



PRESS RELEASE

Sustainable Urban Development in Ha Noi: The Essence of Ecological and Social Approaches

Ha Noi, May 29, 2024 – A significant number of local residents in the riverine areas along the Red River banks in the Hoan Kiem district of Ha Noi want these areas to be transformed into public amenities, including playgrounds, sports facilities, riverside walks, ecological areas and forest gardens. Many express a readiness to engage in community initiatives aimed at revitalizing these areas and enhancing environmental cleanliness through activities such as weekly cleanups, media campaigns, and the monitoring and reporting of environmental infractions. The community's aspirations and proactive stance lay a solid groundwork for municipal authorities to devise holistic strategies for the Red River banks' redevelopment, thereby fostering Hanoi's economic, social, cultural, and ecological progress.

These research insights were disseminated during the seminar "**Ecological and Social Approaches to Sustainable and Inclusive Cities: Ha Noi's Experience in Stakeholder Engagement in Greening**", hosted by the Livable Hanoi Network and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam on May 29.

Over the past months, the Livable Hanoi Network, in collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture and Planning at Hanoi University of Civil Engineering and GreenHub, undertook a survey assessing the environmental state and spatial utilization within the Red River's riverine stretches in Phuc Tan and Chuong Duong wards, Hoan Kiem district. This endeavor received support from UNDP in Viet Nam with funding provided by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The survey's report offers a portrayal of the environmental conditions and local inhabitants' visions for the Red River's sustainable evolution, in addition to showcasing exemplary practices that could bolster Ha Noi's sustainable urban development objectives.

Survey findings indicate a critical level of pollution in the riverine zones, characterized by extensive, longstanding accumulations of solid waste and the discharge of untreated sewage, which exudes noxious odors and profoundly impairs the quality of life for the area's residents. Addressing these issues necessitates comprehensive remedial measures. Interviews conducted with 308 locals within the survey scope disclosed that 59% experienced adverse effects from solid waste contamination, 21% from wastewater, and 25% from air pollution. The unchecked presence of solid waste, plastic debris, and domestic sewage is cited as the primary impediment

to capitalizing on a large potential green area near Ha Noi's city center for its sustainable advancement.

Surveyed residents also expressed their willingness to participate in environmental management once the riverbanks are redeveloped. Up to 76% of respondents indicated they are interested and willing to engage in various environmental sanitation activities, ranging from weekly cleanups to raising community awareness, and monitoring and reporting violations.

Furthermore, there is a significant and diverse demand for public space use among residents of the Red River banks. Up to 82% of respondents believe that public spaces are important or very important to their lives. However, the quantity and quality of public facilities in the area are very limited, small, and difficult to access, particularly for groups such as the elderly, the disabled, and those with weak health.

When asked about their desires for the redevelopment of the riverine areas, most expressed a wish for playgrounds, sports facilities, riverside promenades, ecological areas, or forest gardens. In-depth interviews revealed that local residents highly value the natural aspects of the riverbanks, including vegetation, birds, and squirrels. Many believe that preservation should be a priority, as these are valuable assets not only for the riverine areas but also for Ha Noi city.

Sharing the research findings, **Mr. Le Quang Binh**, coordinator of the Livable Hanoi Network, stated: *"This research was undertaken to offer a comprehensive view of environmental management via spatial renovation with active community participation. It also serves as an exercise in social inclusion, as the research involved local authorities, residents, students, lecturers, and experts in disciplines such as planning, ecology, environment, and sociology. This approach ensures that the survey results embody diverse viewpoints, leading to the proposition of more holistic and inclusive solutions."*

Considering the current environmental, economic, and social conditions of the Red River banks, the research team has put forward a series of recommendations to the People's Committee of Hoan Kiem District and its Bureau of Natural Resources and Environment. These recommendations focus on environmental management and the redevelopment of green spaces to preserve the local ecology and expand public spaces for residents. The proposed solutions draw on international experiences with public spaces, tailored to the unique aspects of the riverine areas, and align with the legal framework and development strategy for the Red River outlined by Ha Noi's municipal government.

Dr. Arch. Pham Anh Tuan, a member of the research team, highlighted: *"The riverine areas, serving as a flood corridor along the Red River and protecting Ha Noi, are currently afflicted with severe air, soil, and water pollution. However, this area also possesses immense potential for the*

development of ecological riverside public spaces that cater to the local community's activity needs. A comprehensive approach to addressing the environmental pollution will rejuvenate the Red River, transforming it into a vital and ecologically significant corridor for Ha Noi."

At the seminar, **Ms. Sabina Stein**, Head of the Governance and Participation Team at UNDP in Viet Nam, expressed: "At UNDP, we echo the residents' vision of the Red River banks as beacons of sustainable development, contributing to Ha Noi's economic, social, and cultural prosperity. In collaboration with the authorities of Ha Noi and Hoan Kiem District, we all aspire to realize this vision."

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