

# thinkCITY

REJUVENATING THE CITY TOGETHER

## THE FUTURE OF CITIES

The role of cities in  
generating economic  
opportunity

## STEPPING OUT OF THE SHADOWS -BUTTERWORTH BARU

The Four Key Interventions

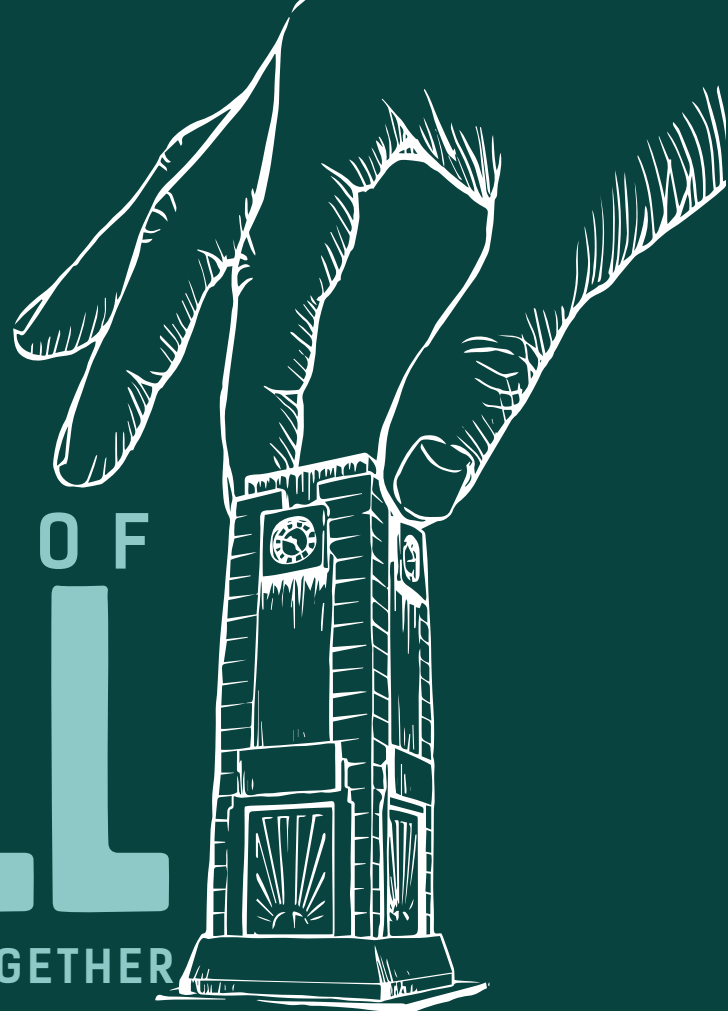
## TAKING A NATIONAL APPROACH

Promoting innovative,  
sustainable urban  
renewal practices  
nationwide



# THE POWER OF SMALL

REJUVENATING THE CITY TOGETHER



## TABLE OF CONTENT

02 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

32 STEPPING OUT OF THE SHADOWS  
BUTTERWORTH BARU  
The Four Key Interventions

03 THE FUTURE OF CITIES

38 CAPITALISING ON KUALA LUMPUR  
Rediscovering Downtown KILs Groove

10 THINK CITY 2.0

44 THINK CITY  
GRANTS PROGRAMME  
The KL Projects

16 GEARING UP  
The cities we work in

54 THE PEOPLE AT THINK CITY

24 THE TIPPING POINT  
Moving on from the  
George Town Grants Programme

56 TAKING A NATIONAL APPROACH  
Promoting Innovative, Sustainable Urban  
Renewal Practices Nationwide

28 THE STREET OF A  
THOUSAND STORIES

62 INSTITUTIONALISATION  
The Creation of a Project  
Management Office

ALTHOUGH THE NATURE OF OUR WORK HAS MEANT THAT THE TEAM HAS GROWN, WE ARE STILL FIRM BELIEVERS IN THE 'POWER OF SMALL' : THE IDEA THAT DOING THE LITTLE THINGS RIGHT REPEATEDLY CAN BRING ABOUT BIG CHANGES FOR THE BETTER.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE THE POWER OF SMALL

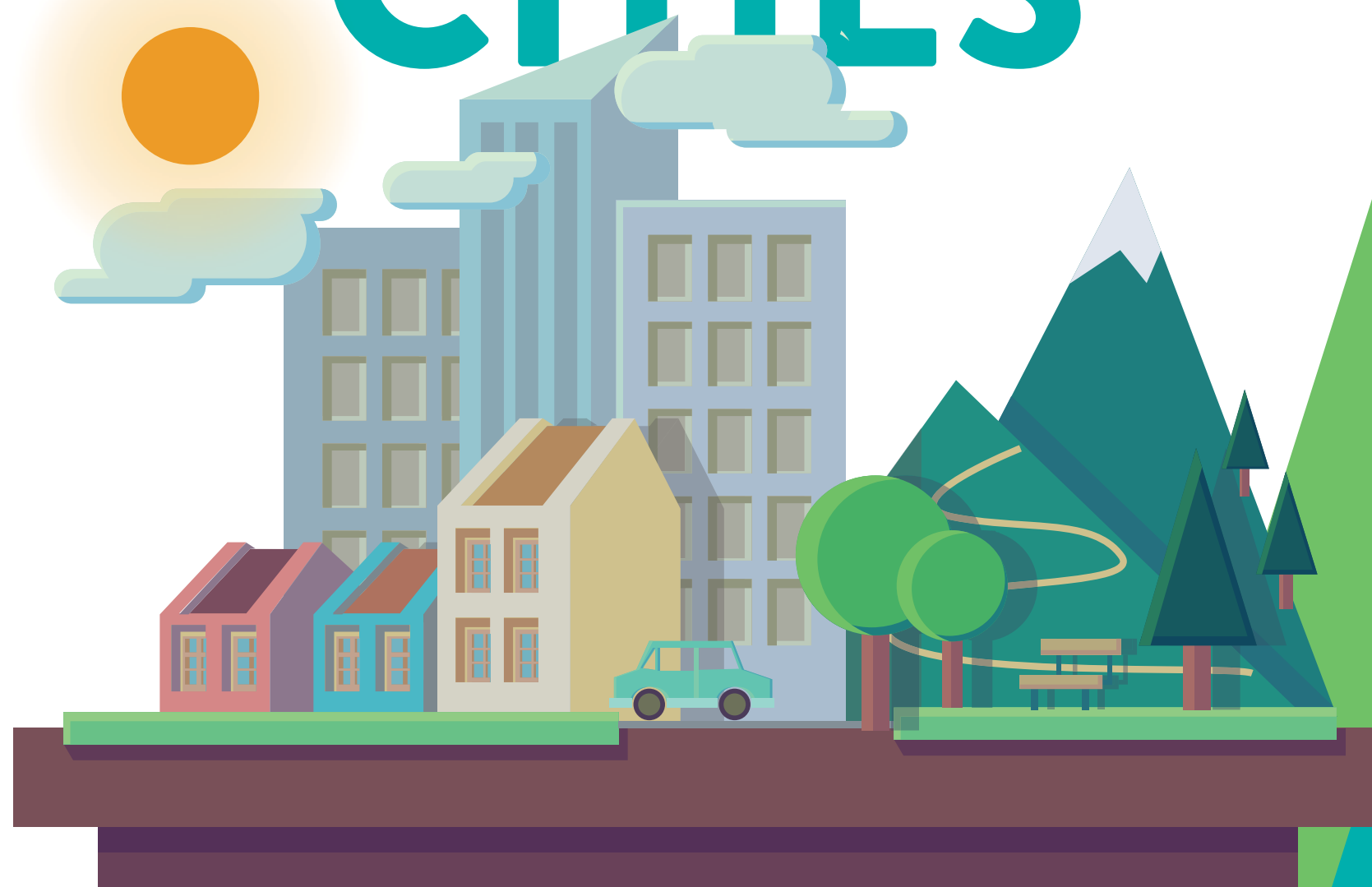
2014 and 2015 have been years of transformation for Think City as we've expanded nationwide from our headquarters in Penang. The expansion has brought us to different cities, including, Butterworth, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru. Although the team has grown, our focus remains the same – to catalyse sustainable urban regeneration and shape economically resilient, community-centric cities.

Although the nature of our work has meant that the team has grown, we are still firm believers in the 'power of small.' The idea that doing the little things right repeatedly can bring about big changes for the better. We see this happen so often with the projects that we work on, how our community engagements bring different people together with far-ranging effects. By patiently laying the groundwork for open communication can build lasting goodwill that over time, transforms communities and eventually cities.

Think City alone cannot take the credit for the successful projects outlined in this report ; the positive results have been achieved through teamwork between ourselves, our institutional partners and grantees. Unlike many funding agencies, we take a very involved role in each project from beginning to end. Not only do we assist our grantees in their application process, we connect them to our network of local and international partners, and are always there for consultation or to provide a listening ear.

I'm excited by what the next few years have in store for Think City as we begin to see the multiplier effect of the projects we have initiated and nurtured. Although there still remains plenty to be done, I'm confident in our processes and our committed, energetic young team.

# THE FUTURE OF CITIES



Think City Executive Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed, discusses the role of cities in generating economic opportunity, and what is needed for cities to position themselves to catalyse large-scale economic opportunities

## OVERVIEW

We're living in a new age of cities, where cities are engines of growth and development. It is in cities that we are witnessing phenomenal productivity gains, as efficient cities are able to achieve economies of scale and drive innovation. Dense, compact cities are also more environmentally sustainable as these tend to take up less economic space.

Against a backdrop of increasing urbanisation are two other key trends – globalisation and digitisation. These have given rise to a new logic which places cities, not nations, at the forefront of competition. This is shaped by three factors:

### ☼ DENSITY

Having the right amount of economic density in a space;

### ☼ DISTANCE TO MARKET

This is not only changing through air travel and high speed rail but through high speed broadband where people are becoming more and more interconnected;

### ☼ DIVISION

Globalisation has ensured that the old 'walls' or divisions are being broken down, by travel and broadband.

