NORTH SEAFRONT, GEORGE TOWN WORLD HERITAGE SITE

A case study

thinkCITY
REJUVENATING THE CITY TOGETHER

April 2021
THINK CITY A FULLY-OWNED SUBSIDIARY OF KHAZANAH NASIONAL BHD.

WE ARE AN IMPACT-FOCUSED ORGANISATION DEDICATED TO MAKING CITIES MORE LIVEABLE

We want to make cities people-friendly and resilient by being a catalyst for change in the way cities are planned, curated, developed, and celebrated.
ABOUT THINK CITY

Think City specialises in:

PLACEMAKING
- Area improvement plans / Strategic placemaking
- Public realm improvements
- Space activation
- Place management

RESILIENCE
- Nature-based climate adaptation
- Health & safety solutions
- Housing

ANALYTICS
- Baseline studies / Territorial analysis
- Urban data analytics
- Strategic plans / Planning documents

CONSERVATION & ADAPTIVE REUSE
- Area conservation / Conservation management plans
- Conservation programme coordination
- Museology / Content curation
- Adaptive reuse strategy & follow up management
ABOUT THINK CITY

Think City Institute

- Think City Institute
- It was builds on a decade of know-how, experimentation & expertise derived from our extensive knowledge networks

WHO WILL BENEFIT?
- Public sector officials
- Urban & Town Planners
- Developers
- Professionals
- Students of urban planning, architecture and heritage preservation

ACCREDITED/CERTIFIED COURSES
- Content programming, space activation, place management
- Community engagement, data collection, research methodology, data analysis, geographic information systems
- Climate adaptation, social inclusion
- Heritage management, cultural economy

OUR PARTNERS

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GEORGE TOWN WAS NAMED UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN 2008
Parts of George Town were in a state of decay and neglect. Efforts to preserve built and cultural heritage were strengthened after the UNESCO title inscription mainly driven by Government and local communities.
COMMON URBAN ISSUES

Underutilised heritage assets, disconnected from the urban fabric

Inappropriate use of Padang that resulted to water ponding and infrastructure failure

Seafront promenade with structural and design incompatibility issues

Dislodged blocks and structural issues at the Seawall

Flooding issue due to blocked drainage and ineffective infrastructure

Community park used as a flea market
Formation of the George Town Conservation & Development Corporation Sdn. Bhd. (GTCDC) between the Penang State Government, Aga Khan Trust For Culture, and Think City
Zones of Intervention as highlighted in the Special Area Plan

- North Seafront
- Armenian Neighbourhood
- Clan Jetties
- Street of Harmony
- East Seafront
- North Seafront
EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

DISCOVER

DESIGN

DEMONSTRATE

DOCUMENT & DISSEMINATE

DATA COLLECTION, BASELINE, ASSESSMENT, ENGAGEMENT

CONCEPT AND STRATEGIC PLANS, CONSERVATION PLANS, MANAGEMENT PLANS

TEST MOCK-UPS, MATERIALS EXPERIMENTATION, PILOT PROGRAMMES

CAPACITY BUILDING, KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER, DOCUMENTATION
North Seafront

Project Background

The North Seafront is a major public realm improvement initiative aimed at upgrading the George Town’s north waterfront. The area has been identified as a priority conservation area in the George Town Special Area Plan’s Annexure B. The implementation of the North Seafront demonstrates the advantages of a culture-based approach that offers sustainable well-being to the community and preserve its valuable cultural and environmental assets.

The first inception plan was approved in 2017 with funding allocated for selected projects such as the preliminary phase of Fort Cornwallis, the Dewan Sri Pinang Conservation Management Plan and the Strengthening of the Esplanade's Seawall.
The north waterfront and adjacent areas bear testimony (OUV Criterion iii & iv) to the traditional town plan of an East India Company Settlement; the fort, the parade ground, the government house, the church all clearly demonstrate the EIC plan – its values and influences (OUV Criterion ii). As the settlement grew new government buildings were introduced: the magistrate’s court, the courthouse, the town and city halls. And as the settlement grew wealthier with the addition of leisure facilities required by the Colonial officers and emerging middle class. Thus, the cricket pavilion and club, and the cast iron bandstand were erected on the town’s Esplanade whilst a promenade was created along the north waterfront, lit by cast iron streetlamps and lined with cast iron benches from Ponders End.
The North Seafront Components

- Fort Cornwallis
- City Hall
- Esplanade
- Town Hall
- Queen Victoria Clock Tower
- Dewan Sri Pinang
THE NORTH SEAFRONT PRINCIPAL PROPOSALS

