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KAMPONG KITA: REINTERPRETING KAMPUNG SPIRIT IN POCKET PUBLIC SPACES FOR UNIVERSITY COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The beautification of Laman KAED at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) aims to enhance the quality of the faculty's outdoor environment through the integration of landscape design, cultural identity, and sustainable design principles. Conceived as a multifunctional public space, the project supports learning activities, relaxation, social interaction, and community engagement. Furthermore, the proposal reflects the architectural values and educational philosophy of the Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design (KAED) by strengthening the relationship between the built and natural environments. Through the incorporation of vernacular references, passive environmental strategies, and community-oriented spatial planning, the project aspires to enrich user experience while demonstrating IIUM's commitment to holistic and value-driven educational spaces.

Keywords: Laman KAED, Malay Vernacular Architecture, Sustainable Landscape Design, Cultural Identity in Architecture, Community-Based Design Approaches, Entrepreneurship in Built Environment

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Laman KAED, located within the Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design (KAED) at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), functions as a central outdoor space that reflects the identity, aspirations, and values of the faculty. As a communal hub, the space accommodates students' academic, social, and recreational activities while simultaneously offering opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurial engagement, including student-led stalls and community events. Consequently, the enhancement of this space is essential to improve its functionality, visual quality, and socio-economic value.

In response to these needs, the proposed beautification initiative seeks to integrate landscape elements, sustainable design approaches, and architectural harmony in order to create a more conducive and engaging environment. In addition, the project aims to strengthen community interaction, encourage outdoor learning experiences, and support IIUM's holistic educational philosophy. By combining cultural references with contemporary design strategies, the proposal aspires to transform Laman KAED into a vibrant and meaningful public space for the university community.

1.1 VISION

To lead in transforming local culture into vibrant, sustainable design experiences that inspire communities and celebrate identity.

1.2 MISSION

To craft thoughtful, place-based designs that merge tradition with innovation empowering communities, preserving heritage, and creating engaging, inclusive spaces through art, architecture, and storytelling.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 MALAY KAMPUNG IDENTITY CULTURAL MAKING

Malay kampung identity is deeply rooted in vernacular architectural traditions, community-built environments, and spatial practices that reflect socio-cultural values and environmental adaptation. According to Ng (2022), Kampung Morten in Melaka demonstrates how vernacular dwellings function as living cultural traditions, whereby residents continuously adapt and reinterpret architectural elements in response to contemporary urban pressures while maintaining their cultural identity. Similarly, Ruhizar, Harun, and Zakaria (2023) emphasise that the architectural uniqueness of Kampung Pulau Sekati in Melak including the use of timber construction, multifunctional spaces, and integration with natural surroundings contributes significantly to socio-cultural cohesion and a strong sense of place.

Furthermore, Zakaria, Hussein, and Md Dali (2021) highlight that vernacular landscape features within Perak Malay kampung settlements align closely with the Malaysian Garden Concept, where landscape elements function not only as practical components but also as identity-defining features within the built environment. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that Malay kampung identity is not formed solely through physical architecture; rather, it emerges through dynamic and context-sensitive cultural processes that intertwine environmental wisdom, collective memory, and communal living practices.

2.2 PLACEMAKING IN PUBLIC SPACES

Placemaking, as a conceptual and practical approach, emphasizes how communities imbue spaces with meaningful cultural and social value. Lew (2017) defines placemaking from a cultural geography lens as “how a cultural group imprints its values, perceptions, memories, and traditions on a landscape and gives meaning to geographic space” (p. 449), highlighting the role of cultural narratives in shaping place identity (Lew, 2017). Schneekloth and Shibley (2000, as cited in Perlego summary) extend this by framing placemaking as a democratic, ongoing cultural process, one that co-produces places through collaboration and cultural labor rather than top-down planning (Schneekloth & Shibley, 2000). Sweeney et al. (2018) further reconceptualize placemaking as an open-ended assemblage, showing how long-term community maintenance and affective labor—beyond initial design—help regenerate and sustain urban spaces (Sweeney et al., 2018). Together, these perspectives reveal placemaking as a dynamic interplay of cultural expression, collective work, and spatial transformation, where public spaces are continuously made and remade to reflect evolving community values and identities.

