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## TODs need to be redefined

The Star



**Sustainable development:** Penang Sentral is a prime example of a TOD. Avenue K shopping mall is the only TOD in KL that has the station directly beneath it, said David (inset).



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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Over the recent few years, many property stakeholders have jumped on to the transit-oriented development (TOD) bandwagon without giving it much afterthought. Property developers leveraged on TODs because such developments are excellent marketing tools as homebuyers and investors buy into the concept of being able to easily use public transportation as a means to get around.

However, the real purpose of TODs is to help cut down energy consumption and thus reduce pollution and carbon footprint.

"This aspect of TODs has been lost in translation," said Veritas Design Group founder and group president and director David Mizan Hashim.

There seems to be a dispute over plot ratios and higher density rather than looking at how TODs can solve environmental issues and help to alleviate traffic problems by encouraging the use of public transportation, he said.

He said there appears to be a contradictory scenario where TODs are built with more parking bays to support the higher resident density.

"Why do you call it a TOD when you are still relying on cars? In-

creasing the number of car parks to match the density that is not what a TOD is all about," he said.

Veritas Architects Sdn Bhd principal Ng Yiek Seng said that "if you get the fundamentals wrong, you will always get them wrong".

Strong political will, he added, is needed to push such developments in the right direction.

Veritas Design Group principal and sustainable director Syah Kamaruddin pointed out that one of the main emphases of TODs is to build sustainable communities.

"We should look at low carbon communities where people can work, live and play within the same environment," he said.

Ng said town planners and the local government need to look at each MRT or LRT station and analyse what is needed there to ensure sustainability.

"For example, you cannot have a hospital at every station as that is not sustainable," he said.

Essential services that require a bigger population to sustain can be spread out so that people can have medical access three or four stops away.

"If you have good urban mobility,

you don't need to move around so much on any kind of transportation because you can walk anywhere - to work, to the shops, to the hospital and to school," said David.

"That is the biggest impact that TODs will have and it is on reducing pollution and carbon footprint."

One of the issues with TODs is the loose application of its definition and developers and stakeholders have taken advantage of this, according to David.

"Let's take the MRT and LRT stations in Central Market. Does this make Central Market a TOD?"

"No new building has been built but the availability of the MRT and LRT has created a certain uplifting of the whole area. It's a kind of TOD but it only came afterwards."

"Have they benefited from it? Of course, they have," he said.

The recently completed Penang Sentral completes the meaning of a TOD, which has connectivity and businesses around the hub.

Another good example is Ativo Suites in Damansara Avenue in Bandar Sri Damansara here, which is due to be completed soon.

He noted that both projects are undertaken by Veritas.