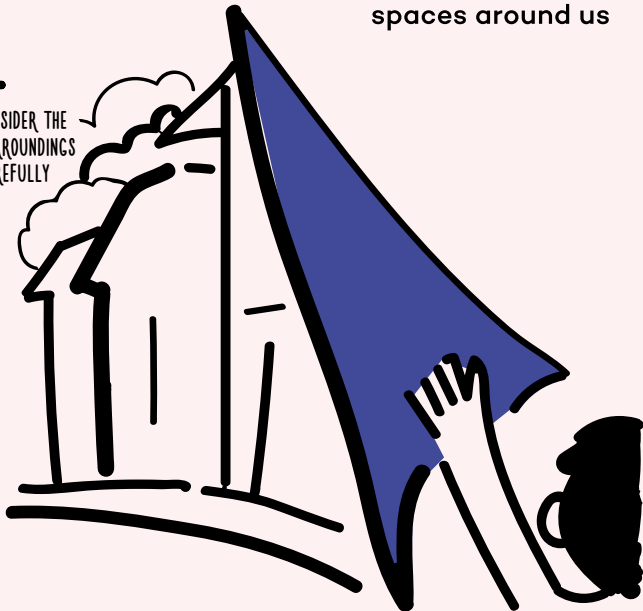


Skyline

Insights into planning spaces around us

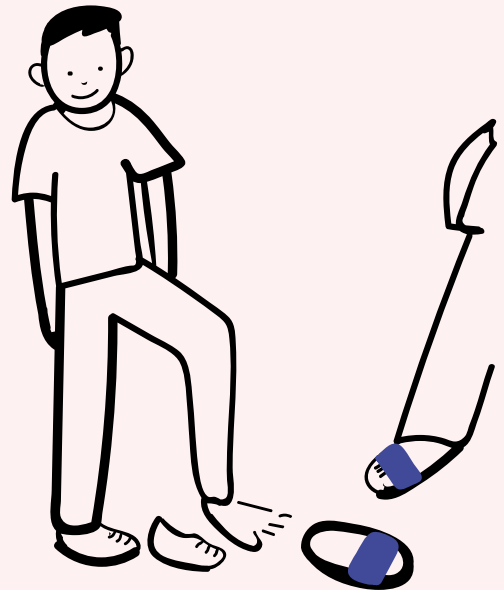
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CONSIDER THE SURROUNDINGS CAREFULLY



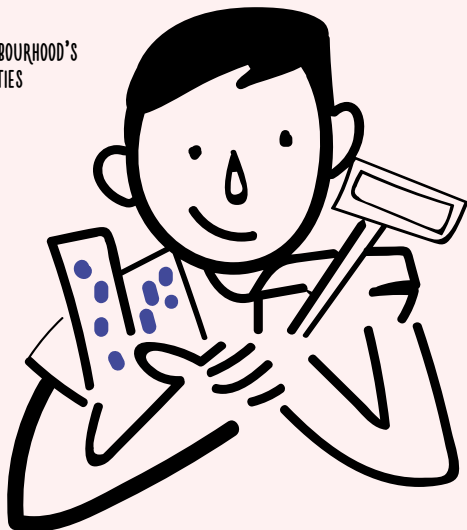
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PUT YOURSELF IN OTHER PEOPLE'S SHOES



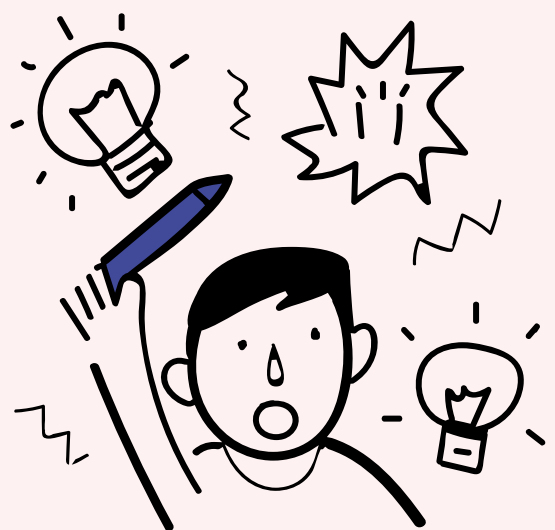
3.

KEEP THE NEIGHBOURHOOD'S SPECIAL QUALITIES



4.

GO CRAZY WITH IDEAS



Design issue: rethink your hood

Youths share 4 tips to redesigning Singapore's first HDB town

'20 under 45'
architects on challenges,
dream projects

Why Mr Saeid
is championing
Kampong Gelam

How farms are
reconnecting
people to food

Skyline



What goes on behind sustaining vibrant and thriving places like Kampong Gelam? Take a walk with the Chairman of One Kampong Gelam, Saeid Labbafi, to find out. More on page 37.

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Cover | The drawings illustrate 4 tips from youths on redesigning neighbourhoods. 141 students became planners for a week in URA's planning workshop 2017, with fresh ideas for Mei Chin in Queenstown, Singapore's first HDB town. More on page 44.

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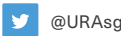
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Designing... from the bottom-up

"Human habitats are not the work of a single designer," says Sir Terry Farrell, one of UK's leading architect and planner. He suggests that good design for cities, whether for a neighbourhood, a building or a street corner, is a product of "many hands over time, the sum of many layers and iterations." In this design issue, we peel away the layers, catching up with architects on shaping the city. We look at how the design of important spaces is changing and how citizens are playing more important roles in contributing to and sustaining well-designed spaces.

In a spotlight on architects across generations from the '20 under 45' series, architects discuss their evolving roles in managing more complex urban challenges. Designing is both rationality and imagination, says Ong Ker-Shing of Lekker Architects. According to her, architects today have to wear many multiple hats: "dreamer, technician, lawyer, judge, mediator, businessman, manager, salesman, accountant, artist".

In designing for fundamentals in the city - where we live and grow our food, how we interact with nature and protect our heritage, things are

also changing in significant ways. Less cars, more immersive green, more integrated, adaptable public spaces - planners are redefining future living spaces. On water and rooftops, farmers and designers are bringing farming into the city, re-connecting us to food. In greening the city, teachers and others are going beyond aesthetics to designing green spaces for learning and health. And in restoring historical gems, overcoming design challenges allows us to savour both past and future in one place.

The most important aspect of good design is in engaging and empowering citizens to be a part of it. Place management champions like Saeid Labbafi are playing increasingly important roles in keeping historic districts like Kampong Gelam thriving. With good guidance and support, youths are also learning to re-design old towns and delving deeper into investigating the historical merits of landmarks like the Rail Corridor's Bukit Timah Railway Station that will help with its future restoration.

Layered, human-centred and joined up - we hope this issue inspires you to be a part of designing our city together.

“Good design is about meeting the needs of people. If you have a nice building but it has no value to people, then it will not matter.”

Muhammad Aiman Bin Mohd Azhan from Catholic Junior College reflects about what he has learnt from URA's planning workshop 2017 in redesigning Mei Chin in Queenstown, Singapore's first HDB town.

70

The number of members One Kampong Gelam has attracted. Its chairman, Saeid Labbafi, has gone door to door since 2011 canvassing for support and won many hearts with his dedicated place-making efforts for this historic district.

4 KM

The first stretch of the 24km Rail Corridor that will be enhanced. From Hillview to the conserved Bukit Timah Railway Station, enhancements will focus on retaining the heritage of the area, improving the greenery and creating inclusive, open spaces for all.

“Humans have a fundamental need to be continually connected to nature...to maintain a sense of positive well-being, work productivity, psychological restoration, creativity and delight.”

With greater impetus given to skyrise greenery and more valuing green spaces, Wong Mun Summ, co-founder, WOHA believes future cities can house several million people affordably while enabling people and nature to peacefully co-exist.

8,000 SQM

The size of Citizen Farm, Singapore's largest urban farm in the Queenstown estate. Designers and farmers are introducing new farming design typologies to reconnect the city and its citizens with food.

“Dreamer, technician, lawyer, judge, mediator, businessman, manager, salesman, accountant, artist.”

Recognised in the '20 under 45: The Third Edition', Ong Ker-Shing of Lekker Architects became an architect to make a difference in people's lives. She sees her role as wearing multiple hats, an alchemy of rationality and imagination.

More reasons to go higher

LUSH 3.0 gives an added lift to skyrise greenery

Vertical greenery is increasingly used in cities to both raise quality of life and improve urban environments and eco-systems and Singapore is one of the cities leading the way. An important aspect of encouraging more of such greenery is to ensure that policies and incentives are supportive of this, in tandem with industry needs.

URA's latest enhancements to the Landscaping for Urban Spaces and High-Rises (LUSH) Programme or LUSH 3.0 in short, deepen efforts further by supporting more sustainability-related uses on rooftops such as urban farms and communal roof gardens, encouraging more landscaping on walls and roofs of buildings and by introducing a green plot ratio for private developments to safeguard sufficient density of greenery within a site.

Implemented in close collaboration with private sector partners, the LUSH programme was introduced in 2009 as a consolidated urban and skyrise greening scheme comprising incentives and requirements. It capitalises on development as a means to inject more greenery into the city and the premise is simple – replace the greenery which has been taken away as a building is developed or redeveloped. 2014 saw an expansion of the geographical coverage and development types in the schemes under LUSH 2.0.

To date, the programme has contributed more than 130 hectares of greenery, equivalent to about 210 football fields. The total amount of LUSH greenery island-wide has been increasing at an annual average of 15 per cent. LUSH has also contributed significantly to high density clusters like the Central Area, and other new growth nodes and regional centres. In fact, the largest amounts of greenery contribution from LUSH were in the key growth areas of Jurong East (more than 50,000 sqm) and Downtown Core in the Central Area (close to 35,000 sqm). There has also been injection of greenery in new developments rejuvenating the well-established and mature estates such as Bukit Merah, Queenstown and Bedok.

For more information on LUSH 3.0, go to www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Circulars/dc17-06

Khoo Teck Puat Hospital's integrated greenery has changed the stigma of hospital environments. Photo Credit: CPG Corporation

A kinder form of architecture

Layering, bottom-up – British architect Sir Terry Farrell advocates for more sophisticated, human centred designs for cities.

Writer **Justin Zhuang**

From advocating for “urban rooms” where citizens can discuss the making of their town to designing transportation hubs that enable thousands of commuters to travel around the city, the “people” has been at the heart of the works of Sir Terry Farrell. Over the last five decades, the British architect and planner has pushed back against high modernism for a kinder form of architecture, and expanded his practice from London to Hong Kong, and most recently, Shanghai.