2.3 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN IDEALS

Sustainable design is a holistic approach that seeks to balance human well-being with ecological stewardship by minimizing environmental impact while enhancing the quality of built environments. McLennan (2004) defines it as a philosophy aimed at improving life quality while reducing harm to natural systems, an idea further developed through principles such as life-cycle thinking, responsible resource use, and biomimicry (Kibert, 2016). In practice, sustainable architectural strategies include integrating green infrastructure, using low-impact or recycled materials, and adapting designs to local climatic and cultural contexts, thereby ensuring resilience and long-term relevance (Hosey, 2012; Stevanović, 2020). Collectively, these ideals emphasize that sustainable design is not merely a technical exercise but a cultural and ethical commitment to create environments that are ecologically responsible, socially inclusive, and adaptable to future challenges.

3.0 LITERATURE STUDY OF MALAY HOUSE

3.1 MALAY KAMPUNG and PONDOK

The Rumah Melayu, or traditional Malay house, represents one of the most significant forms of vernacular architecture in Malaysia, embodying harmony between climate, culture, and community life. Typically constructed on stilts using timber, the house features steeply pitched roofs and open interior layouts that naturally respond to the tropical climate while encouraging social interaction and communal living. Regional variations, such as the Rumah Kutai in Perak and Rumah Limas in Johor, further illustrate the richness of local craftsmanship and cultural identity embedded within Malay architecture.

More importantly, the traditional Malay house functioned not merely as a dwelling, but also as the social centre of kampung life, where gatherings, ceremonies, and everyday communal activities took place.

The elevated roof structures, together with openings such as tingkap jendela and tebar layar, facilitate natural cross-ventilation by allowing hot air to escape while drawing cooler air into interior spaces. These passive environmental strategies demonstrate the environmental sensitivity and climatic responsiveness of Malay vernacular architecture (Nasir, 1985; Lim, 1987).



Figure 1: Ventilation Openings in the Roof of Traditional Malay House.
(Source: Center of Built in the Malay World (KALAM), 1986.)

Malay vernacular architecture traditionally emphasizes the use of locally available materials as a cost-effective approach. In contemporary practice, materials such as concrete are often considered more accessible and economical than timber or steel. A notable example is the Negeri Sembilan State Mosque, which incorporates a series of intersecting reinforced concrete conoids as an abstraction of the horn-shaped gable roofs characteristic of Minangkabau traditional architecture. Rather than adopting a simplistic revivalist approach, the architect reinterpreted the bumbung gonjong in a modern yet expressive manner. The subtle curvature of the roof reduces the need for heavy structural support, thereby creating an unobstructed, expansive prayer hall below. Perforated, lace-like walls further enhance the design by enabling natural cross-ventilation, echoing the openness of traditional Malay mosques that maximize air flow for thermal comfort. Additionally, because the walls are non-load-bearing, they could be ornamented with intricate carvings, resonating with the decorative traditions of Malay houses.



Figure 2: Masjid Negeri Sembilan.
(Source: Utusan Malaysia, 2021)

3.2 DOUBLE HOWE TRUSS

The Double Howe truss is a structural system formed by placing two Howe trusses side-by-side or mirrored along the ridge, connected by purlins. This configuration is particularly suitable for supporting lightweight bamboo roofs due to its efficiency in transferring roof thrust directly to the ground. The system employs the side lattice as secondary bracing to counter lateral loads such as wind and accidental sway, while simultaneously functioning as a load path from eave to eave. To enhance stability, the design requires at least one rigidly braced bay, incorporating the lattice side, along with a cross-brace or diaphragm at the roof plane. These measures ensure that the pavilion behaves as a unified structural unit, demonstrating both practicality and adaptability for bamboo-based architectural applications.

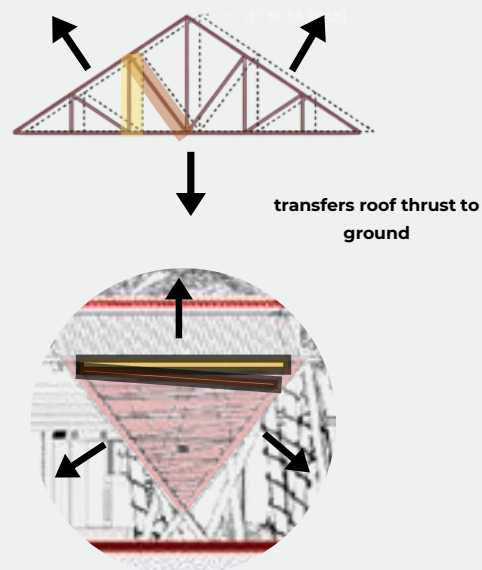


Figure 3: Example of Transfers Roof Thrust to The Ground.

