

That Luang marsh to become Vientiane's showpiece

Plans to turn Vientiane's That Luang marsh into an attractive urban development envisage an area of green spaces, wetlands, a public park, new roads, residential areas, and commercial centers.



An artist's concept of the That Luang marsh development in central Vientiane.

A Japanese company has drawn up plans that are intended to serve as a guideline for the sustainable development of the marsh until 2030.

At the end of last year, government officials gathered in Vientiane to finalize the plan before submitting it to the government for approval this year.

The plan would divide That Luang marsh into five zones, covering an area of 2,200 hectares, of which 660 hectares would be dry land and the rest wetlands.

A commercial zone is planned in the vicinity of the That Luang sputa and the Lao Stock Exchange. A second zone is located near to a planned railway station and includes a residential area and trading centers.

The third zone is close to the marsh itself and includes cultural attractions and residential areas, as well as green spaces. The fourth zone is designed to be a peaceful area that features a residential area, along with commercial and government offices.

The fifth zone is an industrial zone that will be located near the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge and also include an amusement park and residential area.

The plan also incorporates 27 roads, of which three will be six-lane roads.

One of these six-lane roads will link the Phonthan T-junction through the marsh to the villages of Nonvay and Nakhuy and then join the 450 Year Road. Construction work is expected to begin soon.

There is an estimation of total investment, at least one trillion kip will be needed to develop this area. It is envisaged that about 55,000 people would live in the new development.

As stipulated in the plan, the level of the marsh will be lowered by one meter by digging down to that depth. Some participants at the meeting presented plans on how canals would drain the water so as to prevent flooding in Vientiane.

That Luang marsh is considered to be the lungs of Vientiane and the sink that drains the city's waste water. The marsh helps to prevent Vientiane from flooding, so it is essential that sound plans are drawn up for its development.

According to a 2009 survey, Vientiane covers 3,920 sq km and has a population of 795,000. Authorities believe the population will double by 2030.

The authorities plan to create several urban sub-centers to address these issues and make the city more livable and ensure that facilities are accessible to local residents.

Most people agree that if That Luang marsh is developed as planned, Vientiane could be one of the most livable and sustainable cities in the region.

Lao Embassy, January 3, 2012