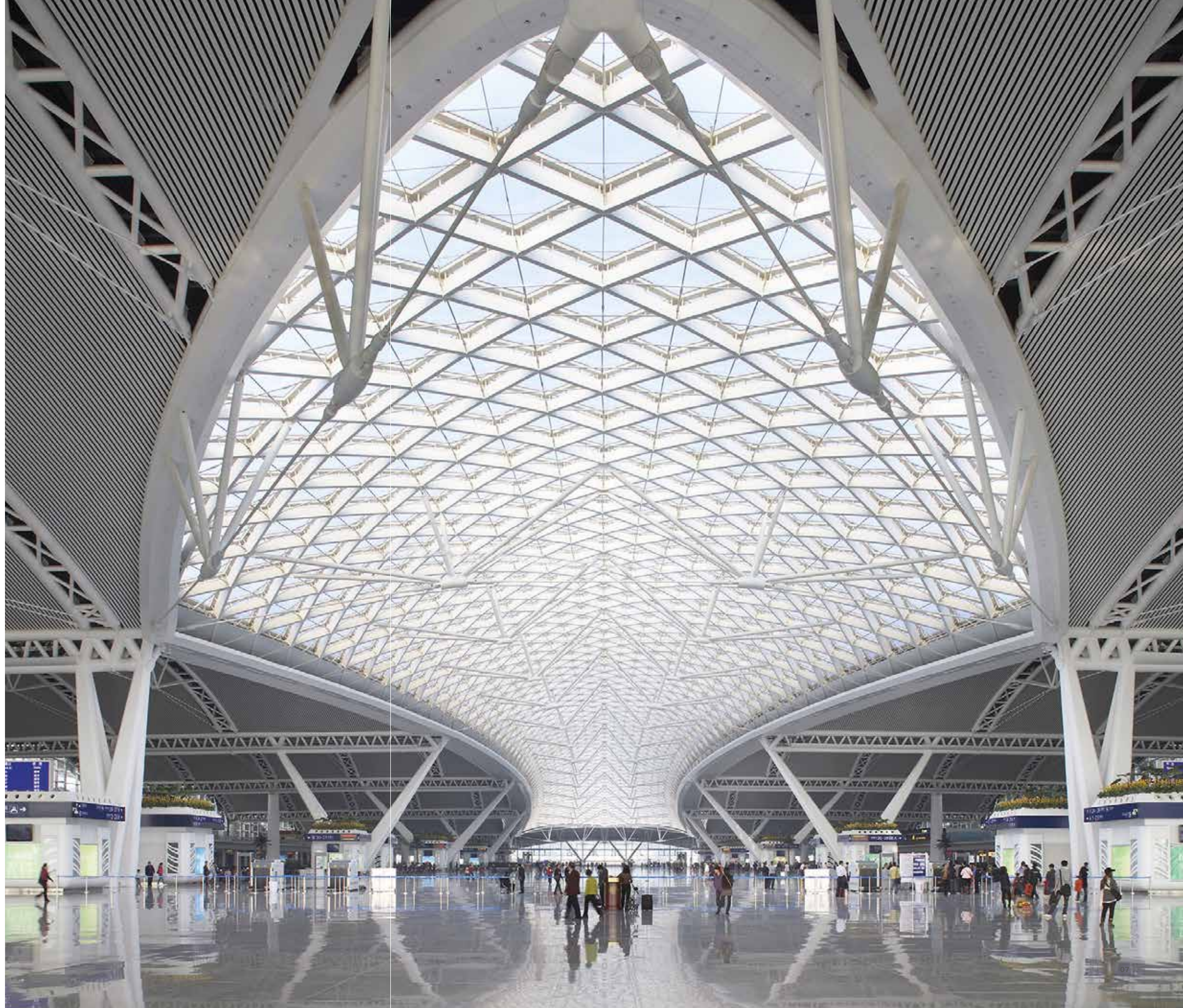
He talks to us about what is good architecture, urban design lessons Hong Kong and Singapore can learn from one another, and his firm's plans for the Singapore terminus of the upcoming Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail.

Why should we involve people in city-making and what role can planners play?

People are experts in their own neighbourhoods and can provide a great deal of insight – designers and planners must learn from those who experience places on a daily basis. Planners should provide meaningful opportunities for community participation and decision-making – their role must not be to merely inform the public of decisions already made.

Some architects fear inclusivity may dilute architecture. What is good architecture to you?

Human habitats are not the work of a single designer – they are generally the product of many hands over time, and the sum of many layers and iterations. Cities naturally evolve, and architects and planners must work with deference to the natural, often invisible order underlying cities.



Designers too often seek to impose an arbitrary visual order to the world, and this has led to a great deal of dysfunctional architecture and urban design in the 20th and 21st centuries. Architecture is not merely sculpture – buildings do not exist in isolation. Good architecture engages with the city and builds upon the existing strengths of a place.

Tell us more about Farrells’ approach in designing transit-oriented and people-friendly cities.

Architecture and site planning of the 20th century often prioritise motorised traffic while neglecting the needs of pedestrians and public transport users. However, cities have increasingly recognised that cars are the least space-efficient mode of urban transport, and we cannot starve off traffic congestion forever simply by building new roads.

We have designed many metro stations in Hong Kong that exemplify a super-dense transit-oriented urban model. There is a high degree of integration between stations and surrounding development, which means that public transport is usually much more convenient than driving.

Walkability is also crucial to urban sustainability. At either end of any public transport journey, riders become pedestrians. Our Kennedy Town Station in Hong Kong considers this holistically in how we designed the spaces around the station entrances, and the new staircases, escalators, and lifts we put in place to connect residents of uphill areas with the new railway station.

What can Hong Kong and Singapore learn from one another?

Hong Kong could learn a lot from Singapore about heritage conservation. Singapore has done well to preserve not just individual buildings of historic significance, but entire townscapes made up of Southeast Asia’s iconic shophouses. Hong Kong’s urban fabric was once comprised of a similar building typology, the *tong lau*, but these have largely been lost to urban redevelopment. Clarke Quay, a vibrant, restored district popular with tourists, prove that heritage conservation done right can be both culturally and financially valuable.

Singapore, on the other hand, could learn from the degree to which Hong Kong communities are integrated with the MTR system. The majority of Hong Kongers live within walking distance of railway stations. In the coming years, as more MRT lines in Singapore come on line, it is worth looking at the potential for walkability improvements around new stations and opportunities for transit-oriented development.

What is one area in Singapore that is well designed for people?

The improvements made in recent years to the Kallang River show what can happen when designers look beyond the functional aspects of urban infrastructure and explore ways to transform these necessary elements of any city into useful “people places”. In the case of the Kallang River, this former concrete channel has been transformed into a magnificent river landscape, integrated with parks and promenades.

What can we look forward to in Farrells’ design of the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail’s Singapore terminus?

We have taken a place-making approach. Even though the station is tucked underground, it needs to read as a highly legible node within the Jurong Lake District – as a meeting place, much like Grand Central Station in New York City, or St. Pancras in London. It’s not just an incidental piece of transport infrastructure – it will be the primary driver of development in the area, and will form the centrepiece of the new Lakeside Gateway precinct, along with the surrounding park.

The fact that the Singapore high-speed rail alignment runs entirely underground holds some exciting design implications. Our other major high-speed railway stations have often been above ground, and the result is a visually imposing mass of railway viaducts that can also pose a barrier to pedestrian movement. In contrast, the new terminus in Jurong Lake District will be tucked beneath a park. We have sought to bring the park into the interior of the station, for instance by allowing natural light to filter down, and by incorporating green, organic design elements.



The 21st century is the century of global city making, which must be more sophisticated, joined up, sustainable and human centred going forward. It’s about layering, learning from the past and regenerating with communities’ involvement from the bottom-up.



One of UK’s leading architect and planner, Sir Terry Farrell is the founder of architectural firm Farrells. His most recent works include an outdoor swimming pool with a shell-shaped roof in Hong Kong and a proposal for a set of six bridges on London’s River Thames. Farrells is also behind the design of Incheon Airport Transportation Building in Korea, Beijing South and Guangzhou high speed rail stations in China. URA hosted Farrells’ ‘Urban Dialogue’ exhibition in Singapore in October 2017, a first comprehensive display of key projects in Hong Kong, China, Korea and Southeast Asia. www.farrells.com

Designing the city

URA's architects Chou Mei and Eugene Lau talk about their initial encounters with architecture, challenges of designing the city and favourite streets.

Writer **Serene Tng**



What was your initial encounter with architecture?

Chou Mei: It was during a holiday to Datai, a resort hotel at Langkawi during my school days that made me realise architecture has the ability to shape our spaces and experiences. I was inspired by the design of the hotel by Kerry Hill. Perched on a hill, cantilevered over the ocean and using natural materials, it exuded a unique charm that drew me in.

Eugene: My occasional visits to construction sites with my father, a site supervisor, was what got me first curious about how all these were contributing to creating beautiful buildings around us.

What is urban design and why is it important for cities?

Chou Mei: Urban design is about shaping the 3-dimensional form of the city and the life in between the buildings. It considers the relationship between buildings and streets, how people would make use of them, and get from one place to another. Good urban design is about good place-making. By influencing the way the people move around and experience the city, urban design has the ability to shape liveable and people-centric cities.

Eugene: Good urban design ensures that a city is not a monotonous rhythm, giving different districts

a unique character, facilitating seamless transport connections, creating comfortable environments for leisure, catalysing vibrant economic nodes, providing homes surrounded with convenient access to amenities. Besides sculpting an attractive city, effective urban design intervention is a powerful tool that can influence the social-economic distribution across a city, to the extent of influencing whether plans will make or break.

What is one project of yours that you are most proud of?

Chou Mei: The Southern Ridges is one of the first projects I worked on as a young architect/urban designer, perhaps for that reason, also one of the most memorable! The idea was to connect 4 hill parks separated by roads with high-level bridges to create a major park and destination attraction. I remember pulling out the plans and sticking them together to see whether the levels would match and whether this would create a good experience for visitors. When completed, the 2 new bridges opened up new experiences for people to walk from hill to hill, and enjoy new public spaces with vantage views. It was a simple idea that led to the creation of some wonderful public spaces in our city.

Eugene: I've been fortunate enough to watch Jurong Lake District (JLD) grow from its inception since 2008 as part of the Master Plan, to it being realised within a short span of 5 years. It's amazing to watch the progress of the developments, interact with the architects and developers, all to realise the vision of making JLD a vibrant commercial node. One of the urban design ideas we pushed for was J-Walk, an elevated pedestrian network that connects all the developments around Jurong East MRT. It is especially well-received on extremely hot or rainy days. Residents I meet have shared that they like the convenience it offers and one even does her evening walks along J-Walk every day!

How has urban design work evolved over the years?

Chou Mei: Technological advances have certainly helped us to plan and design better. We can tap on big data to ensure our cities are designed to be accessible and relevant to communities they serve. Environmental modelling can help to ensure places are designed for shade and comfort. And virtual reality technology can let us immerse ourselves in public spaces even before they are





implemented. But the role of urban design has not changed – it is about designing spaces for people. No matter how cutting edge the technology, cities and public spaces will only be successful if people feel connected to them.

Eugene: Social media empowers people to be more vocal and participative in every aspect of life, and urban design is no exception. There is a paradigm shift from having the government drive projects and consult stakeholders through engagement forums, to working hand in hand with stakeholders on ground-up initiatives. Anyone can be a potential stakeholder, forming their own groups to garner support in the hope of working with urban planners and designers to influence plans and decisions. Even though this means our role now requires us to be more “on the ball”, it is heartwarming to know that Singaporeans are passionate about many issues and are willing to work together to develop the best outcome.

What are some challenges faced in urban design and where are we heading?

Chou Mei: Our cities are becoming more populated, and our roads more congested. At the same time, the practice of the shared economies – sharing of work places, housing, transport – are becoming more prevalent. All these point to the increasing importance of our streets and public spaces as shared spaces. In land scarce Singapore, we need to continually find innovative solutions to create a high quality living

environment with walkable streets and delightful public spaces.

Eugene: As Singapore strives to become a Smart Nation, there is a need for urban design to evolve and embrace technology while ensuring a degree of flexibility for change. For example, when we plan for a pedestrian network, it is no longer a straight forward exercise to connect developments to a MRT station and deciding that the walkway shall be 5 metres throughout; sensors could be deployed in the first few developments to monitor pedestrian flow and data analytics can help to inform us on whether the width of the existing walkways is sufficient for the existing crowd, with an extrapolation of this data to determine if we need wider walkways for future developments to cater for future crowds.

