



# SINGAPORE STREET, BUILDING AND PLACE NAMES

Past, Present and Future



## Foreword

Much of Singapore's history is reflected in the names and streets that we see every day. Street names not only help us navigate our way through Singapore, but they also yield interesting information about our country's history, geography, politics, heritage and culture.

There is a story behind every street, building and place name in Singapore. This publication aims to provide a snapshot of the development of Singapore through a selection of names that reveal the changing landscape of our country's rich heritage and identity that goes back over 700 years.

It traces the history of Singapore through the street-naming conventions from the pre-colonial to modern-day Singapore. By highlighting the stories behind the street names, the publication provides a link to the past. It helps us understand the origins of the names of our local streets and buildings, how they have evolved through the years even as we chart our way forward.


As Singapore celebrates her 54th National Day and commemorates the Bicentennial in 2019, we hope that this publication will not only remind Singaporeans of the illuminating stories of our pioneers – their lives and achievements, but also offer our new generation an insight into Singapore's progress over the years; and how we, as the current and future generations, can continue to contribute to this cosmopolitan metropolis and strive forward together to forge our city of tomorrow.

**Amy Khor**  
Chairperson  
Street and Building Names Board




### The Many Names of Singapore (1299 – 1818)

- *Singapura*
- *Long Ya Men*




### Early Development of Singapore (1819 – 1959)

- *Fort Canning*
- *Central Business District, Raffles Place*
- *City Hall and the Padang*
- *High Street*
- *Central Fire Station*
- *Old Hill Street Police Station*
- *Keppel Harbour*
- *Cultural & Heritage Precincts*
  - *Chinatown*
  - *Telok Ayer, Kreta Ayer, Bukit Pasoh, Tanjong Pagar*
  - *Kampung Glam*
  - *Geylang Serai*
  - *Little India*
  - *Joo Chiat*
  - *Balestier*
  - *Other Ethnic Clusters*
- *Names Honouring Pioneers*



### The Places Where We Live, Work & Play (1960 – Present)

- *Housing Estates*
  - *Toa Payoh Town*
  - *Our Tampines Hub*
  - *Kampung Admiralty*
  - *Bidadari Park Drive*
- *Industrial Estates, Business Park, Port and Airport*
  - *Jurong Industrial Estate and Jurong Town*
  - *One-North*
  - *Tuas Mega Port*
  - *Changi & Changi Airport*
- *Central Area Developments*
  - *Orchard Road and Marina Bay*
  - *Emerald Hill*
  - *Cuppuge Terrace*
  - *Singapore Botanic Gardens*
  - *Tanglin*
  - *Gardens by the Bay*
  - *Helix Bridge*



### The City of Tomorrow

- *Punggol Digital District*
- *Tengah Forest Town*
- *Jurong Lake District*
- *Jurong Innovation District*



## The Many Names of Singapore (1299 – 1818)

Dating back over 700 years, the evolution of Singapore can be found recorded throughout history. Back then, the world was less travelled and language diverse; many aspects of life were still unknown. Nonetheless, the island has been mentioned in maps and records by explorers.

In this chapter, we trace the beginnings of this land from its earliest recorded names such as Temasek, to the Singapore we have come to call home today.



### Singapura

"Chiamassie" was what Marco Polo reported in his travel account about the island sitting at the tip of the Malay Peninsula.

In the 5th century, Singapore was known as "Temasek", "Tumasik" (Old Javanese) and "淡马锡" (pronounced as *Dan Ma Xi*, the Mandarin phonetic equivalent of Temasek). The name is believed to be derived from the Malay word "tasik" which means "lake" or "sea". An island surrounded by sea with a growing reputation as an ideal trading port in the Southeast Asia region, the name comes as no surprise. Even today, the name Temasek remains a big part of Singapore's national identity, with major organisations, educational institutions and two streets bearing this name : Temasek Avenue and Temasek Boulevard.

The Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals) explains how Singapore was known as Singapura. Meaning Lion City in Sanskrit, the name owed its origin to the Palembang prince, Sang Nila Utama. When he arrived on the island in 1299, he spotted a creature and was subsequently informed that it was a lion. He named the place Singapura and became its first ruler. You can find the lion iconography embedded in local culture and symbols such as the Merlion and other official insignia.

Spelling variations such as "Sincapura", "CinCapula", "Cingatola", "Cingaporla" and "Cingapola" were found in early maps of the region. Singapore came under British colonial rule in the 19th century, which saw the move towards the anglicised spelling of Singapore.

The only time we were known by a different name would be during the dark period of the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945. Known as "Syonanto", meaning "Light of the South Island", the Japanese name was disused at the end of World War II.

#### Fun Fact

Ancient navigational maps had a variety of names for Singapore. Helming from different time periods and countries, some of these names were "Sabana Emporium" (meaning port city), "Bargungapara" or "Barxingapara" (meaning gateway to the East), "Ujong Tanah" (meaning land's end), "乌丁礁林" *Wu Ding Jiao Lin* (Chinese translation of Ujong Tanah) and "Pulo ou Isle Panjang" or "Pulau Panjang" (meaning long island).



#### Fun Fact

In 2005, a six-metre high stone replica of the Dragon's Teeth Gate was placed near its original site at the shoreline of Labrador Park. This was installed to mark the 600th anniversary of Ming Dynasty Admiral Zheng He's maiden voyage to Southeast Asia which began in Nanjing, China.