We live in a very instantaneous world, where the change of pace is taking place in a very dramatic fashion. In 1800, only 3% of the world's population lived in urban areas, by 1900 that number increased to about 14%, today it is about 50%, and by 2050 that number will be over 60%. This pace of change has never been seen before in history. The pace is so rapid that if not managed carefully, could lead to major dislocations.



## MAKING CITIES WORK

The challenge lies in how to make cities work efficiently and effectively. It is certainly not a given that all cities are successful, we only have to look at examples such as Detroit and other cities languishing in the US rust belt.

It is vital to recognise that people converge in cities for jobs, to improve their livelihoods and their quality of life. If cities are not prepared to face competition and embrace change, fault lines such as high crime rates, pollution, dysfunctional bureaucracies, traffic gridlock and so on eventually start to creep in.

Cities need to be properly managed and taken care of, and we should not expect an orderly environment to take place on its own. But cities that are well-planned, well-managed and acted upon are successful cities such as Singapore, Melbourne, Vancouver, London, New York, even Beijing is going through a rapid radical change.

## PUSHING GROWTH AND INCLUSION

Inclusive growth is an important aspect of making cities work. It should not be regarded as cutting up more pieces of a pie, but rather, growing the pie. The key is growth first and then inclusion, as it is simply unrealistic to deal with the bottom 40% without the necessary economic engines needed to generate growth.

New thinking has demonstrated that it is no longer only the traditional factors of production – capital and technology – that can shape the dialogue of competition. Labour is increasingly playing a major role, especially as it has become incredibly mobile. Labour is the fuel of the new economy and cities have to focus on how to attract such talent as well as to retain it. The availability of wide range of top talent is the major difference between a rising city and a declining city.

## POSITIONING CITIES FOR SUCCESS

Technology and capital converge to where the talent is, so cities nowadays have to position or brand themselves to attract and retain talent. Investors expect cities to have the fundamentals in place – an educated workforce, security, healthcare, education and public transport – to ensure that large-scale economic opportunities can be seized. Capital and technology will flow into places with all these pull-factors.

Good infrastructure or special economic zones or regions are not the only factor that attracts people. Cities also need to have a certain vibrancy, distinct character or identity. When cities compete, there are three factors that do not change – geography, natural endowments, culture and heritage. This third aspect is usually very underestimated in Asia where we have removed large chunks of our culture and heritage. Nobody wants to live in a sterile space, and successful cities need to have character and dynamism to keep a talented workforce. It is a factor that should not be underestimated as we live in an age of choices where even those in the lower income brackets are able to move with relative ease.

George Town, Penang



## QUALITY OF LIFE

It is also fair to say that the success of a city can no longer be measured purely from an economic standpoint-factors such as safety, air quality, quality of life, recreational activities, mobility etc. play an equally important role and contribute to the well-being of society. Quality of life is not optional anymore, it is a must. Modern, successful cities need to encourage high-density living that is both pleasant, diverse and inclusive.

Progress is being made in these areas worldwide. Medellin in Columbia for instance which for years had a less than savoury reputation, hosted the 2014 World Urban Forum. Closer to home, is Jakarta, which is also undergoing significant transformation. This highlights that it is not just affluent cities in the Western hemisphere that are able to make changes.

## THINK CITY'S ROLE

Ultimately, urban renewal and urban transformation is possible as long as the public and private sectors, and community embrace change. The community cannot afford to be a bystander. Think City's role is to provide city-makers with confidence, to encourage them to be bold, to do things differently, and not to be afraid to get people involved. (see sidebar)

We provide advice, consultation and technical expertise to government, local authorities and civil society groups about the future of their area. While regenerating physical urban spaces is a key part of the agenda, just as important if not more so, is the work we do to strengthen communities through arts and heritage programmes, capacity-building programmes etc. I believe that we should not be afraid of change, positive outcomes are possible with good intentions and an open heart.

George Town, Penang

## BUILDING RESILIENT CITIES

- Liveability is key in the competition for talent and economic growth in the 21st Century.
- However, it has to be a plan-led approach as opposed to a market-based solution to discourage a widening inequality gap and asset wastage.
- Collaboration is key, particularly in a multi-cultural multi-stakeholder environment.
- Incentive programmes (grants) have a role in urban regeneration but requires hand-holding and consultation from design through to implementation.



### MAYOR RIDWAN KAMIL: INNOVATING IN BANDUNG

Ridwan Kamil was one of Indonesia's best-known architects prior to being elected as mayor of Bandung in June 2013. Since then, he has transformed Bandung into a thriving hub for business, manufacturing and creative industries, and tackled problems with public transport, infrastructure and rapid urbanisation heads-on. Programmes such as car-free mornings, free travel for school children on public buses, and no-smoking days have become commonplace, and "wasted spaces" such as land beneath flyovers have been transformed into public spaces such as pocket parks with benches and artificial turf.

Despite criticisms, he is now aiming to steadily change the mindsets of residents and those around him, including relocating street vendors away from busy roads, and directly addressing problems of migrants and homelessness.

Source: AsiaNewsNet



Pocket Park In Bandung



# THINK CITY 2.0



The year 2014 was a major period of transition for Think City as it scaled up its operations to go national. Executive Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed and Chief Operating Officer (COO), Dr Neil Khor reflected on the impetus for doing so, as well as the challenges involved.

## URBANISATION – A GLOBAL TREND

Back in 2009, Think City was set up by Khazanah Nasional as a small, nimble agency to examine the effects of global and local urbanisation trends. It was a response to the on-going evolution of cities, which are increasingly influential actors in shaping and accelerating innovation, economic growth and sustainable living practices.

Safe, creative, dense, well-planned cities are where people and talent choose to converge, which in turn stimulates and sustains long-lasting economic benefits, but where would Malaysian cities fit in on this scale? More importantly, were Malaysian cities resilient enough to face the 21st Century's new world order - a world where urbanisation, accelerated technological change and increased global connectivity make change happen overnight. The line between failure and success has never been more precarious. Blink and the opportunities are missed.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, over fifty years ago, urban populations accounted for only 34 per cent of the global population. By 2014 this number had risen to 54 per cent. It is not just the numbers which are changing, urban centres in East Asia are expanding rapidly with China leading the way with 12 of the 25 largest, and fastest-growing urban areas.

"We can't ignore this phenomenon, (of urbanisation) it's happening all around us," said Think City Executive Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed. "Cities worldwide are facing extreme challenges as they look for ways to evolve and to find their niche, whether on a regional or global platform. We knew that we had to get the discussion (on cities) going to make Malaysian cities better. It's at the point where the future of cities is now high on the mainstream agenda. The recent The Eleventh Malaysia Plan (11MP) and its focus on Malaysian cities as growth engines is a good case in point."

## THE 11MP AND CITIES

The Eleventh Malaysia Plan (11MP) has identified investing in competitive cities as a 'game changer' for the nation. To this effect, by 2020 four major cities in Malaysia - Kuala Lumpur, Johor Baru, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu - will experience enhanced economic growth and liveability and act as major talent hubs.

According to the 11MP, "City residents will be able to afford urban housing, have adequate public transportation systems, enjoy green and open spaces, and have access to economic opportunities that will enable them to provide their children with a better future. While these four cities - selected based on their strong fundamentals - will serve as pioneers, the transformation will be expanded to other cities over time. These cities will serve as role models for other cities in the country and region."

The major shifts that this will produce are summarized in the following chart.



“In the case of Malaysian cities, many grew organically around some form of principal activity. In Penang it was the port that drove growth, in Taiping and Kuala Lumpur it was the influence of the tin mines. Each of these places had a purpose for its creation, but over time, with large numbers of people moving to cities and new economic activities coming in, the landscape of the cities started to shift. Think City was established as a city-making institution to support this evolving urban landscape, to look at ways we could make our cities more innovative and more resilient,” said Hamdan.

#### ECONOMIC DENSITY

Economic density in cities is unplanned and organic, resulting in lower productivity

➤ Increased economic density to enhance productivity

#### URBAN FORM

Uncontrolled and automobile-focused sprawl

➤ Transit-oriented development to increase use of public transportation and reduce reliance on personal vehicles

#### RESOURCE USAGE

Resource use not streamlined, leading to high usage of natural resources

➤ Efficient waste management through guidelines on resource use and effective enforcement

#### HOUSING

New developments are expensive and exclusive with limited affordable options

➤ Affordable and quality housing is accessible to targeted segments of the society

#### INDUSTRY FOCUS

Current industries are predominantly labour- and space-intensive industry

➤ Growth of knowledge-intensive industries with efficient use of space

#### ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities focused on licensing, enforcement, and provision of basic services

➤ Local authorities as strategic drivers of local economic and social development

Source: Eleventh Malaysia Plan.



## GEORGE TOWN – THE TEST SITE

While older Malaysian cities do have a working infrastructure in place underpinned by basic urban planning, the passing of time and the influx of workers into these cities have dramatically changed the urban dynamics. For instance, George Town, which was designed in the late 18th Century by a British trader, was originally planned for a population of 100,000. George Town's early boundaries have since spread and currently it is home to around 740,000 inhabitants; its once thriving port economy, which was once the economic mainstay of the inner city, no longer exists.

By the early 2000s, George Town was very much a city on the decline. Urban decay had set in, and the inner city was hollowing out with large numbers of locals leaving for the suburbs and beyond. For Think City, George Town was the ideal site to pioneer their city-making theories by putting these into practice; going to the ground and mapping the issues, initiating physical and cultural interventions, and most crucially, building bridges between the community, state and local governments to bring about inclusive, sustainable change. George Town would be Think City's prototype and its success or failure would decide the organisation's own future.

“Over four years in George Town, Think City funded and initiated 236 projects, injecting over RM7 million into the local economy (see page 19) through the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP), which was Malaysia's first public grants programme for urban regeneration. The GTGP was designed to encourage stakeholder participation, to understand the needs of the community and get their buy-in before starting projects. Once a certain level of trust has been established, then the community are willing to shape the change and work collaboratively,” explained Hamdan.



# THE THINK CITY METHODOLOGY



Collaboration is an important part of the Think City philosophy. We wanted people and organisations to ‘crowd in’ so that the burden or challenge of urban renewal in George Town was spread out. It also encouraged creativity in new ways of thinking and problem-solving. - Hamdan Abdul Majeed

Ensuring the continuity of projects catalysed by the GTGP was vital for Think City to achieve a ‘tipping point’ for George Town – a point where the changes and innovations in the city would trigger irreversible change. Having a structured methodology, which was applied to all Think City’s projects from the start, was key.

