

No. 42, 43, 44 & 45 MOSQUE STREET

Rising To New Ambitions



2006 AWARD

CATEGORY A

Owner:
A.C.T. Holdings Pte Ltd

Architect:
Liu & Wo Architects Pte Ltd

Engineer:
Mega Consult

Contractor:
Soon Soon Lee Construction Pte Ltd

*L*ocated within the historic Chinatown, these architectural gems were once used as homes of Customs Officers during the British Colonial days. Today, they have received a new lease of life as upscale apartments at the upper storeys and commercial shop spaces below.

Rebuilding The Empire

Built in the 1930s, these two pairs of four-storey shophouses of reinforced concrete frame were in a dilapidated state when its new owner bought them in 2002. Despite the years of neglect, they were still structurally sound, allowing the owner to focus on reconfiguring their interior spaces for modern usage.

The Top-Down approach in restoration was observed. The roof was reinstated to its original condition with replacement clay tiles added where necessary. Timber rafters in the roof were retained and reinforced with steel. The entire structure was strengthened using reinforced concrete beams and micro-bored piling. At ground level, the shopfronts were fitted with glass framed in timber while timber screen doors were added to the apartment stairway entrances. The five-foot way retiled with new terra-cotta tiles complete with pebblewash borders served as a welcoming space to visitors and the public. Externally, the unique timber windows with decorative heart-shaped perforation were retained, restored and painted in red colour with deep green trims. The ornamental details on the external columns were carefully cleaned and



Shophouses restored to original character

retouched, and the façade details and walls were given the much-needed repair.

Filling In The Future

Within, the existing staircases leading to the five-foot way were retained. Their timber balustrades were retained and painstakingly returned to their original condition. A modern lift was sensitively inserted within the tight confine of the existing staircase core to serve the twenty-two apartments. The original vents were thoroughly

cleaned and fitted with glazed panels for air-conditioning purposes.

The rear courts were roofed over to create more viable commercial space at the first storey and roof terraces introduced at the second storey level serve as green spaces and an urban haven for apartments above. In reconfiguring the interior spaces, a double volume space was created at the fourth storey where parts of the original concrete roof slab under the pitched roof had been removed and jack roofs added for better headroom and increased natural lighting. Structural and technical challenges were cleverly resolved without compromising the integrity and quality of the original structure.

Modern City Living

The urban landscape in Chinatown has recovered a dash of its original character through this beautiful restoration. The Empire Lofts project has literally raised the bar for restoration to lofty new heights.



Character of external facade with original vents and windows retained and restored



Decorative heart-shaped perforation



New signboard



Living room within upscale apartment



Modern lift sensitively inserted into staircase core



Unique timber window



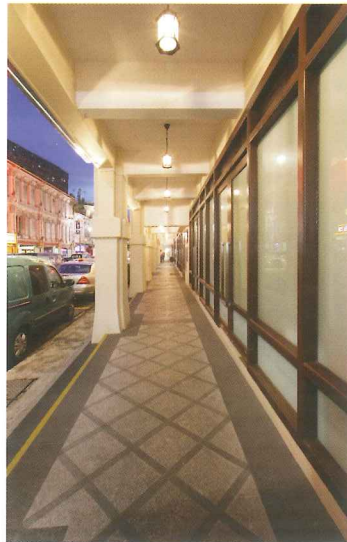
Outdoor jacuzzi at roof terrace



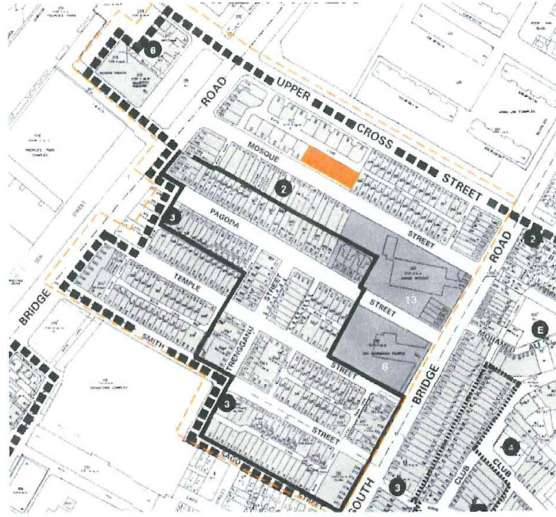
Double volume space within existing fourth storey apartment



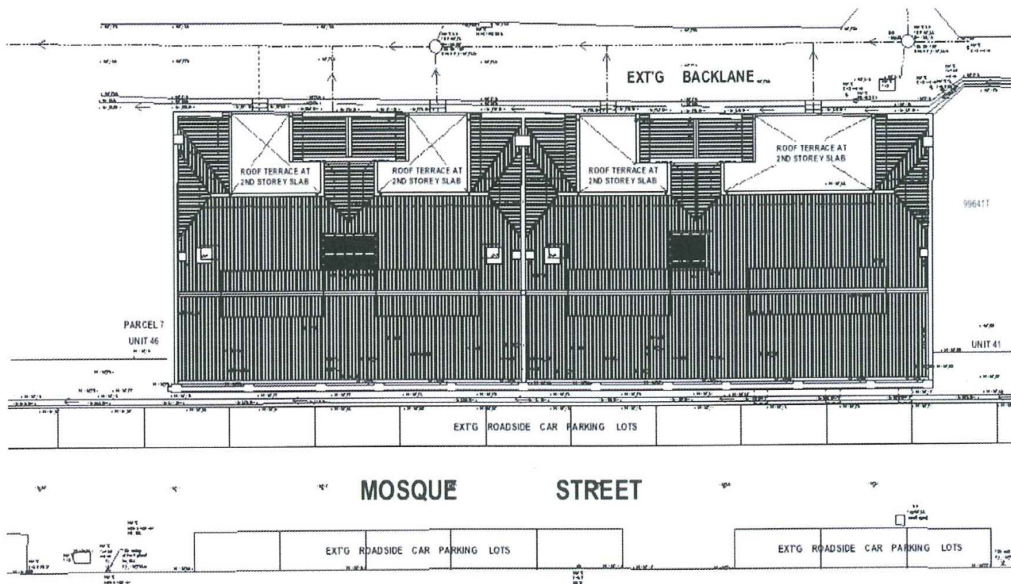
Landscape roof terrace for communal activities



Five-foot way transformed to a welcoming space



The project is located along Mosque Street, in one of the quieter stretches in the Historic Chinatown District.



No. 42-45 Mosque Street were originally two pairs of four storey structures and were part of ten such similar buildings bounded by Upper Cross Street, New Bridge Road and Mosque Street.

The design and layouts of these buildings are almost identical. They were paired structures with two main units on each level served by a common stair. The units were subdivided into rooms which served as living quarters.

The area around the site once housed stables for horses. Hakkas, who were mainly blacksmiths also congregated in this area. The site was earlier occupied by Chinese and Tamil Schools.



These buildings were built in the 1930s by the precursor of the Housing Development Board, the Singapore Improvement Trust, to house civil servants from the Customs Department during the British colonial days.

A unique development made then by the Singapore Improvement Trust, was the introduction of wide backlanes to these buildings which allowed lorries access to remove nightsoil, and thus improving sanitary conditions for the living quarters. For the residents, the backlanes became an avenue for interaction, activities and storage.

Subsequently, these buildings housed retirees and the lower income families. In 2002, URA put these building up as conservation properties for tender. The developer, A.C.T Holdings Pte Ltd, seized opportunity to transform these dilapidated buildings into gems in the heart of the historic Chinatown.