

No. 82 JELlicoe ROAD

The Revitalised Row



Owner:
Capitaland Residential Singapore

Architect:
DP Architects Pte Ltd

Engineer:
Tham & Wong LLP

Contractor:
Dragages Singapore Pte Ltd

Once a row of 16 motor workshops, the reconfigured ten units of double and triple storey pre-war shophouses have been transformed into high-end townhouses anchoring a modern high-rise residential development, Citylights.

A New Shine

Built at a time when engineers commonly doubled up as architects, this row of 1920s

Art Deco shophouses by the Swiss engineer, Hendrich Rudolf Arbenz, are of the typical elongated, single-stacked layout. Flanked by 2 three-storey units, the intermediary units are double-storeyed. Unlike most shophouses of their time, these have individual gabled roofs that together lend the building façade a rare zig-zag roof profile. This uniqueness was sensitively retained as were other original elements such as intricate woodwork, concrete motifs and clay tiled roofs (on the 2 side units). New materials introduced were carefully integrated to maintain the simple and clean look, true to the original.

Interlocking Magic

Inside is where the magic happens. The typical deep linear plan of each unit has been cleverly re-organised into 2 types of interlocking L- and I-shape layouts. The result is a choice of 2 layouts, a wide top storey or a wide lower



Double and triple storey shophouses restored into modern premium homes

storey. This ingenious solution has dramatically improved the interior spatial quality and it affords the residents a choice of spaces to match their taste and lifestyle preferences.

To introduce more light and circulation into the otherwise dark and poorly ventilated spaces, a series of open-air terraces, 'secret gardens' and 'sky windows' were created. Modern elements, such as steel

staircases, further lighten the interior spaces, replacing the original dark and narrow stairways.

Memory Lane

At the entrance of each unit, the original narrow footway arcades have been converted into delightful private green patios that lead into the verdant surrounds. This detail has recaptured the invaluable shophouse 'street' experience of old in a new context. The roof of the new car park fronting these units is also transformed into a landscaped deck with attractive communal facilities, enhancing the overall setting of the integrated development.

Contrasted with sleek and modern residential towers within the same development, the revitalised row now holds its own again, this time as premium modern homes with a rich architectural heritage.



Aerial view of integrated old and new development with attractive landscape and water features



Zig-zag gabled roof and façade detailing repaired and restored



Façade of corner unit



First storey façade with perforated parapet at protruding balcony above



Landscaped deck with attractive communal facilities at car park roof fronting conservation buildings



Internal courtyard of second storey L-shaped unit with wide top



New circulatory and service elements integrated within rear courts



Naturally-lit double-volume spaces enhance connectivity between levels



Previous walkway space converted to new terrace space

INTRODUCTION

Built before the 2nd World War, these 16 shop-houses in *Citylights* Condominium development certainly exudes a unique charm of old Singapore. The integration of these conserved shophouses within the condominium development is a part of URA's sales site requirement; aim to reinforce URA's Identity Plan for the site - to retain qualities of the place by developing the 'new' with the 'old'. Recognising this intention, the design of the development has been carefully considered – through introduction of various architectural concepts to make it relevant for contemporary living patterns, whilst respecting and preserving the key essence of existing shophouses that makes them so unique.

HISTORY

History of Site:

The *Citylights* conserved shophouses are located within a neighbourhood previously known as Lavender Area. In the early 1900s, the Lavender Area was a fishing village and during the colonial rule, with the influx of settlements of essentially Chinese immigrants, shophouses with various amenities, such as manufacturing and go downs and accommodations for these workers, started to emerge in the surrounding. After the colonial rule in the 1950s, it continues to evolve into what it was more known for, the light industrial district, its eclectic mix of hardware shops, go-downs, gas works.

There were a myriad of shops and industries, varying from hardware and engineering, to manufacturing, to live poultry supply and local craft shops. Some of the old trades such as the hardware and manufacturing stores stay remain in the vicinity, although the go downs have been relocated and gas works have been shut down years ago.