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

1. Extended and improved waterfront walkway
2. New surface car parking
3. City Hall garden improved
4. Town Hall refurbished for events and cultural activities
5. Dewan Sri Pinang: public facility to be upgraded
6. Dewan Sri Pinang: entrance to proposed museum addition
7. Light Street Gardens: re-landscaping with removal of paved surfaces
8. Duke Street Food Court: proposed relocation facing new garden
9. Bandstand re-installed on the basis of historic records
10. Padang: playfield upgraded with new topsoil, grading and lighting
11. New underground parking garage: 150 cars
12. Re-instatement of old pathway and removal of existing encroachments
13. Moat and water filling reinstated
14. Navy facility relocated
15. Fort presentation and visitor facilities improved
16. Lebuh Light reorganized for pedestrians and public transport
THE NORTH SEAFRONT IN THE SPECIAL AREA PLAN

Legends
- Boundary of North Waterfront
- Category I
- Category II
- Replacement
- Infill

Significant Landmarks
1. High Court
2. Dewan Sri Pinang
3. Town Hall
4. City Hall
5. Fort Cornwallis
6. Queen Victoria Memorial Clock Tower
    - Existing Trees

Footprint
- Category I (22,029 sq.m.)
- Category II (38,441 sq.m.)
- Replacement & Infill (11,222 sq.m.)
- Built-up Space (72,562 sq.m.)
- Green & Open Space (59,440 sq.m.)
- Road Network (69,520 sq.m.)
THE NORTH SEAFRONT MASTERPLAN

1. Relocation of all 56 hawkers to new food court behind Dewan Sri Pinang, complete with toilets, suraus and centralised dish washing station with amenities upgrade
2. New seafront public park to replace old Rozong Food Court and adjoining spaces.
3. Additional public car and motorcycle parking bays to serve new food court (67 cars, 82 motorcycles).
4. Reconfigure roads with avenue of "wind-tunnel" trees to draw ocean breeze into city core.
5. Public squares flanking Dewan Sri Pinang轴线, building refurbishment and new interpretation of DSP public space
6. Restoration of Fountain Garden
7. New Centrallised Building with linkages to Town Hall, City Hall and Dewan Sri Pinang.
8. Replace Kenilworth Fence and perimeter reflective pond.
9. Strengthening of seawall and promenade improvement
10. Upgrading of Lebuh Light Avenue including reinstatement of historic fountain and restoration of Queen Victoria Clock Tower
11. Conservation of Fort Cornwallis including reinstatement of historic moat on South and Western side of Fort Cornwallis, Reinstatement of Francis Light Statue as per original axis.
12. Upgrading of Padang slope and drainage system
13. New linear food court with views towards padang. To be constructed first before relocating all existing 25 hawkers from Medan Astaka, following by construction of new toilets, suraus, additional stalls and seating behind.
14. New historical/military themed play space and general North Seafront landscape improvement

NORTHERN SEAFRONT REVISED MASTERPLAN
27 November 2020
a. North Seafront – Historical Significance

The north waterfront and adjacent areas bear testimony (OUV Criterion iii) to the traditional town plan of an East India Company Settlement; the fort, the parade ground, the government house, the church all clearly demonstrate the EIC plan – its values and influences (OUV Criterion ii). As the settlement grew new buildings of governance were introduced: the magistrate's court, the courthouse, the town hall and later city hall. And as the settlement grew wealthier, its European ‘crust’ required areas for leisure. Thus, the cricket pavilion and club, and the cast iron bandstand were erected on the town field whilst a promenade was created along the north waterfront, lit by cast iron street lamps and lined with cast iron benches from Ponders End.
Reference to old maps, photographs, postcards and existing topography to understand the urban transformations.
Preparation of the Fort Cornwallis CMP led to the identification of significant values and conservation practices.

- New granite aggregate pathway
- New granite bollards and shrub hedge
- Fountain to be repaired and cleaned up
- Remove existing concrete paving and reinstate cow grass
- All canopy trees to be retained, recovered and pruned.

