DBKU)
Selangor State Government
Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA)
Melaka Historic City Council (MBMB)
Menteri Besar Selangor (Incorporated)
Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia (MoTAC)
Ministry of Finance, Malaysia (MOF)
Penang Ports
Penang State Government
Perak State Government
Permodalan Nasional Berhad
PLANMalaysia
Prasarana
Shah Alam City Council (MBSA)
Selangor State Government
Taiping Municipal Council

Supporting Partners
Cultural Economy Development Agency (CENDANA)
Centre for Archaeological Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia
Chief Minister of Penang Incorporated (CMI)
Citi Foundation
Damansara Assets Sdn. Bhd
Iskandar Investment Berhad (IIB)
Johor Land Berhad
Khazanah Nasional Berhad
Khazanah Research Institute
Lendlease
Malaysian Institute of Planners (MIP)
NextDor Property Communications
Placemaking Malaysia
PNB Merdeka Venture
Urbanmetry
Yayasan Hasanah
Yayasan Sime Darby

Place-Based Programmes

- 01 Community Empowerment
- 02 Climate Adaptation
- 03 Grant Delivery
- 04 SDG Cities & ESG Strategies
- 05 Capacity Building

- End-to-end place activation and management services including:

01
Enabling communities to build resilience and agency to foster social equity in cities and places.
- 02**
Science-based climate assessments, plans and programmes for cities.

03
A proven delivery partner to generate impact from micro-interventions.
- 04**
Optimal strategies and actions to make SDG Cities and achieve organisational ESG goals.

05
Thought leadership, advocacy and training for policy-makers and practitioners.

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thinkcity

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The Think City's Quest to Revalitalise Cities kit is subject to change without prior notice.
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How Can We Help You Make Cities Liveable?

Over the past decade, we have developed several key differentiators that make us a unique organisation. Here are five reasons why we could be your preferred 'think and do' partner: our bottom-up approach that begins with the communities; our evidence-based, learning approach; our role as a catalyst that paves the way for other urban regeneration practices; our diverse team with varied backgrounds and expertise; our uniquely neutral position that enables us to create synergies with governments, private companies, international agencies and communities.

Reach out today.





04



06



05



01

- 01 SukaSuka Lake Retreat, Lenggong, Perak – an attraction as part of the Northern Peninsular Malaysia Archaeotourism Network.
- 02 Confluence Festival at Medan Pasar, Kuala Lumpur.
- 03 The Penang Island Northern Seawall Restoration – now known as the Penang Esplanade.
- 04 Jalan Dhoby, Johor Bahru.
- 05 Artwalk – Butterworth, Penang.
- 06 Rainbow Ribbon Light Installation as part of the Light Project programme in Kuching, Sarawak.

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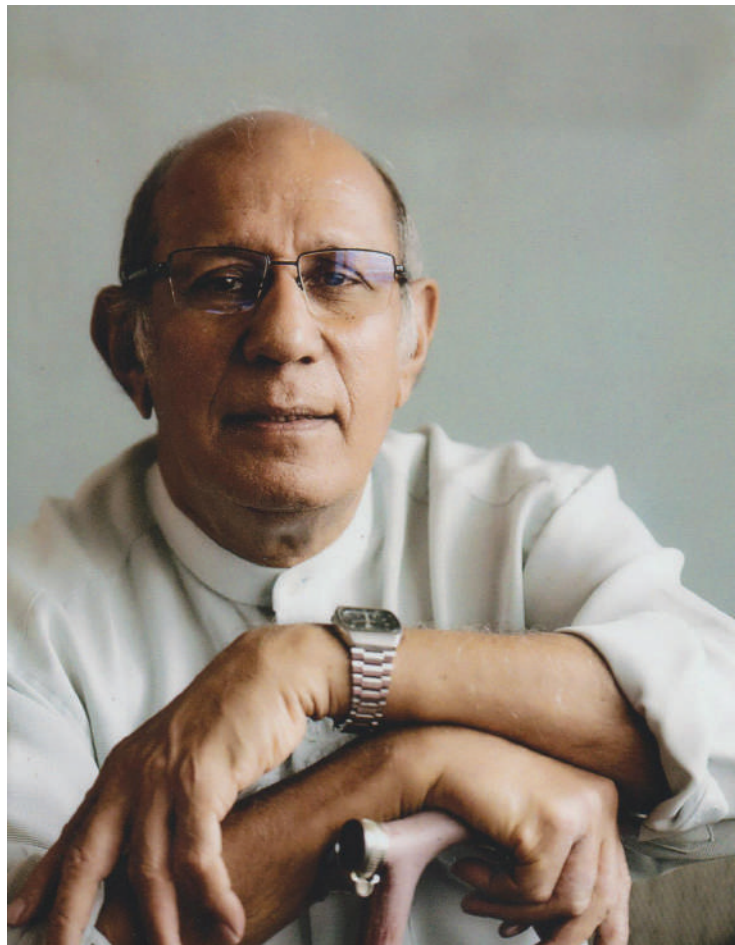
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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



