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Building Johor's Tomorrow: Leading the Future of Smart Circular Cities

The future of urban development has moved beyond smart cities equipped with artificial intelligence (AI) technology. We are progressing towards circular ecosystems that regenerate rather than deplete. This bold shift is grounded in forward-looking frameworks such as the Johor Green Deal and Johor Smart City 2030.

These frameworks have provided the foundation for integrating sustainability, digitalisation and carbon reduction into township design. In Johor, this is our priority as we endeavour to become a regional leader in sustainable urban development.

Defining circular cities

Cities around the world face growing urban congestion, environmental degradation and economic fragmentation. For Johor to succeed as the southern engine of Malaysia's development, we must embrace circular city planning as a core strategy. Circular cities are regenerative by design through the creation of inclusive growth, reinvesting in talent and local enterprises, and embedding sustainability across urban life.

At Johor Corporation (JCorp), and especially through JLand Group (JLG), we are advancing this vision through a practical framework that aligns with Malaysia's Net Zero 2050 mission. This includes ensuring access to economic participation by connecting people to jobs, housing and mobility; transforming linear value chains into closed-loop industrial ecosystems; nurturing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and talent pipelines that meet future industry demands; and embedding clean energy, water efficiency and waste-to-resource systems across our developments.

Turning Johor's circular ambitions into reality

For circularity to move beyond theory, it must be implemented. This is where Ibrahim Technopolis (IBTEC), our flagship circular sandbox city, comes in.

Aligned with Malaysia's national digital and sustainability goals, IBTEC is where policy, innovation and infrastructure converge to address real-world issues. It challenges the old linear model and operates as a circular ecosystem where outputs from one industry fuel another.

With more than RM30 billion in strategic investments already committed, IBTEC is home to high-impact clusters in data centres, electrical and electronics (E&E), life sciences, MedTech and logistics, supported by a data centre business ecosystem and a robust digital backbone enabling real-time, low-carbon operations.

Beyond IBTEC, JLG's other prestigious developments, namely Bandar Dato' Onn and Bandar Tiram, are also bringing the circular vision to life. These townships exemplify how integrated, sustainable living can thrive through 24/7 live-work-play environments. Featuring tiered housing, educational institutions, healthcare facilities and recreational spaces, each township is thoughtfully connected by green corridors and enhanced mobility networks.

Catalysing circular partnerships

No single organisation can deliver the circular economy alone. At JCorp, we balance commercial value with societal impact, and this requires cross-sector collaboration.

We are activating partnerships across federal and state agencies, private investors, academia and communities. Our work with Johor Skills and the Johor Talent Development Council (JTDC) ensures workforce readiness, co-located near investment zones to seamlessly link people, education and enterprise.

These are innovation-led models championed by JCorp that turn shared value into bankable and scalable outcomes. They are also proof that social growth and economic progress can go hand in hand.

Enabling inclusive communities and empowering local enterprise

Circular cities must be inclusive. Projects such as Arena Larkin, a mixed-income, transit-connected development linked to the Rapid Transit System (RTS), demonstrate how we integrate mobility with housing.

Our universal digital infrastructure ensures equitable access, and our investment parcels are designed to both attract capital as well as empower local SMEs and connect them with the talent pipelines that we have built.

From Johor to the region: A new model for urban innovation

Johor is emerging as Southeast Asia's circular innovation corridor, where regenerative cities, dynamic industries and empowered communities come together.

Through bold policies and implementation by JLG, we are offering a working model of sustainable urbanisation that aligns with national plans such as the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) 2023 and New Industrial Master Plan (NIMP) 2030, while also working towards raising industry standards.

Through JLG, JCorp reaffirms its long-term commitment to shaping globally relevant, inclusive and renewable urban ecosystems. This is a call to action for public and private stakeholders to join us in co-creating resilient, future-ready cities. The circular movement is already taking root here in Johor, and we are proud to be turning that vision into reality.

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