3.3 SHARMA SPRINGS BY IBUKU

Sharma Springs, a six-storey private residence in Bali designed by Ibuku, exemplifies innovative bamboo architecture through its dramatic vaulted and arched forms as well as intersecting bamboo members. The project illustrates how bamboo can be bundled and configured to form triangulated shells, effectively distributing lateral forces and axial compression. This triangulated weaving reduces footing demand and provides a comparable structural concept to cross-braced bamboo at the base of a pavilion. Furthermore, Sharma Springs highlights the advantages of combining bamboo's natural properties with engineered solutions such as steel gussets and bolted connections. This integration of natural material behavior with modern detailing methods demonstrates how bamboo can achieve structural resilience and architectural expressiveness simultaneously, making it a valuable precedent for sustainable pavilion design.

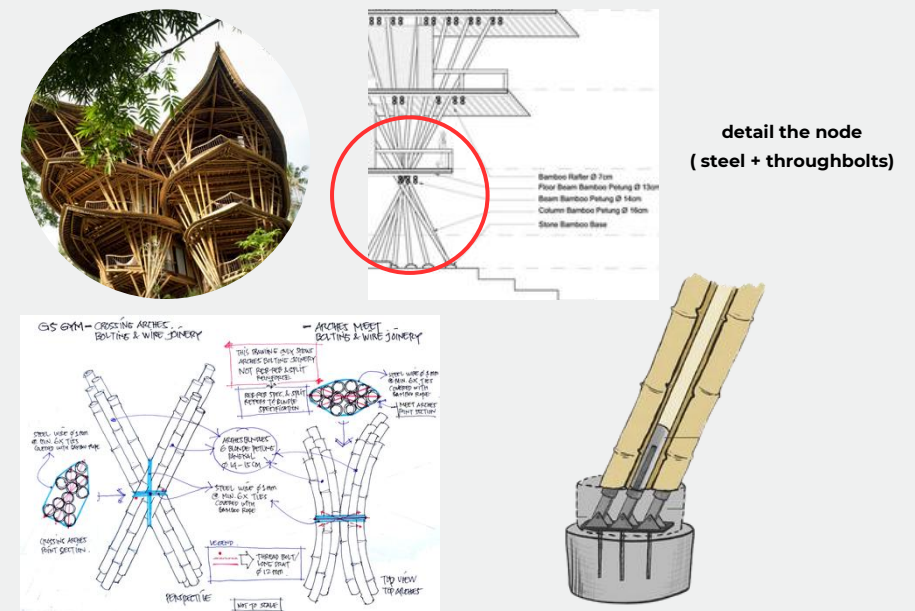


Figure 4: Example of Detail Node with Steel and Through bolts.

4.0 CASE STUDY

1) I-CITY, SHAH ALAM

i-City is a pioneering 72-acre ICT-based urban development situated in Section 7, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia, along the Federal Highway. Designed by architect Jon A. Jerde, it embodies the concept of a fully integrated “intelligent city,” encompassing corporate, residential, and leisure components such as office towers, a regional shopping mall (~1 million sq ft), Cybercentre suites, hotels, apartments, data centres, and an innovation centre.



Figure 5: i-City, Shah Alam.
 (Source: Tripadvisor, 2025)

I-City Shah Alam, famously known as the “City of Digital Lights”, is a leisure and lifestyle destination that has become a landmark for immersive night-time experiences in Malaysia. Its signature lighting concept transforms the urban park into a glowing wonderland through the use of over one million energy-efficient LED installations (i-City, 2021).

It is designed not only as a visual spectacle but also as an interactive environment, featuring thematic sculptures, illuminated trees, and dynamic displays that change with the seasons and special events. This combination of aesthetic creativity, sustainable technology, and experiential design makes i-City’s lighting a distinctive case study in contemporary urban placemaking and the integration of interior and exterior lighting.



