



Malaysia Architectural Journal

Journal homepage:
<https://majournal.my/index.php/maj>
e-ISSN : 2716-6139



The Iconic Of River Of Life

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 30 April 2024
Received in revised form
Accepted: 15 October 2024
Available online: 23 June 2025

Keywords:

Iconic; Heritage; River of Life

ABSTRACT

Iconic projects, such as the River of Life, Pintasan Saloma, Kuala Lumpur Gantry, Urban Place Making, Heritage Walk, Urban Back Lane, Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad, and KL Street Beatification, are significant construction or development endeavours with symbolic significance, extraordinary design, innovation, or cultural impact. These projects, often serving as landmarks or representations of a city, region, or concept, are notable for their architectural uniqueness, historical importance, or ability to capture public attention and admiration. Therefore, efficient and persistent maintenance plans are crucial. Iconic projects in big cities contribute to the country's financial, political, and cultural success. Facility management involves a team of professionals, including architects, civil engineers, and quantity surveyors, and should incorporate thorough planning into daily building operation. The Klang riverfront, a significant natural treasure in Greater Kuala Lumpur, is undergoing restoration to become a major city. The restoration aims to educate people and instill a sense of ownership in the city while preserving its heritage. The goal of Kuala Lumpur's waterfront renovation is to maintain its history while also redefining this desirable area. The River of Life will weave together diverse waterfront areas, strengthening the identity of the area as the historical, physical, and social entities of Kuala Lumpur. The river is home to historical structures such as Merdeka Square, and Masjid Jamek, symbolizing the initiation of Kuala Lumpur. The River of Life offers stunning views of the City Center, making it the most unique KL river corridor. The restoration has beautified the river, reinvigorating its social and cultural legacy, ecology, and environmental consciousness. The project has received numerous accolades, including the 2014 ISOCARP Awards, the 2015 Malaysia Landscape Architecture Awards, the 2015 Singapore Landscape Architecture Awards, and the 2021 LivCOM Awards in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

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1. Introduction

The Klang riverfront represents a significant yet underutilized natural asset within the Greater Kuala Lumpur / Klang Valley region. The Klang River possesses all the essential attributes to transform into an iconic riverfront that could become a central element of daily life for residents. The revitalization of this riverfront has the potential to position Kuala Lumpur among the world's leading cities with vibrant and pristine waterfronts. Consequently, the River of Life Entry Point Project was designated within the Greater Kuala Lumpur / Klang Valley National Key Economic Area as part of the Economic Transformation Programme. Tourism plays a crucial role in the prominence of iconic architecture in global cities, as it boosts economic growth, enhances place marketing, and strengthens national identities. Iconic buildings and urban projects often reflect the interests of the global capitalist elite, using architecture to reinforce their commercial and ideological power. Despite the focus on creating visually striking and symbolic buildings, there is a growing emphasis on sustainability in iconic architecture. Many modern landmarks, while not initially designed with sustainability as a primary goal, are recognized for their eco-friendly features and contribute to the broader movement toward environmental consciousness. Overall, cities increasingly use iconic structures to shape their image, attract tourism, and drive cultural and economic activity. Iconicity in architecture involves blending aesthetic appeal with functional and symbolic elements, often incorporating sustainability to meet contemporary values and expectations.

1.1 Iconic Project City Hall Kuala Lumpur

The term "icon" originally referred to an image or representation, but in the context of architecture and urban design, it signifies buildings or spaces of notable aesthetic, symbolic, and cultural importance. These iconic structures are not confined to specific locations but are influenced by the intersection of power, meaning, aesthetics, and taste. The City Hall of Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) is essential in overseeing and maintaining various projects aimed at the city's iconic development. These initiatives, whether funded by the Federal Territory ministry or through self-financing, are designed to enhance Kuala Lumpur's landscape and cultural significance.

Among the most significant projects is the "River of Life," which focuses on revitalizing and preserving the city's waterways. Another important project is the Saloma Link, a bridge that connects key areas of Kuala Lumpur seamlessly.

