

## Continuity and Change: Heritage-led Approaches to Urban Regeneration in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** *Urban regeneration has become an important strategy for addressing urban decline while promoting sustainable development. In Malaysia, rapid urbanisation and market-driven development have placed increasing pressure on historic urban areas, yet have created challenges for balancing development and heritage conservation. This paper examines the role of heritage-led regeneration within Malaysia's urban regeneration agenda. Drawing on findings from the research titled "The Formulation of Urban Regeneration Policy Framework in Malaysia", this study includes two focus group discussions with policymakers, local authorities, practitioners, developers, and academics. The paper explores the contribution of urban heritage to place identity, economic revitalisation, social cohesion, and sustainable urban development. The focus group discussions provided direct qualitative evidence that shaped the proposed five-dimensional framework, revealing that while heritage acts as an active socio-ecological driver, its success is strictly dependent on resolving governance fragmentation and institutionalising community participation to prevent the physical and cultural displacement of local communities. The findings indicate that heritage-led regeneration can effectively balance continuity and change through adaptive reuse, culture-led development, community participation, and integrated governance. However, several challenges remain, including development pressures, fragmented governance structures, inadequate conservation planning, and conflicts between conservation objectives and market interests. The paper proposes an integrated heritage-led regeneration framework that aligns heritage conservation with broader sustainability and urban resilience goals.*

**Keywords:** *heritage-led regeneration; urban regeneration; adaptive reuse; cultural heritage; Malaysia*

### INTRODUCTION

Cities are dynamic entities shaped by multiple layers of economic, social, cultural, and physical transformations. Although urban growth has historically been linked to economic prosperity and modernization, many cities also face decline characterized by deteriorating infrastructure, economic stagnation, population shifts, environmental degradation, and a loss of cultural identity (Roberts & Sykes, 2000). As a result, urban regeneration has become a significant policy response aimed at addressing the challenges facing aging urban centers.

Over the past two decades, urban regeneration has transformed from primarily focusing on physical redevelopment to a more comprehensive and integrated approach. This new approach includes economic revitalization, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and cultural preservation (Couch, Sykes, & Börstinghaus, 2011). Within this broader framework, heritage-led regeneration has gained recognition as an effective method for balancing development goals with the preservation of cultural identity.

Malaysia's vibrant cities, including Kuala Lumpur, George Town, Johor Bahru, Ipoh, and Melaka, have transformed into bustling economic hubs through urbanization. While this exciting development brings growth, it also highlights the need to protect our cherished historic districts that embody the rich cultural and social fabric of these communities. By addressing challenges from redevelopment and rising land values, we can preserve these treasured areas for future generations to enjoy and thrive in.

This article is based on a research report commissioned by the National Property Research Coordinator (NAPREC), titled "Formulation of Urban Regeneration Policy Framework in Malaysia." The report has identified urban heritage as a vital component of the urban regeneration agenda in Malaysia (Eni et al., 2019). The findings emphasized that heritage conservation should not be seen merely as a preservation effort but as an essential part of sustainable urban regeneration, capable of enhancing economic vitality, social cohesion, and a sense of place. The study also highlighted the significance of culture-led regeneration, adaptive reuse, and community engagement in protecting urban heritage while facilitating urban transformation. These findings provide a solid empirical foundation for examining heritage-led regeneration within the context of Malaysia.

This paper aims to explore the role of heritage-led regeneration in Malaysian cities and investigate how heritage assets can contribute to sustainable urban regeneration outcomes. Specifically, the paper seeks to:

1. Examine the conceptual relationship between heritage conservation and urban regeneration;
2. Analyse the significance of heritage-led regeneration within the Malaysian urban context;
3. Identify challenges and opportunities associated with implementing heritage-led regeneration strategies; and
4. Propose a policy framework for integrating heritage conservation into future urban regeneration initiatives.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Urban Regeneration and Sustainable Urban Development**

Urban regeneration has evolved to prioritize holistic solutions over simply tearing down and rebuilding. Instead of just focusing on demolition, it embraces an integrated approach that enhances economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects of our cities. According to Roberts and Sykes (2000), regeneration is about creating a dynamic, unified vision that addresses urban challenges while uplifting the overall quality of life in the community. It's an exciting journey toward vibrant, thriving urban spaces.