Figure 6: i-City LED Lights
 (Source: Tripadvisor, 2025)

From a design perspective, the park integrates Human-Centred Design (HCD) principles that prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and emotional engagement (Ergonomics of Human-System Interaction, 2019). Clear pathways lit with warm-toned LEDs improve navigability for diverse groups, including children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, while ambient lighting in crowded spaces enhances safety and comfort.

The use of low-heat LED technology contributes to thermal comfort, especially for visitors strolling in the evenings. At the same time, dynamic light shows and themed seasonal displays evoke emotional responses such as wonder and excitement, fostering both repeat visitation and cultural resonance.

The design of i-City also responds to the contemporary tourist economy shaped by digital culture. Lighting installations are deliberately configured to be “photo-friendly,” optimizing angles and minimizing glare to encourage visitor photography.

This transforms guests into active promoters of the brand through user-generated social media content, thereby extending the visibility of the site beyond its physical boundaries. Moreover, the intuitive use of lighting as a spatial guide reduces the reliance on signage, leading visitors naturally from one attraction to another. Such strategies illustrate how i-City not only merges architecture with technology but also actively integrates user experience and digital engagement into its urban identity.

Table 1: Types of Lightings Used in I-City.

Lighting Type	Lighting Type
LED Light Installations	Creates immersive forests, sculptures, and seasonal displays with color dynamics
LED Thematic Structures	Festive lanterns enhance cultural and thematic storytelling
Water & Laser Shows	Combines lasers with water choreography for dramatic, multi-sensory illumination
LED Architectural Highlighting	Illuminates structures sustainably while reinforcing branding and atmosphere

The findings from the i-City study suggest that the innovative lighting solutions observed there could greatly improve the atmosphere and usability of Laman KAED in various ways. For example, these lighting options can be utilized to craft a more welcoming and captivating environment for visitors by accentuating architectural details and landscaping features.

Table 2: Types of Lightings Implemented in Laman KAED Beautification Design.

Type	Placement	Benefits
Solar Path Lights	Along the yellow-and-black curb or garden beds	Enhances safety, aesthetic appeal
Solar Wall Washers / Spotlights	Pointed at the "Laman KAED" signage or facade	Highlights architectural features
Solar Pole Lamps	Bus Cafe Area	Provides wider coverage for visibility
Solar String Lights / Decorative LEDs	Roof awning or trees	Creates ambient night-time charm

5.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and design-based case study approach to explore how the traditional kampung spirit may be reinterpreted within a contemporary public space at Laman KAED.

STAGE 1: PREPARATIONS

The preparation of references for this project is based on materials obtained from Laman KAED course briefing and lecture inputs. These sessions provided essential background knowledge on the project site, its design requirements, and the intended thematic direction. Information gathered from the briefings and lectures serves as the foundation for understanding the project objectives, guiding the development of the design concept, and ensuring that the proposal aligns with the academic and cultural framework set for Laman KAED.

STAGE 2: DATA COLLECTIONS

On this stage of process focuses on data collection, which begins with a literature review and a preliminary study. The preliminary study involves examining precedent and case studies, understanding client needs, identifying special requirements and regulations, as well as considering sustainability aspects such as SDG, ESG, and IIUM Sejahtera. This is followed by a detailed site analysis that looks into site inventory and zoning, user behavior, ventilation, circulation, features, and existing site issues to gather comprehensive information for the project.

STAGE 3: DESIGN PROPOSALS

The final stage of the design proposal involves several key steps to ensure a complete and refined outcome. It begins with developing the design concept, followed by consultation to gather feedback and improve ideas. Next, the project moves into design development, where details are worked out, and then into design finalization, where the proposal is polished and completed. Finally, the work is prepared for submission in different formats such as an Magazine, Design Ideals Journal, poster, or technical report.

6.0 SITE ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

6.1 ANALYSIS OF THE SITE

The Laman KAED is a landscape for exhibition place of the Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design (KAED) at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Gombak campus. It serves a function as a platform for students and staffs to showcase their creative works, conduct design-related events, and experience learning outside the classroom. The space reflects cultural and environmental values, often inspired by local traditions and Islamic principles.



Figure 7 :Laman KAED

Nevertheless, the existence of The Bus Cafe at Laman KAED is a creative reuse project that transforms an old bus into a vibrant social space for students and visitors. Students or outside vendors can use the opportunity to expand their business to generate their income. For example, such as student open a kiosk or outside tenderers have food trucks or stalls during events or during normal days. By this, it encourages students entrepreneurship skills, creativity, and collaboration with students aligning with KAED's vision which is hands-on learning. The landscape and environment of the Laman KAED provide a welcoming vibes and a spot for gathering, discussion, and relaxation, blending functionality with cultural and environmental awareness.