These iconic landmarks are crucial to the city's identity and public perception. By examining each project more closely, we can reveal the unique features and contributions that integrate them into Kuala Lumpur's cultural and architectural fabric. Prominent projects include the River of Life, Saloma Link, Kampung Baru Gantry, and others.

2. Methodology

Initially, commence with a literature review to examine the characteristic or identity water front as a framework for understanding urban challenges. Grounded in identity theory, the eight objective design proposals of River of Life were analyzed. While River of Life comprises eight distinct objectives executed by designers in different locations, they all share a common goal: the restoration of urban waterfront. In the literature review of identity, of waterfront we aimed to extract common strategies prevalent in all these projects. Subsequently, the River of life waterfront in Kuala Lumpur, was analyzed using the analytical framework. The spatial scope covers 10,7 km of Gombak and Klang River waterfront space within the boundaries of central business district of Kuala Lumpur. A direction for a more iconic redevelopment of the River of Life waterfront is proposed based on the early planning. Figure 1 is a flow diagram of this study.

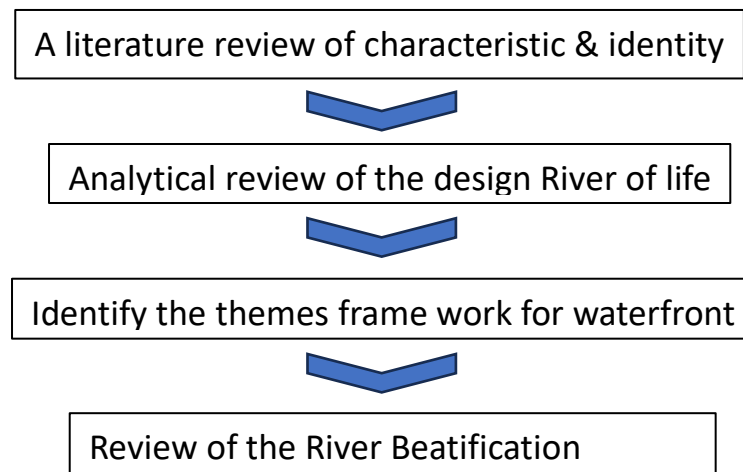


Fig. 1 Flow of Study

3. Literature Review

3.1 What is Water Front?

The definition of "waterfront" is "the area of a town or city next to a river, lake, harbour, or other body of water," according the Oxford American Dictionary of Current English. On the other hand, "the urban area in direct contact with water" is what (Moretti, 2008) [1] defines as the "waterfront." According to (Timur, 2013) [2], the word "waterfront" describes the region where land and water converge, producing a dynamic location where these two elements interact. The seven categories of waterfronts identified by (Reifeiss, 1995) [3] are: employment-focused, mixed-use, cultural, environmental, historical, and residential.

3.2 Features of Water Front

The concepts of urban form, urban space, and legibility must be thoroughly examined in order to fully analyse the physical aspects of a historic shoreline (Shamsuddin et al., 2013) [4]. An organised setting gives it a distinct and clear picture, which adds to its identity (Lynch, 1960) [5]. (Lynch, 1960) added that the distinguishes between five basic components that make up urban structure. Urban structure, accessibility, mobility and circulation, signage, and parking are all components of legibility (Shamsuddin et al., 2013) [4]. Morphological studies may be used to evaluate urban form, which is related to the built environment and block patterns found in cities (Shamsuddin S, 2011) [6]. Furthermore, a town's grain and texture are assessed by the massing and articulation of buildings, which are a part of urban form. A unique townscape is enhanced by fine-grain historic structures, whereas coarse-grain modern constructions can impede the immediate perception of unique elements (Shamsuddin S, 1997) [7]. For urban space to be effectively perceived, it must be both legible and distinct. According to (Shamsuddin et al., 2013) [4] a further elucidate that the physical characteristics of a waterfront encompass features such as water quality, access to the water body, edge treatment, building massing and articulation, heritage structures, open spaces, and public.