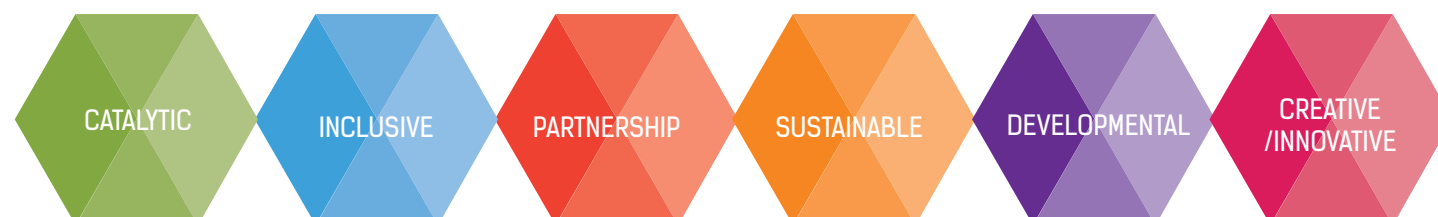
According to COO, Dr Neil Khor, “We started out (in George Town) by undertaking a baseline study, to fully understand the city - who lived there, what people did, how buildings were used and so on. From understanding the city and its challenges we moved towards incubation where we

either initiated projects or helped the community to initiate and carry out their own projects. After fully demonstrating each project, we documented and advocated each successful project. This was the formula that we revisited for almost all the projects that we went through, though of course some didn’t go through all these stages. All of the projects also needed to meet six key criteria (see the image below).”

After four years the GTGP came to an end and there were many hard questions that needed to be answered. Had the Programme been a success? Had the interventions in George Town reached the tipping point? Where to now for Think City? “We were at the crossroads (at the end of the GTGP),” said Hamdan. “Do we just say that we’ve done a good job and end on a high note? Allow for things to progress on its course? Or could we take the lessons of what we had done and see whether a similar model could be used to support renewal in other cities around Malaysia.”

## GEORGE TOWN GRANTS PROGRAMME (GTGP) CRITERIA

All grants had to exhibit the following characteristics:



The year 2014 was an important transition period, as Think City wound up its last remaining projects in Penang and initiated the GTGP Impact Assessment (see page 19) in order to objectively examine the extent of its impact. Plans were also in motion to scale up Think City as an organisation, revisit and refine the formula that had worked in George Town and roll this out in other Malaysian cities, notably Butterworth and Kuala Lumpur.

“Looking backward made us evaluate what worked and didn’t work (in George Town). Although we never had a cookie-cutter approach to our urban interventions, we had to ensure that our formula would work in the cities that Think City was expanding to,” explained Hamdan.

While George Town could be described as an archetypal historical city facing modern pressures and the challenge of reinventing itself, Butterworth is a grimy, industrial secondary city and Kuala Lumpur, a sprawling capital city. Although all three cities are very different in terms of scale, development

and economic activity, Think City’s systematic approach means that problem areas can be identified to allow strategic initiatives to be put in place – beginning with a baseline study and allowing for plenty of community engagement to take place. “We strongly believe in bottom-up solutions, as these are more likely to bring about real, sustainable change,” said Hamdan.

“This new phase (in Butterworth and Kuala Lumpur) is a transition from a pilot project (in Penang), to scaling up and creating beacons where people are noticing that change is taking place in cities and want to connect, to be a part of it. This is the yardstick of success. It’s not just about money either when you consider that the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur) has an annual budget of RM1 billion,” observed Hamdan, “Obviously our Think City Grants Programme will hardly make a dent compared to this. What we have to do is leverage on the power of ideas, of doing the small things right and bringing people together. That’s our strength.”



# GEARING UP

## THE CITIES WE WORK IN

Think City has a presence in three major Malaysian cities that have very different characteristics. In order to drive sustainable urban regeneration initiatives, we need to understand what makes each place tick.



### THINK CITY INTERVENTIONS EXPLAINED

There are three common aspects to Think City's work in different cities:

- Think City usually begins with a public grants programme to enable crowdsourcing of possible interventions,
- Following this, Think City works closely with the city government to identify areas where Think City can support their priorities or interventions,
- Thirdly, Think City initiates management initiatives for projects that fall outside the first two categories.





# GEORGE TOWN

## THE CHALLENGE

Penang is Malaysia's third largest urban conurbation and is a major E&E (electrical & electronics) hub. Its capital, George Town, is also part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. By the end of the twentieth 20th Century, however, the island and its capital were at a critical juncture:

- Penang was struggling to attract and retain high-quality human capital,
- George Town was in a state of urban decay, with the city 'hollowing out'.

## THE RESPONSE

The George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) was designed to deliver sustainable projects that aimed to improve the quality of life and the quality of the environment for both residents and visitors, and to provide a comprehensive, long-term approach that would enable the city to effectively manage the present and any future challenge by:

- Creating a thriving, vibrant George Town to attract more talent to Penang and help it avoid the middle-income trap,
- Arresting the state of physical and social decay in George Town,
- Encouraging sustainable tourism and high, long-term growth industries to attract people and businesses back to the city,
- Leveraging on George Town's UNESCO World Heritage Status (WHS).



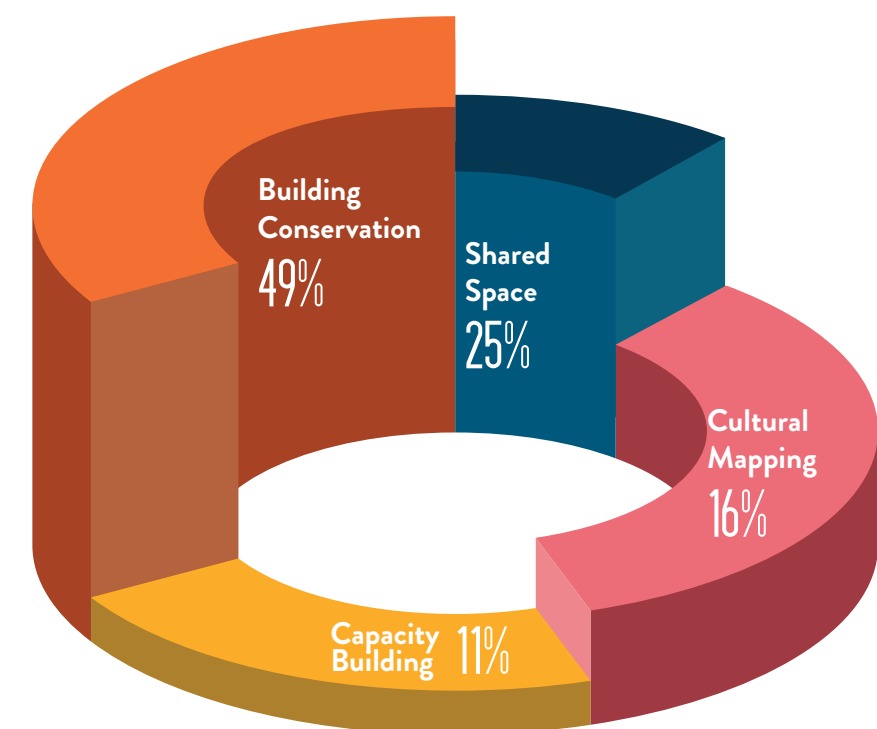
Masjid Kapitan Keling, George Town, Penang

## GEORGETOWN GRANTS PROGRAM STATISTICS



Source : George Town Grants Programme, Impact Assessment 2014 by Geografia

## GTGP COMMITTED FUNDS BREAKDOWN





**BUTTERWORTH**

## THE CHALLENGE

Butterworth is a historical port and railway town on mainland Penang, a transit point for goods and people. The recently announced RM2 billion Penang Sentral project at the current site of the ferry terminal, bus terminal and railway station is set to be the northern region's main transport hub.

- Butterworth is a town that has 'hollowed out' with the shift of administrative and commercial centres to nearby suburbs such as Seberang Jaya, Prai and Kepala Batas,
- The town is dirty and unattractive, residents feel there are not enough green common areas, and residents' access to the beachfront has been cut off by the new highway,
- A lack of diversity of cultural attractions or content has made it a transit point, rather than a potential investment or tourist destination.

## THE RESPONSE

Butterworth and George Town have close historical and physical links similar to the relationship between Hong Kong and Kowloon. The long-term Butterworth Baru plan is based on this polycentric approach and will enhance the links between both cities. (see overleaf)

## DOWNTOWN BUTTERWORTH HEADLINE STATISTICS

Study Area 267 ha	No. Buildings 4,095	Building Footprint 95 ha	Space Between Buildings 170 ha	No. Jobs 17,800	No. Residents 23,747	Pop. Density 85/ ha	Jobs Density 67/ ha
No. Employee 3,060	Vacancy Rate 12.4%	% Female Residents 49%	Open Space /Public Use 3.3%	Hotel Rooms 640	Home Owners 52%	Ave. Household Size 4.1	Non-Malaysian Households >2%

## BUTTERWORTH BAHARU'S KEY INTERVENTIONS INCLUDE:

- Developing Penang Sentral as a prime commercial district (which can also absorb the spill over from George Town)
- Redeveloping Butterworth's old town, conserving historical buildings, creating public spaces, enhancing commercial spaces and encouraging tourism,
- Riverfront development along the Sungai Perai to transform the river into a valuable asset,
- Improving urban amenities and services,
- Development of the Butterworth waterfront, to include recreational spaces, tourism opportunities and mixed development.



# HONG KONG AND KOWLOON – A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Kowloon began as a low-rise squatter village, which subsequently experienced a sudden growth following an influx of Chinese immigrants after the Second World War. A lack of housing in Hong Kong city caused a new surge in high-rise buildings in Kowloon, creating what eventually became the Kowloon Walled City – a 6.4 acre city inhabited by over 33,000 residents. This was considered the most densely populated place on earth.