DATO' SERI ANWAR FAZAL, THINK CITY CHAIRMAN

Fifteen years ago, a small but ambitious team of eight in Penang, Malaysia, embarked on a transformative journey with a shared mission: to revitalise George Town and breathe new life into this cherished historic city.

Today, it is with great pride that I reflect on how far we have come, with our team now nearly 90 strong across the nation—each individual contributing to the remarkable progress we have achieved together, working locally, nationally and globally, and building on the legacy of the past, relevance to the present and shaping the future we want.

Our diverse portfolio of projects and programmes has grown through impactful collaborations with a wide range of stakeholders, including the local, state and federal Governments of Malaysia. We always work hand-in-hand with community leaders addressing critical public housing challenges, and with public officials who share our commitment to ensuring no citizen is left behind in the pursuit of an enhanced quality of life. We have also worked closely with two United Nations agencies, particularly UNESCO and UN-HABITAT, while Khazanah Nasional Berhad and Yayasan Hasanah have been central in advancing this inspirational initiative.

As we celebrate this significant milestone, I extend an invitation to all of you—our partners, collaborators, and communities—to join us as we continue this exciting journey. Together, we have the power to shape the future of our cities, inspire people and create a lasting impact for generations to come.

Let us work together in creating a vibrant, liveable, and sustainable future to make a better world.

TESTIMONIALS



"From day one of Kwai Chai Hong, we've had Think City right there with us, guiding the way. Throughout our journey, we have learned the power of Placemaking. What we had was a vision to revive KL Chinatown. What they offered was invaluable guidance and support—bringing in the experts, the community, and anyone who cared about the space. They've been the glue holding it all together, pushing us toward one shared dream: a downtown bursting with history, culture, and creativity. This is only the beginning!"

Zeen Chang
Kwai Chai Hong



"Congratulations to K2K Idol for creating an amazing platform that allows public housing residents to showcase their talents. With the right entertainment platform like K2K Idol, the finalists have the chance to take their journeys even further."

Mawi
K2K Idol Mentor



"Thanks to Think City's grant, we at Hin Bus Depot are excited to embark on our greening project. Transforming our roof into a green space will enhance biodiversity and create a vibrant environment for the community, setting a precedent for sustainable urban development in George Town."

Tan Shih Thoe
Hin Bus Depot



"These northern states are a region rich with various forms of heritage. We have cultural remnants from the prehistoric era, proto-history, the historical and colonial periods. We also possess many tangible and intangible assets, both contemporary and ancient. The grants funding from Think City has sparked growth in terms of research, knowledge dissemination, leading to economic spillovers and further development."

Dr Nasha Rodziadi Khaw
Universiti Sains Malaysia

15 Years of Making Cities Liveable



What began in 2009 as a mandate to spearhead urban rejuvenation in George Town through small grants has evolved into championing better cities for all, collaborating with communities, changemakers, and partners to drive lasting, positive change.

Pioneering Urban Transformation in Malaysia

At Think City, our mission is to rejuvenate cities, neighbourhoods, and communities across Malaysia and beyond. Over the past 15 years, we have made substantial progress in advancing urban growth by transforming underutilised spaces into vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive environments.

Today, Think City stands as a leading impact organisation, dedicated to advancing culture-based economic development, placemaking, social and environmental resilience, and overall liveability in cities. Our approach is evidence-based and participatory, ensuring that every initiative is grounded in community needs and real-world impact.

Our innovative projects and partnerships have revitalised historic areas, breathed new life into public spaces, and championed cultural preservation, while prioritising environmental sustainability. Our efforts have not only improved the quality of life for residents but also fortified the social fabric of our cities, enhancing their resilience and adaptability to future challenges.

The results of our efforts stand as a testament to the impact of community-driven urban rejuvenation, setting a new standard for sustainable city development in Malaysia.