Research indicates that modern urban regeneration needs to be multi-faceted because factors such as economic restructuring, social exclusion, deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate public services, environmental stress, and governance challenges often interact within the same urban areas (Tallon, 2010; Diamond et al., 2010; Brabazon, 2015). Similarly, the Malaysian Public Sector Blueprint (PSB) views urban regeneration as a comprehensive and integrated long-term program aimed at addressing economic decline, physical obsolescence, environmental issues, and social deterioration, in alignment with government development policies (Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, n.d.; Penang State Planning Committee, 2022).

Sustainable urban development expands the regeneration agenda by requiring projects to minimize resource consumption, reuse existing assets, enhance public spaces, improve mobility, protect community well-being, and monitor environmental and social impacts (Mander et al., 2006; Glasson & Wood, 2009; Lehmann, 2019). This sustainability perspective favours strategies such as adaptive reuse, retrofitting, maintenance, and brownfield revitalisation whenever possible, as these approaches can prolong the life of the existing urban fabric while alleviating the pressure for outward expansion (Lehmann, 2019; Wan Rabiah Wan Omar et al., 2015).

Evidence from Malaysia indicates that policy ambiguity continues to pose a significant barrier to urban development efforts. While urban redevelopment, rehabilitation, preservation, and revitalization may be classified under the Public Sector Benchmark (PSB) categories, they are not always implemented with consistent legal authority, adequate funding, or appropriate social safeguards (Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, n.d.; Eni et al., 2019; Penang State Planning Committee, 2022). Therefore, a crucial regeneration approach must differentiate regeneration from redevelopment by emphasizing measurable public benefits in areas such as cultural continuity, social inclusion, environmental performance, and place identity (Glasson & Wood, 2009; Porter & Shaw, 2009).

### **Heritage and Culture-Led Regeneration: Conceptual Evolution**

Heritage-led regeneration refers to efforts in which heritage assets act as catalysts for social, economic, cultural, and physical transformation (Pendlebury, 2013). Thus, heritage can serve as a valuable urban asset that supports place identity, economic revitalisation, tourism, social cohesion, and cultural continuity. Heritage value should encompass historic buildings, traditional communities, cultural memory, everyday social life, public spaces, and local economic practices, rather than being limited to just protected monuments or restored facades (Eni et al., 2019; Orbasli, 2001). This interpretation aligns with Smith's heritage theory, which posits that heritage shapes collective memory and influences people's relationship with place (Smith, 2006).

Similarly, culture-led regeneration leverages cultural activities, creative industries, the arts, events, and public spaces as resources for urban renewal (Evans, 2005; Darchen & Ladouceur, 2013). Many scholars view culture as a catalyst and driving force for urban transformation, particularly when linked to collaborative governance and community engagement (Radzuan et al., 2024). Culture-led regeneration is most effective when it protects both tangible heritage and the intangible aspects of urban life, including local businesses, community rituals, street activities, and collective memory (Orbasli, 2001; Clark & Wise, 2018).

### **Socio-Economic Risks: Displacement and Commodification**

While heritage-led and culture-led regeneration strategies offer substantial opportunities for urban revitalisation, critical scholarship persistently raises concerns about their unintended socio-economic side effects. A primary risk is the commodification of heritage, where historic areas are transformed into consumer-oriented landscapes or branding tools designed to attract high-income residents, tourist dollars, and commercial investors, rather than serving and sustaining the living communities that originally defined them (Porter & Shaw, 2009; Ginsburg, 1999; Yung & Chan, 2012). This process often triggers hyper-gentrification, driving up property values, municipal taxes, and rents. Consequently, traditional traders, low-income tenants, street hawkers, and local residents are systematically priced out and physically displaced (Glasson & Wood, 2009; Orbasli, 2001; O'Brien & Matthews, 2016). Therefore, to prevent heritage-led regeneration from devolving into exclusionary property redevelopment, policies must establish robust legal and economic safeguards, including rent-stabilisation measures, local enterprise subsidies, and community-benefit agreements, ensuring equitable development and the preservation of living cultural heritage (Smith, 2006; Clark & Wise, 2018).