### Long Ya Men

Documented in a well-known Chinese traveller Wang Dayuan's travelogue titled *Dao Yi Zhi Lue* (岛夷志略) in the 14th Century, "龙牙门" *Long Ya Men* or Dragon's Teeth Gate was the name given in reference to the rocky outcrop at the narrow strait which Chinese trading ships would sail by at present-day Keppel Harbour.

The name was inspired by the many crags present at the gateway to Keppel Harbour. The rocky outcrop gave the Keppel Harbour an edgy look, almost like a glimpse into a dragon's jaw. It served as navigational aids for early seafarers sailing through the narrow channel. The outcrop was also known locally by the Malays as Batu Berlayer, which means "sail rock."

The crags were eventually destroyed by the British in 1848 in an attempt to widen the channel for larger sea vessels to sail through.

## Early Development of Singapore (1819 – 1959)

Sir Stamford Raffles formulated a plan to organise the use of land in Singapore from observing other colonial towns. He worked together with Lieutenant Philip Jackson to draw up the Raffles Town Plan or Jackson Plan in 1822. This plan spanned from the Telok Ayer area to the Kallang River and focused on the planning of the downtown areas close to the Singapore River.



According to the plan, government buildings were allocated the area stretching from Fort Canning Hill to the Open Square, running along the North bank of the Singapore River.

They eventually formed the civic district area where many of the historic government buildings such as the Old Parliament House, the Former Supreme Court, and the Former City Hall still stand today. Currently, the National Gallery Singapore is housed in the latter two iconic buildings - the Former Supreme Court and the Former City Hall.

The new settlement was also divided into districts for different communities and it created zones such as European Town, Chinese Campong (present-day Chinatown), Kampong Glam and Kampong Chulia.



## Fort Canning



The Malays referred to Fort Canning as Bukit Larangan or Forbidden Hill. It was believed to be the final resting place of the kings of ancient Singapore, including the last king, Sultan Iskandar Shah.

In the 14th century, the Chinese traveller Wang Dayuan (汪大渊) called the hill "Ban Zu (班卒)." The name was derived from the Malay word "Pancur," which refers to the spring of water on the hill. When the British arrived, it became known as Government Hill and the site where Sir Stamford Raffles built his residence.

It was renamed Fort Canning Hill in 1861 when a fort was built on the site.

## Central Business District, Raffles Place

Singapore from the air in the 1960s



Singapore from the air in the 1990s



Singapore from the air today.



The Central Business District (CBD) is a legacy of the Raffles Town Plan that remains until today. It is situated on the south of the Singapore River, with Raffles Place at the heart of the CBD.

Raffles Place was renamed from Commercial Square in 1858. The Square consisted of many low-rise commercial buildings and even had an open-air carpark from the 1920s until 1965. The car park became a landscaped park with two fountains located at each end with the roads pedestrianised.

Today, the CBD features our iconic skyline and the new waterfront that was created from land reclamation.

Shenton Way in 1960s.



### Fun Fact

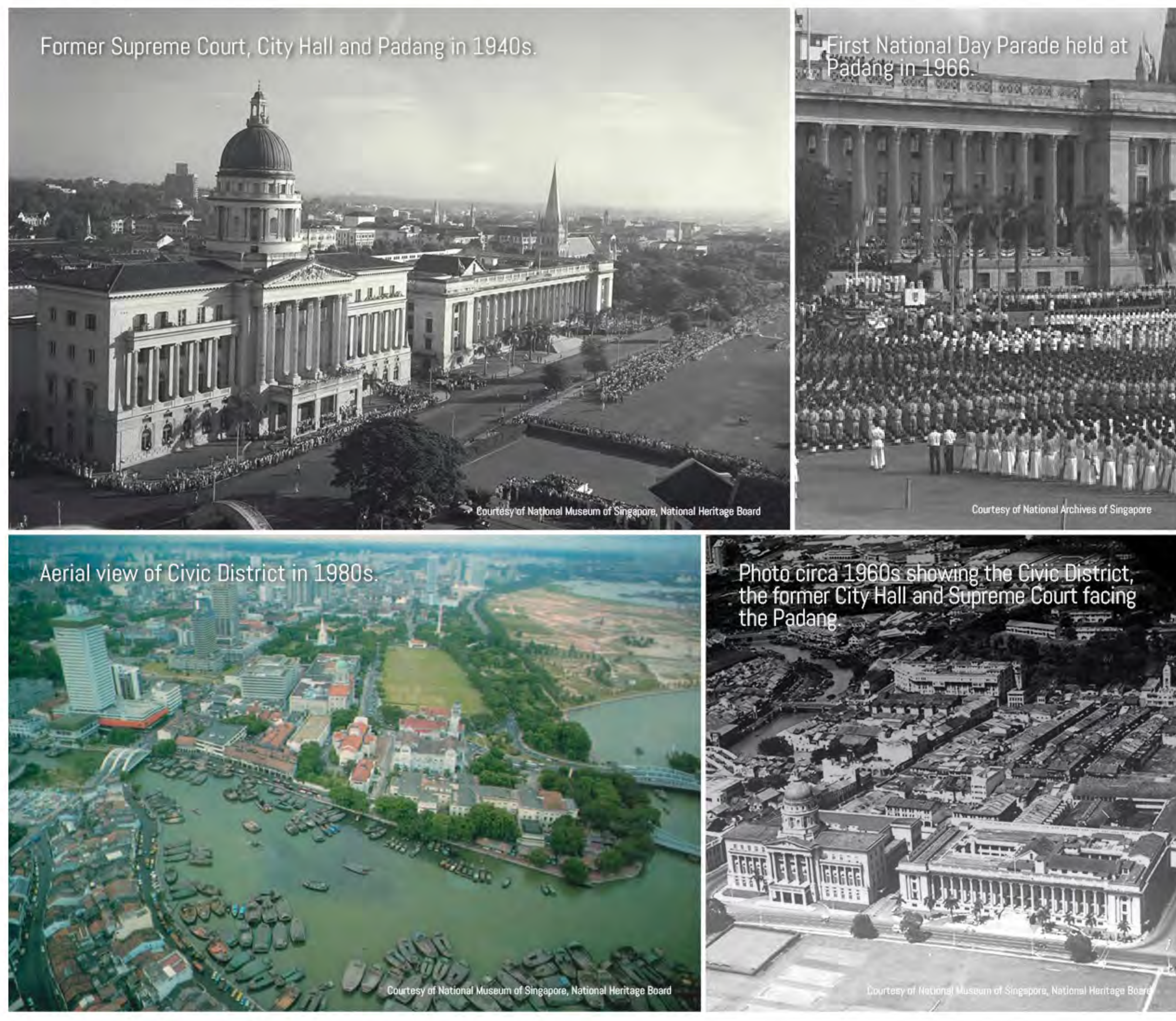
The major trunk road in Singapore's central business district was almost named Raffles Way, but Shenton Way was chosen instead. It serves as a tribute to Sir Shenton Thomas, the last Governor of the Straits Settlements who chose to remain in the city during the Japanese Occupation.