History of Building:

These 16 pre-war shophouses were built in the late 1920s, by Swiss engineer *Hendrich Rudolf Arbenz*. While most of the shop-houses in the neighbourhood have been demolished over the past 20 years, these pre-war shophouses had been classified by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) as Art Deco style¹ and were gazetted for conservation in February 2000.

¹ The Art Deco movement manifested between the period of 1910 to 1930s where the term "Art Deco" was derived in 1925 at the Paris exhibition, *the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, and the style culminated at the New York World's Fair in 1939. This period of design and style did not just affect architecture; it also greatly influenced the field of fine and applied arts, furniture, sculpture, clothing, jewellery and graphic design of the past and remains as a widely sought-after style in present days.

EXISTING ARCHITECTURAL QUALITIES

1) Facade and External features

The row of shop-houses exhibits a unique architectural style, unlike the "typical" shop-houses of pre-war Singapore. Rather than having a long sloping roof that slopes towards to the main street, these shop-houses have individual gabled roofs, giving the entire building a façade with a zigzag roof. It should be noted that the two 3-storey end-units have original clay tiled roofs, and this is contrasted with the reinforced concrete slab roofs used elsewhere nearby. The columns along the arcade supporting the 2nd storey have characteristic brackets at all 4 corners.

According to URA's documentation of typical Art Deco style shop-houses, classical motifs such as capitals, arches and keystones are streamlined and the use of decorative wall tiles is also rare. The design of these shop-houses focuses on the proportional beauty and elevation composition of the whole row of shop-houses, with strong emphasis on street corners. Elements are mostly in simple and clean details, with little or no ornamentation.

2) Architectural and Structural principles

Besides the distinctive architectural style, the organization and architectural massing is also quite atypical of the pre-war shop-houses. Flanked by two corner 3-storey units, 4-meters wide each, the other 14 shop-houses in between are two-storey, with similar internal layout. A narrow pedestrian arcade of approximately 1.5-meters wide joins these shop-houses on the 1st storey.

Several unimpressive steps are scattered along the arcade, indicating that the surrounding ground may not be entirely level. The shop-houses on the 1st storey are consistent with staircases throughout the length of the entire building. These staircases lead to independent living units on the 2nd storey. One can also access the 2nd storey from the public pedestrian arcade. The existing staircase is approximately 1.2-metres wide.

The existing and separated staircases leading to the 2nd storey dwelling makes the building quite adaptable to various uses. The high ceilings of the 2nd storey provide an opportunity for maisonnettes/loft units.

Each shop-house is about 25-meters deep. On the shop-house front, each entrance is marked with intricate woodwork at the top of the entrance door. At the rear, there is a kitchen and toilet. URA has confirmed that there is no requirement that the rear portion of the existing shop-house be retained. (in the new works, this portion of kitchen and toilet were not retained to facilitate a more efficient site organization.)

Given that the ceiling height on the 1st storey is approximately 4.0 to 4.5-meters, there are indications in several of the shop-houses that the previous owners may have attempted to add “illegal” mezzanine floors, but it is very unlikely that by today’s standard, this will be acceptable.

The 2nd storey has a high-pitch concrete roof with exposed timber beams, to give the characteristic individual gabled roof mentioned earlier.. True to the development of the Art Deco period, when concrete began to emerge as a popular building material, the structural system of these shop-houses utilizes reinforced primarily concrete slabs, beams and columns.

Most of the units are similarly organized with two small rooms with windows opening to the southeast. Because of its width-depth ratio, the living room of the 2nd storey lacks natural light and is, therefore, particularly dark. For some of the units, the former owners have added skylights to bring natural lighting into the units. The bedrooms lead to a balcony that forms a prominent feature on the south-east façade.

Spalling is an evident problem on the roof slabs, kitchen and toilet. At the corner units, a steep staircase leads up to a square room on the 3rd floor. Approximately 20 square-meters, the room is quite airy with window openings on three sides.



Jellicoe Road Shoohouses before conservation