What do you hope to see more of?

Chou Mei: Streets and public spaces come alive only when they are well used by people. So it’s important that they are designed to be delightful, safe, comfortable and inclusive, allowing people to use them in a variety of ways. As cities become more global, I think it’s more important to ensure that our streets and public spaces are designed for the local context and community. I would like to see local communities being more involved, and empowered to make a difference to our public spaces, to create well-loved streets and neighbourhoods that are designed for the people who are going to use them.

Eugene: More smoke-free zones will make any street or public space a lot more enjoyable! So much effort has been injected into the planning of Orchard Road and Marina Bay Promenade, why not make them smoke-free for these places to be more refreshing for all? It will be great for upcoming public spaces and privately owned public spaces to have designated smoking zones in order for more people to enjoy the spaces.

What are some of your favourite spaces and streets?

Chou Mei: I love how New York’s High Line and London’s King Cross, have transformed previously non-descript places into well-loved, public spaces that are full of life. Tokyo’s Omotesando is a favourite street, with vibrant and quirky side streets that invite people to explore and wander in. Over the years, we have seen many delightful public spaces transform our cityscape in Singapore but one of my favourite ones has to be the piano park right here at the URA Centre! It’s not exactly a public space. In fact, this was once a driveway. A group of young architects decided to layout some astro-turf, put out some pianos and strew some chairs and tables about. Today, it’s a wonderful informal hang out, often with spontaneous music playing on the piano. For me, this is the epitome of a great public space, when good design has the ability to create delightful experiences in the city.

Eugene: I grew up in the heart of Little India and have lived there for the past 30 years, hence I can’t help but feel a strong sense of affinity for the area. While it’s not the most well-designed area in Singapore, it has got to be one of the most challenging areas to plan due to its organic and chaotic nature, which is what I absolutely love about the area. From walking through Desker Road when I was younger, to filtering through the Sunday migrant worker crowd, I have witnessed first-hand how the area has evolved through the years. I’m glad that planning interventions have been sensitively introduced to improve the public realm while retaining the unique character of the area.

I also love Tokyo’s Omotesando. The scale of the low to mid-rise buildings along the entire stretch makes it an intimate and pleasant walk, and the fact that it is a gentle hill, you get a clear vista of the bustling streets and a myriad of architectural facades before you start your walk. I am always amazed by the many dynamic buildings and facades all lined up for our admiration, and coming alive when the sun sets with its own unique night lighting scheme.

Chou Mei is the group director of conservation and urban design while Eugene Lau is the deputy director of urban design technology. Visit the Singapore City Gallery at The URA Centre for more information about urban design and planning the city.



Redesigning our neighbourhoods

3 residential precincts may see fewer cars, more greens and better public spaces in future.

Writer **Serene Tng** | Illustrator **Gavin Goo**

What if we could redesign our future neighbourhoods, how will they look like?

Less cars and more mobility options to get around. More space for community interactions with greater access to other parks and larger networks. And stay close to nature and green spaces rich in biodiversity, with naturalised canals and skyrise greenery.

Focusing on people-centred designs to support healthier and more sustainable lifestyles, URA planners presented possibilities for 3 future residential precincts, Kampong Bugis, Holland Plain and Bayshore in October 2017.

Here's how 3 future precincts could look like.



Moving around with ease – on foot, bikes or other mobility devices where public transport nodes and shared transport are easily accessible and become the choice mode of transport. And fewer cars mean more space for greenery, other amenities and safer streets.

Bonding on a larger scale – with a variety of public and recreational spaces on ground, above ground and across neighbourhoods, without fences or barriers. Diverse, plentiful and adaptable for all ages, community and play spaces just got more exciting.

Greening richly and going up – reconnecting with nature in a deeper way with green spaces retaining rich biodiversity, naturalised canals cleansing storm water runoff and skyrise greenery encouraged. Pneumatic waste systems can also help create cleaner environments.

3 future neighbourhoods: key highlights

Kampong Bugis

Location: Along Kallang Basin

Number of homes in future: 4,000

3 ideas: Kampong Bugis will be piloted as a car-lite residential precinct to be implemented by a single master developer with easy access to public transport. One can cycle from Kampong Bugis to the city in 15 mins and have access to a variety of commute options. The existing Kallang Riverside Park will be enhanced into a lush, vibrant waterfront park.

Holland Plain

Location: Near King Albert MRT station, close to Rail Corridor

Number of homes in future: 2,500

3 ideas: 2 new parks – the community plain and wetland park, will provide spaces for the community to relax, exercise and bond. They will cover 30% of the precinct and native plant species can be introduced to extend nearby habitats for biodiversity. Water sensitive features like vegetated swales and rain gardens can be incorporated to cleanse off storm water runoff and green fingers will be introduced in between developments for better connections to the MRT and nearby parks.

Bayshore

Location: Next to East Coast Park

Number of homes in future: 12,500

3 ideas: A 1 km Bayshore street is envisioned with wider pavements lined with trees, cafes, and parks. A linear green space behind the existing row of low-rise residential developments along Upper East Coast Road will give a sense of the former coastline in the 1960s and future residents can walk directly to East Coast Park via a new landscaped bridge across East Coast Parkway.

Farming anywhere near you

Near homes, on rooftops, on water – designers and farmers are introducing new farming design typologies that are reconnecting the city and its city dwellers with food.

Writer **Jennifer Eveland** | Photographer **Chee Boon Pin**



Innovators at the forefront of urban agriculture are proving that city farms can be a catalyst for communities, bridging people and food production in meaningful ways. When private and public sectors work together for a common food security goal, urban farms have the potential to contribute more than just good food, but jobs, education, community engagements, national security and environmental benefits.

Farming in cities

In China, issues in food safety have come to the fore, with public concern about the impact of pollution on farms and their crops. For centuries, agriculture has manipulated the landscape, resulting in mass deforestation and disruption of natural systems, according to Michael Grove, principal at US-based architecture and design firm, Sasaki Associates.



Urban farming can help, says Michael. “If we can move some agriculture to cities and allow the land to revert to its natural state, that’s a positive benefit.” However, in cities, farms are typically relegated to a hodgepodge of plots and rooftops, limiting their productivity, he adds. To address this issue, Sasaki is designing an entire district in Shanghai that will integrate mass-scale vertical farming and agricultural R&D with homes, shops, restaurants and parks.

In Holland, Dutch firm Beladon also wants to move farms into cities. Beladon chief executive Peter van Wingerden says that urban dependence on transportation to deliver food from rural farms or overseas is unsustainable, increasing pollution, food spoilage and vulnerability to geopolitical relations. “Cities want to become climate adaptive for food production, but have little space.” In tackling this, Beladon has designed a floating farm that can produce dairy, eggs or vegetables over virtually any body of water.

According to Peter, as most of the world’s cities are located on coasts or along rivers, they are presented with large areas of untapped space. In Rotterdam, Beladon’s floating farms are part of a larger residential and commercial development that will help revitalise an area that was once occupied by port activities. In Singapore, Peter believes large reservoirs present an opportunity too.



Retrofitting urban spaces

Here in Singapore, where land is precious and the environment is hot, wet and insect-ridden, traditional soil farming is impractical. But one local urban farm is championing the use of marginalised spaces to feed the city. ComCrop operates a vertical hydroponic farm on the roof of Scape on Orchard Road, and is ready to scale up with more rooftop farms. Co-founder Allan Lim believes that urban farming has the potential to do for food security what the Singapore water story did for water security – assuring supply while contributing to economic growth. “If we become a primary producer of food,” says Allan, “we can spin off multiple products up the value chain, which creates more jobs.”

When it comes to marginalised space, most plentiful would be on rooftops, but that presents another challenge to urban farming - retrofitting city infrastructure. When ComCrop began designing its farm on the Scape rooftop, co-founder Allan Lim says they were designing against an existing system of rooftop infrastructure that rendered a lot of square footage unusable. It is a problem in Singapore, he says, where there is no standard for rooftop design. To influence the design of usable roof space, ComCrop published a booklet suggesting practical design specifications and distributed it to architects and developers.

It takes at least 4,000 square metres to make an impactful farm, he says. But rooftops built today that can’t support a farm are lost opportunity to make marginalised space productive for decades. One suggestion is to set production targets for rooftop farms to drive what he feels is a more practical approach towards national food security.

These ideas and others underlie a shifting paradigm in farming, where cities and city dwellers develop a closer relationship with food and the environments in which it is grown.

As farms move into cities, they have the potential to interact with residents and reconnect them with the food that is essential for their survival. The future of farming is one where urban farms form synergies with surrounding communities, businesses, childcare centres, schools and old age homes, providing not only

food, but opportunities for education, employment, and a greater appreciation for the food we eat.

At your doorstep

“We do not know the smell of the countryside anymore,” says Peter, who muses about urban residents who accept the smell of emissions from vehicles, refineries and other industries yet find the scent of a natural farm foreign. His hope is to build floating farms as close to the city as possible, integrating them into the fabric of neighborhoods and designed in iconic ways to make them attractive, approachable and transparent.

Citizen Farm also has a vision for communities, to integrate the farm and food production with surrounding child care centres and elderly day care centres to provide opportunities for education and well-being. The farm has also developed prototypes for indoor growing facilities that can be installed in HDB estates and office buildings.

Education and outreach are a large part of Darren Ho’s work as head of Citizen Farm, where he conducts tours and talks, in part to inform citizens about where food comes from, but also to interest them to become consumers of locally-grown produce.

So far Darren says public interest has been overwhelming in both numbers and positive feedback, but Allan Lim at ComCrop, who also conducts public outreach, says that there is still some way to go towards educating local consumers. It could also be a price point issue, as local produce is priced slightly higher than imports, however local farmers are hoping that will change as they scale up.

“I think AVA has done a good job to promote local produce,” he says, “but people simply don’t trust that Singapore can grow things. It’s a mindset issue.”

These farms were featured in URA’s Urban Lab exhibition in October 2017, “Growing More with Less”, to inspire new ways of farming for the future. Urban Lab is a platform that regularly presents the latest R&D and urban solutions for a more sustainable and future-ready city.



Farm highlights at a glance



Shanghai’s integrated Urban Agricultural District by Sasaki

Location
Between Shanghai’s international airport and the city centre

Key idea
Urban-suburban district that integrates farming into every aspect of the built environment and serves as a living laboratory for farming innovation and education

Attractions
Interactive greenhouse, science museum, festival market, sky plazas, civic greens

Size
100 hectares; includes 67,000 sqm of housing, 13,000 sqm of commercial space and 79,500 sqm of public space

Completion
2019

Rotterdam’s world first floating dairy farm by Beladon

Location
Any body of water

Key idea
40 cows on a 1,200 sqm floating platform producing 1,000 litres of milk a day. A machine will mop up cow dung and a robot tops up the food stations

Completion
Pilot by 2018

ComCrop Rooftop Farm

Location
Roof of Scape, Orchard Road

Key idea
Produce leafy greens on rooftop using hydroponic growing systems and distribute to nearby cafes and for public sale via Redmart

Future plans
Operate 20,000 sqm of rooftop farms by 2035

Citizen Farm

Location
Queenstown

Size
8,000 sqm

Key idea
The farm uses a combination of experimental growing methods to produce mushrooms, leafy greens and microgreens which it distributes to consumers via subscription service. In what it calls a “closed-loop” growing system, Citizen Farm collects food waste and spoiled food from importers and manufacturers, feeds it to insects farmed on site and creates natural compost which it then inputs into its growing systems

More than just beautiful greens

With the recent LUSH 3.0 that supports more skyrise greenery, we visited 2 rooftop gardens/farms and a hospital with integrated greenery and find out that greening efforts are doing more than just beautify our environments.