Shenton Way in 1970s.





## City Hall and the Padang



The City Hall is one of the most historic and significant places in Singapore.

Originally named the Municipal Building from 1929 to 1951, this grand architectural marvel saw the end of the Japanese Occupation period with the signing of the Instrument of Surrender on 12 September 1945. In 1959, the building witnessed Singapore's attainment of self-government with the installation of Singapore's first Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew and Yang di-Pertuan Negara (Head of State), Mr Yusof Bin Ishak. This event took place with unveiling of the state anthem, Majulah Singapura, state flag and state crest.

The declaration of Singapore's merger with Malaysia in 1963 was read there. After Singapore attained independence from Malaysia in 1965, the building housed various government offices and was the chosen venue for swearing-in ceremonies of political office holders.

The Padang, in front of the City Hall, was also the site of the first National Day Parade on 9 August 1966, and Singapore's Golden Jubilee National Day Celebrations on 9 August 2015.

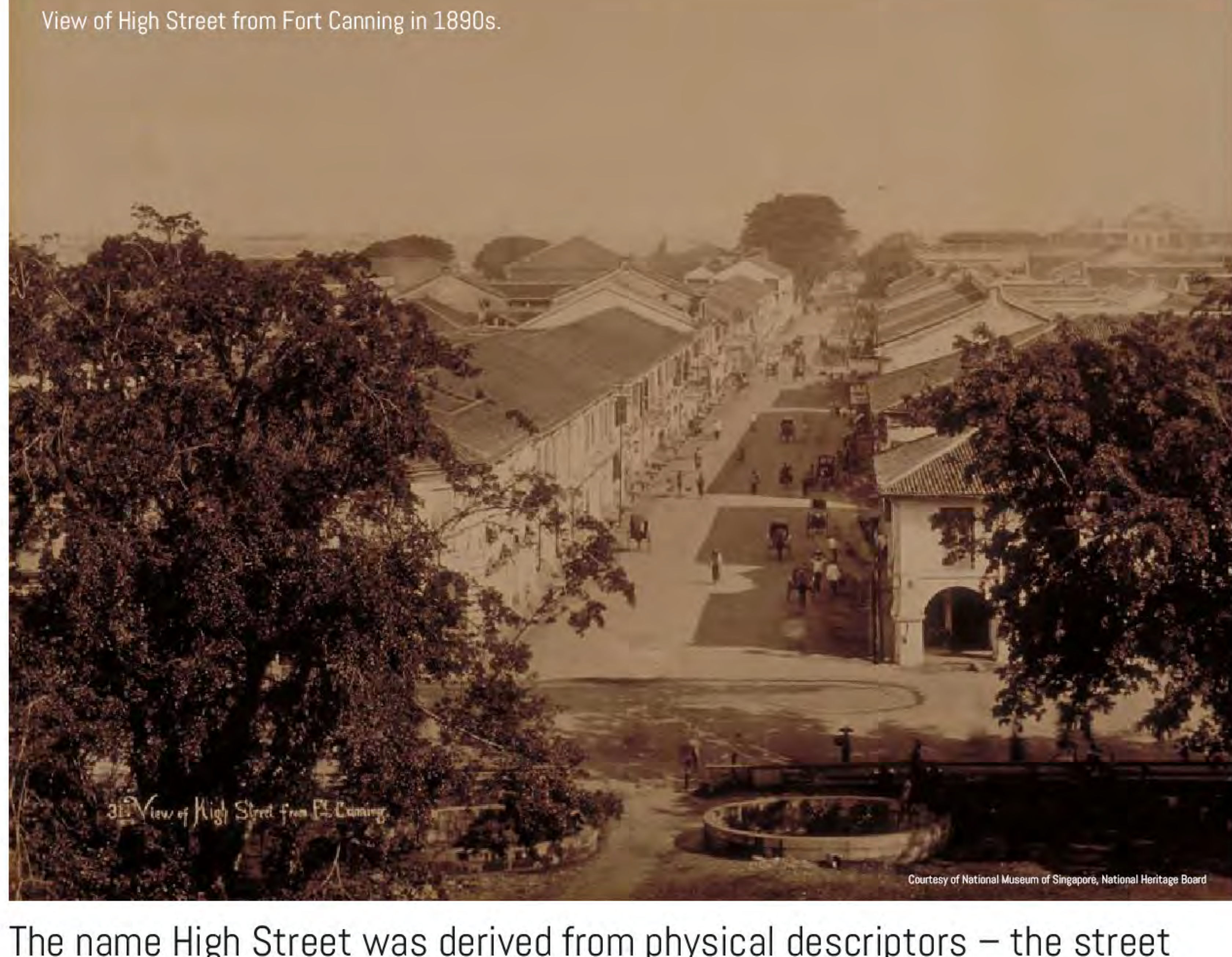
Initially, the Padang field was reserved for government use in 1822 but this plan did not carry through. Instead, the field became a popular spot for members of colonial society to meet, socialise and play sports. The field became used predominantly for sports due to its expanse of land and the establishment of the Singapore Cricket Club (1870) and Singapore Recreation Club (1885) at opposite ends of the field.

