

# Urban renewal to take centre stage

In-depth discussion on preservation, new segment targetting youths at upcoming conference



story by  
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URBAN regeneration will be the main theme for the upcoming International Conference on World Class Sustainable Cities (WCSC) 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, with more than 550 delegates from various fields and professions expected to attend.

It is jointly organised by the Federal Territory Real Estate and

Housing Developers' Association Malaysia (Rehda KL), Malaysian Institute of Planners (MIP) and Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM).

With Kuala Lumpur City Hall as the symposium's partner, this year's conference on Sept 29 will feature new segments such as a Youth Urban Lab and a photo competition aligned with the conference's theme.

"We have invited four speakers from the US, Spain and Sweden.

"They were selected for their achievements in leading urban regeneration in places such as New York City in the US and Malmo in Sweden," said WCSC 2015 organis-

ing committee chairman Datuk N.K. Tong.

The theme of urban regeneration also explores smart partnerships between private sector and Government in renewing decayed urban areas, and touches on issues such as preservation and gentrification.

PAM representative Sarizal Yusman Yusoff said the preservation of old buildings was not just a matter of selecting an old building and calling it a heritage site.

Pointing to nearby examples such as Penang and Singapore, Sarizal said preservation and adaptive usage was a collective effort, engaging people to determine

which areas should be preserved as heritage areas and others for redevelopment.

MIP representative Khairiah Talha explained that urban regeneration was much more sustainable and a better alternative.

"Energy consumption is also an issue; higher density cities will actually result in lower energy use," said Khairiah.

Aside from a limited-seating masterclass, the youth component of the conference is aimed at engaging young people, university students and young professionals as well as artists in their vision of what a city should be like.

"We are limiting the number of

participants to 150, and while the discussion topics for the Youth Urban Lab are not confirmed yet, they will be concurrent with WCSC 2015's main theme," said MIP youth committee head, Nurul Sheema Abdul Rahman.

The other avenue of engagement, said Tong, was the photo competition with the aim of compiling the works into a coffee table book.

WCSC, which first kicked off in 2009, has seen several ideas implemented in Kuala Lumpur through knowledge-sharing from other cities such as the Cheongyecheon River restoration in Seoul, which led to the River of Life project.

## Making PJ people-centric

By **YASMIN AHMAD KAMIL**  
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THE "Universal Design and Accessibility In The Built Environment Towards A People Centred Petaling Jaya" workshop, which drew some 300 participants, was yet another step in Petaling Jaya City Council's (MBPJ) aim to accelerate the implementation of the Universal Design Guidelines.

Experts defined the term and presented exemplary designs while NGOs pointed out weaknesses in Petaling Jaya's built environment.

Petaling Jaya councillor Sia Siew Chin said many buildings, both old and new, were still not barrier-free for the disabled.

She said some disabled-friendly facilities were superficial as they were only available on the ground floors but not on the upper floors.

"I hope that contractors and developers will look into this after this workshop, and ensure that buildings are accessible to everyone," she said.

The first of the two-day event saw speakers including the Singapore Building Construction Authority Goh Siam Imm, MIP member Ihsan Zainal Mokhtar, International Islamic University Malaysia Prof Datuk Seri Dr Asiah Abdul Rahim and PAM council member Mustapha Kamal Zulkarnain presenting their papers on topics such as "Planning a Barrier-Free City."

Dr Asiah said that not all developers adhered to the Malaysian Standards of MS1184:2014 Universal Design and Accessibility in Built Environment code of practice, citing examples such as railings that were supposed to have two levels to protect children and adults and be able to withstand certain weight.

"We know but we do not apply it," she said.

Ihsan highlighted that universal design benefitted everyone

and not limited to the disabled.

The second day focused on group discussion of issues and problems and the presentation of resolutions and proposals from these discussions.

Selangor Health, Welfare, Women and Family Affairs Committee chairman Dr Daroyah Alwi, who launched the workshop, praised the organisers, saying that such events supported the state government's initiative in achieving an accessible environment in Selangor without physical, social and economic barriers for its people.

Dr Daroyah also commended MBPJ's efforts in helping the disabled, such as providing a van transit service.

In a press statement, the council said the involvement of professionals in the workshop was to help the council establish a Barrier-Free City Masterplan that will include contents such as guidelines and strategies to create a barrier-free city by 2030.

MBPJ has embarked on its Barrier-Free City agenda since 2000, launching several ground-breaking initiatives including establishing the first ever Technical Working Committee for the Development of Disabled Facilities. This committee deliberates on the development plans by developers in the provision of facilities for the disabled.

It also acts as advisor to MBPJ in technical matters relating to the disabled and monitors implementation of projects by public and private sectors.

The initiatives have resulted in national and international recognitions including being among the top three in the "Citizen Engagement" category in the Commonwealth Association of Public Administration and Management for its "Barrier-Free City: Lifting the Urban Disability Stigma" project in 2012.



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