### **The Malaysian Urban Policy Context and Gaps**

Evidence from Malaysia indicates that policy ambiguity and structural fragmentation continue to pose significant barriers to urban development efforts. While urban redevelopment, rehabilitation, preservation, and revitalization are classified under public sector categories, they are not always implemented with consistent legal authority, adequate funding, or appropriate social safeguards (Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, n.d.; Eni et al., 2019; Penang State Planning Committee, 2022).

Existing Malaysian urban regeneration initiatives, as governed by the Public Sector Blueprint (PSB), PLANMalaysia Guidelines, and the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) execution books, primarily prioritise physical redevelopment, structural safety, and property-led economic returns. These models frequently treat heritage as an aesthetic byproduct or a zoning constraint rather than an active socio-ecological driver. Our proposed five-dimensional framework significantly advances these existing Malaysian models by integrating heritage conservation directly into the core regeneration policy. It shifts the paradigm from speculative property redevelopment to a balanced, values-based model that treats community stewardship, intangible cultural practices, and preventative anti-displacement measures as institutionalised pillars of sustainable urban resilience.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative research approach, drawing on findings from the research project titled *"Formulation of Urban Regeneration Policy Framework in Malaysia."* To ensure a robust qualitative design, the research involved two sequential Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a diverse,

purposively selected group of stakeholders. The participant composition of thirty-three (33) experts was distributed as follows: federal and state government agencies (8), local authorities (7), professional urban planners and architects (6), private property developers (4), academic researchers in heritage and urban planning (5), and private sector practitioners/non-governmental organisation representatives (3) such as Think City.

The first FGD aimed to understand urban regeneration strategies in Malaysia and identify key variables for policy development. It was conducted as a 4-hour structured session utilising a standardised question protocol that prompted participants on historical regulatory bottlenecks, funding deficits, and institutional silos. The second FGD explored ten thematic areas, including urban heritage, economic regeneration, governance, urban well-being, sustainable infrastructure, and urban design. This second session lasted 4.5 hours and utilized a semi-structured discussion protocol complemented by interactive thematic mapping exercises where participants physically located heritage assets and displacement pressure points on city maps.

The qualitative data from both discussions was transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a rigorous six-phase thematic analysis procedure as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved: (1) familiarisation with the transcripts through repetitive reading; (2) generation of initial codes such as 'governance fragmentation', 'tenant displacement', 'adaptive reuse incentives', and 'cultural commodification'; (3) searching for themes by clustering codes into broader categories; (4) reviewing candidate themes against the entire dataset; (5) defining and naming the final five dimensions of the framework; and (6) producing the analytical report. This coding process was validated through inter-coder agreement between three research team members to ensure analytical reliability. Urban heritage emerged as one of the most significant themes within the regeneration framework and is the focus of this paper.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings from two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), complemented by a desktop review to enhance and validate the qualitative empirical data. To improve analytical focus, the findings from FGD participants are explicitly separated from the conceptual interpretations supported by the desktop literature review.

### Urban Heritage as a Regeneration Asset

**FGD Empirical Findings:** The FGD findings indicate strong consensus among stakeholders that urban heritage is a strategic asset for supporting regeneration objectives. Heritage areas link the past and present, while also strengthening cultural identity and social cohesion. FGD participants specifically emphasized that in the Malaysian context, historic districts encompass traditional communities, old shophouses, public spaces, and cultural landscapes that face immense redevelopment pressures, speculative land values, and rapid land use changes. Participants from Kuala Lumpur voiced serious concerns about the gradual loss of historic urban character due to market-driven development, specifically citing the challenges of preserving cultural identity in historic districts such as Kampung Bharu and Petaling Street while striving to become a world-class city. The stakeholders identified five key functions that heritage assets serve within the regeneration process: preserving cultural continuity, enhancing place identity, supporting tourism development, generating economic opportunities, and strengthening community attachment.