The field was officially named the Padang (translating to "field" in Malay) in 1907. The Padang soon became an important venue for civic events after City Hall (1929) and the Old Supreme Court Building (1939) were established facing it. Today, the two buildings form the National Gallery Singapore and the field is still used for football or sporting events.

In commemoration of Singapore Bicentennial in 2019, it was announced that the Padang will be designated as a national monument.



## High Street



The name High Street was derived from physical descriptors – the street sits on higher ground in comparison to surrounding roads. This is one of the oldest methods of street naming in Singapore.

High Street was the first paved street to be built in Singapore in 1819, cleared out from the surrounding jungle near the shore for the treaty signing with the Temenggong of Johor. By the 1900s, the street located north of the Singapore River was flanked by rows of shops, hotels and public offices.

Today, High Street no longer leads to the shoreline, ending at the junction of North Bridge Road and Parliament Place. Part of High Street has been renamed as Parliament Place in 1999 after the Former Parliament House, the oldest colonial building built in 1827.

## Central Fire Station



Located at the foot of the Government Hill (Fort Canning Hill today) is Singapore's first fire station - the Central Fire station. Built in 1908, it is iconic not just for its history, but also for its 'blood and bandage' façade (i.e. exposed red bricks and white plaster stripes), an outstanding and eye-catching landmark in the area.