Figure 8 : Laman KAED Leisure Area

Laman KAED is strategically located within the heart of the KAED compound, making it easily accessible to students, staff, and visitors for various academic and social activities. Designed with an eco-friendly approach, the area incorporates green landscapes, shaded walkways, and open spaces that encourage natural ventilation and reduce reliance on artificial cooling. Its layout fosters interaction and community engagement, while the surrounding greenery creates a refreshing environment that supports relaxation and outdoor learning. The integration of sustainable elements, such as adaptive reuse structures, native plants, and energy-conscious design, positions Laman KAED as not only a functional gathering space but also serves as an example of environmentally responsible planning.

6.2 FINDINGS

Table 3: SWOT Analysis.

CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTIONS
STRENGTH	Strategic Location: Situated within the KAED compound, easily accessible to students, staff, and visitors.
WEAKNESS	Limited Facilities: May lack permanent infrastructure such as weatherproof seating, lighting, or proper utilities to support large-scale activities.
OPPORTUNITIES	Entrepreneurial Growth: Expansion of student-run creative stalls during events to generate income.
THREATS	Weather Dependency: Outdoor setting makes activities vulnerable to heavy rain or extreme heat, which may reduce usability.

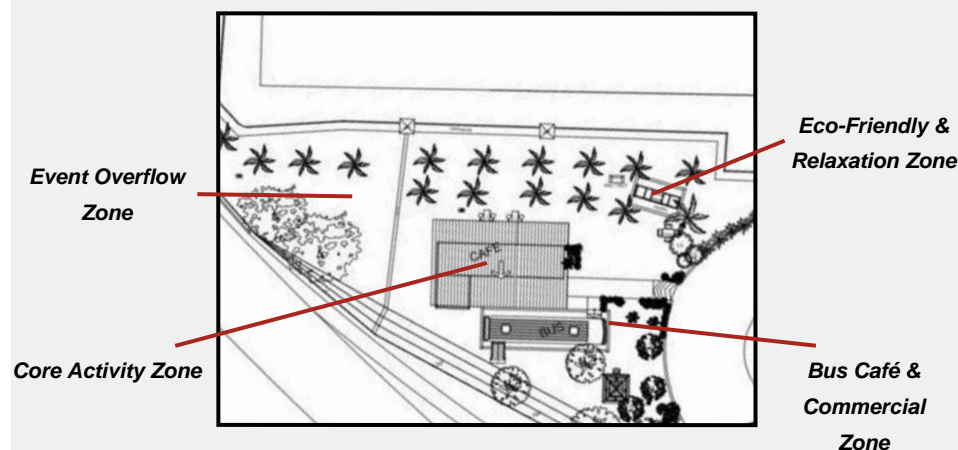


Figure 9: Overview of The Laman KAED Layout showing The Arrangement of The Key Areas

Table 4: Zone Analysis

ZONE	DESCRIPTIONS
Core Activity Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The heart of Laman KAED, designed as the main open plaza for flexible use. Leverages the strengths of accessibility and centrality. Its open space allows dynamic rearrangement depending on the event size. Functions: Exhibitions, academic showcases, outdoor lectures, communal activities, and design workshops.
Bus Café & Commercial Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located around the repurposed Bus Café, this zone anchors social and entrepreneurial activities. Opportunities for student entrepreneurship and creates an iconic attraction at Laman KAED. Functions: Food stalls, kiosks, food trucks, and student businesses.

Eco-Friendly & Relaxation Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The greener peripheral areas with gazebos, shaded walkways, and trees. Builds on the strength of Laman KAED's eco-friendly landscape, while enhancing its identity as a sustainable space. Functions: Quiet study areas, group discussions, and eco-learning.
Event Overflow Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open lawn area on the lower edge of the site, adaptable for temporary functions Mitigates threats of space constraints by providing a flexible buffer zone for expansion.

7.0 DISCUSSION

The findings from the literature review, case studies, and site analysis highlight the importance of integrating cultural identity, sustainability, and functionality in the beautification of Laman KAED. The existing site offers strong potential as a communal hub but faces challenges such as limited infrastructure, weak visual identity, and weather dependency.

