

SG 2 - COMMUNITY
CONNECTOR TO PENANG
SUMARNI ISMAIL, ROSLINA SHARIF, SARIZAL YUSOF
AND TAN MEI GI

People devote time and effort to live in this world. They require basic needs to achieve a simple healthy life. However, the rising cost of living has led to an increase in urban working poverty in Malaysia. Low levels of education and lack of employment opportunities are conditions normally associated with the urban working poor. Excess resources used for human survival as well as to satisfy human desires, are largely wasted. This calls for a need to work something out to meet the increasing disparity between basic needs with the surplus wasted resources. This paper reviews the proposal, The Sungai Dua Community Connector (S2CC), which will be a place that connects the urban working poor community with the public. It is a place to achieve the needs of urban working poor and residents around that area, in terms of economy, social and healthy lifestyle. This community connector provides a comfortable space for the urban working poor and upgrades them through different opportunities, especially education.

Keywords: Urban working poor, low-income residents, excess resources, food waste, USM, Penang, skills, social interaction

Introduction

Being multidimensional, urban working poverty is an urgent issue to that need to be dealt with in city areas in Malaysia as our country grows (Klugman, 2011). The cost of living rises as our country urbanizes and the number of urban working poor also increases (Zainal, 2012). Penang, a highly industrialized state could probably have the higher number of urban poor, although the incidence of poverty in Penang is low (Abdul Gapor et al., 2007). This is mainly because more than 85% of its population lives in urban areas and with the increasing size of urban areas and urban modernization, the people who are living at the surrounding area, who obtained low household income would actually be exposed to urban poverty (Nazirah, 2014). It shows that there is a need in coping up this issue before it gets more serious.

According to the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) from Abdul Gapor et al. (2007), Penang has a median household income of RM3,162, which is about RM330 higher than the country's RM2,830. The households that received RM 2,108 or below for their monthly income would be considered as poor or living in a low income group in Penang (Penang Monthly, 2012).

Analysis is done between the case studies with similar typology in order to extract the essence of information to be used for this project. There are three types of case studies that were discussed, which are community centre, riverside walk, and food bank. The features of each case study and similarities to the proposed project would be analysed in a table form for easy and precise information. The case studies are examples from local and international, which includes Community Centre Herstedlund, Surry Hills Library and Community Centre, Sra Pou Vocational School, Cheonggyecheon Stream, PJ City Food Bank, The Greater Boston Food Bank, and Houston Food Bank.

Background Study

The increasing rate of Malaysian urbanization is expected to be exceeding 70% by 2020 (Siong, 2008), causing the rise of living cost an increase in urban working poverty in Malaysia (Zainal et al., 2012). Urban working poor is not the hard core poor but the

working residents staying at urban area that are facing poverty issues. The income they earned is not enough or stable to cover their expenses to live simple healthy life. Most of the people might not be aware of this slowly arising urban working poor issue (Figure 1). At the same time, the excess resources in Penang, especially food waste issue is huge and increasing. The disparities need of urban working poor and excess resources is getting noticeable. With the rapid urbanization along with a growing population in our country, the issue of urban working poor, which is multidimensional, would be getting serious and need more attention if it is not being coped correctly.

The design objectives for the community connector is to provide sustenance to help meeting basic needs to develop life skills and to allow urban working poor better engagement with the surrounding. It also to provide a channel for interaction for the residents' community, and to raise awareness in reducing needs and to reduce surplus and wastage.

The Sungai Dua Community Connector (S2CC) will be a place that connects the urban working poor community with the public. It is a place to achieve the needs of urban working poor and residents around that area, in terms of economy, social and healthy lifestyle. This community connector will provide a comfortable space in helping urban working poor and upgrading them through different opportunities, especially education. To cater the objectives of providing socializing space, learning space and access to affordable healthy food, this community connector project will be a combination of three components, as shown in Figure 2



Figure 2: Three main functional spaces to be provided in this project (Source: Mei Gi, 2015)

The site selected for this design project is located at Jalan Sungai Dua, Penang, which is the eastern central part of Penang Island. The name Sungai Dua is due to the area is sandwiched between two Dua rivers. Bordered by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) at the north, the selected site is surrounded by the dense low-cost residential area at the south and sited along the commercial shop lots at the sides and front (Figure 3.)