## Old Hill Street Police Station

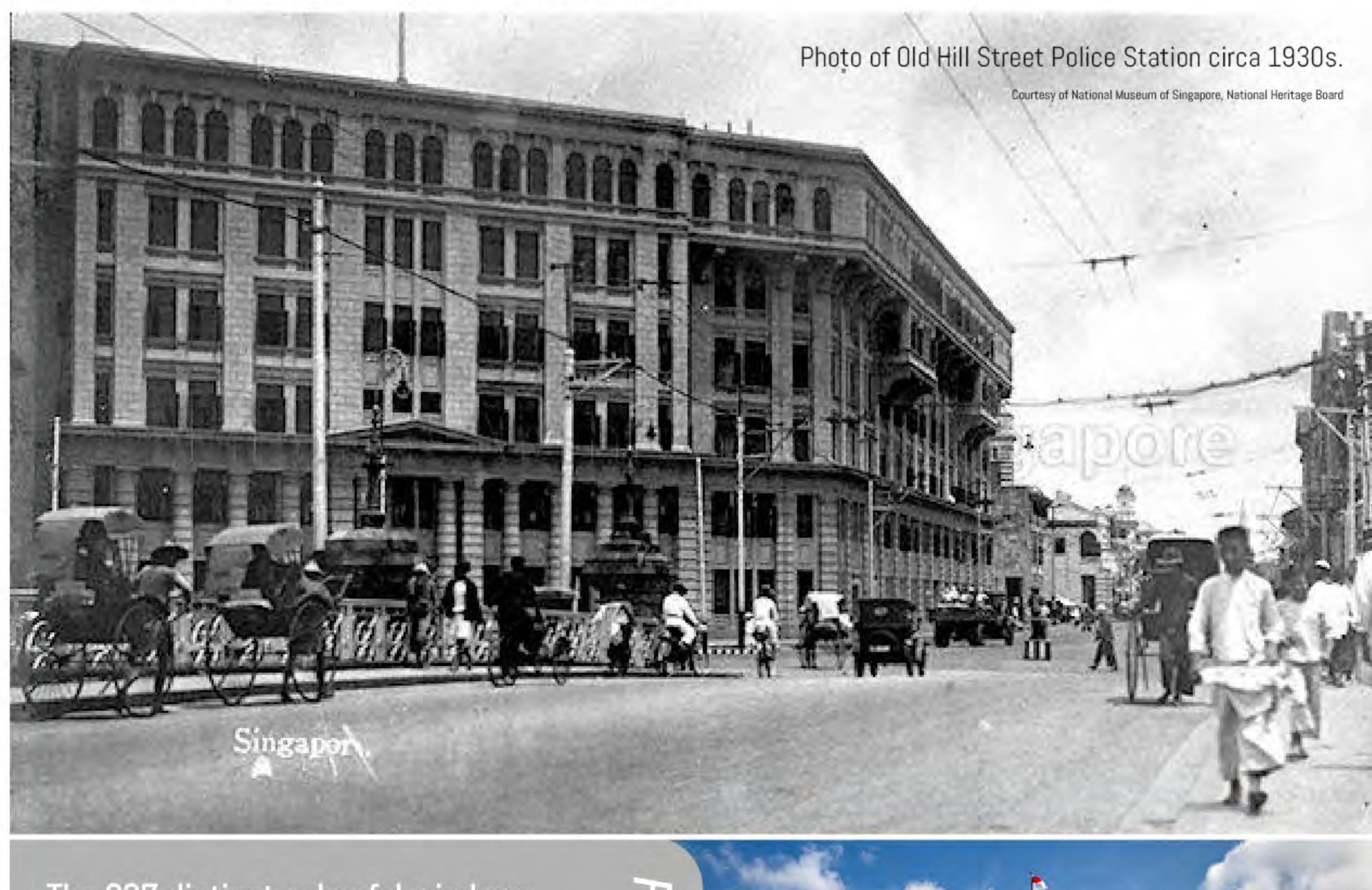
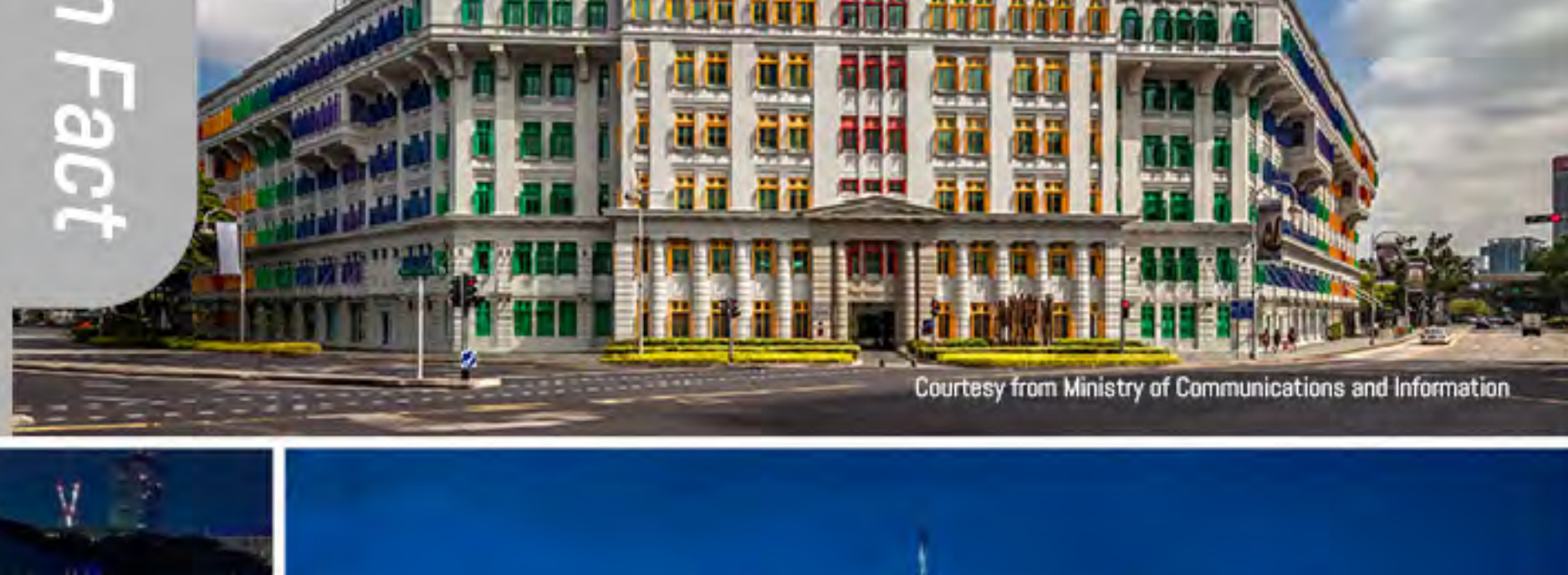


Photo of Old Hill Street Police Station circa 1930s.

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

The 927 distinct colourful windows have been the subject of many Instagram posts and featured in local advertisements.

Fun Fact



Courtesy from Ministry of Communications and Information



Night view of Old Hill Street Police Station.