Writer Dawn Lim

A healing landscape begins with the hospital

Although Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) was completed in 2010, it remains a good reference project that has changed the stigma of hospital environments. Jerry Ong worked on the project and understands this most intimately. We speak to him and Kuan Chee Yung, both architects at CPG Corporation, about KTPH being a very special kind of hospital and their thoughts on the future of integrated greenery.

How has the hospital embraced its environment?

Jerry: They carry an accepting attitude towards the ever-evolving biodiversity and the maintenance that comes with having a “green” hospital. The team originally came

from Alexandra Hospital (AH), so if you have been to AH and seen its lush gardens, you will understand why. KTPH’s stress-free environment has brought in various communities of visitors on the daily that makes it more than a hospital.

What were KTPH’s requirements in the design brief?

Jerry: A little backstory here. Mr Liak (then-CEO of AH) had transformed AH into a gardenesque place and created a culture where the staff take ownership of the hospital’s landscaping. The design of KTPH started with the desire to bring over the same culture when the team moved from Alexandra to Yishun. Our challenge as architects was to make this possible. The hospital also had a vision of a very open hospital facility – one without definitive

start and end. They adopted this site adjacent to the Yishun pond, a harsh-looking storm water pond. We integrated it as part of the development and softened the surrounding landscape.

How did you plan for the long-term maintenance of landscaping?

Chee Yung: If you look closely, the “vertical greens” are mostly grown in planters. They only look “vertical” because of clever layering. We also employed a layered “regimented rainforest” strategy. Unlike manicured gardens that have to be regularly clipped, a “regimented rainforest” won’t look terrible even when it is a little overgrown. Overall, we try to keep maintenance effort and cost low to make the landscaping sustainable.

Was there a strategy for the various gardens around the hospital?

Jerry: Different groups have very different expectations of what they want in a hospital so we try to strike a balance. Besides the green features in public areas at KTPH, there are other considerations for specific users or patients. The private garden outside the geriatric clinic on Level 4 is a good example. We designed a garden that is safe for dementia patients to wander around without ever getting lost.



Are you exploring any new landscaping ideas?

Chee Yung: CPG is currently exploring afforestation by employing new planting mediums on new grounds to encourage real forest growth. But forests take thousands of years to mature, so we are trying out scaffolding planting (somewhat like Supertrees 2.0) to speed up the process. Something else we are investigating is a self-maintaining terrarium design for buildings. Just imagine ornamental terrariums that are multiplied in size.

Your perspectives on the future of integrated greenery in Singapore?

Chee Yung: We are starting to ask questions such as: how do we make maintenance of landscaping part of the public domain so that ideas become cost-viable? But above all, we have to build up the complexity and a community of champions who want things to happen on the ground.

Jerry: I think pushing the boundaries a little more with each project is all it takes to grow. How do we use landscaping to create a healing environment? How do we allow humans to interact more closely with nature? The goals and questions are the same but they can be challenged differently.



Reinventing values education with a learning garden

For Chong-Phoon Lyvenne, school staff developer at Spectra Secondary School, the campus’ rooftop garden is more than a place that imparts environmental knowledge and gardening skills. The humble plot at 180 sqm is a dynamic outdoor classroom for teaching values and character-building.

How did you tailor the programme to your students’ needs as a specialised school?

The profile of our students tend to have low self-esteem, less motivation to learn, and they give up too easily. They are also kinaesthetic and visual learners who enjoy learning by doing in authentic settings. So we designed the Garden-based Service Learning (GBSL) programme as a 10-week, evidence-based Character and Citizenship module that focuses on hands-on learning through gardening activities.

What kind of lessons do you hope to impart?

We don’t aim to create farming experts. Rather, students learn values through experiences in the garden. We consciously elicit “values vocabulary” revolving around resilience, responsibility and respect, motivating them to put effort and

persistence into whatever they do. The garden is also a place to restore “damaged” relationships with at-risk students, using gardening activities as analogies to life beyond school.

Did you face any obstacles when you started the rooftop garden?

Starting with unsuitable soil and poor drainage made farming on this rooftop difficult. When we took over the new school building in 2013, we realised the building contractor had filled the planters with clay. It sat below the thick layer of compost piled on by our garden design vendor, which gave way to water-logging and flooding issues. Gradually, the clay beds got compacted when the rain pounded on them and got all caked up during the hot season.

We rebuilt the garden ourselves by improving drainage and amending the clay with growing media that comprises the right composition of top-soil, compost and sand. Through consultations with AVA, and farmers in Lim Chu Kang, we finally got it right in early 2017 and only then could we grow edible crops productively.

What are the advantages of having a garden on the roof?

Being unblocked by surrounding buildings, we get full sun for 12 hours daily, which is ideal for growing many local edibles. But the heat generated from the concrete floor can be too strong for younger plants. We grew climbing fruited vegetables such as cucumbers, winter melons, gourds, long-beans and passion fruits on trellises built over common walkways between planter beds.

What kind of community support do you have?

Our community of volunteers comprises present students and urban farming enthusiasts – parents, engineers, teachers from other schools and more who love to farm.

They maintain the garden, work alongside students in the programme and are keenly aware of their purpose in contributing to GBSL’s goal. Most volunteers come in on Saturdays from 8-11am, and some on weekday mornings.

Future ideas and further uses for the garden?

Our own farm-to-table cook-out sessions, and Farmers’ Market fund-raising events which are already ongoing. Seasonal produce is used in menus served to teachers and guests by our Hospitality Department and Culinary Club. We also host learning journeys for schools – Mulberry Learning Centre brings their pre-schoolers here for monthly nature exploration walks.

Farm-to-beauty experiments atop a mall

Bjorn Low (Edible Garden City) and Cynthia Chua (Spa Esprit Group) have an ongoing partnership that began with farming for food. Recognising a shift in appreciation towards more natural approaches to skincare, their conversations led to explorations beyond farm-to-table. With Cynthia’s working relationship with Raffles City, they managed to transform the mall’s rooftop into an experimental garden growing all kinds of medicinal and skin care herbs to be turned into creams and lotions for Spa Esprit’s new skincare line, Farm To Beauty.

What went into the design of this garden?

Bjorn: We tried a few different approaches for this space (a 10,000 sqf plot), first planting in rows with shade netting protection. That proved to be very labour intensive to up-keep. We changed this into more of a food forest layout where different planting layers work together to create a natural support network.



Cynthia: When we first started, we planted a small amount of different types of plants that interest us to test out their feasibility for mass production. Our most productive crops at the moment are Calendula and Aloe Vera. The beauty of this rooftop farm is that it is work in progress. We are always growing a variety of plants to see which crop acclimatises better while exploring a variety of fragrances and different healing properties.

The challenges you had to overcome to make this rooftop suitable for farming?

Bjorn: Understanding the microclimate of this rooftop. The rooftop is wedged between two towers and created a wind tunnel. Coupled with the heat of the rooftop, this dries the soil quite fast. So we created temporary shelters with shade netting to protect the more tender crops, mulched the soil with coco husk to reduce water evaporation from the soil and installed a drip irrigation system to keep the crops hydrated.

What are the advantages of setting up a farm on a rooftop?

Bjorn: Food grown on the roof can be supplied to inhabitants or businesses located within the building, thus generating economic

returns from a once non-productive space. Growing on the rooftop also provides different opportunities for community engagement in high-density areas. These are possible on the ground, but the land-locked nature of Singapore will make such exercises challenging.

What do you want to achieve with Farm to Beauty?

Cynthia: Farm To Beauty is one of the many first-of-its-kind experiences that Spa Esprit Group has always strived to create. It is a beauty brand with a difference and a nice way to make use of unwanted space. I hope this small but crucial change can help consumers rediscover the beauty of nature and inspire a bigger agricultural movement.

Advice for people who wish to set up a rooftop garden?

Bjorn: Rooftops are microclimates and sometimes how a neighbouring building creates shade can factor on the garden. In different parts of the year, high winds can also happen depending on how high you are, and if you are close to the shoreline. Ensure that the plants are properly hydrated as things can dry up quite fast on the rooftop. Lastly, tweaking the crop selection to find a formula will take time to achieve, so be patient and observant.

Like heirlooms

How do you restore a church, warehouses and a bakery? Treat them like heirlooms, says experts like Ho Weng Hin of Studio Lapis and others who see their work as a calling. They talk about the restoration challenges and design solutions behind these gems.

Writer **Jennifer Eveland** | Photographer **Chee Boon Pin**

Cathedral of the Good Shepherd

URA Architectural Heritage Awards 2017 for restoration

Location

"A" Queen Street

Architect

Serena Tan, Associate Principal, Architects 61

Conservation Specialist

Ho Weng Hin, Partner, Studio Lapis

Timeframe for restoration works

3 years

It takes a village to restore the treasures within Singapore's oldest Roman Catholic church. This 170-year-old Cathedral of the Good Shepherd saw various specialists involved, from Swati Chandgadkar, the renowned stained glass expert who worked on the church's stained glass to Diego Cera Organbuilders, Philippines' leading pipe organ specialist, who restored the 105-year-old pipe organ. The organ was disassembled and shipped to the Philippines for repair and then sent back and reassembled. Roeland Stulemeijer, principal conservator and managing director of Singapore-based ArtCare Restoration restored the precious religious artifacts, while local firm Benaka

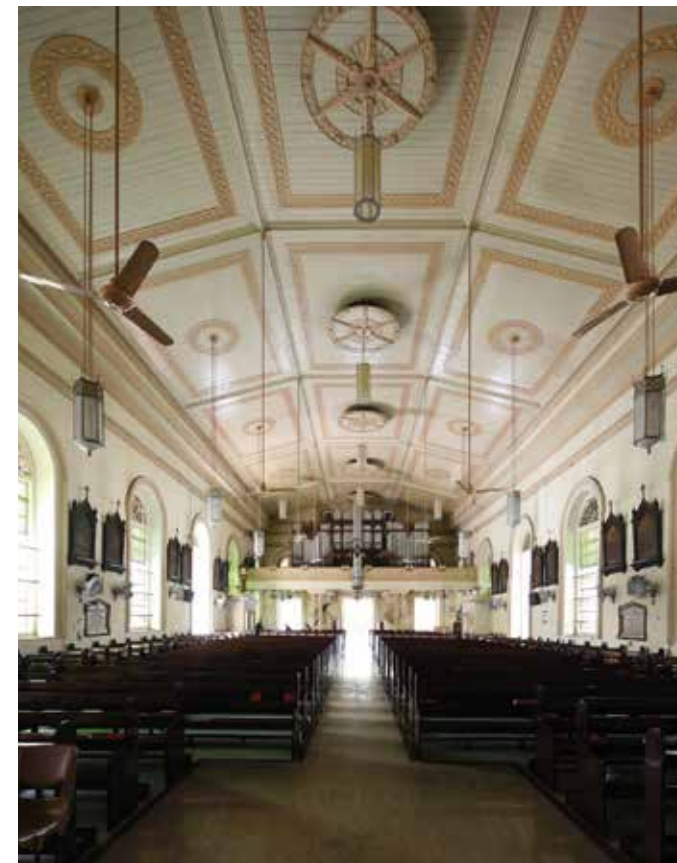
Art Conservation renewed various paintings. "This coordinated effort is necessary as unlike in Europe or the United States, Singapore does not have such expertise in one shop," says Weng Hin.