3.3 Characteristics Forming Historic Waterfronts' Identity

According to (Relph, 1997) [8], a place's physical characteristics, the activities that take place there, and the meanings or symbols that people identify with it are the three main components that combine to form its identity.

3.4 The Waterfront's Physical Features

In order to fully understand what makes a historic waterfront unique, we must examine its urban form, how its spaces are organised, and how easily people can navigate it. (Lynch, 1960) [5] breaks down urban structure into five main elements, while legibility—the ease with which a place is understood and navigated—depends on factors like how the space is structured, how accessible it is, how people move through it, and even the parking and signage. The pattern of buildings that make up the city is what matters most, and we can better understand it by closely examining its layout. The finer points of a town's texture, such as the arrangement of buildings and their architectural features, are also included in this form. A town's distinctive character comes from its heritage buildings, which have fine grain. However, larger, more contemporary constructions can occasionally obscure views of these significant elements. A city's spaces must also be easily navigable and possess a unique personality. According to (Shuhana et al. 2013) [4], the physical attributes of the waterfront encompass a variety of elements, such as the quality of the water, accessibility to the water, treatment of the edges, building mass and details, historical sites, open spaces, and public art.

3.5 Observable Activities of the Waterfront

It was highlighted by (Rozaly et al., 2017) [9] that a place's identity is greatly shaped by the activities and interactions of its inhabitants. Whether we're relaxing by the water or taking a stroll while taking in the scenery, our actions always mirror our reactions to our environment. A place's atmosphere is influenced by both outside and inside activity. What we see and experience in these areas is largely determined by the kinds of activities individuals engage in and the places they do them.

3.6 Significance & Connection with the Waterfront

Many factors contribute to the meaning we assign to a place, making it special or memorable, including familiarity, historical importance, nostalgic recollections, a sense of connection, distinctive features, individual preferences, and connections that develop with time. A location must have a unique identity and a well-defined structure in order to have great symbolic significance. According to (Lynch, 1960) [5], a cozy space evokes good emotions and memories. Deep significance is produced when comfort, symbolism, and the memories associated with historical locations come together. Everything from sitting to shade to well-lit areas to universally appealing designs adds to comfort.

3.7 Characteristic of water front

(Roberts, 2000) [10] characterizes urban regeneration as a comprehensive and integrated strategy aimed at addressing urban challenges, with the ultimate goal of fostering sustained improvement. (Marshal, 2001) [11] posits that the extension of the new city should be connected to the historic city center, utilizing the water body as a means to bridge the past and present. The waterfront regeneration process, as outlined, seeks to revitalize the attributes enumerated in Table 1 through the practice of placemaking. (Relph, 1997) [8] argues that placemaking involves the application of the theory of place in the design of public spaces. (Najafi and Syarif, 2012) [12] identify physical features, activities, and meanings as the primary components of placemaking. (Rodwell, 2008) [13] further asserts that a historically contextualized waterfront is instrumental in reinforcing the identity of the city. Hence the waterfront regeneration has to be contextual

4. Results

4.1 The River of life Kuala Lumpur

The initiative to beautify the riverbanks aims to revitalize the Klang and Gombak Rivers while enhancing the area's economic competitiveness. Spanning 10.7 kilometers from Taman Tasik Titiwangsa in the north to Midvalley in the south, the project supports recreational activities such as walking, jogging, cycling, and picnicking along the Klang and Gombak Rivers. Improvements have been made to the footpath along the riverbank between Midvalley and the river confluence at Masjid Jamek, creating a comfortable, continuous route. A series of guiding lights has been installed along the river to assist pedestrians at night. Additionally, four guide galleries have been established as information centers, complemented by waqf huts where visitors can relax and enjoy the scenery. Various flowers and plants have been strategically planted to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the riverbanks.

