

## FEATURE



BY NATALIE KHOO

# PJKita – a community space for the young

For many of our youths, the shopping malls of the Klang Valley are great places to hang out, but their range of retail enticements can deplete one's resources rather rapidly. So, where else can they expend all that energy and have fun with friends or family?

In a transformational move, a new public space in Kelana Jaya, Petaling Jaya, Selangor is being created as a new go-to place for the community, especially the youths. Located along Jalan SS7/15, the project occupies 4.3 acres and is carried out under PJKita, an initiative by the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ). The project aims to engage and bring the community together to learn about their ideas and aspirations in achieving a sustainable, creative and community-driven city.

"What we are trying to get off the ground is a community project by MBPJ and this is the genesis of it. It is to be a new youth centre where part of its aim is to stimulate youth entrepreneurship," says Dr Tan Loke Mun, principal of DrTan LM Architect, the lead architect for the project.

The components of the PJKita community centre include a shopping street zone, a youth and children zone, offices, a food hall and market section, skateboard area and an inclusive sports zone. The project team is also looking to create the shopping street using shipping containers where retail start-ups can rent for a very low price for their boutique businesses.

## A piece of street art, literally

The first part of the PJKita project, phase 1A was completed on Oct 28 with the installation of a 122m long public street art, in time for PJ Fair 2017 to be held on Nov 4 and 5. The fair will also mark the beginning of construction works for the community-oriented shoplots at the shopping street, the community centre and the new MBPJ office in the area.

PJ Fair 2017 is a public event to celebrate the diversity of PJ and bring city folk together through a series of music, arts and culture programmes. Among the activities that will be held during the event include a fireworks show, a concert by local artistes, cultural performances, a flea market, HBO movie viewing and others.

components. I think what is truly unique about this project is that this is a public project that is facilitated by the private sector,



An artist's impression of PJKita.

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Loke Mun: This project is more than a corporate social responsibility project as it involves the community.

along with the community," says Loke Mun.

"The public street art is the first public attraction so, it works as a draw to pull the crowd in to enjoy the other components of the community centre. Upon entering, there is the shopping street which will be a gathering space such as the ones you see in Harajuku, Japan, where young people can stroll and shop. We'll have the shipping containers at the shopping street. Then, there is the children's zone, which will be a secured area with a toy library and little rustic mud huts for the children to play in," Loke Mun elaborates.

The street art project is headed by Pamescenes in the neighbourhood.

"We have to work with five primary colours — green, red, white, yellow and black

— for the painting of the street and wall murals. We are also using a black outline as it is the best way to emphasise the patterns. The murals [on the road] will flow up to the wall and the wall will eventually show the tectonic version of the whole but simplified directory of PJKita," shares Pamela.

## Community activation

The project also involves EPIC Communities as the community mobiliser and for space activation, Sunway Construction for the construction works, artist Lisa Foo for the entrance tree art installation and Nippon Paint Malaysia as the street and wall mural paint the crusher run and SQ Engineering for the manpower.

"Every weekend since the beginning of October, members of the public have come together to paint the road and do some bricklaying. We wanted people from all age groups and all walks of life to participate in the process. EPIC Communities provided the training and the rest was all hard work.

"Over the period of one month, we have seen a major transformation taking place. Last month, it was all empty tarmac and today, the mural has been completed," Loke Mun enthuses, adding that some of the volunteers were passers-by who were intrigued when they saw the activity that was going on.

To Loke Mun, this is more than a corporate social responsibility project as it involves the community.

"When the community gets activated and is involved, you get happier people," he says. "When it comes to community initiatives, it is interesting because we don't know what will happen. In the end, it somehow always gets done and ready. When you deal with a community, everyone gives, and they will always give more than what is asked for. That is the beauty of it," Loke Mun concludes.



Volunteers working with recycled items.



Volunteers painting the 122m-long public street.