Whilst the Walled City itself has since been demolished and replaced with a public space, Kowloon continues to be a major manufacturing centre for many businesses in Hong Kong.

Increasingly, however, Kowloon is seeing a transformation towards encouraging arts and cultural heritage; the West Kowloon Cultural District aims to build a vibrant cultural quarter for the city, dedicated to bringing together local and international artists and audiences to be inspired and to celebrate the arts. In the future, former inner-city industrial areas look set to be regenerated, led by the constraints imposed by Hong Kong's limited size and developable land.



# KUALA LUMPUR

## THE CHALLENGE

Malaysia’s capital city, Kuala Lumpur, is a sprawling metropolis that is home to over six million people. Think City’s work in the capital is focused on Downtown Kuala Lumpur (KL) approximately a 1km radius from Masjid Jamek, which is the city’s historical starting point; an area facing a number of planning, economic and social challenges.

- Downtown KL is currently functioning as a transaction space - servicing a transient population of hospitality and financial workers, visitors and non-Malaysians.
- There is a lack of economic, jobs, housing, demographic and landuse diversity and many assets and spaces are underutilised.

## THE RESPONSE

As the starting point for a metropolis that now houses over six million people, the area has a rich and diverse history that can underpin a revitalisation effort and prevent ghettoization from taking root.

Key interventions include:

- Diversifying Downtown KL’s social, economic and physical landscape through the grants programme and increased cooperation with the community, local authority and other stakeholders,
- Encouraging a creative economy to take root in the city centre,
- Creating more pull-factors in Downtown KL through strategic placemaking and programming to encourage more visitors.

## DOWNTOWN KL HEADLINE STATISTICS

Study Area 213 ha	No. Buildings 1,409	Building Footprint 71 ha	Space Between Buildings 142 ha	No. Jobs 57,370	No. Residents 3,792	Pop. Density 18/ ha	Jobs Density 269/ ha
% Finance, Banking, Legal Jobs 40.5%	% Workers Using Public Transport 49%	Ave. Employees Per Business 11.4	Total Floorspace (sqm) 5.3mil	Government Jobs 12,938	Creative and Knowledge Jobs 3,320	Vacancy Rate 10.3%	Ave No. Years Businesses Established 10
Jobs for Non-Malaysian 13.5%	Non-Malaysian Households 1 in 2	No. Students 7,577	Est. Day-time Population 54,000	Male Workers 54%	Male Residents 73%	Parkland /Open Space 6.6%	Est. Night-time Population 11,000
Buildings in Need of Major Restoration 128	Buildings Recently Restored 146	Ave. Sqm Per Job 96	Ave. Sqm Per Business 1,363	No. Hotels 142	Hotel Rooms 7,313	Residents Aged 25-39years 73%	Ave Distance Residents to Work 2km

## A summary from our baseline studies.

Before interventions can be planned, the Think City team needs to fully understand the situation on the ground



Kuala Lumpur



George Town



Butterworth

Residents	Pop. Density	Jobs	Jobs Density	No. Buildings	Space Between Buildings
9,425	45.7h/a	21,934	106/ha	5,078	52.0%
27,500	103/ha	14,230	55/ha	4,095	64.3%
3,792	17.8/ha	57,370	269/ha	1,416	66.5%

206ha	266ha	213ha
GTWHS	Butterworth	KL



# THE TIPPING POINT

MOVING ON FROM THE  
GEORGE TOWN GRANTS PROGRAMME

“The data clearly shows that, overall the GTGP was effective in achieving many of its stated aims especially as a means to kick start the regeneration of the WHS. It was the breadth of the programme that is considered its greatest asset, rather than the impact of individual grant areas or projects.”

Taken from George Town Grants Programme, Impact Assessment 2014 by Geografia

## OVERVIEW

When Think City first came into the public eye in 2009, its presence in George Town was intended to catalyse a diverse range of urban regeneration initiatives in the historic city. Armed with only RM16 million and a small team, it kick-started scores of innovative projects over a four-year period under the umbrella of the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) – which was also Malaysia’s first public grants programme (see page 18).

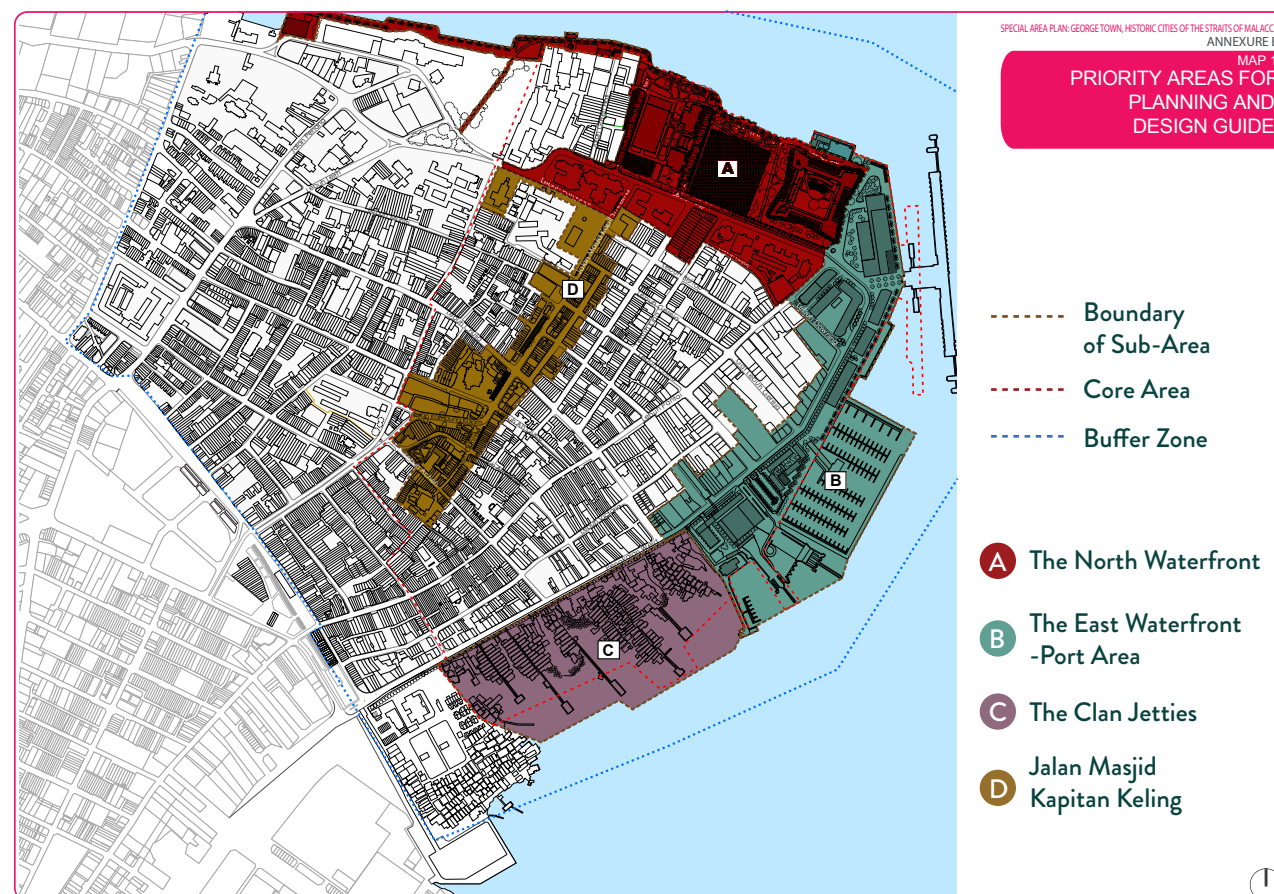
By 2013, as the GTGP was winding up, it was time for Think City to take its city-making initiatives to policy level. While GTGP projects were community-led and often ad-hoc responses to urban pressures, the George Town Action Plan (GTAP) is a Think City-led comprehensive action plan for George Town’s future regeneration and development.



## THE GEORGE TOWN ACTION PLAN (GTAP)

The roots for the GTAP were put down firmly at the end of 2013 when Think City signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) for the George Town Strategic Master Plan, which led up to the GTAP. According to Think City Executive Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed, “Up to that point we had done a lot in George Town, but we wanted to move to a ‘tipping point’ where we could bring about sustainable and impactful change (for the city), with a momentum of its own.”

“The GTGP was good at creating small changes, but working with the Aga Khan Trust will bring about significant change in line with our vision to make George Town a liveable city. For example, establishing proper urban design guidelines, returning the waterfront to the people, improving public amenities. This is all part of a structured, planned sequence of urban interventions.”



The George Town Action Plan (GTAP) aims to balance George Town's heritage with future development.

*“A lot of the time in Malaysia, there is a lack of a deeper understanding of what city making is. Often we're still stuck at the rudimentary level and are just trying to carry out basic infrastructure fixes. We do not yet have cohesive thinking about what makes a city really work.”*

*It's time to move beyond the functional or generic aspects and address the 'soul' that makes a place a great place to live and work.*

Hamdan Abdul Majeed,  
Think City Executive Director

*“AKTC has great confidence in the abilities of Think City and I believe that some of our experimental projects will create new standards of development for the city.”*

Luis Moreal, Aga Khan Trust for  
Culture General Manager

*On the transition from George Town Strategic Master Plan to George Town Action Plan:*

*“Think City was able to bring in international experts - the Aga Khan Trust for Culture - which gave us international exposure. AKTC were very willing to share their technical expertise with us, which is a testament to Think City's commitment.”*

*Think City also introduced new ways of promoting and carrying out publicity for the Action Plan, it received a good response on a much larger scale (to our previous projects).”*

Amelia Neoh, Previously Assistant Director,  
Town and Country Planning Department, Penang  
Currently, Chairman of the  
One Stop Centre (OSC) Sungai Petani Municipal Council

*“Although the GTGP has had a net positive impact, it was not perfect. There are lessons that can be learned to be applied elsewhere. Of most note are:*

- Linking the grants programme to a spatial regeneration framework,
- Better compliance, monitoring and wrapping-up processes,
- Expanding the grant pool and making more effort to engage hard to reach groups,
- More focus on intangible heritage and economic development,
- More efforts to deliver tangible environmental initiatives,
- An earlier focus on affordable housing/diversity to counter the negative impacts of gentrification associated with regeneration.”

