

**FOCUS GROUP ON SUSTAINABILITY & IDENTITY FOR CONCEPT PLAN
REVIEW 2011
- SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

INTRODUCTION

We aspire to be a home that is endearing, enchanting and inspiring to all Singaporeans. To ensure that our home remains this way far into the future, we must also strive to maintain a home that is environmentally and socially sustainable.

The challenge is to realise this aspiration and in doing so, also manage the impact of environmental and climate change and the physical and social transformation of Singapore. The key factor is the engagement of all segments of our society, including the government, businesses, community groups, households and individuals, to create a home with which we establish endearing and meaningful connections.

APPROACH

Convened in Jan 2010, the Focus Group considered current policies and strategies as well as findings from URA's Lifestyle Survey and Online Survey. Site visits were also conducted.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Focus Group's two main thrusts were to consider:

(A) Building a sustainable city

1. Strengthen green infrastructure
2. Foster more sharing and ownership of sustainable practices

(B) Making Singapore an endearing home

1. Cherish and safeguard our built and natural heritage
2. Enhance our people's experience of our built and natural heritage
3. Involve the community in shaping an endearing Singapore

A) BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE CITY

Environmental sustainability is important for our future and it makes good economic sense as well. It is the right and responsible thing to do. What policies and practices are needed to make sustainable living a part of Singaporean lifestyle?

1) Strengthen green infrastructure

(a) Get more green buildings and take a lifecycle approach:

Currently, Singapore's Green Mark scheme encourages developers to adopt green building standards and features for new and existing buildings. While more and more developers of new buildings have subscribed to the Green Mark Scheme, we should step up efforts to further incentivise owners and tenants of existing buildings to adopt green building features. We should also look at the entire lifecycle of a building – from design and planning, to construction, operation and maintenance – and consider the resources used and the impact of the building on biodiversity and the environment.

We should also review the land tender system to include green building criteria so as to encourage developers to incorporate more green building design features in their developments.

(b) Promote the use of environmentally friendly transport:

More people should take public transport, walk or cycle, rather than use private transport. To encourage more people to use public transport, fares should be reduced and public transport should be made more convenient, frequent and comfortable. For example, multi-modal season passes can be introduced to allow for unlimited travel to be made across different transport modes within a designated time period, say a day, and economical shuttle services to MRT/LRT stations can be provided. Car parking policies should be reviewed to discourage the use of private transport, for example by reducing the number of car parking lots or by charging higher car parking fees in the city and town centres.

We should encourage cycling and walking by making it safer and more comfortable to do so. A dedicated bicycle lane network is necessary, for example like those found in other cities such as Osaka, Amsterdam and Sydney. We should have more parking facilities for bicycles which are also more secure and space efficient. Changing facilities should also be introduced for cyclists. Walking connections could be shaded and protected from direct sun and rain.

(c) Establish an islandwide waste-reduction and recycling programme for the community:

We should encourage more people to reduce waste and recycle more in Singapore. The various recycling efforts should be addressed in a holistic manner as part of a national programme. We can look at a comprehensive

infrastructure to support the recycling programme. Adequate and accessible recycling facilities should be provided across Singapore. Recycling facilities could be located at public transport nodes with rebates on public transport fares to encourage recycling. Facilities for the separation of recyclable wastes should also be provided in public housing estates so that sorting can be carried out at source.

Disincentives like higher waste disposal fees tied to the amount of trash collected from each household can help to reduce wastage of resources. We could consider giving incentive schemes for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which deal with waste reduction and recycling. We should also encourage the re-use of waste products as inputs for other industries to help minimize waste.

(d) Grow demand for green products and energy sources:

We should encourage people and businesses in Singapore to buy more green products. Though green products may cost a bit more, if people are more aware of the benefits of protecting our living environment, they would be more willing to participate. Appropriate procurement procedures and incentives to obtain products from environmentally-friendly sources must be introduced to encourage our people to use more green products. Besides educating consumers, a reliable green accreditation body and system should be set up to encourage the growth of green consumerism.

We should also promote the use of cleaner and renewable energy sources such as solar energy or biogas for the generation of electricity.

2) Foster More Sharing and Ownership of Sustainable Practices

(a) Promote more community initiatives:

There are many on-going community efforts and initiatives on environmental sustainability, such as promoting recycling and reducing energy consumption among the households. We should find ways to communicate and share ideas with one another on how to do more.

Processes and mechanisms for everyone to work together on environmental initiatives should be developed to enable and encourage the sharing of such ideas across groups and organisations, including government agencies, businesses, community groups and schools. We can also tap on the mass media to further promote environmental awareness among the public.

(b) Facilitate local communities to take ownership of the environment:

We all have a role to play in making Singapore environmentally friendly as Singapore is our home. Being sustainable begins with each person, household, and business. In choosing how we live our lives and conduct our businesses, we should try to see how we can fit and adapt to the natural environment rather than to expend resources on technologies to alter the environment to fit us.

We should also empower residents to take ownership of improving our living environment. For example, we could make it easier for residents to set up community gardens in their estates. We should also recognise individuals and local communities that have contributed significantly to our environmental sustainability efforts.

B) MAKING SINGAPORE AN ENDEARING HOME

Singapore is famous for being clean, green, safe, and meticulously planned. What is it about Singapore, however, that makes it special – endearing – to us, and how can we keep it that way?