Courtesy from Ministry of Communications and Information



Courtesy from Ministry of Communications and Information

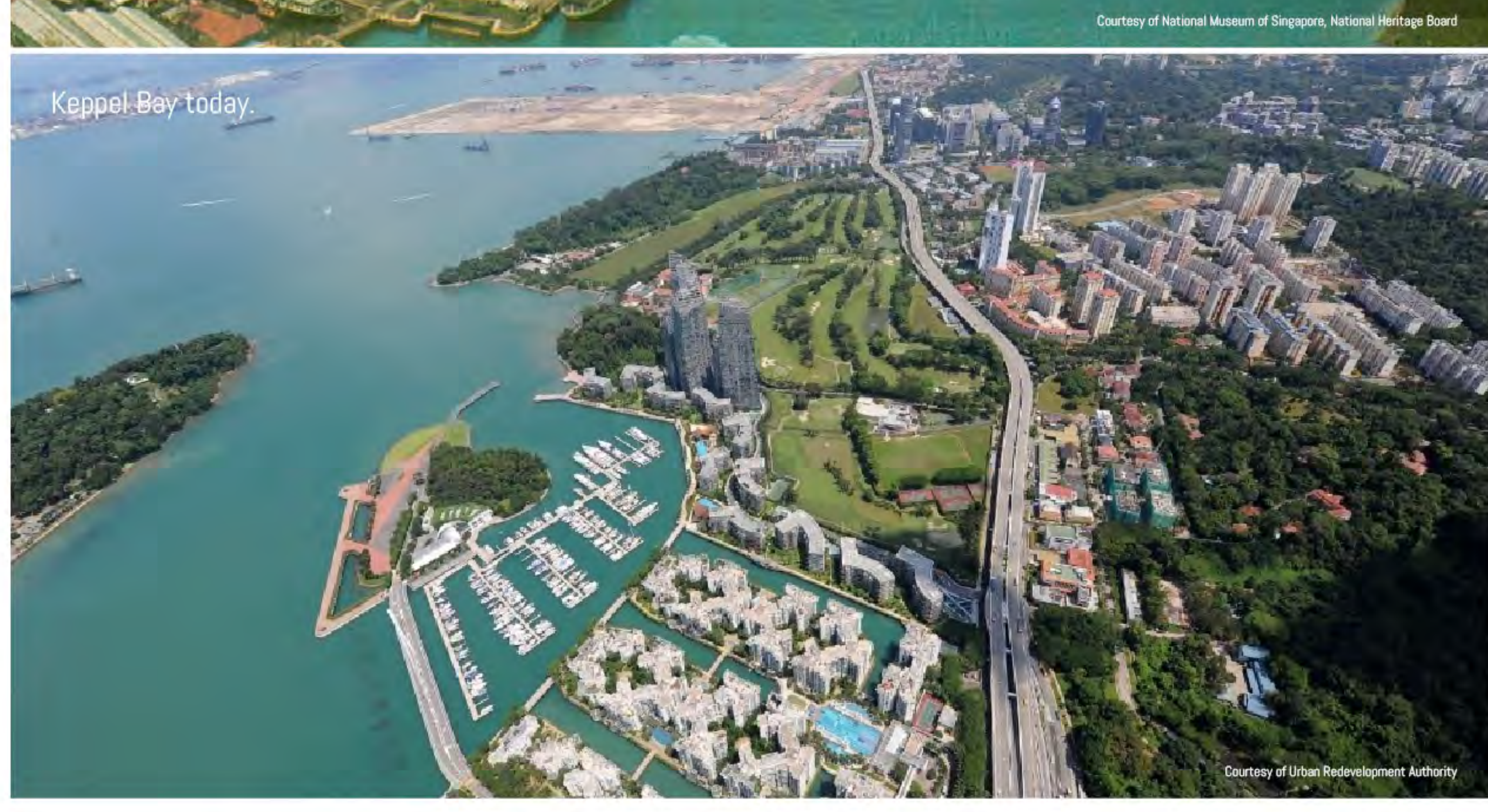
Close to the Central Fire Station is the six-storey Old Hill Street Police Station located at the junction of Hill Street and River Valley Road. First built in 1934, it was the largest government building, dubbed as the “Police Skyscraper” at that time. Today, it is no longer a police station and is currently occupied by the Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY).

## Keppel Harbour



Keppel Bay in 1960s.

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Keppel Bay today.

Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

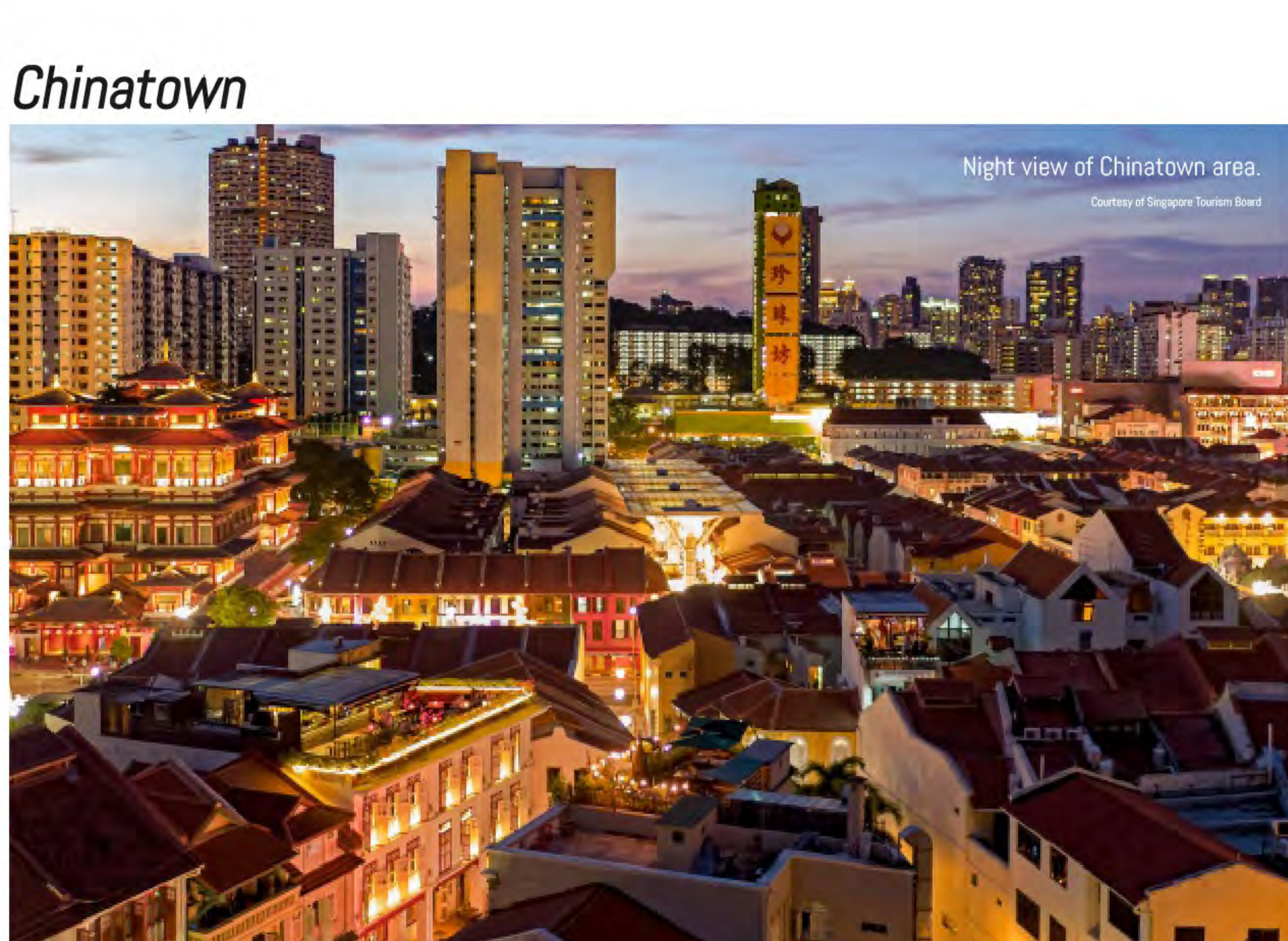
Previously known as New Harbour, Keppel Harbour was completed in 1886 and together with New Harbour Road were renamed in 1900 after Admiral Henry Keppel (1809-1904). He was best known for surveying and planning the development of a harbour along the Straits of Singapore. A naturally deep harbour, it allows bigger vessels to dock, load and unload goods. It then went on to become one of the busiest ports in the world.

Today, beautiful waterfront condominiums such as Caribbean at Keppel Bay and Corals at Keppel Bay now stand at where the docks used to be. The area has been renamed Keppel Bay, to commemorate the area’s port history.

## Cultural & Heritage Precincts

Most of our cultural and heritage precincts were developed in the central district. It consists of conserved buildings, museums, galleries, and several heritage walking trails. They shed light on Singapore’s past and present through our landscape and art while showcasing possibilities in the future.

## Chinatown



Night view of Chinatown area.

Courtesy of Singapore Tourism Board

The distinctive red roofs of the Chinatown shophouses stand out from the rest of the buildings in the Tanjong Pagar area.



Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Chinatown Heritage Centre.

Courtesy of Singapore Tourism Board

Chinatown, also known as “牛车水” (*Niu Che Shui* translates into bull, cart and water in Mandarin), has been the designated enclave of the ethnic Chinese people since the Raffles Town Plan. Chinatown is now the centre of Lunar New Year celebrations which features distinct decorations such as red lanterns and the Chinese zodiacs.

Its Chinese name came about in the 19th century when it was observed that the people living in the area collected water through animal-pulled carts. The water was subsequently used as water supply and to wash the roads back then. Today, Chinatown is Singapore’s largest historical district that connects to other areas such as Telok Ayer and Tanjong Pagar.



1885 map showing Choa Chu Kang, Kangkar and Lim Chu Kang. Kangkar.

Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Fun Fact

Ever wondered why “Chu Kang” is repeated in many local street and place names?

Choa Chu Kang, Lim Chu Kang and Yio Chu Kang were named after the Chinese immigrants who set up villages along the rivers in the north of Singapore by the 1840s. The land around the river bank or river’s mouth is known as “Kangkar” in Teowchew.

While “港主” *Kang Chu* referred to Chinese headmen who controlled the land for crops cultivation and building of villages along both sides of the river, “厝港” *Chu Kang* referred to the river settlements.

To break it down further, “Chu” possibly refers to “主人” which means owner in Teochew while “Kang” means river. So when looking at a name such as Yio Chu Kang for example, it means that the area was historically owned by a Yio (or Yeoh or Yeo) clan or family which settled down by the river.





## Telok Ayer, Kreta Ayer, Bukit Pasoh, Tanjong Pagar

Telok Ayer was a landing site under the Chinese district for early immigrants entering Singapore in the 1820s. Telok meaning “bay” and Ayer meaning “water” in Malay, this docking bay that faced the seafront saw a concentration of Chinese clan associations and religious buildings in the area.

Upon arrival, many immigrants would set up altars and worship the gods to thank them for a safe voyage.

Kreta Ayer was officially named in 1922 and translates into water cart in Malay. In the early 19th and 20th centuries, water was drawn from wells located on Ann Siang Hill and then distributed to various parts of Chinatown by bullock and ox carts. This mode of delivery inspired the name of the street.

Tanjong Pagar means “cape of stakes” in Malay and references its origins as a fishing village situated on a former promontory. It is said that the name is derived from the presence of fishing traps better known as kelongs along the coast.