Precedent studies, such as the reinterpretation of Malay vernacular architecture and the innovative lighting strategies from i-City, demonstrate how traditional values and modern technology can be harmonized to create meaningful, vibrant spaces. Moreover, the inclusion of entrepreneurship opportunities aligns with IIUM's holistic educational vision, reinforcing the role of Laman KAED not only as a place for learning and leisure but also as a platform for economic growth and community engagement.

These insights provide the foundation for the development of a concept proposal that addresses current issues while celebrating cultural heritage and sustainability.

8.0 DESIGN CONCEPT

PROJECT NAME: KAMPONG KITA

8.1 CONCEPT STATEMENT

The concept of Kampong Kita is rooted in Kampong Life, inspired by Lat's The Kampung Boy, which reflects the warmth, simplicity, and communal spirit of the traditional Malay village. At Laman KAED, this kampung spirit is reinterpreted through site circulation that mirrors the spatial qualities of traditional Malay houses. Furthermore, this orientation not only organizes movement but also symbolizes unity, direction, and belonging, shaping the space into a welcoming ground for the KAED community.

8.2 DESIGN STATEMENT

The proposed bamboo pavilion at Laman KAED integrates traditional Malay architectural values with contemporary sustainable design strategies. Constructed primarily from locally sourced bamboo, the pavilion promotes natural ventilation, passive shading, and environmental responsiveness while simultaneously reflecting cultural identity and local craftsmanship.



Figure 10: The Design Concept Visualization and The Related SDGs.

8.3 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

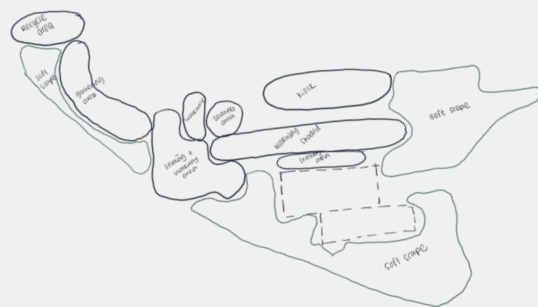


Figure 11: Bubble Diagram.

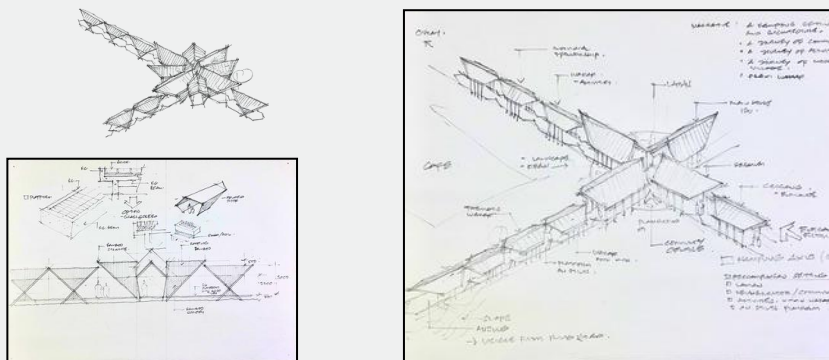


Figure 12 & 13: Development of The Design.

9.0 DESIGN FINALIZATION

Kampung Kita draws inspiration from Lat's The Kampung Boy, reflecting the warmth, simplicity, and communal spirit of the Malay village. At Laman KAED, this spirit is reinterpreted through site circulation, symbolizing unity, direction, and belonging while shaping a welcoming space for the KAED community.



Figure 14: Kampung Boy.
 (Source: IMDB, n/a)