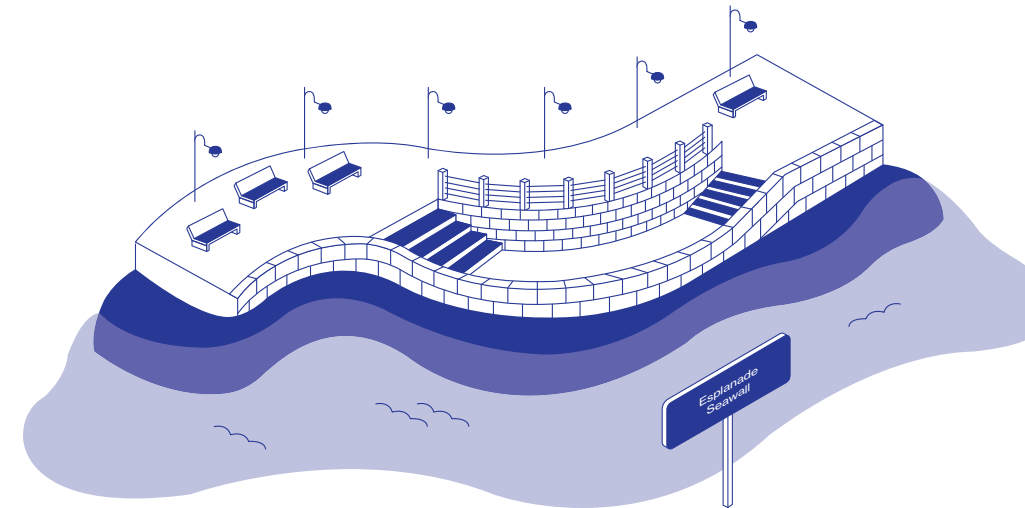
GLOBAL STANDARDS, LOCAL IMPACT

We leverage a global perspective to address local urban rejuvenation challenges, partnering with experts and organisations worldwide to drive transformative change. By collaborating with renowned institutions such as the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the Getty Conservation Institute, we endeavour to implement projects that adhere to the highest international standards.

This approach not only enhances the quality of urban spaces, but also propels cities towards becoming world-class destinations, blending local needs with global best practices to achieve sustainable and impactful change.

A Journey of Sustainable Urban Rejuvenation

Over the past 15 years, we have learned that great places attract great people. To truly excel, cities must nurture their heritage, culture, environment, and creativity. Think City is committed to creating resilient, inclusive cities where purpose, people, planet, and profit thrive together. By fostering these elements, we lay the foundation for vibrant, innovative communities that are ready for the challenges of the 21st century.