**Desktop Review and Literature Synthesis:** To contextualise these qualitative insights, our desktop review aligned the participants' views with established heritage theories. Smith (2006) and Orbasli (2001) argue that urban heritage is not merely a collection of physical attributes, but a living space shaped by buildings, residents, traders, and collective memory. Furthermore, critical literature warns that evaluating heritage success solely by tourist numbers or property appreciation can lead to displacement and loss of authenticity (Porter & Shaw, 2009; Yung & Chan, 2012). This theoretical framing supports the FGD consensus that a regenerated heritage district must be evaluated through a balanced lens that measures local business retention, cultural continuity, and community satisfaction alongside economic growth.

### **Adaptive Reuse and Urban Revitalisation**

**FGD Empirical Findings:** Adaptive reuse has become one of the most frequently discussed strategies for urban regeneration. In the FGD sessions, participants recognised adaptive reuse as a highly effective operational tool for reactivating deteriorating urban spaces without compromising architectural significance. They cited specific local examples, such as converting traditional heritage shophouses into boutique cafés, art galleries, local restaurants, community facilities, libraries, and creative offices. The participants argued that these adaptive interventions can revitalise local economies while maintaining structural integrity. However, local practitioners and architects in the FGD raised concerns about the lack of standardised building codes for heritage properties, the high costs of structural rehabilitation, and the complex approval processes with local authorities.

**Desktop Review and Literature Synthesis:** The desktop review reinforces these findings by linking them to the environmental and social pillars of sustainable urban development. Literature suggests that adaptive reuse significantly reduces construction waste, extends building life cycles, and revitalises brownfield sites, thereby alleviating outward greenfield expansion (Lehmann, 2019; Mander et al., 2006). Nevertheless, critical scholars such as Porter and Shaw (2009) and Glasson and Wood (2009) warn that adaptive reuse carries a high risk of 'commercial exclusion' if old buildings are exclusively repurposed as upscale hospitality or investor-focused spaces, thereby displacing traditional residents and trades. The synthesis of FGD and desktop evidence suggests that adaptive reuse incentives must be made conditional on securing public benefit, community access, and the preservation of living heritage.

### **Heritage Tourism and Economic Regeneration**

**FGD Empirical Findings:** Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) identified heritage tourism as a vital contributor to local economic development. Participants frequently highlighted George Town and Melaka as premier examples where heritage listing and conservation have successfully boosted tourism appeal and local economic vitality. According to the FGD experts, heritage tourism drives job creation, local entrepreneurship, and place branding. However, participants also highlighted a critical concern: tourism can easily lead to 'over-tourism' and hyper-commercialisation, which drives up property values and rents, forcing out traditional trades, hawkers, and local residents.

**Desktop Review and Literature Synthesis:** The literature supports this duality. While heritage tourism is a powerful economic engine that funds costly conservation and property maintenance (Wan Rabiah Wan Omar et al., 2015; McCarthy, 2007), it also poses severe risks of gentrification. Critical studies show that when historic districts are transformed into consumption-oriented tourist landscapes, the original social fabric is destroyed as residents and local businesses are displaced (Ginsburg, 1999; O'Brien & Matthews, 2016). Thus, public-private partnerships must be established with clear frameworks that balance private commercial interests with community-wide benefit-sharing and tenant protection (McCarthy, 2007; Diamond et al., 2010).

### **Managing Change: Balancing Continuity and Development**

**FGD Empirical Findings:** A recurring theme in the discussions is the need to balance continuity and change. FGD participants expressed strong anxiety regarding uncontrolled development, increased plot ratios, speculative investments, and rapidly rising land values in historic core zones. They emphasised that managing change, rather than freezing development, is the key challenge. They pointed to the need for local authority planning controls that respect the existing scale and fabric.

**Desktop Review and Literature Synthesis:** The literature indicates that heritage-led regeneration provides a spatial planning framework that mediates between physical preservation and urban transformation. Continuity encompasses historical architectural form, collective memory, and community attachment, while change incorporates necessary modernisation, climate adaptation, and infrastructure improvements (Smith, 2006; Lehmann, 2019). The analytical conclusion is that continuity and change must be mediated through statutory planning instruments, rigorous design controls, and transparent value-capture mechanisms (Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, n.d.; Glasson & Wood, 2009; Eni et al., 2019).