*Taken from George Town Grants Programme, Impact Assessment 2014 by Geografia*



# THE STREET OF A THOUSAND STORIES

In every city around the world there is typically a street that typifies its spirit of place. For George Town, Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling (formerly known as Pitt Street) holds a special place in the city's history as well as its future.



Stretching the breadth of the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS), Pitt Street (now known as Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling) is one of George Town's oldest thoroughfares and was established by the British in the late 18th Century. The street's popular name – the Street of Harmony – is a reference to the existence of the city's oldest church (St. George's Church), Hindu temple (Sri Maha Mariamman Temple), Taoist temple (Goddess of Mercy Temple) and mosque (Kapitan Keling Mosque) along the street.

Despite being the site of such historical and cultural riches, there were no standardised wayfinding systems or interpretation centres to alert visitors and passers-by to its historic and cultural highlights. Sensing an opportunity to create greater awareness of the WHS, Think City developed a wayfinding system and initiated a network of interpretation centres.

## A LAYERED APPROACH TO PLACEMAKING



The wayfinding system comprises information panels about particular sites, directional signage and free-standing maps of the neighbourhood.

The local communities participated in writing and interpreting their own histories, producing digital brochures that could either be downloaded onto smart phones or printed out.

"We're taking a multi-layered approach to the Street of Harmony (as with many of our projects)," explained Think City Programme Manager, Daniel Lim. "We work with stakeholders to enhance the physical aspects of the street. Aside from the physical we also look at producing content, or programming which can bring the community together."

## SPIRIT OF PLACE

Spirit of place conveys the cultural essence of a site. In historic sites it encompasses the meanings of a place accrued through time and through its past and present uses. Expressed through the tangible built heritage, these intangible heritage values give the place its distinctive character, an aura that draws people to the place, speaks to them, engages their emotions and, often, gives them a sublime experience of their surroundings.

The concept may be better understood if one alludes to the notion of "body and soul". The body is the physical fabric of the heritage site in its original state and setting. The soul, the spirit of place, is the sum of the site's history, traditions, memories, myths, associations and continuity of meanings

connected with people and use over time. Collectively, these tell the story of the place, generate its identity and give it emotional impact.

How does conservation of a physical structure articulate its spirit of place? Primarily, the place has to be true to its history. This truth must be conveyed in the very process of conservation itself, in a heritage site's physical form, in its contemporary use, and in its interpretation and presentation.

Laurence Loh, Conveying the Spirit of Place, Asia Conserved, Lessons Learnt from the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation (2000-2004)



# STREET OF HARMONY PROJECTS



## THE STAR PITT ST.

In partnership with the STAR Publications Berhad, the historic Star Building was retrofitted and currently homes a bright and breezy community centre, performance space and library, which is open to the public.

The building has two main entrances, one on the Street of Harmony and one on Lebuhraya Queen (in Little India), lending itself naturally to community activities.

The permanent Penang Story exhibition at The Star Pitt St. tells the story of the state from a community standpoint, and also acts as a 'gateway' to the new network of interpretation centres.

To allow The Star Pitt St. to remain a sustainable community initiative, spare commercial space is rented out.



## JOURNEY OF HARMONY

To encourage visitors to the WHS to discover more about the street's peaceful religious co-existence and cultural exchanges, Think City together with Arts-ED are publishing a free booklet on the street's key religious institutions.



## KUAN YIN TEMPLE

Think City worked with the Temple's trustees to create a pocket garden in the temple courtyard, adding a much-needed green space that can be enjoyed by the community.

## THE PENANG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The upper floor of the building is also the headquarters of the Penang Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO). "Think City and the PPO will be working together to encourage inner city children to pick up an instrument," explained Lim. "We're hoping that in time, as these children grow up they will become members of the PPO too."



"Think City has been an integral part of the transformation efforts of our George Town Bureau into The Star Pitt St. They were a strategic partner who enabled us to fulfill our desire to give back to Penangites in a very real and long-term way.

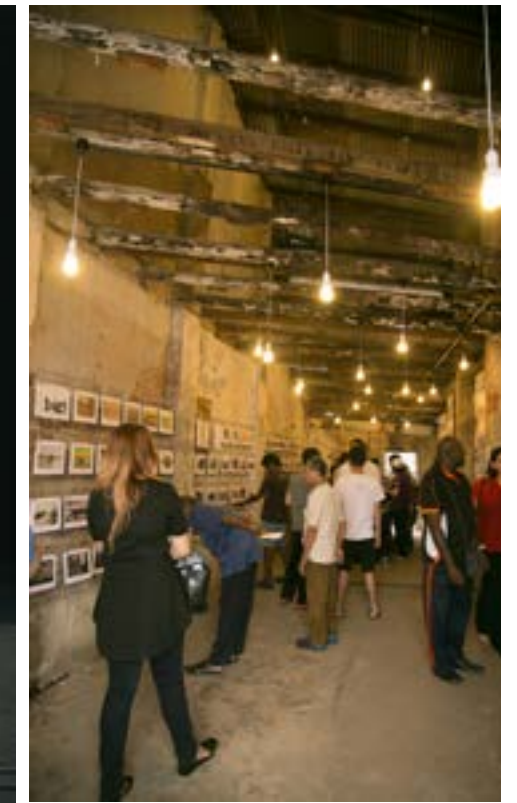
The expertise provided, from the overall direction of the transformation, to the linkages and partners brought in, and the expertise required to bring the project to life were invaluable. As a long-term partner of the project, we also look to Think City to provide the expertise in the development and implementation of programming at The Star Pitt St.

From the beginning both parties entered into the relationship fully aware of our dependence on each other in order to ensure the success of the project. This naturally led to a relationship based on mutual respect and trust – the belief that both parties would put in the same amount of effort and investment for everyone's benefit. I believe this relationship has also been about mutual learning. For The Star, our level of understanding and appreciation for heritage, arts and culture has only deepened, thanks largely to this collaboration.

I hope that this partnership will continue for years to come to ensure The Star Pitt St. reaches its maximum potential. Our role as witnesses to the daily unfolding of history can only serve to complement Think City's own work and perhaps even pave way for other forms of collaboration in the long-run."

Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai, Group Managing Director, Star Media Group Berhad





# STEPPING OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Often derided as George Town's 'ugly sister', major urban regeneration efforts in Butterworth aim to change this perspective and inject vibrancy into this industrial town.





## OVERVIEW

Only a ten-minute ferry ride away from the historical charm of George Town is the industrial outpost of Butterworth on mainland Penang. The town was founded in the mid-19th Century by the British and rose to prominence on the back of its industrial muscle – the port, railway station and manufacturing.

Butterworth's once thriving old town could best be described as shabby and run-down. It has the worn-out air of a commuter town, a place for the working population to find affordable housing, but not a place one would call home. The town's once thriving public spaces have been left to the elements and the Butterworth Outer Ring Road has taken the coastline away from the town, depriving the local population of a waterfront.

Despite initial appearances, Think City's baseline study revealed that Butterworth's population of 27,500 inhabitants is over seven times denser than downtown Kuala Lumpur, and nearly three times as dense as George Town.

*"Butterworth is the starting point of this journey. It has a historic town center, an extension of the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site, great waterfront vistas and a river regeneration project that will transform Seberang Prai into a liveable place. It can be Malaysia's own Bilbao."*

Dato' Maimunah Shariff,  
President of Seberang Perai Municipal Council



*"Penang Island has now reached its capacity in terms of land development. To make Penang a liveable city, Seberang Perai needs to become a viable alternative to the island."*

Lim Guan Eng,  
Chief Minister of Penang



## BUTTERWORTH BAHARU – THE FOUR KEY INTERVENTIONS

"It was important for Think City to get involved (in Butterworth) as we believe that there is the potential for George Town and Butterworth to be linked in a similar way as Hong Kong and Kowloon," explained Think City Butterworth Programme Director, Murali Ram. "A simple example is how Butterworth's commercial district could be improved to absorb and attract more spillover from George Town which has limited commercial space."

The recently announced RM2 billion Penang Sentral project at the current site of the Butterworth's ferry terminal, bus terminal and railway station is set to be the northern region's largest integrated transport hub and holds the key to the town's revival.

"Bringing about a level of sustainable change in Butterworth means leveraging on the town's history, geography and transport infrastructure to enhance quality of life while also carrying out targeted intervention to stimulate local interest, buy-in," said Murali. The Butterworth Baharu plan has already been endorsed by the Penang State Government.

## THE FOUR QUADRANTS OF INTERVENTION



## INTERVENTION 1 – BRINGING LIFE BACK TO BUTTERWORTH OLD TOWN

### REDEVELOPMENT + CONSERVATION + TOURISM + COMMERCIAL+ PUBLIC SPACE

#### EXPANDING TAMAN PANTAI

"Many of the residents which we interviewed during the baseline study felt that there were not enough recreational areas or activities in Butterworth," said Murali. "We are rejuvenating Taman Pantai, a once-popular park using a similar blueprint of private – public sector engagement which we piloted with Armenian Park in George Town, but on a much larger scale"

The project involves expanding the park, even using shipping containers as part of the park's hardscape. "The idea is to create a strong statement of intent, to do something new and artistic to encourage the local community and local businesses to participate in change for the better."

#### BUTTERWORTH FRINGE FESTIVAL (BFF)

The Butterworth Fringe Festival (BFF), which kicks off this year, is programmed as a two-day event packed with world-class outdoor performances as a part of the successful George Town Festival. Its future is assured for at least three years, with funding from Think City and the State Government.

"We chose the Jalan Jeti Lama area for the venue of the BFF as this is where Butterworth as a town started, it's the site of the original jetty next to the old Hindu temple. Once the new ferry terminal was completed, the area was forgotten. We want to remind people of the area's history and to make it hip so that the people will take an interest, even after the Festival," explained Murali.



MPSP resurfaced the roads/spaces where performances will take place, and Think City refurbished two vacant shophouses to use as exhibition/art spaces.

## INTERVENTION 2 – AN ACTION PLAN FOR PENANG SENTRAL

To bring together stakeholders to create a new, large Business Improvement District Scheme (BIDS) in the city which leverages on Butterworth's position as Malaysia's northern transport hub.