1) Cherish and safeguard our built and natural heritage

Singapore has much built and natural heritage which can contribute to an increased sense of belonging to Singapore. These include our historic districts (such as Chinatown, Kampong Glam and Little India) and monuments (such as the old Supreme Court and City Hall), local areas of identity (such as Thomson Village, Joo Chiat, and Changi Village) and iconic structures (such as Esplanade and Merlion), public housing estates, parks and waterbodies, and nature reserves/areas (for example Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and Pulau Ubin).

Our historic districts should continue to be relevant to our people in terms of their activities and uses. A Heritage Charter jointly drawn up by the public, private and people sectors can be introduced to guide the kinds of activities and uses to be allowed in heritage areas, for example historic districts. We should respect certain monuments when considering the type of uses to allow in their vicinity. While the kind of activities and trades in historic districts would have to stay relevant with changing needs, the key traditional trades and activities within historic districts should be retained to better differentiate these areas from other places. The activities in our local areas of identity should complement the character of the surroundings. We also need to develop more iconic structures.

What is also unique about Singapore are our public housing estates, where more than 80% of Singaporeans live. We should retain significant buildings and iconic structures in such estates even as we rejuvenate them so that they are differentiated and distinctive in the eyes of those who lived there. Popular facilities that anchor people to our housing estates should be retained and enhanced so that they remain relevant to the needs of the people, such as schools, wet markets and hawker centres and town centres/squares. Original names of places and streets can also be retained to strengthen our sense of identity.

Singapore's image as a City in a Garden can be further strengthened to make Singapore even more distinctive and to enhance our sense of belonging to Singapore. We should make our parks more distinctive by designating parks with national or historical significance as 'National Parks'. Town parks in public housing estates should also be made more distinctive through a combination of waterbodies, activities, landscaping, and greenery that reflect the history of the town.

Our natural heritage is also an important aspect of what makes Singapore distinctive and endearing. We should give stronger and more explicit emphasis to recognizing the role of our natural heritage in creating an

endearing home. While much biodiversity on land has been retained, we should also retain and protect more of our remaining marine biodiversity. We should also consider how biodiversity can be promoted in our urban environment at 3 levels: (a) local, such as the incorporation of green features into our buildings including green roofs, skyrise gardens, and green walls, (b) district or regional, by including the connectivity of green spaces as part of the general planning guidelines, and (c) system-level, by thinking of and planning green spaces as urban ecosystems that support biodiversity and provide key ecological services to people.

2) Enhance our people's experience of our built and natural heritage

(a) Raise awareness of endearing places:

Our built and natural heritage is what makes Singapore an endearing home to us. We should strengthen the sense of belonging and connection with our built and natural heritage by fostering greater awareness of their value, making these places more accessible to the people, and by making these places come alive through activities and events.

We should introduce more signage and storyboards including audio features, in historic districts and local areas of identity to raise knowledge and awareness of their historical and social significance. Partnerships with special interest and learned groups could be cultivated. More walking tours can be conducted by community groups and educational centres located in historic districts to encourage people to find out more about the significance of these places. Local residents who are interested could be trained as guides and rewarded and recognised for their efforts.

There can be greater integration of local history into the rejuvenation plans for housing estates, for example through sculptures, public art and buildings, to raise awareness of the history of the towns. New residents should be introduced to the history and heritage of the town, through printed guides and invitations to events. We should also encourage more small-scale private museums and "collectibles showcases" in relevant places to raise awareness and promote the value of arts and heritage around Singapore.

(b) Improve accessibility for all:

Our parks and greenery make Singapore distinctive as a garden city. We should encourage more people to visit our parks by introducing more basic facilities such as restrooms, rest points and shelters, especially with our ageing population in mind. We should also allow more people to enjoy our rich biodiversity with more treetop walks and boardwalks. We have a comprehensive park connector network which we can tap on to make our parks more accessible. The park connector network should also be enhanced to provide better accessibility to parks and other town facilities. Commuter links within the town should also be developed with green foliage cover to cool such access routes. In developing new town facilities

(such as libraries and hospitals), we should also ensure that these are well-integrated with existing town facilities and community spaces.

(c) Inject greater vibrancy for unique experiences:

We should bring back more life to our heritage districts by introducing more live-in population, with an eye to enhancing the authenticity of life in these districts. Activities and events that complement the character of the parks and waterbodies should be developed, such as outdoor activities like tree climbing, arts and cultural performances, to add vibrancy. Town squares, void decks and community gathering spaces should be retained or re-introduced within public housing estates to promote social interaction and vibrancy.

3) Involve the community in shaping an endearing Singapore

(a) Seek greater involvement of local communities, schools, stakeholders and NGOs in designing and managing endearing spaces:

We should continue to engage our local communities and stakeholders in cherishing and safeguarding our built and natural heritage, including the cultivation of a friendly and safe environment through mutual help, respect and vigilance. There should also be more concerted engagement of schools and NGOs in efforts to strengthen the local identity. Partnerships should be actively encouraged with a diversity of interest groups, both those located in the neighbourhood and those that have special interests in the subject.

(b) Develop greater stakeholder participation in place management:

While there is a role for the government to initiate place management efforts to actively guide the development of historic districts, we should encourage the community and private sector to take greater initiative and ownership of their historic districts. For a start, the government agencies could work with local stakeholders and set up a framework for place management for selected areas. Over the medium term, the local stakeholders should take over the management process to manage and guide the evolution of these areas.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

More details on the Focus Group's recommendations will be shared at the public forum on 6 May 2010 for public feedback. In the meantime, we welcome views from the public. Please send in your comments to the following link: <http://spring.ura.gov.sg/conceptplan2011/publicforum/>. The feedback received will be considered by the Focus Group for incorporation in its final report.