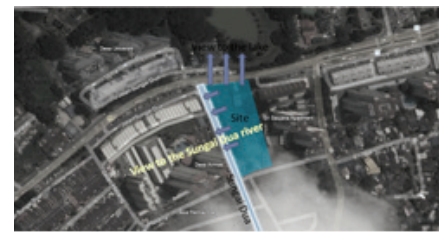


Figure 3: View from the selected site (left) and Water bodies at the selected proposal site (right) (Source: Mei Gi, 2015)

Design Process

Sungai Dua Community Connector (S2CC) is functioning as connector to the surrounding community at the proposed site, which is the urban working poor community and USM students' community. The three functional components, community centre, training centre and food bank is being placed together. With the community centre located nearest to the target users, the urban working poor, the entrance is located at the most convenient direction. The idea is also to strategize the pedestrian movement and building typology surrounding the site. Site analysis, site response, and zoning are part of the initial design stage in the design development process.

Initially, the idea is to reinforce the identity of Sungai Dua. A make-over of the landscape and access to Sungai Dua is characterized as a wavy seating beside the stream (Figure 4).

The first idea (Scenario 1) was to have a landscape park at the centre of the site, surrounded by the building components. This will allow users from different building components face one com-

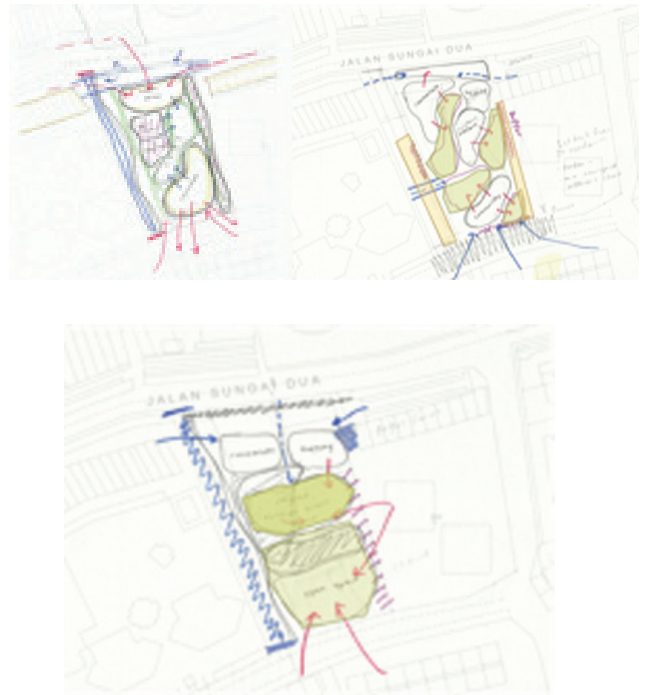


Figure 4: Sketches of Scenario 1 (left), 2 (middle) and 3 (right) (Source: Mei Gi, 2015)

mon gathering space and have integrated activities together. In Scenario 2, the landscape gathering park is divided into smaller separate parks to cater for different activities. The building components are separated by smaller parks, in such that everyone will have their own park, buffering one component and another. Implementing the same design strategies and experimenting with different arrangements to see the relationship of spaces (Figure 5).

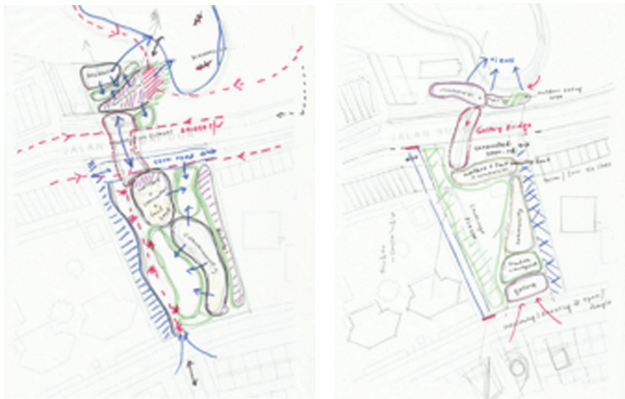


Figure 5: Sketches of improved spatial planning across the road (Source: Mei Gi, 2015)

By taking an advantage of the routine pedestrian pathway taken by the students inside the USM campus to Jalan Sungai Dua, the spatial planning forms a circulation going across the roads. The training centre is being expanded to the opposite site of the street, into USM campus. This idea breaks the barrier between USM campus and the public, allowing more exploration into the site and view into USM campus. Also, it is narrowing the gap between urban working poor community, the public, the students, and offering chances to both community to explore the spaces used, connecting them both physically and psychologically. The building has taken an advantage of the whole lake view, attracting attention and interest towards the proposed building.