### **Governance Fragility and Coordination**

**FGD Empirical Findings:** FGD participants strongly highlighted governance fragmentation as the single largest barrier to successful heritage-led regeneration in Malaysia. They pointed out that responsibilities are scattered across multiple federal ministries, state departments, and municipal local authorities, with very little cross-agency communication. The lack of integrated conservation plans and inconsistent enforcement of building codes were identified as critical operational failures.

**Desktop Review and Literature Synthesis:** Governance literature emphasises that regeneration management requires clear structural accountability, as decisions involve complex trade-offs between land value appreciation and public interest (Diamond et al., 2010; Porter & Shaw, 2009). A Malaysian heritage-led framework must clearly define statutory roles, identify dedicated funding streams, and establish transparent metrics to monitor long-term socio-economic impacts (Eni et al., 2019; Glasson & Wood, 2009).

### **Empowering Communities through Participatory Action**

**FGD Empirical Findings:** FGD stakeholders consistently emphasised that successful conservation cannot rely solely on top-down municipal plans. They cited the community grant programmes of Think City in George Town as a highly successful model of community-led stewardship, where local residents and traders were actively empowered to identify heritage values and co-design public spaces.

**Desktop Review and Literature Synthesis:** The literature on community participation supports this, arguing that traditional regeneration has been dominated by property developers, frequently neglecting social welfare, resident empowerment, and the voices of vulnerable groups (Ginsburg, 1999; Clark & Wise, 2018). Participation must therefore transition from passive public consultation to active power-sharing through community heritage mapping, resident panels, and community benefit agreements (McCarthy, 2007; Glasson & Wood, 2009; Orbasli, 2001).

### **Culture as a Core Driver of Regeneration**

**FGD Empirical Findings:** FGD participants advocated for integrating culture-led regeneration into broader urban policies. They emphasised that culture should be viewed holistically, encompassing creative industries, local performing arts, traditional craft workshops, street markets, and community-led heritage programs, rather than being restricted to monumental physical restoration.

**Desktop Review and Literature Synthesis:** This is consistent with global experiences in which culture serves as a powerful catalyst for social renewal (Evans, 2005). However, culture-led strategies must be coupled with strong social safeguards, such as anti-displacement policies and affordable space covenants, to prevent them from becoming superficial city-branding exercises that displace the very cultures they claim to celebrate (Porter & Shaw, 2009; Yung & Chan, 2012).

## **TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION FRAMEWORK**

Based on the FGD findings and literature review, a Malaysian heritage-led regeneration framework should incorporate five interconnected dimensions: Governance, Community, Economy, Place-making, and Sustainability. These dimensions were developed through a rigorous synthesis of the thematic clusters identified during the FGDs and mapped against the strategic pillars of the National Urban Regeneration Policy Framework (Eni et al., 2019). Rather than operating as isolated silos, these five dimensions form an integrated socio-ecological system. According to Table 1, governance serves as the foundational framework, providing the regulatory and financial structure. Place-making and the Economy act as the visible catalysts, driving spatial quality and economic viability. Community represents the living heart of the framework, ensuring that the local population remains the central stakeholder. Sustainability is the ultimate long-term outcome, ensuring that physical, environmental, and cultural continuity are maintained for future generations.

**Table 1.** Proposed Five Dimensions of Heritage-Led Urban Regeneration in Malaysia

| Dimension      | Core Factors and Theoretical Integration                                                                                                                            | Primary Literature Source                                          |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Governance     | Integrated planning, regulatory coordination, and multi-level collaboration. Requires gazetted zones, adaptive reuse guidelines, and transparent approval criteria. | Eni et al. (2019); McCarthy (2007); Diamond et al., (2010)         |
| Community      | Participatory planning and local stewardship. Institutionalised through community heritage mapping, trader representation, and community benefit agreements.        | Ginsburg (1999); Clark & Wise (2018); Mat Radzuan et al. (2026)    |
| Economy        | Heritage tourism, creative industries, and adaptive reuse. Economic incentives must be conditional on public benefit, local business retention, and affordability.  | Mat Radzuan et al. (2026); Wan Rabiah (2015); Porter & Shaw (2009) |
| Place-Making   | Conservation of historic urban landscapes, fine-grain street patterns, and public spaces. Focus on pedestrianisation, walkability, and local cultural programming.  | Orbasli (2001); Smith, (2006); Lehmann (2019)                      |
| Sustainability | Environmental resilience, social inclusion, and cultural continuity. Combines energy retrofits, affordable housing, and social impact assessments.                  | Mander et al. (2006); Glasson & Wood (2009); Yung & Chan (2012)    |