Most challenging

Some of the hardest problems has to do with mundane details like air-conditioning (AC). "We had to fulfill safety and structural requirements and yet remain sensitive to historic materiality and authenticity," says Serena Tan. "In a new building, the AC is simply concealed in the false ceiling. But for the cathedral, we have a vaulted ceiling and therefore the AC could not be exposed." Architects 61 worked to have the air-conditioning fan coil units disguised within cabinets tucked under the windows on both sides of the nave, designed to complement the neo-classical interior style. This allowed for the ceilings and walls to be freed from unsightly equipment and conduits so that the beautiful concave decorative timber ceiling and voluminous cathedral interiors could be fully retained without modification.

Most unexpected

As with any restoration work, there will be surprising twists. Weng Hin recalls an incident in September 2015 when the portico facing Victoria Street collapsed suddenly. Unknown to the team, the massive porch was only attached to the main building by a piece of timber, charred by fire and destroyed by termites. "It was an accident waiting to happen," said Weng Hin. But had it not collapsed then, it would have endangered the public after the work was completed. "We called it divine intervention!"





The Warehouse Hotel

URA Architectural Heritage Awards 2017
for restoration and innovation

Location
320 Havelock Road
Architect
Randy Chan, Principal, Zarch Collaboratives Pte Ltd
Timeframe for restoration works
2 years

It takes great sensitivity to restore historic buildings as continued markers of time and changing narratives. From facilitating warehouse activities in the 1960s to 1980s to now serving as a 37-room boutique hotel, Zarch Collaboratives was careful to balance the old and new while respecting its past. “We worked to ensure the interiors constantly revealed the warehouse typology and its historical functions to invoke what it used to be,” says Randy Chan. His memory of the 120-year-old buildings was as a club where “we used to go for tea dances during secondary school days.” Restoring these buildings feels like a civic fulfillment, says Randy. “With our changing

landscapes, such buildings hold the key to bond us to a common history and memory.”

Most challenging
Even though bringing in natural lighting and the design of windows tend to be a perennial problem for such industrial buildings, Zarch worked to ensure that most of the rooms were able to enjoy at least one view to the outside and most received natural light. The warehouses’ original jackroofs, a small elevated roof at the top, typical features of warehouses, were used to bring more light into darkened spaces. “By creating corridors below the jackroofs, it gives the interior spaces a sense of lightness and delight for guests when they walk through the corridors leading to the rooms. Guests also feel like they are still in a warehouse.”

Most striking
The lobby is the hotel’s most distinctive feature, a spectacle from the moment a visitor enters. “As the main feature of the hotel, we wanted to reveal the spatial quality of the warehouse using the element of the original truss, or framework, and the exposed brickwork,” says Randy. “The original truss was built to support only a simple corrugated roof, so to support the load of additional insulation and mechanical and electrical services, we had to design a new structure portal frame with a discreet profile that would not overwhelm the existing profile of the warehouse and trusses.”

The Red House

URA Architectural Heritage Awards 2017
Special Mention for the red building only

Location
75 East Coast Road
Owner
Warees Investments Pte Ltd (a wholly owned subsidiary of MUIS)
Timeframe for restoration works
1 year, 3 months

It takes great dedication to retain one of Singapore’s most iconic community landmark. In restoring The Red House in Katong, the focus was on the building’s intention and its soul. “There are very few buildings of this nature that have such strong social memories for Singaporeans,” says Zaini Bin Osman, chief executive officer, Warees Investments. “Thus we wanted to respect what the building was before and the role it has played to its surrounding communities.”

The Red House’s intention was a *wakaf*, or charitable property. Behind the distinctive red painted facade and its familiarity as a long-standing bakery were the wishes of Sherrifa Zain Alsharoff Mohamed Alsagoff, the philanthropist who owned the building along with five adjacent shophouses. She placed all 6 of the buildings in a charitable trust, managed by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), to ensure that future financial proceeds from the buildings would go to the poor, regardless of race or religion, to pay for medical care.

The Red House’s soul was a bakery. Warees Investments, developers and managers of MUIS’ endowment properties, realised that it was important to continue the Red House legacy as a bakery. They tracked down a former employee of the original Katong Bakery & Confectionery who informed them that the operators were no longer in business. After an extensive search for a suitable replacement, Warees was approached by Heavenly Wang Café, a coffeeshop with a focus on heritage tastes in Singapore. It proved a match made in heaven. Heavenly Wang, being a subsidiary of NTUC Foodfare Co-operative, shared Warees’ commitment to a greater social purpose.

Today, the Red House once again welcomes back neighbourhood customers. The regulars range from grandparents meeting their friends for a morning tea and a slice of old-style pastry which was unique to the old bakery and which has



been reintroduced specially to this outlet, as well as school kids popping by for a treat in the afternoon when classes are over.

Most challenging
“If you look at the elements of the old building, the most difficult to restore were the colonnades which had badly deteriorated,” says Zaini. “The contractors built new beams inside the old columns, but the external parts of the columns were all retained. So if you look at them now you will see that they are not smooth because they are still covered by the original cement. They also don’t have 90-degree angles, like they would if they were new.”

Most extensive hunt
Warees searched for artisans who could reproduce the decorative elements of the past with authenticity, specifically details such as the timber window and door carvings and the tiled floors. “It was all hand work,” says Zaini. “The contractor located a retired Malaysian woodcarver who lived in Johor, and managed to pull him out of retirement to come and do the work. The windows and doors are all carved according to past photographs.” Even the floor inside the bakery is all the old style tile design, says Zaini, of the vintage floor tiles that many bakery customers love. “People asked where are you going to find these tiles in Singapore today?” The answer was Vietnam. It was there that the contractor located a ceramic tile factory that recreated the tile qualities and design bespoke for this project.

The URA Architectural Heritage Awards is an annual award and platform that recognises and celebrates the quality restoration of monuments and conserved buildings. In its 23rd year in 2017, with the two award winners then, there are now 130 projects that have received the award.

In conversation with architects

With the '20 under 45: The Third Edition' recognising a new crop of 20 Singapore-registered architects under the age of 45, we catch up with 3 firms that have '20 under 45' architects recognised across generations. They talk about more complex challenges ahead, the evolving role of the architect and the mission to create beautiful spaces.

Writer **Justin Zhuang** | Photographer **Chee Boon Pin**

DP Architects (DP)

Angelene Chan

Chief Executive Officer ('20 under 45' second edition)

Seah Chee Huang

Director ('20 under 45' third edition)

Year founded

1967

Selection of works

Esplanade-Theatres on the Bay, Singapore Sports Hub, Goodlife! Makan, Our Tampines Hub, Sunray Woodcraft Construction Headquarters, Singapore University of Technology and Design

What are some challenges architecture faces today?

Chee Huang: The context of architecture is getting increasingly complex. By 2050, studies project that 90% of the urban population increase will come from Africa and Asia. This intensity compounds issues such as social and environmental sustainability. The shifting social demographic — Singapore's ageing population

— is also something to be mindful of. Every architecture we create easily lasts for 30 or even 100 years, so we need to see how our design embeds these futures.

Angelene: We are in this time of great change. For instance, retail is facing one of the biggest disruptions now, and no one knows what retail is going to be next year, what more 10 years from now. Healthcare is going to be a big thing in Singapore if 1 in 4 are going to be older than 65 in 2030. We talk about offices, you already see co-working spaces becoming quite the norm because of high rents. In every one of these different building types, you will see a change.

How is the increasing focus on people-centric designs influencing the way you work?

Angelene: From the day DP was founded, the people has always been within our philosophy. It has always been about who are the people using the space we are creating for. DP's first project, People's Park Complex, had the first "city room" — so we've always been looking at our works in that way.

Chee Huang: The whole vehicle of architecture can be a really powerful platform to generate positive change and create meaning. We need to continue to be plugged into a cultural fraternity that harnesses various complex issues — whether it's social, cultural, economic, political — and to synthesise and make sense of them. One key role we should champion: integration.

Tell us more about the idea of integration given your recent work, Our Tampines Hub (OTH).

Angelene: OTH integrates different types of spaces, including retail and community. In the past, these were in different locations because you would drive to them. In the future, they all come together under one roof and are connected by public transport. Retail in the future will be community spaces. If you need to buy anything, you'll buy it off the internet. You only go to a retail centre for the experience or meeting friends.

Chee Huang: It's this whole idea of hybrids, where we overlay more meanings to a specific component, and in this case building and site.



Rather than the conventional idea of a single-use building, OTH explores this concept of a "superhub". There are 12 public agencies under one roof, as well as lifestyle programmes. It opens up shared economies as there is co-location and collaboration. A large part of the project is about weaving the everyday lives of the community within the whole architecture. With a strong emphasis on intensification and optimisation also comes a keen awareness of liveability. That is why OTH integrates greenery, an awareness of scale and prioritises common spaces.



WOHA Architects

Wong Mun Summ

Co-founder ('20 under 45' first edition)

Phua Hong Wei

Associate ('20 under 45' third edition)

Year founded

1994

Selection of works

School of the Arts, PARKROYAL on Pickering, Enabling Village, Kampung Admiralty, SkyVille@Dawson, Oasia Hotel Downtown

How has the role of architects evolved?

Mun Summ: Traditionally, the architect not only designs, but manages a project too. In many cases, architects have given up the project management role, so a lot of clients now manage the designers and projects. We have clients telling us: "Let's have a meeting every day" or "Why don't you move your team to my office so that we can have more discussions." But architecture is not done by having meetings. Time is our resource. Architecture needs to be done through constantly thinking, shaping and refining the concepts, strategies and designs.

Hong Wei: Things are really picking up: clients expect you to churn out a design and there are regular changes in requirements and guidelines. With digital tools, it's interesting to see the switch from a very grounded way of presenting architecture to a quicker way of putting things together. Before, you did your homework and ask questions to establish a solid foundation. Now people just Google and put together images, moods and precedents. There are many more specialised fields today: consultants for façade,

acoustic, sustainability etc and as the lead consultant we need to have a grasp of everything.

Why is there a great interest in environmentally sustainable architecture?

Mun Summ: In the eighties, people were less conscious about environmental issues. Cheap oil gave rise to the Middle East, which gave rise to star architects and formalism. That has run its course with the explosion of mega cities in the last 20 years. People realise our cities are not liveable, and environmentally sustainable buildings have become fashionable because of this. We have always been doing the same thing.

Hong Wei: There must be a realisation that sustainability is not about what you have to give up or compromise. Sustainability is about value adding.

What's next for sustainability?

Mun Summ: Our focus continues to be about the bigger picture and the environment rather than individual buildings alone. We are interested in how buildings contribute towards making the person more comfortable, and create a liveable environment. It is not about how it looks anymore. It's not about putting landscaping into the building, but the effect of that. It's about forming enough critical mass. Just us doing these buildings is not enough.

Hong Wei: The next step would be how buildings can be civic, generous, and sociable. At a presentation on Oasia Hotel Downtown, someone living in the nearby public housing said he felt invigorated by the sight of this 'big green tree'. That was a feel-good moment because the building can value add, contribute back, and engage not just people living and working in the tower but the man on the street and people working around it.

