

## Neighbourhood Revitalization – Jury Review

Sustainable Tropical Environmental Design Exhibition 2011

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The group of artefacts represents intelligent urban designs which are intended to create a sustainable development that can become a growth catalyst to the particular surrounding. The concept posits the powering of buildings by the whole façade of community and the environment that can stimulate the existing urban forms. Norizyan Salleh's Aquatic Center operates as a new sustainable social fabric stimulating economic growth within and along the Kedah River through environmental regeneration, recycle and social reconnection as an approach. The low scale of building blends seamlessly into the overall surrounding. The upper floor terraces and balconies bring along a sense of freedom to the users. In another artefact, William Tan's Pekan China revitalization reminds us of the humble side of our design in association with the existing urban fabric. The old physical design features of the existing artefacts remain intact with additional modern features to supplement the old to ensure that the rusticity of China Town is kept unimpaired. A new market facelift will surely benefit the town as a new place of interest. The choice of earth based eco-friendly material such as timber accentuates the adaptive reuse development typology in a very contemporary manner.

Meanwhile, in another proposal, Toon Yin Yee uses the scale and rhythm of the immediate neighbourhood of Pekan Kobo, Alor Setar through a central spine communal area of shop houses that acts as a medium for a mini urban revival. The multiple accesses to the spine can be seen as a noble way to integrate all the town sectors with the new development. Perhaps, the most compelling project is Mohd Khairi's Higher Learning built environment that blends well with the natural surroundings. The buildings are elevated from the ground allowing breathing space for the social networking whilst enhancing the existence of the mangroves.

The manner in which the schemes attempt to facilitate the local community's participations leaves several issues that need to be apprehended. The physical linkages between the new proposals and the surrounding developments need further investigations. For instance, the placement of high-rise blocks along the main road which does not allow the travellers or the locals to view the interior of the proposed development alienates the proposed building and the local community. In many cases, the hybrid of nature and the built environment can be further enhanced by providing less

building footprints. Needless to say, the manner in which the users experience the spaces remains as a potent determinant to enhance their environmental and social experience. The development should be based on how the local community should react to the development. Nevertheless, the projects redefine the concept of scale; the integration of appropriate building forms and shapes to enhance the social and environmental experience in an urban environment. It is an issue that should interest the urban planners, architects or developers in attaining sustainable urban development.