To operationalise this framework, Malaysian local authorities must transition from top-down regulatory enforcement to collaborative co-management. The implementation mechanisms outlined in Table 2 provide a concrete roadmap. For instance, the gazettement of Special Area Plans (Rancangan Kawasan Khas) under the Town and Country Planning Act (Act 172) allows for specific design controls and pedestrianisation schemes that enhance place-making. Concurrently, the establishment of Heritage Conservation Incentive Schemes provides financial viability for private property owners to undertake adaptive reuse, provided they adhere to community-retention covenants. Finally, conducting mandatory Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) ensures that potential displacement risks are identified and mitigated before regeneration projects are approved, thereby securing long-term social and cultural sustainability.

**Table 2.** Key Indicators and Implementation Mechanisms (Revised Model)

| Dimension      | Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)                                                                                                                     | Implementation Mechanism                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Governance     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of heritage zones gazetted in local plans</li> <li>Standardized adaptive reuse guidelines</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-stakeholder Heritage Steering Committees</li> <li>Gazettement under Town and Country Planning Act (Act 172)</li> </ul>    |
| Community      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of active community heritage maps</li> <li>Resident/trader seats on local planning boards</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutionalized Community Heritage Charters</li> <li>Grievance redress mechanisms &amp; co-design workshops</li> </ul>        |
| Economy        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate of traditional business retention</li> <li>Private investment mobilized through grants</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage Conservation Incentive Schemes</li> <li>Conditional tax reliefs &amp; soft loans for building owners</li> </ul>        |
| Place-Making   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pedestrian walkability index score</li> <li>Frequency &amp; attendance of local cultural events</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special Area Plans (Rancangan Kawasan Khas)</li> <li>Public realm pedestrianisation &amp; greening projects</li> </ul>          |
| Sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volume of construction waste diverted</li> <li>Housing affordability &amp; social displacement rate</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) for major projects</li> <li>Regular heritage impact monitoring &amp; welfare funds</li> </ul> |

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Several policy implications emerge from this study to guide the integration of heritage conservation into future Malaysian regeneration efforts:

1. **Urban regeneration policies should explicitly recognise heritage as a strategic development asset** rather than a static constraint, shifting from monument preservation to living-heritage conservation.

2. **Conservation planning should be structurally integrated into local development plans** via Special Area Plans, ensuring consistent zoning, plot ratio controls, and design guidelines.
3. **Adaptive reuse incentives should be expanded** and made conditional on delivering measurable public benefits, community access, and local business retention.
4. **Community participation mechanisms must be institutionalised** through community heritage mapping, representative panels, and formal co-design procedures.
5. **Public-private-people partnerships (4P) should support heritage investment** by establishing transparent risk-sharing rules, revolving funds, and social safeguards.
6. **Culture-led regeneration should become a core component of urban regeneration policy** with explicit indicators to monitor and mitigate displacement, commercial exclusion, and gentrification.

## CONCLUSION

Heritage-led regeneration provides an effective mechanism for balancing continuity and change within rapidly transforming urban environments. The Malaysian experience demonstrates that heritage conservation can contribute significantly to economic revitalisation, place identity, social cohesion, and sustainable urban development. Rather than viewing heritage as an obstacle to progress, policymakers should recognise heritage assets as drivers of regeneration and resilience. Future urban regeneration strategies in Malaysia should therefore adopt integrated approaches that combine adaptive reuse, culture-led development, community participation, and collaborative governance. By embedding heritage within regeneration policy, Malaysian cities can achieve sustainable urban transformation while preserving the cultural identities that define their uniqueness and historical significance.

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