RT+Q Architects

Rene Tan

Co-founder ('20 under 45' second edition)

Jonathan Quek

Associate ('20 under 45' third edition)

Year founded

2003

Selection of works

House of a Collector, House on a Plain, House of Courtyards

What is architecture missing these days?

Jonathan: Context - things are starting to look the same. You actually have to look at which country the project is in and where it is designed. There is also a trend of formless architecture, but there is often a lack of clarity in such projects.

Rene: A new sort of international style has emerged. It's both good and bad. Good in a sense that architecture has become more abstract and more internationally accessible. Bad that it has lost some sense of place. The biggest question is should architecture be part of a certain culture or is it something for everyone. I think it should be a balance of both. While we practice in various places around the world, we don't care where we do the work. We don't care whether you are Indian, Japanese or Croatian, architecture should be fundamentally about what is important for the user.

What are some of the challenges in designing residential projects today?

Jonathan: With globalisation, technology and the Internet, clients can search for anything. It's very easy for them to point to a picture and say I want my house to be like that. We have clients that show us 10 images off the Internet and they don't relate, nor can they be applied to a house.



Rene: Clients' requirements have become more challenging. While we try to attend to their personal needs, we must not forget the larger needs of the profession. Some people get so particular about having the right kind of koi pond that they forget about the other aspects of a house—composition, scale, things like this. My fear of architecture today is there are too many distractions and we as architects are also equally distracted.

How should architects practice in this distracted world?

Jonathan: It comes back to having core values, and to not be distracted by the computer and what it can do for you. Persevere and tell clients what are the main things to focus on. Our role as architects is to be a professional guide, to

direct clients' attention towards a theme or concept from their wish list. Consistency in the work is very important. You see a lot of good architecture out there but one bad work and your reputation goes.

Rene: We try not to lose sight of the larger issues. The core values of architecture and mission have to be the creation of beautiful spaces. Working in Thailand or Indonesia where communities are more rural, there is more emphasis on the craft of architecture because they use their hands. Whereas in fast-paced Singapore, this tends to be lost. That's why we try to restore some sense of craft into architecture. Architecture is all about the human endeavour. Although machines are helpful, architecture must always show its emotional component.

Personal passion

3 architects from the '20 under 45' third edition let us in on their initial fascination with architecture, dream projects and what's in their bags.

Writer **Justin Zhuang**

TEO YEE CHIN
Principal, Red Bean Architects

Projects
Brick House, House V, House X, Singapore Pavilion, Venice Biennale

Amongst the university courses available, Yee Chin chose to study architecture simply because it was the most interesting. But on retrospect, he remembers three early encounters with building and spaces. The HDB flat in Bedok North where he spent his toddler years, his primary school building, and the old Raffles Institution at Grange Road where he studied in, which had curious below-grade spaces where the building met the ground. Having worked on a variety of projects from interiors to private homes, Yee Chin says one thing he did not anticipate when starting out was the effort it takes to design a building. "It is certainly more work than I expected!"

Tell us about one work of yours that is memorable.

"Space to Imagine, Room for Everyone", the exhibition I co-curated and designed for the 2016 Venice Biennale. It allowed me to immerse in different cultures and in turn made me understand myself and ourselves (Singapore's design) better.



What more do you want to see in Singapore's architecture?

Ground level shops and restaurants in every building on all streets.

One project or space you wish more would notice?

Pearl Bank Apartments. It is stunning! A strong reflection of collective living, the striking circular tower offers a breathtaking experience and its 35th storey may be the first sky terrace in Singapore's housing.

Your dream project?

A commission to master-plan Holland Village, where one can potentially test a new version of the shophouse fabric to serve as a model for future developments.

Yee Chin reveals what's in his bag and what he carries around:

1. A pocket sized sketchbook which I use in the office or outside.
2. Lined notebook for taking notes during meetings or when I'm teaching.
3. Laser measuring devices, useful for taking measurements in big or tall spaces. Quicker and cooler than pulling out the tape!
4. 3 rolls of drafting tape from Muji. Different patterns all in the maroon (red bean) colour.
5. A VGA adaptor for the MacBook. Always in my bag because you never know when you need to make a presentation.
6. My MacBook Pro I carry with me quite a fair bit. For emails, writing and presentations.
7. A fountain pen for more enjoyable writing/sketching and a pilot Gtec C4 pen which has a fine nib for more precise drawing and writing.
8. The latest issue of The Singapore Architect. This is a magazine that I edit. I've been writing articles and reviews for the past 18 years, and recently I took over as editor. While it's always a stretch to write and edit on top of practising full time, it's a worthwhile endeavour shaping the architectural discourse here.
9. *Unrest*, a novel by Yeng Pway Ng. I just finished this book. When bringing my children to the library I usually pick up a book from the shelves. NLB has got an excellent collection of local literature.
10. My name card. Just to add a dash of red in this corner!

NG SAN SON
Senior Associate Director, DP Architects

Projects
Orchard Central, Changi Civil Service Club, My Village@Serangoon Gardens, River Safari

The humble Singapore Improvement Trust flats along Upper Pickering Street was where his wonder for architecture began. San Son recalls how these mid-century flats had long horizontal lines, smooth corners and staircases pivoted with round columns that stood out in a Chinatown then undergoing redevelopment. Having grown up fascinated by how the "cranes 'disappear' and replaced by a building mass" in his neighbourhood, San Son is now deeply engaged in the designing and construction of architecture itself. "Architecture is a challenging journey but I am still learning, adapting and analysing every step of the way," he says.

Tell us about one work of yours that is memorable.

The extension of St Andrew's Cathedral – it was the first built project I worked on as a fresh graduate. Guided by my director and mentor Chan Sui Him, it offered a

meaningful start in my architectural journey and contributed to building my foundation as an architect.

What more do you want to see in Singapore's architecture?

More public spaces that are integrated with private and government buildings.

One project or space you wish more would notice?

The public housing void deck. It is often taken for granted, yet has many opportunities for spontaneous and practical uses: residents can bring their own chairs and chat up neighbours; there can be chance encounters when collecting letters. It is also where children play soccer, or houses TV and study corners.

Your dream project?

Where I am my own client.



San Son reveals what's in his bag and what he carries around:

1. "Tools of the trade" that I cannot live without – laser pointer for site visits, penknife, markers and pencils.
2. A drawing by Tan Yeo, a talented architecture student with the word "REDO". I use that word in the NUS architecture studio very often when I was designing the River Safari.
3. Sketchbook to accompany my travels where I do quick 5-minute sketches to capture the essence and then move on to the next location.
4. Scale ruler which I use frequently to resolve issues in real time with hand drawings instead of relying on technology all the time.

ONG KER-SHING
Director, Lekker Architects

Projects
The Caterpillar's Cove, Gallery House,
Yale-NUS College landscape, Cemetery
Park, Nanjing, China

Struck by how the environment has “enormous power over our mood, memories and experiences”, a young Ker-Shing chose architecture when considering what to do in life. Not only could she explore the visual language of the physical world, architecture allowed her to make a difference in the lives of people by engaging them on a personal level. While architecture as an intellectual discipline involves the alchemy of rationality and imagination, Ker-Shing says practising it is more than just balancing the right and left brains. “It is the wearing of multiple hats: dreamer, technician, lawyer, judge, mediator, businessman, manager, salesman, accountant, artist,” she says.

Tell us about one work of yours that is memorable.

Our first real architecture project — the Belmont House — has a special place in my heart. It certainly suffered from “first house syndrome” in that we poured almost every architectural idea we ever had into it... but we managed to wrestle it into a building with some beautiful moments, of which I am still very proud.

What more do you want to see in Singapore's architecture?

More slow projects being made. Everything is produced at such a rapid pace that there is almost no time to think, to truly innovate beyond stylistic gestures.

One project or space you wish more would notice?

The Arcadia, a condominium in Bukit Timah. It was developed by my maternal grandfather, and was a kind of predecessor to many of today's



architectural trends. It's remarkably green, adventurous in its three-dimensional language, and strikingly social in its imagination.

Your dream project?

Designing and building a tree house with my kids.

URA's '20 under 45' series is part of the larger objectives to profile emerging Singapore-registered architects and promote architectural excellence in Singapore. The architects are selected by a panel of assessors from the architectural profession and related industries, based on their achievements in design, ideas and leadership. The first two editions were in 2004 and 2010. The '20 under 45: The Third Edition' book is available at select bookstores and the Singapore City Gallery.

All interviews have been edited and condensed.

Ker-Shing reveals what's in her bag and on her desk:

1. A hand-embroidered bookmark from Ena da Silva, one of my favourite people, an artist and Sri Lanka's “national treasure.” It reminds me that there is great joy in making things.
2. An idea for a small building.
3. Grether's Pastilles: ostensibly a throat lozenge, but really my favourite chewy candy since I was a kid.
4. Pithy reminders (and drawings) from my daughter when she was 6 going on 16... it contains gems like “bite your worries to bits” and “widen adventures”.
5. What I sketch on: a postcard binder I used to sell in my now-closed-forever shop Strangelets. On top are pencils with my name on them to stop people in my office from walking off with them, and my Clayton Franklin reading glasses, which I have just sadly started having to wear.
6. My trusty Moleskine diary, always with a cover customised by my kids, to keep track of life.
7. A pair of Rocket sunglasses: this is from my brother's “designed in Singapore” eyewear company which makes classic sunglasses for the weekend. I moonlight as the Design Head, which means I get to decide on all the colours!
8. Highlighters with the word “BOSS” circled – another office joke, because people really do keep walking off with all my pens.
9. A Hermes tape measure, a gift from my mother when I became a licensed architect.
10. Hand cream because I am an obsessive hand-washer.

Why Mr Saeid is championing Kampong Gelam

He pounds the street to keep the place alive + 6 things to know in getting started.

Writer **Serene Tng** | Photographer **Chee Boon Pin**

It is his love for Kampong Gelam and seeing the potential that more can be done if everyone chipped in that got Saeid Labbafi, Chairman of One Kampong Gelam, knocking on doors from as early as 2011. Both a Singapore permanent resident and a Teheran native, Saeid and his family owns 8 carpet shops along Arab Street. Operating in the historic precinct for 15 years, Saeid took the initiative to first approach several shops to rally businesses together. 7 years on, and One Kampong Gelam (OKG), a place-management association he founded in 2014 now has 70 members made up of mainly businesses in the area.

Kampong Gelam (named after the ‘gelam’ trees in the area) was once the seat of Malay royalty in a traditionally Malay urban residential area. Bounded by Ophir Road, Victoria Street, Jalan Sultan and Beach Road, the area was gazetted as a conservation area in 1989. For his proactive place-making efforts, Saeid was awarded the Place Champion Award in September 2017.

We stroll through its back alleys and lively streets on a lovely morning with Saeid to find out how he keeps this place thriving while managing its evolving identity and diverse stakeholders.



¹The Place Champion Award is conferred by the Place Management Coordinating Forum every year to recognise private sector individuals who have made significant place-making contributions to their respective precincts. The forum is an inter-agency group comprising the Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore Tourism Board, National Arts Council, National Heritage Board, National Parks Board and SportsSG, overseeing the development of the place management sector in Singapore.

We meet at Sultan Mosque and immediately ask: what is it about Kampong Gelam that draws you in?

It has a very friendly environment with a strong community. The area is also rich in history with many iconic buildings like the Sultan Mosque and a diverse mix of businesses amidst beautiful streets.

What are some lesser known attractions?

There are at least 8 traditional perfume shops operating in the area and the precinct offers many authentic cuisines from the region.