Design Solution

Taking advantage of the location of the site, the entrance to the food bank component and training centre is located beside the main road. Being an educational building component, the training centre is situated inside the USM campus. The commercial incubator shop lots are located below the training centre, extending from the same commercial spaces, beside the proposed building, lining and facing to the Jalan

Sungai Dua. The grocery store and food bank are located along the same stretch of shop lots, connecting the same functional components together from the neighbouring site, allowing continuous shopping environment to the users that are passing by (Figure 6)



Figure 6: Section X (Source: Mei Gi, 2015)

The layout design and spatial arrangement are always referring back to the six main objectives, where the users are the most important. The whole layout is to serve the users with comfortable usage and sense of exploration from one space to another. Building facades that are facing East-West direction should not be avoided altogether. Instead, opening up some portion to receive sunlight, can invite the view of evening's sun set into the building. Natural daylighting is being applied into different spaces such as skylight and rotatable vertical louvers. Also, the rotatable vertical lou-

vers help in allowing natural cross ventilation and adjusting privacy level of the interior spaces (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Skylight details (left), Rotatable vertical louvers (middle), cross ventilation of building spaces (right) (Source: Mei Gi, 2015)



Figure 8: Landscape park enhancing the identity of Sungai Dua (Source: Mei Gi, 2015)

References

- Abdul Gapor, Salfarina., Zulkarnain A Hatta, Jamaluddin Sulaiman, Suriati Ghazali, Narimah Samat, Noreha Hashim, Zakaria Bahari, Nor Malina Malek, Azlinda Azman, Saidatulakmal Mohd, Azeem Fazwan Ahmad Farouk. (2007) Kajian Sosioekonomi Bumiputera Pulau Pinang, Unit Perancang Ekonomi Pulau Pinang.
- Consumer Association of Penang. (2013). Think. Eat. Save: Avoid food wastage. Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://www.consumer.org.my/index.php/food/security/658-think-eat-save-avoid-food-wastage>
- Jasmine, A. (2007). Urban poverty in Malaysia: Emerging tensions. Retrieved from: <http://www.yss98.com/index.php>
- Klugman, J. (2011). Overview. Retrieved September 22, 2014, from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/3836061205334112622/5301_overview.pdf
- Kok, J. K., Goh, L. Y., & Gan, C. C. (2014). Meaningful life and happiness: Perspective from Malaysian Youth. The Social Science Journal, Retrieved from http://ezproxy.upm.edu.my:2058/S0362331914001256/1-s2.0-S0362331914001256-main.pdf?_tid=d73c5648-9068-11e4-8136-00000aab0f26&acdnat=1419974249_7b8a2a869344c8bb7175afda792bbb0a.
- Narimah Samat, Yasin Abdalla Eltayeb Elhadary, Fatimah Mahdi Hijles, Suriati Ghazali & Morshidi Sirat (2012). Poverty and Deprivation: Using Geographic Information System in Evaluating The Accessibility of Households to Food Retailers in Penang State, Malaysia. Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 7(2), 328- 342. Retrieved from <http://journalarticle.ukm.my/5639/1/narimah012.pdf>.
- Nazirah Md. Tarmizi, Noorita Shahrman, Ismail Maarof and Abd Manan Samad (2014). A Concept of Urban Poverty Area Identification Using Spatial Correlation

Studies on High Resolution Satellite Imager. FIG Congress 2014, 1-13. Retrieved from http://www.fig.net/pub/fig2014/papers/ts05g/TS05G_md_tarmizi_shahriman_et_al_6843.pdf.

Penang Monthly. (2012). The Working Poor. Retrieved September 22, 2014, from <http://penangmonthly.com/the-working-poor/>

Pramanik, A. H. (2008). *Poverty with Many Faces: A Case Study of Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: IIUM Press.

Siong, H. C. (2008). Urban Governance and Rapid Urbanization Issues in Malaysia. *Jurnal Alam Bina*, 13(4), 4. Retrieved from <http://www.epublication.fab.utm.my/293/1/JAB2008Jld13No4AR01.pdf>.

The Star. (2013). CAP: 355,000kg of food goes to waste daily in Penang. Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2013/06/04/CAP-355000kg-of-food-goes-to-waste-daily-in-Penang/>

The Star. (2013). Pitch in and make a difference. Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Community/2013/08/13/Pitch-in-and-make-a-difference-Seeking-more-donations-and-support-for-MealsonWheels-programme/>

Zainal, N. R., Kaur, G., Ahmad, Nor Aisah, & Khalili, J. M. (2012). Housing Conditions and Quality of Life of the Urban Poor in Malaysia. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 50, 827-838.