Adjacent areas near the riverbanks are being developed to unlock their economic potential. To ensure pedestrian accessibility, pathways have been widened or repaved, and street furniture has been arranged systematically to avoid obstructing pedestrian movement. Road bends at intersections have been leveled to facilitate smoother pedestrian flow. Tactile paving has been incorporated along the walkways to guide visually impaired individuals. The road level connecting these routes has been elevated and equipped with bollards to prioritize pedestrian safety. A directional signage system has been installed, and bike paths have been clearly marked. Given the close historical ties of these areas to Kuala Lumpur, the heritage trails that complement the riverside route have been redesigned to allow the public to appreciate the remaining historic buildings and cultural heritage, thus reconnecting the community with the river. Figure 2 is the objective of the project.

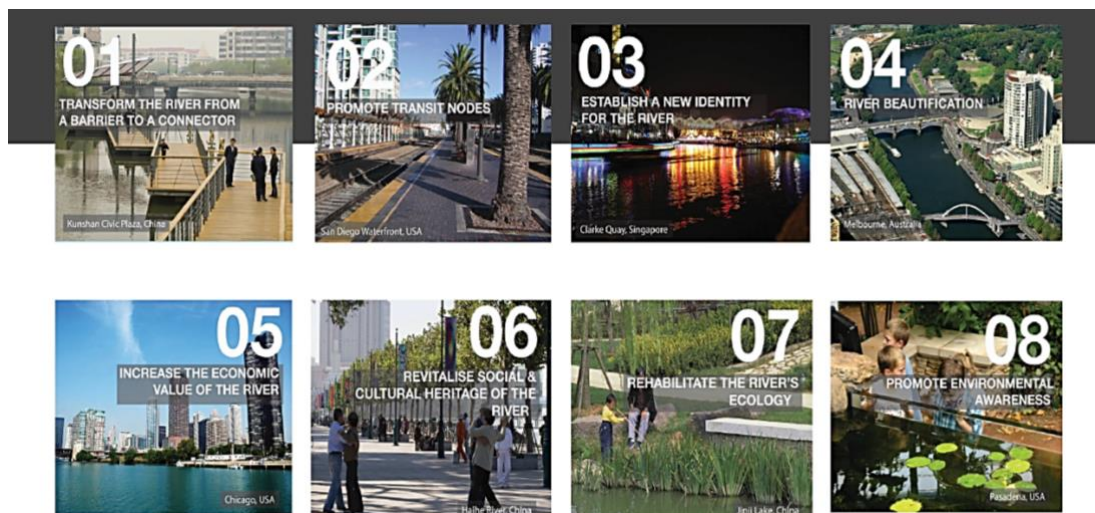


Fig. 2. Objective of the Project.

Great waterfronts have the power to boost the energy and economy of a city. They are valuable spaces that when planned successfully, become a gift from the city to the public. Waterfronts can become a string of destinations; a vital place for city residents and tourists to shop, work and gather.

The River of Life will be community-driven, ensuring that local residents are actively involved in its development and maintenance. It will be visionary, incorporating forward-thinking design and planning strategies. The project will be culturally aware, respecting and integrating the rich cultural heritage of the surrounding area. It will be context-sensitive, tailored to fit the unique characteristics and needs of the local environment. The River of Life will also be climate-sensitive, taking into account

the impacts of climate change and promoting sustainability. The area will be designed to be safe, providing a secure environment for all users. It will be universally accessible, ensuring that people of all abilities can enjoy the space. Finally, the River of Life will be well-connected, with efficient links to the surrounding neighbourhoods and transportation networks. The Frameworks of this project can be visualize as diagrammed in Figure 3.











Fig. 3. Framework of Project





4.2 River of Life Precinct 7

The Klang Riverfront in Greater Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley is a historically significant yet underutilized natural asset. It played a crucial role in the development of Kuala Lumpur since the 19th century due to mining and rubber plantation activities. The "River of Life" project aims to revitalize this riverside, transforming it into a major global city attraction while preserving its heritage. The initiative seeks to connect various waterfront areas, enhance the historical and social identity of Kuala Lumpur, and make the riverfront more visually appealing and environmentally conscious. River of life has stunning views of the City Center from almost every angle, making it the most unique KL river corridor, and it should be "instagrammable" enough to get views on social media as free advertising. River of Life has beautified the river to reinvigorate the area's social and cultural legacy, ecology, and environmental consciousness, turning it from a barrier to a link that promotes transit hubs and a sustainable urban environment.