How did you decide on what to do in the beginning?

Start small. I approached just 10 shops in getting initial support. And chose to focus on 3 things of common interest to key stakeholders in the beginning: improving the cleanliness of the area, introducing relevant events and regular bazaars that will help increase footfall and working on enhancements that will help both businesses and visitors like ensuring sufficient car parking and outdoor refreshment areas.

How would you explain your place management role?

Malls with multiple owners have MCSTs (management corporation strata title) contracted to manage them. A precinct is like a mall except much bigger. Like the MCST, I see my role as managing the overall marketing and branding of the precinct, getting everyone together to bring improvements to the area, creating a much greater impact.

How do you gain the support of Kampong Gelam's diverse mix of businesses?

Survey, survey, survey - for every major event and enhancement we want to implement, we carry out many surveys with businesses to really listen to what they want and need, to ensure that improvements are made with their interests at heart. And very often, we walk door to door to stay in touch with stakeholders. I've made many friends along the way and the precinct now feels like a second home.

It is getting hot. We step into the cool Cube Boutique Hotel at Bussorah Street and bump into Benedict Choa, an OKG council member and director at RB Hospitality.

Members like Benedict work tirelessly giving their time and money to make this precinct better.

An example is this hotel itself where Benedict has offered to integrate an information kiosk in the hotel to serve the precinct, working in close partnership with the Singapore Tourism Board.

Benedict and other OKG members are also helping to support retailers in Kampong Gelam to go digital and omni-channel, the first of many neighbourhoods to undergo a digital revitalisation as part of the larger retail industry transformation led by the Infocomm Media Development Authority.

What are some of your proudest achievements so far?

Initiating the first ever precinct-wide car-free zone involving 4 streets in Kampong Gelam as part of the Aliwal Arts Night Crawl and Arts House Limited in October 2017, working closely with URA and other agencies. That made a major impact in showcasing the vibrancy and offerings of the area and demonstrated many possibilities on the potential of bringing people together, the benefit of collaborations and how street closures can make the precinct even more enjoyable.

Over the years, OKG has also developed strong ties and good communication with key government agencies and major stakeholders in the area – this is crucial in gaining the necessary support and being able to implement significant improvements.

Has Kampong Gelam become more commercialised? How do you balance retaining its identity and ensuring its relevance?

I agree that it has become somewhat commercialised. It is about striking the right balance. When I took on the role of managing the place, there are already many types of businesses operating in the area. Moving forward, one way to achieve the balance is to manage the business licenses for the area carefully.

Stepping out of the hotel, Saeid is keen to share one of his pet peeves: dustbins.

Just walk along any of these beautiful streets and one of the biggest things you will notice are rows and rows of dustbins. I believe there are many ways to approach this, perhaps changing the designs of the dustbins to ensure they don't stand out for the wrong reasons or to place them in more subtle ways to make the streets even more attractive.



He shows us potential hidden gems we didn't notice before.

The precinct has many interesting back alleys that can be turned into great sidewalks for visitors and pedestrians. And there are at least 2 entry points into Kampong Gelam at the Ophir/Beach Road and North Bridge/Ophir Road junctions that can be turned into more attractive gateways. By making these junctions more inviting and engaging as green, public spaces, visitors can experience a more memorable sense of arrival into the precinct.

You are thinking of piloting Business Improvement District (BID) for Kampong Gelam where all stakeholders are committed to contribute financially. How will this benefit everyone?

Financial support is always one of the biggest challenges we face in managing a precinct like this. BID can certainly offer greater financial stability and certainty in helping us carry out more substantial improvements in the long term. Most importantly, BID will benefit both businesses and visitors. More will come to

visit and stay longer. And Kampong Gelam can continue to remain relevant and close to our hearts.

Before we leave, tell us your 3 biggest lessons?

For such a place-making role, you need a lot of patience and passion to see things through. Even

though everything you do is on a volunteering basis, demands and expectations are high. Be prepared to commit your time to making things work and building relationships. Finally, you need to learn to strike a healthy balance in time spent on precinct work, family and career.

Follow OKG on facebook @OneKampongGelam.

**6 things to know:
Starting a pilot Business
Improvement District (BID)**

BID is a legislated place management model commonly used in other cities with positive impact. Property/business owners vote to carry out a business plan and everyone is compelled to contribute towards funding the business plan if there is majority support for it.

The pilot BID programme was formally launched by URA in September 2017 to test the BID framework in Singapore. Under this pilot, seed funding is available to encourage stakeholders in precincts like Kampong Gelam to proactively drive and contribute towards place management efforts. The first to pilot the BID, Singapore River One's Chairman, Wilson Tan shares 6 things to know in getting started.

- 1

Any stakeholder in the precinct can start a BID.
A strong dose of courage, gumption and stamina for the long-haul is highly recommended. Tip: defining the boundaries of the precinct is important in garnering enough stakeholders to fund a strong business plan and yet be of a manageable size.
- 2

Take into account the precinct's mix.
For example, Singapore River is a melting pot of hospitality, entertainment, food & beverage

- 3

Form a task group to lead that is passionate and disciplined.
They must walk the talk by embracing the BID processes in their interactions with stakeholders. As BID is still a new concept, it will be an ongoing process of educating stakeholders on its benefits. Only enthusiastic individuals who can stay the course need apply.
- 4

Get to know your stakeholders.
Take the time to get to know your stakeholders to reflect their voices in the business plan for the precinct. Be prepared for reiterative planning sessions with surveys and dialogues to hear different views.
- 5

Plan the timeline, make it inclusive
Engage stakeholders every step of the way so that they are kept abreast of BID milestones.
- 6

Focus on the big picture and long term.
Never lose sight of the long-term and big picture goals of BID while running day-to-day operations. While delivering short-term solutions may bring some immediate rewards, they can also lead to a constant cycle of stop gap measures which may not benefit the BID in the long run.

In support of the pilot Business Improvement District (BID), the government will provide dollar-to-dollar matching for the collected membership fees at a cap of \$500,000 per year for the first 4-year pilot BID. Interested parties to start a pilot BID can submit a formal expression of interest (EOI) with a proposal to enhance the precinct over 4 years. For queries and to submit the EOI, write to bid_feedback@ura.gov.sg by 31 March 2018.

**Rail in
motion**

The extraordinary 24 km long Rail Corridor continues to fascinate us as we look at the past and future of the first 4 km stretch to be developed.

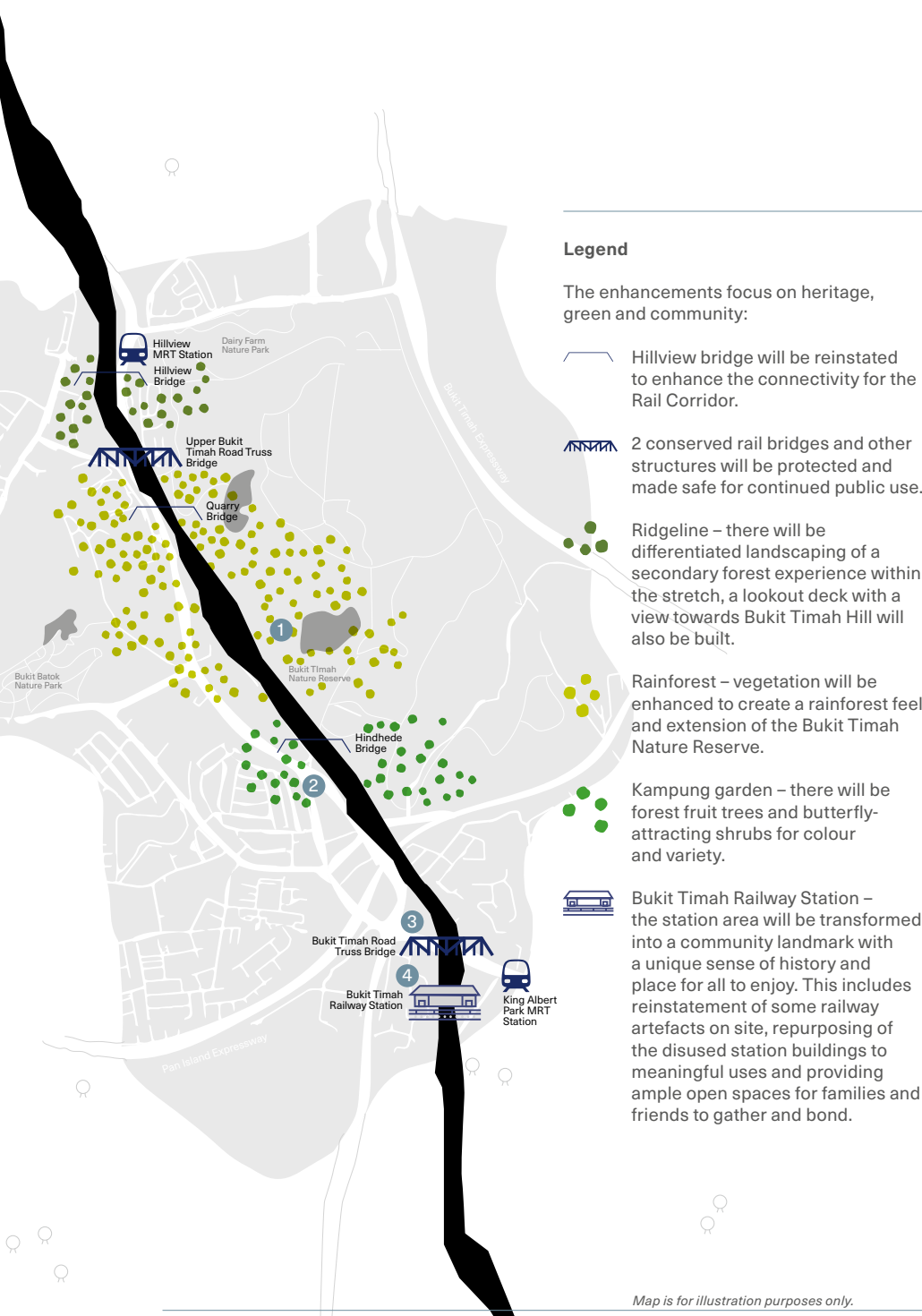
Writer **Luo Jingmei** and **Serene Tng**

When the last of the Keretapi Tanah Melayu's (KTM) trains pulled away from the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in 2011, it marked the beginning of a new era. This 24 km long Rail Corridor has witnessed the passage of time and is a carrier of hopes and dreams. In charting the rail's future as a continuous green, community space, URA carried out extensive engagements with the community in the last few years that culminated in a Concept Master Plan in 2016. It recently won the landscape master planning award from the Landscape Institute (UK) and the International Federation of Landscape Institute (IFLA – Asia Pacific Region).

We look at the past and future of the first 4 km stretch to be developed and delve into the unseen work behind the Bukit Timah Railway Station.

First 4 km

Announced in October 2017, the 4 km Rail Corridor Central from Hillview to the Bukit Timah Railway station will be first to be developed. The designs include feedback from community groups and seek to retain the rail's rich history while catering for a wide range of experiences in future. Works will begin in 2018 and be completed by 2021.