This is a long-term vision for the next 15 to 20 years and requires buy-in from the various private stakeholders to unlock the potential from underutilized land.



## INTERVENTION 3 – REJUVENATING THE SUNGAI PERAI

### PUBLIC SPACE + RECREATION + RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT + TOURISM

“All over the world riverfronts are regarded as an asset,” said Murali. “In Butterworth because of the state of the river, buildings tend to face away from it. “We’re trying to buck this trend and create awareness that the river is a valuable asset and not a dumping ground.”

In the pipeline are plans to map pollution to determine an effective and sustainable course of rehabilitation. Then comes the challenge of making the river more accessible to the public, creating spaces for the community to use, for instance picnic spots, jogging trails and so on, and leveraging on the mangrove swamps as a point of interest.

This five-year project is still in its infancy and requires multi-agency cooperation.



## INTERVENTION 4 – ENHANCING THE BUTTERWORTH WATERFRONT

### WATERFRONT MIXED DEVELOPMENT + PUBLIC SPACE + RECREATION + TOURISM

“The baseline study made it very clear that the residents’ major concern was a lack of green public spaces. Older parks and the waterfront have been encroached on by the new highway. With about 3.5km of coastline there is a lot of potential to create a truly world-class waterfront, something similar to the East Coast Park in Singapore,” said Murali.

#### THINK CITY GRANTS

Think City has allocated RM1 million for its grant programme for Butterworth. To date, five grants have been successfully awarded, including a grant for St Mark’s Church roof restoration.

### ST MARK’S CHURCH ROOF RESTORATION

St Mark’s Church in Butterworth is a historic church that dates back to 1895. The Church’s committee approached Think City for a grant to help replace their corroded zinc roofing which was leaking, with clay tiles (similar to the Church’s original roofing).

Once repairs to the roof have been completed, the Church will once again be open to the community and is even considering creating a small, interpretation centre to highlight its history to visitors, run by a full-time guide.



St Mark’s Church ran a funfair on 5 April 2015 to supplement the Think City Grant for its roof repairs. This event successfully raised over RM50,000 while encouraging grassroots participation and future community events.

## SEBERANG PERAI STORY

The Seberang Perai Story project organised by Think City, the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) and Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai (MPSP) is a regular series of talks close to MPSP President, Dato’ Maimunah’s heart.

“I would say that Seberang Perai is Penang’s best-kept secret. There are definitely plenty of hidden gems on the mainland,” she enthused.



### THINK CITY AND MPSP

One of the crucial factors in Think City’s various projects nationwide, has been the ability to form and build close working partnerships with public and private sector institutions. The relationship with Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai (MPSP) is one that goes back to 2012 with the appointment of Dato’ Maimunah Shariff as MPSP president.

“Dato’ Maimunah was instrumental in the early days of working in George Town in her previous capacity at George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI). There’s a lot of mutual respect,” explained Murali.

Given the ambitious nature of the regeneration plans for Butterworth, MPSP have seconded a member of staff to Think City’s new Butterworth office.

“The first collaboration between Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai (MPSP) and Think City took place three years ago, when we ran a programme called ‘Imej Baru Butterworth’ to regenerate and spruce up Butterworth. Butterworth has been in state of decline for some time and this was made even worse about eight years ago when MPSP shifted its office to Bandar Perda. The town lost a lot of its vibrancy.

‘Imej Baru Butterworth’ was a small concept plan that grew into a much larger plan – Butterworth Baru – with the help of Think City. Butterworth Baru is a long-term project that will really transform the town and improve the quality of life for the community; they deserve much more. The objective is to make Butterworth more liveable and create a multiplier effect that has a positive impact on the economic and social sectors.

As Head of the Unit for Butterworth Baru I work very closely with Think City and will be moving into a shared office in the last quarter of 2015. Our working relationship with Think City has always been very positive. There is strong collaboration between both organisations and they are always very supportive and demonstrate a high level of commitment. I would say we learn together, especially when it comes to community engagement programmes.”

Normaira Bt Abdul Rahman,  
Head of the Unit for Butterworth Baru, Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai





# CAPITALISING ON KUALA LUMPUR REDISCOVERING DOWNTOWN KL'S GROOVE

Medan Pasar, Kuala Lumpur



## OVERVIEW

Downtown KL was a natural starting point for Think City given its background as the historic heart of the capital city. This is an area rich in pre-independence buildings and whole sets of architecture related to this period, from Masjid Jamek to Medan Pasar, and the iconic Sultan Abdul Samad building and Dataran Merdeka only minutes away by foot.

During office hours the area appears lively enough with workers, students and tourists milling about, while after working hours, the area clears out. “This is not a place where the action is,” observed Think City Executive Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed. “It doesn’t need to be this way. We’ve seen again and again in cities worldwide that downtown areas can draw in the younger generation and energise creative industries.”

“Every city has a historic area which is what gives a city its unique identity. We saw an opportunity in this one kilometre radius of the Masjid Jamek area, which many of us who have migrated to KL for work or employment are familiar with. The Puduraya Bus Station would have been the first place students or workers would have arrived at.”

Neil Khor, Think City COO.

Medan Tuanku, Kuala Lumpur



## THE STRATEGIES

Think City’s baseline study confirmed the initial suspicions that this was an area that had hollowed out and was largely ignored, essentially an area ripe for reinvention. According to Jia-Ping Lee, Think City KL Programme Director, “There is a huge gap between the professional workers that come into the area during the day and the migrant community that actually live there. There is nothing in between to sustain the neighbourhood.”

“The area totally empties out at night and there is this view that the migrants have taken over. This is not entirely accurate, it’s more like locals have abandoned the place.”

“We want to inject more programming and placemaking into the area to really activate the space in a consistent and sustained way, where we can align a calendar at least six months ahead and plan for tourism, art or cultural activities with other stakeholders. If we don’t arrest the decline at this level there is the very real fear that it will no longer be an inclusive space,” she explained.

## WORKING TOGETHER

Crowding-in is a typical Think City modus operandi to bring as many players to the table for a better outcome.

“We’re very much in alignment with PEMANDU’s River of Life project, which aims to revitalize the Klang and Gombak Rivers and the surrounding areas in the long-term. Medan Pasar is so close to the confluence (of these rivers) and we’ve encouraged Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) to purchase some lots which can be used as potential community space, whether as an art gallery, cultural space etc.” said Lee.

“The idea is to increase the number of workers and visitors that stay in the area after office hours. To encourage them to spend time and money, the area needs to have sufficient pull. Medan Pasar is one pocket area. If we can activate different pockets in Downtown KL, we can make the area more cohesive, where pedestrians can flow easily from one part to another and, more importantly, want to explore the area because there are interesting activities or places of interest to visit,” Lee reiterated.

MoU signing between Think City and Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) on 16 January 2015.





ART IN THE PARK

Billed as the first public art even in KL’s oldest park, ‘Art in the Park’ was an initial collaboration between Think City and DBKL to reintroduce the Perdana Botanical Gardens (formerly known as Lake Gardens) to the public.

According to Festival Director and Think City director, Suryani Senja Alias, “We want to educate the public about public art. Right now people think that it (art) is just giant bunga raya, cats and pumpkins, but we want people to think more deeply. It’s roughly about finding narratives and stories through materials, that tell you something about the city and displaying it in the park.”

MEDAN TUANKU AND SULTAN ISMAIL POCKET PARKS – A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

When two small parks in the vicinity of Medan Tuanku and Jalan Sultan Ismail were due for an upgrade, DBKL turned to Think City for ideas. Rather than come up with a plan and pass this to DBKL’s landscape architects to implement, the Think City team took a different approach.

In April, Think City brought in Capire, an Australian firm specializing in stakeholder engagement, to conduct a one-day workshop with DBKL and Think City staff as participants. The session demonstrated ways in which stakeholder engagement could be conducted – including stakeholder mapping and a list of possible tools to be used in different situations.

Inspired by this, the DBKL team then suggested that some of these tools could be used to conduct a bottom-up approach for the Medan Tuanku and Sultan Ismail parks.

Using the knowledge acquired from Capire, video cameras were set up in one park to film the daily activities of park users over the course of a week, while in the other, passers-by were interviewed about their ideas on how the space was utilised and how it could be improved. The findings were then presented to the DBKL landscape architects, providing them with in-depth information with the end-users firmly in mind.

“Our interventions are not always about us coming up with the solutions, but rather creating the space to allow sustainable solutions to be reached,” said Lee.



Stakeholder Engagement in Sultan Ismail



THINK SQUAD – MOBILIZING YOUNG CITY-THINKERS

Think City’s national initiatives are very much focused on reimagining cities for future generations. To engage with youth, Think City set up Think Squad, their new youth outreach programme that piloted in Kuala Lumpur.

Lee explained, “At the moment we’re engaging schools and colleges, holding talks and setting up Think Boards where the students can share their ideas for better city living. The next step is to identify 20 people for the Think Squad programme where we train them on presentation skills, documentation skills, on-ground programming and city-making skills. Eventually this could lead to an internship at Think City and even a full-time position. We like to think of this as sustainable talent pooling.”

BOOTS ON THE GROUND



for the terrain and its community as Think City Programme Manager, Solomon Jebaratnam discovered during Think City’s community outreach efforts.

“The purpose (of the outreach) was to engage with the Downtown KL community, to tell them more about Think City and also to source for Physical Grant project applications for Cycle 2 of the Think City Grants Programme.”

“In two weeks I met with almost 100 people and ten different organisations, including, St. Mary’s Cathedral, Tamil Methodist Church and Persatuan Kwang Siew just to name a few. Most of the responses were lukewarm; you can imagine that many were skeptical of an organisation wanting to give money out.”

“Having said that, one of the most encouraging responses was from the Persatuan Peniaga Lebu Ampang (Lebu Ampang Business Association). The President, Datuk Abdul Rasul was very excited about getting involved with Think City. I was able to set up a meeting between him and our Executive Director, where we shared our vision for KL, and explained the participation opportunities for small communities.”