Key landmarks along the river, such as Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad, Merdeka Square, and Masjid Jamek, highlight Kuala Lumpur's historical and architectural significance. The project includes beautifying the river, incorporating features like guiding galleries, pedestrian bridges, and water elements, all strategically placed to enhance the area's appeal. Effective management and maintenance of these facilities are crucial for their long-term success. These buildings not only act as landmarks but also provide evidence of the colonial background of the city (Dunn, 2011) [14]. In addition to the riverfront revitalization, Kuala Lumpur's heritage is celebrated through various sites including colonial buildings, traditional Malay areas like Kampung Baru, Little India in Brickfields, and the Sin Sze Si Ya Temple, which is the city's oldest Taoist temple. These sites collectively represent the city's diverse cultural and historical narrative.

Table 1
Before and After Results

No.	Before	After
1		
	The new pedestrian bridge under the beautification works of River of Life project, reduces the walking distance from Dataran Merdeka to Masjid Jamek. A lush landscape was introduced to create a more shaded and cooling environment. (ROL Precinct 7 Package)	
2		
	An extended boardwalk was introduced to bring the public closer to the river while enjoying the beautiful scenery along the riverfront. (ROL Precinct 7 Package)	
3		
	With water features and adequate seating, people get to enjoy and appreciate the beauty of the historic colonial Sultan Abdul Samad building. (ROL Precinct 7 Package)	
4		
	Preserving colonial heritage and landmark by bringing people closer. (ROL Precinct 7 Package)	

5	
	<p>Protecting and safeguard cultural and natural heritage. Big water bodies (natural and newly created) contributes to reduction of urban heat island. (ROL Precinct 7 Package)</p>
6	
	<p>The space is equipped with several building usage such as information Centre, café dan viewing tower to serve the activity around the area.</p>
7	
	<p>The open space was upgraded and more shady trees were planted. An annex building was built to serve as a gallery displaying information on the history of the mosque. (ROL Precinct 7 Package)</p>
8	
	<p>Turn the space from parking area to be more friendly area for walking and shaded tree and cooling environment.</p>

5.0 Discussion

The study explores how waterfronts are more than just physical spaces—they're where nature and urban life meet, shaping the identity of a community. It delves into how these areas blend human activity, design, and history, making them places where people connect with both the environment and their heritage. Themes like accessibility, comfort, and emotional significance highlight the importance of creating waterfronts that people can easily navigate and feel attached to. The study emphasizes that waterfronts should be developed thoughtfully, preserving their historical and cultural value while ensuring they remain vibrant, meaningful places for the community to enjoy.

Table 2 shows how the significance factors of waterfronts support the goals of transforming, beautifying, and revitalizing a river.

Table 2
Identifying Thematical Framework for Waterfront

ROL		Literature Study		
Themes Frame Work ROL	ROL Goals & Objective	Significance Themes	Descriptions	Key Reference
Connect	Transform the River from a Barrier to a Connector	Land and Water Connection & Urban Form and Structure	Land and Water Connection: The waterfront naturally blends land and water, turning it into a space for interaction rather than division.	Trimur (2013), Shamsuddin et al. (2013)
	Promote Transit Nodes	Accessibility and Mobility & Legibility	Accessibility and Usability: Effective layout and mobility around the waterfront make it easier to create transport hubs and increase accessibility.	Shamsuddin et al. (2013), Lynch (1960)
Activate	Establish a New Identity for the River	Historical and Cultural Identity & Urban Form	History and Culture: Reviving historical and cultural elements helps create a new, meaningful identity for the river.	Relph (1976), Shuhana et al. (2013)
	River Beautification	Urban Layout & Building Articulation	Urban Layout: Designing attractive buildings and spaces enhances the aesthetic value and beautifies the river area.	Shamsuddin et al. (2013), Trimur (2013)