National Parks Board (NParks)'s heritage walk reveals 4 historical milestones along the stretch:

- 1

Rail origins – The rail line was first discussed in 1869 by the W.J. Du Port of the Tanjong Pagar dock company to manage the rising demand for primary produce from the Malay Peninsula. It opened in 1903 transporting goods to and from Keppel harbour.
- 2

Beauty World – The railway was a backdrop to the colourful origins of the Beauty World Centre as a popular amusement park during the Japanese Occupation, to a lively market in 1947

- Legend**
- The enhancements focus on heritage, green and community:
- Hillview bridge will be reinstated to enhance the connectivity for the Rail Corridor.
- 2 conserved rail bridges and other structures will be protected and made safe for continued public use.
- Ridgeline – there will be differentiated landscaping of a secondary forest experience within the stretch, a lookout deck with a view towards Bukit Timah Hill will also be built.
- Rainforest – vegetation will be enhanced to create a rainforest feel and extension of the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve.
- Kampung garden – there will be forest fruit trees and butterfly-attracting shrubs for colour and variety.
- Bukit Timah Railway Station – the station area will be transformed into a community landmark with a unique sense of history and place for all to enjoy. This includes reinstatement of some railway artefacts on site, repurposing of the disused station buildings to meaningful uses and providing ample open spaces for families and friends to gather and bond.

Map is for illustration purposes only.

- 3

Battlefield – The Bukit Timah Railway station and the Truss bridge's embankments were the furthest points for the British to retake Bukit Timah hill in the battle between them and the Japanese forces in 1942. But the British eventually withdrew towards Clementi Road.
- 4

Suburban station – Opened in 1931, the Bukit Timah Railway Station was an important part of three smaller stations (the other two were Tanglin and Alexandra) built to serve suburban areas and industrial areas around it.

Restoring Bukit Timah Railway Station

What does it take to restore a landmark like the Bukit Timah Railway Station (BTRS)? You first have to study and document it carefully.

31 students from the Singapore University of Technology and Design's Architecture and Sustainable Design (SUTD) pillar gained a first-hand insight into the work that goes on behind documenting a conserved landmark like the station for future restoration. Initiated by URA and led by Assistant Professor Yeo Kang Shua, the project was introduced for the first time as part of the students' coursework for the Conservation Theories and Approaches of Built Heritage module. They spent 3 months from May to August 2017 walking the ground, investigating, documenting and analysing every aspect of the station and its surroundings, experimenting with the use of digital photogrammetry (3D scanning) with the support of drones. Kang Shua and 3 students, Mok Jun Wei, Chiang Yan Yan, Cassandra Tan reflect on the importance of the study and insights gained.

What is one thing the students learnt from the study?

Kang Shua: Even though the station's structure and design is seemingly simple, the students realise that there is much to learn from this building. There is also the challenge of studying a landmark such as this that has limited literature and historical documentation.

How does this study enhance the curriculum?

Kang Shua: It gives students a hands-on learning experience of the intricacies behind architectural conservation. It is important to include historical construction methods in the architectural curriculum, beyond the focus on new construction technologies. This is especially pertinent when an increasing number of structures around the world are conserved.

What should architectural conservators pay attention to?

Kang Shua: They need to understand the sense of place and the design intent of the original designer of the building. In doing so, there will be a better understanding of the context and the ability to adapt the historic structure more sensitively for current and future uses.

What can even ordinary windows and doors tell us?

Yan Yan: Through observation and using clues from different parts of the station, we realised that some works had been carried out through the years as technology advanced and the functions of the station evolved. We discovered that there are 6 different types of glass window panes used in the station, ranging from textured float glass to clear float glass. These indirectly bear witness to the evolution and technological advancements of glass making through the years.



3 things you may not know about the station

The SUTD students share some discoveries from the study.

- 1

Rail tracks
The rail tracks which use the Metre Gauge Rail (MGR) are now a rarity in Singapore, compared to the Standard Gauge used in Singapore's MRT tracks today. The MGR is still used in some Malaysian Railways' tracks from Johor to the Gemas station in Peninsula Malaysia.
- 2

Token Pole
There used to be 3 token poles but only 1 is left on site now. These were used as

a safety signalling system where a train driver is required to have the token to travel along a particular section of a single railway track. The driver would drop off or collect the key token on the pole when they pass the station.

- 3

Windows and glass panes
The mild steel window frames and its original glass panes are one of the important defining elements of the station. The variety of glass panes found today are most likely due to the replacement of broken panes, which indirectly reflects the technological changes in glass making over the years.

Cassandra: From the doorknob and single-casement door design, we were able to deduce that the middle portion of the station is a relatively new extension of the original waiting platform in the railway station. This is also backed up with further evidence of the change of floor tiles within the new room. We also identified mild steel framed windows at the railway station, made by English manufacturer, Crittall Windows Ltd.

How has this study influenced your thoughts on conservation?

Cassandra: It has helped me to develop the sensitivity towards different social, economic and historical conditions when working on conservation projects and to appreciate the importance in weighing these factors before coming to a reasonable conclusion.

Jun Wei: This study has raised several questions for me to ponder upon as an architecture student. Are we able to achieve a balance between Singapore's economic development and the preservation of our heritage? With various stakeholders involved, we often fail to take a step back and ask ourselves, whose vision are we championing? And are we able to align our objectives into one that is altruistic?

The station's future
The students' study and proposals will be taken into account for the future restoration works of the station. It is envisioned to be one of the landmarks of the Rail Corridor, serving as a community node with a strong sense of history and a variety of public spaces for the community to enjoy. The landscaping will feature a "heritage garden" theme with kampung flowering plants reintroduced to reinforce the station's sense of place. The historic buildings will be restored and repurposed for compatible uses.

The conserved station building will be transformed into a heritage gallery and visitor centre for people to learn more about the history of the railway station and Rail Corridor, while the former Station Master's Quarters will be a convenient stopover providing basic refreshments and amenities for Rail Corridor users. Complementing the repurposed buildings are the provision of well-shaded community lawns to allow for various leisure activities to take place. URA and NParks are also studying plans to creatively reinstate some salvaged railway tracks between the steel truss bridge across Bukit Timah Road/Dunearn Road and the old railway station, to recapture the route that trains used to run along.

For updates and to be a friend of the Rail Corridor, go to www.nparks.gov.sg/railcorridor



4 tips for designing neighbourhoods

In redesigning Mei Chin in Queenstown, Singapore's first HDB town, students from URA's annual planning workshop 2017 share their top 4 considerations.

Writer **Serene Tng**

"Good design is about meeting the needs of people," says Muhammad Aiman from Catholic Junior College. He and another 140 tertiary students learnt how to plan for and design good neighbourhoods in URA's 9th edition of the Challenge for the Urban & Built Environment (CUBE). Being planners for a week in November 2017, the students came up with fresh ideas to turn the charming Mei Chi estate into a possible new hub and heart for Queenstown in future.

1 Consider the surroundings carefully
Zhi Fan suggests we need to take into account the context of the site and its surroundings. "Be careful to blend in any change well with the surroundings."

2 Put yourself in other peoples' shoes
"It is about putting yourself in the shoes of the residents, knowing what people want," says Bryan Lee, Singapore Polytechnic.

3 Keep the neighbourhood's special qualities
"We need to ensure the special qualities and what is unique about a place is retained," says

Muhammad Aiman, Catholic Junior College. "It is also critical to have a core area that brings everyone together and where key amenities are located like community centres and hawker centres."

4 Go crazy with ideas
Lim Zhi Fan of River Valley High School feels that one should not be constrained by the current policies or contexts. "It can be limiting if you stick to the same thing." Fellow team mate Nathan Teo adds: "We should always allow ourselves to go crazy with new ideas first. Then we can be both sensitive to tradition and yet find new ways for improvements."

Check out the various student design proposals at the CUBE 2017 exhibition, at the URA Centre, from 19 March to 27 April 2018. For updates on CUBE, follow their facebook page @CUBEStudentWorkshop.

Hidden communities

Photographer Joseph Nair reveals the hidden communities around the Rail Corridor.

Writer **Joseph Nair and Sarah Liu** | Photographer **Joseph Nair**

The Rail Corridor tells an important story of the Singaporean life. More than a physical remnant of history, the line exists as a guardian of nature and an economic past that shapes the lifestyles of small residential communities. In a quiet, undisturbed existence, people here lead private and communal lives — working, eating, and commuting — as part of the mundane. Shying away from the urban build-up, a kampong mosque, and folk shrines dedicated to Hindu and Buddhist-Taoist deities sit comfortably amid wildlife, greens, and biodiversity. Reminding us of our roots, these sacred spaces form the footprints of economic migrants who arrived with their ways of life. A resident along the Rail Corridor, photographer Joseph Nair captures the hidden life and communities along the line.



1 | Two retirees carry a load of jackfruit foraged from mature fruit trees planted a long time ago by owners and residents along the Rail Corridor. 2 | An office building in the one-north development at Buona Vista is reflected in a puddle along the Rail Corridor. Workers from offices at one-north often use this route as a shortcut to enjoy affordable lunch options at the Holland Drive and Tanglin Halt markets.



3



4



5



6

At a glance

We check out the latest events and happenings shaping the landscapes and neighbourhoods around us.



Buy the book: support our local architects

The '20 under 45: The Third Edition' book presents inspiring and beautiful local and overseas works of the next generation of 20 Singapore-registered architects under the age of 45. More than a collection, the book captures a uniquely Singapore style of architecture that is making an impact on the world map.

Buy Select bookstores and the Singapore City Gallery

Be a friend of Car-Free Sunday SG

Beyond soaking in the fun-filled car-free streets in parts of the city throughout 2018, why not play a more active role? Join in the friends' network to organise suitable activities or contribute financially to help support the continued efforts to create more lively streets with fewer cars.

Sign up ura_carfreezones@ura.gov.sg



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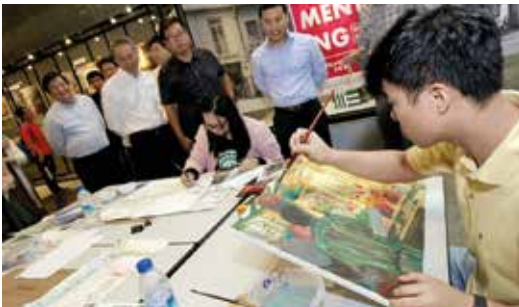
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Contact ura_gallery@ura.gov.sg



3 | Priest A. Thiru conducts prayers at a Hindu shrine along the Rail Corridor nestled below the junction of Queensway and Portsdown Road. A once common sight along the Malayan Railway, these temples or shrines were set up by Indian railway workers who sought protection from familiar deities amid a new environment. It is possibly the last of Hindu railway shrines in Singapore. 4 | Peking Room, a Tanglin Halt coffee shop, is better known for its tenant Tanglin Halt Roti Prata that draws long queues any day of the week. 5 | A worshipper crosses the Rail Corridor to get to the Masjid Hang Jebat (not pictured, to the right of frame) for Friday prayers. This mosque began in 1952 as a *Surau* or prayer hall for the Malay Regiment soldiers who lived in the vicinity. 6 | Mr Chua Thiam Seng, 65, sorts cardboard the way he has been doing it for 20 years at the Commonwealth Drive HDB blocks. These flats along the Rail Corridor are better known as *Chap Lau Chu* or '10-storey blocks' in Hokkien, and were once proudly displayed on Singapore's first issue of the one-dollar note.

Photographer Joseph Nair captures the hidden communities and life around the Rail Corridor: commuters on board an eastbound MRT train over the Rail Corridor (below), Muslim worshippers at Masjid Hang Jebat walking across the former Queens Crescent estate, a migrant worker making his way along the Rail Corridor and devotees at the Sri Thandavaalam Muneeswaran Alayam shrine hidden in sheds beneath the Queensway viaduct (below right). More on page 45.