While plenty of urban planning decisions are made from KL’s lofty skyscrapers, there is no substitute for getting a feel



# THINK CITY GRANTS PROGRAMME THE KL PROJECTS

The first round of the Think City Grants Programme in Kuala Lumpur attracted a diverse range of applications with the bulk focused on community building and the development of sustainable practices.





**CREATIVE CITY KL**  
GRANTEE: OCTAGON CREATIVE

Mapping the back lanes within the Masjid Jamek core zone to build upon in the future with programming and design ideas.



**MALAYSIA BIENNIAL**  
GRANTEE: NEXTDOR

A study of the PPR flats in KL to determine possible improvements for future low cost housing in KL.



**GOOGLE BICYCLE MAPS**  
GRANTEE: PAUL KOH

Google Maps currently provide options for those who are walking, in a car or using public transport. This initiative aims to add bike routes to Google's options by mapping out the quickest routes, shortest routes and safest routes.



**MALAYSIAKU CELEBRATIONS**  
GRANTEE: EDWARD SOO

An initiative to create awareness on cultural performances and food that celebrate Malaysia's diversity was held at Bangsar Village Shopping Center, APW, Bangsar and Pantai Dalam. The event brought together people from all backgrounds to celebrate Malaysia's diversity.



**HOUSE VISION MALAYSIA**  
GRANTEE: HAFIZ AMIRROL

A study that seeks to incubate ideas on ecological efficiency, mobility, health and security in the heart of KL.



**PROJEK POKET POKOK**  
GRANTEE: ART PRINTING WORKS

Art Printing Works has set out to design and create a pop up park within a printing press factory in Bangsar. Once completed, the site will be open to the general public.





**PERENNIAL KITCHEN**  
GRANTEE: EATS, SHOOTS AND ROOTS

A study of food security within the Masjid Jamek core zone. In pursuit of sustainable food, the study will look into the availability and quality of water and sunlight amongst other factors.



**TRANSAGE**  
GRANTEE: MALAYSIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

A study of Jalan Pahang, more specifically the quality of living in the area. Rodents and rubbish are some of the aspects being studied.



**SUTAN PUASA**  
GRANTEE: ARECA BOOKS

A book that looks at the alternate history of the founding of Malaysia's capital city - Kuala Lumpur.



**WORKSHED**  
GRANTEE: STUDIO KARYA

The establishment of a makerspace in Bukit Bintang for people who seek to design and create models or wood/plastic/metal pieces but lack the knowledge, raw material and equipment needed to do so. Space and materials will be provided in return for a small fee. Knowledge of design, materials and equipment will be transferred from the owner, guardian and users of the space to those who seek it.



**SEKEPING JUGRA**  
GRANTEE: NG SEK SAN

The creation of a maker space along Old Klang Road for craftsman to showcase their skills and artworks.



**WARGA MARGINAL LORONG HAJI TAIB**  
GRANTEE: ARIAN ZAHARI

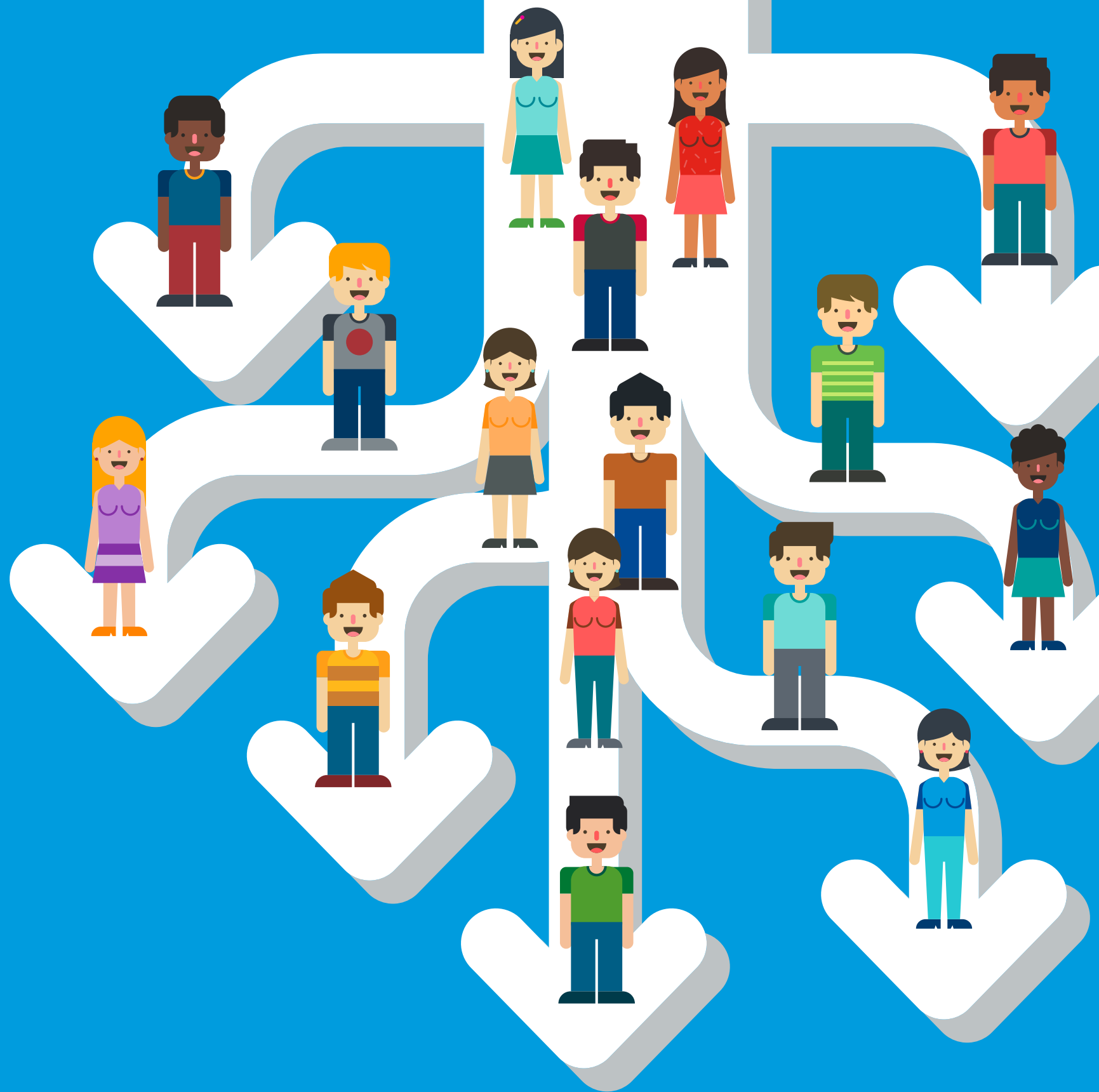
A baseline cum cultural mapping study of Lorong Haji Taib for potential programming in the future.





# PEOPLE AT THINK CITY

To deliver Think City's efforts in urban regeneration, we have brought together a diverse set of people with different backgrounds and competencies. These include architecture, urban planning and design, event planning, economics and finance, history, branding and communications, engineering, legal, and NGO experience.







## GEORGE TOWN TEAM

From L to R: Salleh Mahadzir (Programme Executive), Dr. Neil Khor (COO), Aufa Abd Rahman (Programme Executive), Muhammad Hafiz Ahmad (Programme Executive), Daniel Lim (Programme Manager), Daniel Lee (Programme Executive), Hanis Hafizah (Programme Executive), Oga Chan (Consultant), Nuraisha Azmi (Consultant)



## BUTTERWORTH TEAM

From L to R: Nicole Thum (Programme Executive), Murali Ram (Programme Director & Counsel), Sharma Doray (Programme Manager), Kartina Mohamed (Programme Executive)



## KUALA LUMPUR TEAM

From L to R: Julien Hives (Programme Manager), Duncan Cave (Programme Manager), Sazlin Sabri (Programme Executive), Riduan Ngesan (Programme Executive), Lee Jia Ping (Programme Director), Michelle Tan (Programme Manager), Joanne Mun (Programme Manager), Solomon Jebaratnam (Programme Manager), Alisah Alias (Admin & Finance Executive)



## SUPPORT TEAM

From L to R: Noor Ariza Mohd Ali (Support Service Executive), Bharathi Nandakumaran (Support Service Manager), Farah Nadiyah Ameer Tajudin (Project Management Office & Desk Officer)



## INTERNS AT THINK CITY

Learning is an intrinsic part of Think City and internships bring a new, valuable flow of ideas into our offices. We see our interns as part of our family, where each individual has unique sets of skills and knowledge to bring to our projects.

Interning at Think City is a two-way street – we take the time to mentor and provide interns with multi-disciplinary exposure to our many urban regeneration projects, while encouraging new ways of thinking and getting the job done. We're not fans of, "This is the way it's always been done" thinking. We thrive on new ideas and innovations. It helps keep us relevant.

A 'can-do' positive, flexible attitude is essential whether it's working with communities on the ground, or building relationships with senior city managers. Our interns will be the first to admit that we push them hard and have high expectations. Ultimately, that's the key to unlocking their potential.

During my three-month internship I worked with the Programme Management Office (PMO) to sort and edit document files, and also design an evaluation for project management tools.

My early perception of Think City was that it was an organisation focused on improving liveability in Penang. As I worked there, that perception changed, and I learnt that Think City works in other Malaysian cities (including Kuala Lumpur) to enhance the living area for the communities in these cities.



I am truly grateful for my time spent on Think City's internship programme as I feel that my work experience will stand me in good stead for the future.

