PJ Section 13 Gets a New Facelift

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SECTION 13 in Petaling Jaya is probably one of the most recent examples of urban renewal. The 260 acres bordered by Section 14, Section 12 and Section 17 started out as an industrial area in 1960s and 1970s. At that time, some parts of Section 17 were rubber plantations and the setting up of factories there seem to be a good idea. The population around Section 13 was scarce and there was an abundance of land.

Growth, progress and development of residential properties soon resulted in communities forming around the residential areas of Section 13.

Today, there are plans to turn it into a business park.

A town planner who declined to be quoted says current environment can no longer sustain the manufacturing sector in that area.

?There are labour issues, traffic involving large trucks all of which are having a negative impact on the surrounding lots,? he says.

He says it was not possible to have shophouses there, resembling those in Section 14. Neither was there a need for another town centre as there was the commercial areas of Section 14, Paramount and SEA Park and Section 14 and further away, SS2.

It was then decided to turn it into a service-oriented commercial and business area to complement surrounding areas. The more focused approach has also allowed the landowners, planners and the local authorities develop the place according to their respective aspirations based on certain guidelines.

**Demolished**

?There are different ways to go about urban renewal or regeneration. There is the Kampung Baru model where laws and statues have to go through a parliamentary process. Or it can be done on a more ad hoc basis, as what is happening in some parts of Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya where old buildings are demolished to make way for new ones,? he says.

Over at Section 13, the template for change started decades ago when the Malaysian Feedmill factory was purchased by niche developer Jaya33 Sdn Bhd and converted into the current Jaya 33 which comprises several blocks and a retail entity.
The second phase is the ongoing development of Plaza 33. The successful conversion of that piece of factory land subsequently resulted in the construction of Jaya One, by Tetap Tiara Sdn Bhd, another family entity.

Says the town planner: "The collaboration among land owners in Section 13 would be among the more cohesive although there are challenges. Some of them have invested heavily in machinery and were not ready to move until land prices move further up.

"Other land owners did not want to go into the challenges of becoming developers," he says.

The main driver behind the changes was purely economics. A factory may pay RM40,000 annually to the local council. If that same piece of land were used for serviced apartment, assessment collected may be about RM1,000 a year. If there are 100 units, there is RM100,000 going into the coffers of the local authorities.

Garis Architects director Ahmad Jefri Clyde says it is easier to transform an area when the landowners hold the title deeds to large tracts of land and are fairly united, compared with having to deal with hundreds or thousands of houseowners.

Clyde is the planner for Section 13.

**Controlled activities**

Fraser & Neave Holdings Bhd, for example, owns about 13 acres. The Aluminium Company of Malaysia sold its 10 acres in 2004 to Tetap Tiara Sdn Bhd for RM47mil for the development of Jaya One.

Says Clyde: "It is economics that is pushing for change. Factories are getting old. There is a greater demand for land for other uses. So there is the push and pull factors."

Instead of manufacturing, the area will now be used for limited commercial use, where the land use will not be as intense and activities are more controlled, as in the setting up of a showroom and other service-oriented activities, says Clyde.

Several of the landowners are planning to build serviced apartments, which means there will be a huge residential element there. Two of the factories have been converted to churches. These two elements, says Clyde, will help to form the basis of a community.

Because there will be a lot more people on that 260 acres in time to come, it is important to provide connectivity among the buildings to reduce the number of cars on the road, Clyde says.

"People travelling from one part of Section 13 to another can walk, which takes the pressure off roads like Jalan Universiti, Jalan Kemajuan and Jalan Semangat," he says.

The commercial and residential elements will result in a population of about 103,000 people living and working there as the plot ratio will be increased to 3.25 compared to 2.75 before.

Clyde says developers will have to adhere to green issues and the provision of landscaping to beautify the area.