Restoration of the Fountain Garden following the ICOMOS Florence Charter of 1982

Development of the Lebuh Light streetscape improvement plan based on historical documentation
EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

DISCOVER

DESIGN

DEMONSTRATE

DOCUMENT & DISSEMINATE

Plasterwork testing at Fort Cornwallis

Advising and improving the quality of construction work at the Seawall

Local craftsmen involvement and participation
EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

Workshop with government agencies, organisations and NGOs

Fort Cornwallis Young Archaeologists’ Programme

Training and demonstration by master mason Giovanni

Padang space management guidelines

1. General Information
   a. A certificate of public liability insurance covering MPF as an additional insured.
   b. No permanent posting or marking of field in any manner is permitted.
   c. No vehicle whatsoever may be driven onto Padang or into the surrounding grounds except guide dogs.
   d. No dogs may be driven into the field.
   e. No unauthorised and/or non-authorized equipment is not permitted without MPF’s approval.
   f. No peddling or solicitation of food, drink or merchandise is not permitted within MPF premises.
   g. Any planned activity must receive consent from licensing department, MPF.

2. General Rules and Regulations for Padang
   a. No scheduled public events or activities are allowed on Padang.
   b. No planned public visits or activities are allowed on Padang.
   c. No scheduled public events or activities are allowed on Padang.
   d. No scheduled public events or activities are allowed on Padang.
   e. No scheduled public events or activities are allowed on Padang.
   f. No scheduled public events or activities are allowed on Padang.
   g. No scheduled public events or activities are allowed on Padang.
Strategic Masterplanning & Management Plans

- Special Area Plan (SAP)
- Strategic Master Plan (SMP)
- Planning and Design Guide for the Public Realm
- Conservation Management Plans (CMP) under the National Heritage Act 2005
- Heritage Management Plans (HMP) under the George Town Special Area Plan (SAP) and associated dilapidation reports
The Padang (Esplanade)
The Padang before: note the flooding in the area
The Padang after the drainage improvement intervention
Strengthening & Improvement of North Seawall
STRENGTHENING & IMPROVEMENT OF THE NORTH SEAWALL

The seawall in the 1920s

Detail of the Esplanade seawall with the cast iron handrails © M. Langdon
STRENGTHENING & IMPROVEMENT OF THE NORTH SEAWALL
Progress on site

Close monitoring to ensure high quality of results

Design update: The lower passageway exposing the old wall
Lebuh Light as found
Lebuh Light as it was
Lebuh Light today
Lebuh Light as found
Lebuh Light today
Koh Seang Tat's Fountain Garden

Koh Seang Tat Fountain, 1883
Launching of the New Town Hall
Source: The Penang State Library Collection, via Visions of Penang website
Old bench found at MBPP Workshop

Inclusion of artisans to re-create the old bench

Giovanni assisted in the fountain and granite block restoration works

CM explaining the project to press during a press conference

Master mason Laurino assisted the construction of gravel walkway

Restored fountain. (small pic) – reference to a Victorian fountain in England
The Fountain Garden Today
The Fountain Garden Today
The Fountain Garden Today

Fountain Garden – Before (1)
The Fountain Garden Today
The Fountain Garden Today
Conservation & Curation of Fort Cornwallis

View of Fort Cornwallis, surrounding moat and Clock Tower, George Town (circa 1920)
NORTH SEAFRONT - CONSERVATION & CURATION OF FORT CORNWALLIS

Areas of Intervention

Conservation of Storerooms

Moat Reinstatement

Content Curation
Restoration of Storerooms

South Moat Reinstatement

West Moat Reinstatement
Fort Cornwallis Storerooms as found
Current Restoration of the Storerooms
Current Restoration of the Storerooms
Fort Cornwallis before excavation in 1990
Fort Cornwallis after archaeological excavation
Reinstatement of the South Moat
Reinstatement of the South Moat
Reinstatement of the South Moat
• **Consolidate a comprehensive, holistic plan for the area.** This should be based on an accurate understanding of the historic evolution of the area and its previous configuration through old plans, historic photographs and visual representations.

• **Do not proceed haphazardly through separate and unrelated interventions.** Rather, streamline the different actions and phases of implementation in a way that combines reinstatements, demolitions and calibrated additions to reflect the genuine values and qualities of the area.

• **Partnerships, public consultations & community engagement are essential** to ensure that information and a general consensus are captured, established and disseminated effectively towards the formulation of a comprehensive use programme and physical plan for the area.

• **Pilot initiatives, experimentation, capacity building sustained training and testing are important** to preview the final results and ensure that they are in keeping with the expected objectives of the project. Avoid rushed implementation and half-backed solutions in favour of tested solutions that achieve the intended results.

• **Traditional principles of conservation must be applied, while also exploring innovation** to respond to contemporary needs and user expectations.