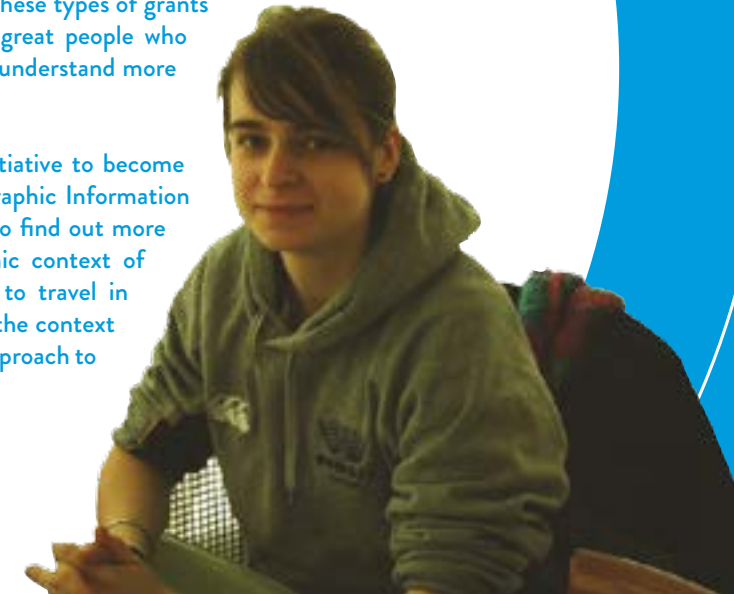
Nicole Khoo, Think City intern.

I was an intern at Think City for six months from February to July 2013. I primarily worked on documentation during the final few months of the George Town Grants Programme (GTGP) that was implemented in Think City's early days.

For the documentation work, I worked with Think City staff and web developers to develop and implement a useful internal database and, ultimately, map Think City funded projects in George Town, including information on the GTGP, project implementation etc. It gave me a deeper understanding of a public grants project of this scale and, by "shadowing" a lot of the work, I was given a valuable insight into how these types of grants schemes affect the community. The office was full of great people who inspired me to get "stuck in" to a lot of the projects and understand more deeply the impact of Think City's work.

During my internship I was allowed to take my own initiative to become involved in areas that interested me, for example Geographic Information Systems (GIS) during the land use mapping, as well as to find out more about new areas, particularly the cultural and economic context of George Town and surrounding areas. The opportunity to travel in Penang and Kuala Lumpur was crucial to understanding the context and how best to support the development of a balanced approach to landuse on a local and national scale.

Agnes Granroth, former Think City intern.



I interned for just over four months – two months were spent in Penang and the remainder in Kuala Lumpur. I worked on far too many projects to list and I learnt a whole range of skills including:

- Creative Cities Forum – organising an international conference attended by over 100 delegates, event management, and handling PR for visiting speakers and attendees;
- Pulau Tikus community talk – learning to work with government officials and gaining a better understanding of Think City's role in bringing in Project for Public Spaces (PPS) to work together with the local council;
- Tunku Abdul Rahman book – the printing process and managing multiple stake-holders;
- Think City Grants Video – videography, filming, social media presence, content generation;
- Architectural Association Visiting School – understanding the methodology of streetware, carrying out on-site filming for the ten days. All of this was an introduction to architecture for me.

Interning at Think City allowed me to witness change happen in the short term but also to understand the overarching bigger picture. It was exciting to be a part of something new and refreshing in Malaysia.

Before I joined, I had read about all their projects and achievements over the years. I was pleasantly surprised when I walked into the office to find a small team. All had very different personalities and roles, which made working with them a very dynamic experience. They gave me a great welcome and made sure I was taken care of. At the same time they pushed me to learn when I didn't know, and to perform above expectations. They were also very generous in allowing me to meet and interact with Think City's partners, grantees, etc.

Jia-Her Teoh,  
former Think City intern.





# TAKING A NATIONAL APPROACH

PROMOTING INNOVATIVE,  
SUSTAINABLE URBAN RENEWAL  
PRACTICES NATIONWIDE





OVERVIEW

Effectively catalysing urban transformation is a mammoth undertaking that requires a high level of technical expertise and commitment from a range of public and private sector stakeholders. To introduce current methodology, new thinking and training to Malaysian city-builders (be they planners, architects etc.), Think City’s National Initiatives focus on bringing world-class capacity-building programmes to cities across the country.

Since its inception in 2009, Think City has continuously reached out to local and international third parties that offer knowledge, competence and expertise in a range of fields that can be broadly categorised as improving the urban environment and making cities more liveable.

“As Think City transitioned from a Penang-based to a national organisation we identified certain capacity building programmes that could be replicated in other regions of Malaysia. These were those programmes that had shown some traction in Penang, and were worth extending geographically,” said Think City Project Manager in charge of National Initiatives, Duncan Cave.

“The national initiatives allow us to pilot or incubate ideas in one area to test them. This allows each Think City team - Butterworth, Penang or KL - to try ideas, and then the best ones can be replicated through the National Initiatives.”

Currently, Think City is collaborating with global planning consultancy, Arcadis, to help create a liveability index for Malaysian cities. The ultimate aim is to create a baseline to allow Think City’s progress to be tracked, and also to give local governments and related agencies the necessary indicators to identify urban issues. “We have the potential to become a leading centre of expertise on community-based urban development matters over the next few years,” highlighted Think City Executive Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed.

URBAN CONSERVATION PLANNING IN MALAYSIA  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE  
AND BADAN WARISAN MALAYSIA



ABOUT THE COURSE

The course is geared towards mid-career planners working in Malaysia and is intended to build greater capacity for meeting Malaysian urban conservation challenges (the Malaysian Institute of Planners has accredited the course with five Continuing Professional Development points).

Now in its third year, the course is led by international and local instructors utilising problem-solving and other active learning methods that complement more formal presentations and hands-on field exercises.

“Although the course is geared primarily towards Malaysian participants, we have invited planners from the region to share the challenges they face and present alternative solutions,” explained Cave.

“Over three years approximately 50 have been trained in Urban Conservation Planning and the feedback has been very positive. Most agreed that they could apply their learnings in their every day work, and that it will assist them in making better planning decisions in the future.”

Having been run as a pilot course, Think City, the Getty Conservation Institute and Badan Warisan Malaysia are in the process of moving the course to a local tertiary institution where it might be conducted as a Masters programme.

*“I attended one of Think City’s capacity-building workshops in 2012 and was very impressed with the urban regeneration projects they were carrying out in George Town, especially the way they engaged with the community, built trust and then carried out successful demonstration projects.”*

*I used a similar methodology for Iskandar Regional Development Authority’s (IRDA) Sungai Segget revitalisation. This is a catalyst project in the Johor Bahru Transformation Program (JBTP). The success of this project will be an enabler for the whole transformation project. When completed it will set a national benchmark for future river rehabilitation projects as well as encourage more investment in JB.”*

Johan Ropi  
Previously Vice President,  
Planning and Compliance,  
Iskandar Regional Development  
Authority

*“To truly gauge the success of a programme we will evaluate it at the end of each pilot phase. The Urban Conservation Planning course which we run with the Getty Conservation Institute is almost over and we will be having it assessed with the Getty by an independent third party to gauge its effectiveness.”*

Duncan Cave, Think City Project Manager in charge of National Initiatives

*The 2015 Kuala Lumpur course focused on the Brickfields area, which is a good example of a historic area facing the challenges of urban redevelopment.*



## AA VISITING SCHOOL: STREETWARE SOUTHEAST ASIA IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION OF LONDON



*The course used Wisma Central - a 40 year-old mixed used building in the heart of the Kuala Lumpur City Centre - as the study site, to provide the students with a unique opportunity to revitalise an old building through adaptive re-use - ultimately, maintaining the usefulness of the building, rather than demolishing it to make way for another shopping mall.*

### ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

After three successful years in Penang, the Architectural Association of London and Think City moved Streetware Southeast Asia to Kuala Lumpur. The Itinerant Research workshop from 1 to 10 July 2015 focused on specific urban regeneration challenges. The Itinerant Research workshop focused on specific urban regeneration challenges. Local architecture students and professionals were teamed up with a group of international professionals from AA to explore new ways of thinking by using innovative design methodologies combined with on-site recording and a lecture series from local and international experts.

“The Architectural Association (AA) in London has a Visiting School programme from which AA tutors collaborate with cities and universities in very different parts of the world to experiment and innovate on design methodologies.

Within this context, Think City and the AA have collaborated on AA Streetware Penang and Southeast Asia, which has applied academic research and creativity to urban regeneration challenges in Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

From the start we have integrated Malaysian and international experts to enrich the academic programme in order to formulate ideas. The aim is that these ideas can inspire the direction of work and future strategies of these cities.

From Streetware I, II, III Penang (which started in 2012) the challenges of the research briefs have increased the level of ambition. The design methodology that we test at the AA research workshop helps us to understand cities’ ‘character of place’ in order to be sensitive to the context of our propositions. Think City considered it important to expand the collaborative experiences in Penang to a larger extent and the research workshop will be exploring a different city in Southeast Asia every year. The first stop has been Kuala Lumpur in 2015.

The collaboration with Think City has worked well, especially from the academic and research points of view. This Visiting School Research Programme tries to complement academic objectives with the compromise of formulating creative and implementable ideas. In the near future I would like to continue academic research initiatives, while the research efforts could inspire Think City in their objective to shape better Malaysian cities.”

**Naiara Vegara, Director Architectural Association Semester Programme / VS Streetware Southeast Asia .**

## URBAN REGENERATION PROGRAMME FOR JOURNALISTS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ASIA NEWS NETWORK



### ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

A three-year pilot phase was launched in Malaysia in 2014, which brought together 12 local and international journalists from both print and on-line platforms to George Town, to help them develop a greater understanding of urbanisation and its challenges.

The second stage of the pilot phase, which commenced in 2015, focused on photojournalism and addressed affordable housing, a crucial challenge in any city. The photojournalism study for 2015 was the Rifle Range flats, the first affordable housing project in Penang where an estimated 10,000 people from the low-income group live.

The project will culminate in an exhibition of the works produced by the participants at the STAR Pitt St. Building, which then travelled to Butterworth, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru.



# INSTITUTIONALISATION

## THE CREATION OF A PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE

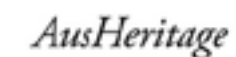
As Think City begins its operations in different regions and with the growing number of people and projects, the need for a more structured approach to project delivery and tracking was identified. The Project Management Office (PMO) was set up within the organisation to set the standards, provide governance, enforce accountability and establish discipline to manage projects in an objective and consistent manner.

The PMO is expected to help the management and operations by providing benefits in the areas of governance, visibility of project status, reusability, delivery support and also traceability."



# CORPORATE PARTNERS

In carrying out various projects, Think City works closely with the following local and international partners:







# thinkcity

REJUVENATING THE CITY TOGETHER



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