Regenerate	Increase the Economic Value of the River	Categories of Waterfronts (employment-focused, mixed-use) & Human Activity	Types of Waterfronts: Waterfronts can be mixed-use areas that support jobs, tourism, and residential spaces, increasing economic value.	Breen & Rigby (1994), Tugnutt (1987)
	Revitalize Social & Cultural Heritage of the River	Human Interaction & Cultural Identity	Human Activity and History and Culture: The river can become a hub for cultural and social activities, reconnecting people with its heritage.	Relph (1976), Shuhana et al. (2013)
Enliven	Rehabilitate the River's Ecology	Natural Interaction & Urban Form	Land and Water Connection: The balance between urban life and nature ensures the river's natural environment can thrive, preserving its ecology.	Shamsuddin et al. (2013), Trimur (2013)
	Promote Environmental Awareness	Emotional and Symbolic Connection & Human Activity	Emotional Connection: By enhancing the river's symbolic and personal significance, people become more invested in its environmental health.	Lynch (1960), Tugnutt (1987)

The study reveals how waterfronts are more than just scenic spots; they are vital spaces where nature and city life come together, shaping a community's character as an iconic feature. For architects, this means designing these areas to blend seamlessly with their natural surroundings while honouring their historical and cultural significance. It's about creating spaces that are not only beautiful but also accessible and comfortable for everyone. Good waterfront design should make it easy for people to enjoy and connect with their environment, enhancing their emotional and social experiences. By preserving local heritage and focusing on user-friendly features, architects can turn waterfronts into cherished places where people feel a deep sense of belonging and pride. These projects can be showcased or promoted to the public and other designers to highlight improvements in built environments. Outstanding examples may also receive recognition as notable achievements in the field.

The River of Life project, based in Kuala Lumpur, garnered significant recognition across various prestigious platforms. For the international level, at the ISOCARP Knowledge for Better Cities event held in Gdynia, Poland, from September 23-26, 2014, the project won the 1 Prize, highlighting its innovative urban planning approach. Subsequently, the Singapore Institute of Landscape Architects (SILA) awarded the River of Life Master Plan a Gold Award on October 12, 2015, and the River of Life Phase 1-Early Works Package a Silver Award on the same date, both in Singapore, showcasing its excellence in landscape architecture.

The project further distinguished itself at the Yuan Ye Award International Competition, held in China in November 2017, where it secured the Gold Prize for Transforming Kuala Lumpur Heritage Quarters, recognizing its exceptional urban landscape design. Additionally, the project was featured at the 2019 ASIA-PAC Landscape Architecture Awards organized by the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) Asia Pacific Region in Bangkok, Thailand, from November 2-5, 2017. These awards collectively underscore the project's significant impact and innovative contributions to urban landscape architecture.

6. Conclusion

From this study reveals that waterfronts are much more than just picturesque spots—they're vital parts of our cities where nature and urban life beautifully intersect, shaping the heart of our communities. The River of Life project in Kuala Lumpur stands as a prime example of how thoughtful design can breathe new life into these areas, blending historical charm with modern functionality. This project not only won accolades from prestigious platforms like ISOCARP, SILA, and the Yuan Ye Award, but it also highlights the power of creating spaces that are both inviting and meaningful. By enhancing accessibility, preserving heritage, and fostering community connection, the River of Life project shows that with the right vision and care, waterfronts can become cherished places where people feel a deep sense of pride and belonging. This revitalization turns waterfronts into vibrant hubs of activity, celebration, and sustainability, enriching our urban landscapes and daily lives.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude towards the top management of Project Implementation & Building Maintenance Department, City Hall Kuala Lumpur for their support and guidance. Heartiest thank you is also extended to all participants who volunteered and gave their precious time in this study.

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