2009–2013

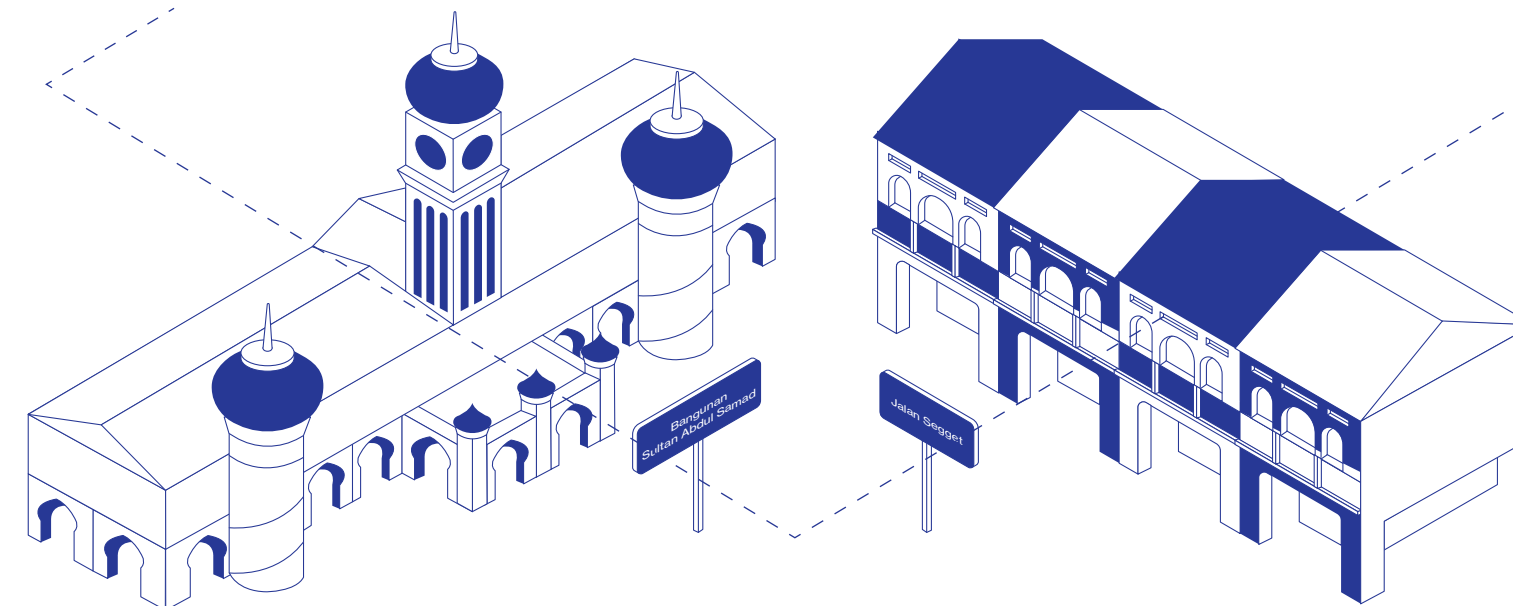
THE PENANG LAB

Our visionary programme to revitalise George Town, Penang was designed to preserve the city's heritage, enhance community spaces and foster cultural pride as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) was a pivotal tool that helped us rejuvenate the site, strengthen community ties, and inspire innovative urban planning solutions.

2013–2016

NATIONWIDE OUTREACH

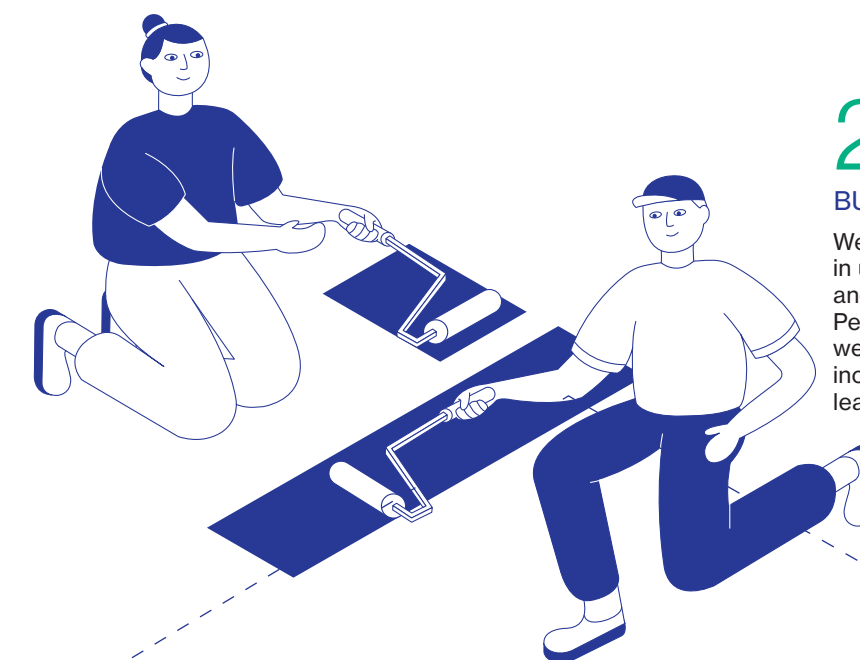
We expanded our impact beyond grants programmes and into urban policy efforts, embarking on nation building projects that would drive innovative solutions to urban challenges and empower local communities to lead their city's revitalisation. We deepened our expertise, built capacity, and launched new urban labs in Butterworth and Johor Bahru.



2017–2021

BUILDING AN INSTITUTION

We cemented our reputation as a trusted partner in urban rejuvenation by deepening our networks and expanding our intervention programmes across Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru. In doing so, we strengthened our role in shaping sustainable and inclusive urban environments that underscored our leadership as a key player in urban transformation.



2025–2030

BEYOND BOUNDARIES

We believe that cities are engines of growth, and this cements our plans to export Malaysia's urban development model globally, sharing our expertise for the benefit of other cities and communities. By bridging public, private, and people sectors, our goal is to set new standards in urban development, proving that cities can thrive through collaboration, innovation, and inclusive growth.



2019–2024

PIVOT TO PROSPER

In addition to being a trusted delivery partner to the Government's urban rejuvenation initiatives, we embraced collaborations with stakeholders who shared our vision of city-making, within their own domains. Our collaborative approach led to impactful projects, offering innovative solutions to urban challenges and advancing heritage conservation, public space improvement, community resilience and more.