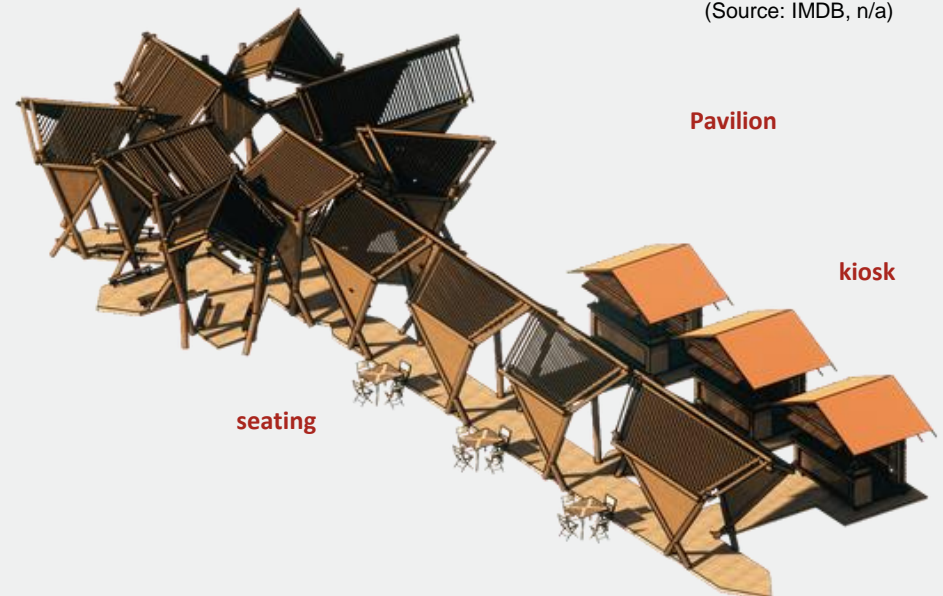


Figure 15: Axonometric View of Kampung Kita.



Figure 16: Axonometric View of The Kiosks.



Figure 17: Axonometric View of The Recycle Waste Area.



Figure 18: Axonometric View of The Pangkin under The Coconut Tree.



Figure 19: Perspective View of The Kiosks (i).



Figure 20: Perspective View of The Kiosks (ii).

Figure 21: Perspective View of The Recycle and Pangkin Zone.



Figure 22: Perspective View of The Pavilion Seating.

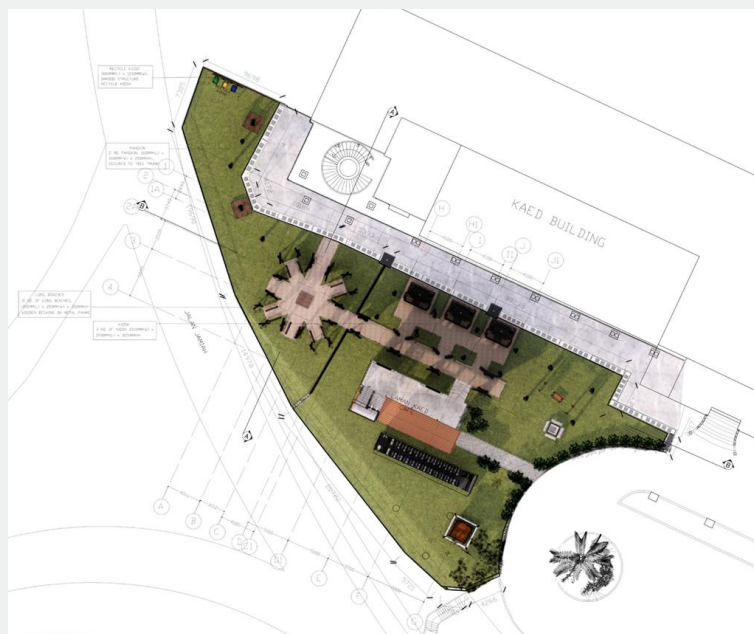


Figure 23: Rendered Floor Plan.



SECTION A-A'
NOT TO SCALE

Figure 24: Section A-A'



SECTION B-B'
NOT TO SCALE

Figure 25: Section B-B'



NORTH ELEVATION
NOT TO SCALE

Figure 26: North Elevation.



EAST ELEVATION
NOT TO SCALE

Figure 27: East Elevation.

CONCLUSION

The Kampong Kita pavilion proposal at Laman KAED envisions a harmonious integration of tradition, sustainability, and innovation in design. By utilizing locally sourced bamboo and incorporating passive strategies such as natural ventilation, shading, and orientation to the Qibla, the pavilion is intended to embody the cultural essence of Malay kampung houses while addressing the climatic needs of Malaysia. As a proposed communal hub, it aspires to serve not only as a space for learning, interaction, and cultural exchange among students, but also as a future cultural landmark and event venue that can support community programs and income-generating activities. Ultimately, this proposal aims to demonstrate how vernacular values may be reinterpreted into contemporary contexts, offering a vision of Laman KAED as a vibrant ground where heritage, sustainability, and innovation converge.

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