

PRESS RELEASE
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**PLACEMAKING CONFERENCE SETS OUT TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACES IN
ASEAN**

FIRST REGIONAL PLACEMAKING CONFERENCE AND AWARDS PROGRAMME TO SPUR ADOPTION OF
PLACEMAKING IN THE REGION

Kuala Lumpur, Nov 7: Think City, a Malaysian-based social purpose organisation focused on urban rejuvenation, jointly launched the first ever regional placemaking conference with UN-Habitat and other partners alongside over 250 participants from Malaysia and around the world. The programme was officiated by Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister, YBM Senator Dato' Raja Kamarul Bahrin.

Placemaker Week ASEAN, which is currently taking place within Kuala Lumpur's creative and cultural district from November 4 to 8, 2019, will allow participants to share best practices, case studies and conduct workshops to discover how placemaking can be an effective means of improving public spaces, buildings, streets and cities.

Targeted at ASEAN city makers and managers, the inaugural conference aims to promote knowledge surrounding placemaking best practices and encourage discourse on innovative solutions for the future of communities and public spaces.

Placemaking is the process of managing and designing or adapting public spaces to benefit the community's well-being and happiness as well as promote cultural identity, community bonding, inclusiveness, social equality, and drive economic success.

At the launch Hamdan Abdul Majeed, Managing Director of Think City Sdn Bhd said, "With urbanisation culminating in critical mass in the ASEAN region, the Place Agenda is increasingly becoming more important. It is a crucial part of Malaysia's future, as it is in many countries in ASEAN and it is a pivotal time for the region's collective future as we experience this urbanisation, to bring back quality of life, address the urban divide and other urgent issues."

"Placemaking has the power to play a part in achieving the New Urban Agenda in the ASEAN region, and in making our cities work with long-term, sustainable placemaking efforts.

"In this inaugural Placemaker Week ASEAN conference, the strategy is to learn from international leaders in the placemaking sphere who have excelled and brought transformation, to dive into case studies and learn from their successes and their failures," he added.

The programme included 'place games' where multi-disciplinary teams consisting of urban designers, architects and planners pitched placemaking solutions to a panel based on actual locations around downtown Kuala Lumpur, Penang and later in the week in Johor Bahru. These included the heritage core of Kuala Lumpur and explored how new developments around the area could play a role in engaging with local communities whilst capturing the character of the surrounding neighbourhood.

Culminating in a two-day plenary session on November 7 and 8, 2019, the event featured urban rejuvenation case studies centred on placemaking and talks by 32 international and regional placemakers.

Hamdan added that while placemaking had been known to bring positive outcomes there were still many challenges.

“We are here because despite the positive outcomes that placemaking brings - there are still many challenges at hand.

What do we do about the lack of urban financing? The lack of space? What is local governments are less than enthusiastic or the community is skeptical? As urban planning becomes increasingly complex, how can placemaking be even more creative and innovative? Can placemaking help with social inequality? How can we harness disruptive technology in placemaking? What can placemaking contribute to the Climate Action movement? These are but some of the challenges we hope to find solutions to together, as a network of placemaking professionals.”

Hamdan then stated that Placemaker Week ASEAN had a long-term view of developing a momentum of effective placemaking excellence in the region.

“It is our hope that this first conference will contribute to a region-wide momentum of innovative placemaking, informed by experts from around the world. It is our aim that in five years, we will be dissecting more cases of excellent ASEAN placemaking.

“We are already in talks with our neighbours about hosting the next annual conference in an ASEAN city, which we will proudly announce within the next few months,” he added.

Following on from the success of Placemaker Week ASEAN, the Placemaker Awards ASEAN was also launched with the aim of recognising the best public spaces within Southeast Asia. Co-presented by Think City and Nextdor Property Communications, the awards will help to promote the philosophy of placemaking as a means to support community building alongside the rising rate of urbanisation within Southeast Asian cities.

Executive Director of Nextdor Property Communications Sdn Bhd and co-founder of the Placemaker Awards ASEAN, Imran Clyde said “The awards allows us to have a regional benchmark for public space and we hope this will accelerate the efforts of local councils and municipalities, property developers and communities to incorporate placemaking.

“After all, most of the iconic destinations around the world are supported by vibrant, inclusive and dynamic public spaces”, said Clyde.

Set to take place in April 2020, the Placemaker Awards ASEAN is the first regional award of its kind and will provide an avenue for local councils, property developers, community leaders as well as non-governmental organisations with an avenue to showcase their respective community building efforts through the creation, design and management of public space.

Primarily focused on urban public spaces such as parks, plazas, squares and open space formats such as neighbourhood-serving spaces, the Placemaker Awards ASEAN also invites submissions for private-public spaces such as retail and commercial developments that adds

to the quality of life for surrounding communities. Submissions will also be judged on the aspects of design, programming, community value and ownership.

The award will select up to 10 finalists and one overall winner who will receive the Placemaker Of The Year Award in recognition of outstanding effort for placemaking.

Placemaker Week ASEAN is presented by Think City and UN-Habitat and co-presented by local placemaking advocate Nextdor Property Communications, European placemaking advocate STIPO and the Malaysian Institute of Planners (MIP), supported by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), British Council Malaysia, Placemaking X, Project for Public Spaces, PNB Merdeka Ventures, Lendlease and the Citi Foundation, with ISOCARP on board as official network partner and the ASEAN Post as the regional digital media partner.

For more information about Placemaker Week ASEAN, visit www.placemakerweek.com.

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About Think City

Think City is a social purpose organisation dedicated to improving the wellbeing of communities by creating more sustainable, liveable and resilient cities. Established in 2009 to spearhead urban regeneration in George Town, their impact and successes have led to expansion into Butterworth, Kuala Lumpur, and Johor Bahru. Adopting a community-first, evidence-based approach, Think City focuses on four main communities of practice: Placemaking, Resilience, Analytics and Conservation. Owing to their position as a neutral party, Think City has enabled synergies between the public and private sectors, the community and international partners. Together, they work to implement projects that enhance the heritage, art & culture, environment, economy and resilience of cities in the ASEAN region. Think City is celebrating their 10th Anniversary with a year-long programme of events and projects. For more, see thinkcity.com.my.

Issued on behalf of Think City Sdn Bhd by Nextdor Property Communications Sdn Bhd

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