

Module Two Experiential Project Learning

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Reimagining Kuala Lumpur: World's First Botanical City

Urban development has significantly reshaped cities globally, including those in Malaysia, often at the expense of natural ecosystems. Rapid expansion and infrastructure prioritisation have reshaped landscapes leading to the decline of native flora and fauna. This loss of biodiversity destabilises local ecosystems and adversely affects the health and well-being of urban communities. As cities grow denser, green spaces give way to concrete, exacerbating climate risks such as flash floods, air pollution and urban heat islands.

The Botanical City concept offers a transformative approach by reimagining urban areas as living ecosystems where nature is actively restored and integrated into city life. Rather than viewing nature and urbanisation as opposing forces, this approach envisions a city that grows in harmony with its natural environment. It moves beyond aesthetic green spaces to design urban areas that support ecological functions, strengthen natural habitats, and establish self-sustaining ecosystems. This requires a fundamental shift from conventional development that prioritises tall buildings and paved roads, to a more human-centric and ecologically balanced model.

Beyond biodiversity, the Botanical City model delivers broader environmental, social, and economic benefits. It regulates the microclimate by reducing urban heat island effects, mitigates flooding through improved rainwater absorption, and enhances air quality by filtering pollutants. Shaded walkways and green spaces promote outdoor activity, enabling people to lead healthier lifestyles while enhancing their physical and mental well-being. Beyond economic benefits, these spaces enrich communities by increasing the liveability and resilience of urban areas—offering ecological and social value. They create job opportunities in urban forestry, eco-tourism, and green infrastructure while also strengthening food security through urban agriculture.

Why Kuala Lumpur? Why Now?

Kuala Lumpur is at a critical juncture in its urban development. Rapid expansion has made it one of the fastest-growing cities in Southeast Asia, yet this growth has come at a cost. Over 100% increase in urban sprawl over the last two decades has led to rising temperatures, increased air pollution, and flash floods.

By piloting the Botanical City concept in Kuala Lumpur, this project aims to create a scalable model adaptable to cities across Malaysia, transforming urban areas into biodiversity-rich, climate-resilient, and people-centered ecosystems. This approach positions Malaysia as a global pioneer in urban innovation and environmental stewardship, demonstrating how cities can thrive in harmony with nature for generations to come.

MS&B participants will develop a vision and implementation framework for a Botanical City, create actionable plans, establish governance structures for multi-stakeholder collaboration, and define metrics to measure biodiversity gains, climate resilience, and community benefits.

The Botanical City Vision

As part of the experiential learning module, participants will conduct site visits and stakeholder interviews to reimagine key features that would transform Kuala Lumpur into the world's first Botanical City. Areas of consideration include:

- 1

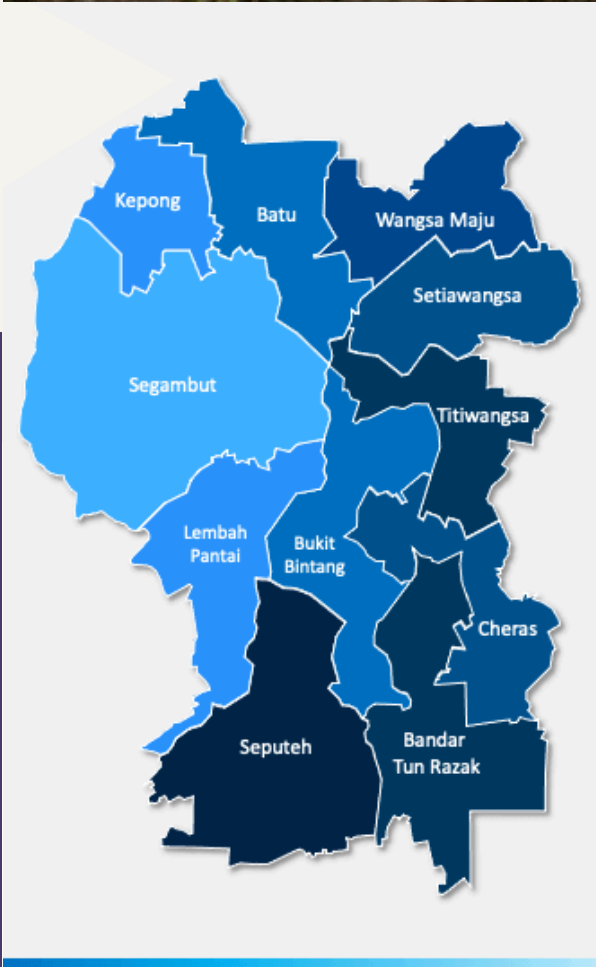
Interconnected & Accessible Green Spaces
A network of botanical corridors across the Klang Valley ensures seamless, shaded walkways connecting neighbourhoods, parks, riverbanks, and natural reserves—facilitating both human mobility and wildlife movement. By repurposing underutilised areas into public green spaces, every citizen has access to greenery within five minutes of their home, making nature a shared and equitable resource across all socioeconomic levels.
- 2

Native Species Cultivation
Focusing on native Malaysian flora rather than ornamental plants, creating a living showcase of the country's botanical heritage while supporting local ecosystems. This approach transforms urban greenery from an aesthetic afterthought into a functional ecological tool.
- 3

Net Zero Policy
Implementing strict protocols that prevent further developments resulting in a net loss of nature or reduction in green spaces, using geographic information system technology to monitor and manage urban greenery.
- 4

Integrated Water Resource Management
Developing efficient water conservation strategies by utilising vegetation along riverbanks to prevent erosion, absorb runoff, and regulate water flow.
- 5

Community Stewardship
Transforming residents into "citizen-stewards" of the Botanical City, fostering pride and ownership through involvement in maintaining and enhancing urban nature.



What Participants Will Learn

- Learn how to cross-fertilise ideas in a diverse group, leveraging varied perspectives to spark creative solutions.
- Understand the synergy of co-creation, and implement these principles in your organisation to unlock fresh insights and drive innovative strategies.
- Gain frontline insights into 21st-century challenges, trends, and innovations that can be applied to your industry, ensuring your organisation remains resilient, adaptable, and future-proof.