Bukit Pasoh Road is a road within the area of Tanjong Pagar. The road got its name from the traditional Ali Baba jars, “tong” or “pasoh” that were used to store rice and water in homes in the 19th century.

Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in 1930s.



Aerial view of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station circa 2010.



### Fun Fact

The former Tanjong Pagar Railway Station bears testimony to the rapid development of trade, industry, and transport in the colonial period, as well as Singapore's historical ties with Malaysia.

The opening of the Causeway in 1924 resulted in a stark increase in rail and road traffic between Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. Situated along Keppel Road, the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station was officially opened in 1933 to serve as the terminus for the 700km long west coast railway line in Malay Peninsula run by the Federated Malay States Railways (today's Keretapi Tanah Melayu or KTM).

The railway station remained operational until 30 June 2011, with Sultan Ibrahim Ismail of Johor driving the last train out of the station. The building had been preserved together with the first 80 metres of each platform and would be integrated with the Cantonment MRT station, which is currently under construction.

Jinricksha Station in 1960s and today.



### Fun Fact

Located at the junction of Neil Road and Tanjong Pagar Road, the former Jinricksha Station stands as a testament to the history of one of the earliest and cheapest forms of public transport in Singapore, the Rickshaw.

The term “Jinrikisha” (also spelt as Jinricksha) means “human-powered vehicle” in Japanese, a form of transportation that was imported from Japan in the 1880s. By 1902, the number of rickshaws operating in Singapore reached a total figure of 22,629. The Jinricksha Station served as a centre for registration and regulation of the rickshaw pullers, up to World War II.

Following the 1947 ban on rickshaws in Singapore, the building was used for several other purposes, such as a family-planning clinic, before it was gazetted in 1987 as part of the Tanjong Pagar conservation area. The historical landmark was bought over for private commercial redevelopment in 1989.



North Bridge Road.



South Bridge Road.



### Fun Fact

Built around the same time in the 1820s as the Presentment Bridge (now called Elgin Bridge) were North and South Bridge Roads running north and south of the bridge over Singapore River.

The tramway line present at North Bridge Road linked the town with the New Harbour (now Keppel Harbour).

The South Bridge Road is the location of the Sri Mariamman Temple and Masjid Jamae. Both buildings still stand as national monuments in Chinatown today.

## Kampong Glam

Sultan Mosque.



Kampong Glam is the site of Istana Kampong Glam and Sultan Mosque, which was reserved in the Raffles Town Plan for the Sultan and his followers. The name for Kampong Glam or Gelam was derived from the gelam trees that grew in that area.

Today, the historic district of Kampong Glam is bounded by Jalan Sultan, Beach Road, Victoria Street and Ophir Road, and corresponds to the area of Arab Kampong designated in the Raffles Town Plan.

The streets around the Istana Kampong Glam and Sultan Mosque came to be named as Jalan Sultan and Sultan Gate. Arab Kampong contained street names of places in the Middle East such as Arab Street, Bussorah Street, Muscat Street and Baghdad Street.

Hajjah Fatimah Mosque.



Khadijah Mosque.



Masjid Hajjah Rahimabi Kebun Limau.



### Fun Fact

There are three mosques named after women who have contributed generously towards the construction of the mosques. They are Hajjah Fatimah Mosque (1846) at Beach Road, Khadijah Mosque (1920) in Geylang and Hajjah Rahimabi Kebun Limau Mosque (1984) in Kim Keat.

The name, 'Masjid Hajjah Rahimabi Kebun Limau' takes reference from its old place name, 'Kebun Limau' (Malay for lime garden) as the area had many lime trees in the late 1800s.

# JALAN

# LORONG

### Fun Fact

Upon independence, Singapore made a move to adopt more Malay names to signify our links to the Malay world and the region. This is how our Jalans and Lorongs came about, which translates to streets and alleys respectively.

Today, Jalans and Lorongs are mainly found in older areas such as Geylang and Toa Payoh. Now, newer street names tend to use the English form of spelling.







## Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator



The Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator, referred to locally as the Armonian Church, was commissioned by the first twelve Armenian families who settled down in Singapore. Located along Hill Street, the church was completed in 1835 and was consecrated the following year.

It is also known as the oldest Christian Church in Singapore and was designated as a national monument in 1973. Today, Armenian and Oriental Orthodox services are held at the church. The church's Memorial Garden contains tombstones of prominent Armenians in Singapore, such as Ms Agnes Joaquim who bred Singapore's national flower, the Vanda Miss Joaquim; and the Sarkies brothers who founded Raffles Hotel.

# PARSI ROAD

## Parsi Road

Parsis were originally from Pars (old Persian name for "Fars Province" in present-day Iran) and they believe in the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism. While most of them moved to India, some decided to trade and settle down in Singapore in the 1800s. Parsi Road is situated off Shenton Way and was given its name after Parsi community in 1954.

One outstanding Parsi who was in Singapore would be Cursetjee Frommurzee. He was a partner and founder of the John Little department that once stood at Raffles Place.

## Names Honouring Pioneers



Singapore will not be where it is today if not for the many pioneers and philanthropists who have called this place home, and generously helped to shape different aspects of society such as education and healthcare. To honour them, their names grace our institutions, hospitals and housing estates today.

Syed Omar Aljunied was a wealthy merchant who came to Singapore in 1819. He donated land to be used as Muslim burial grounds and built mosques such as Masjid Omar Kampong Melaka. The Aljunieds, who originated from Yemen, established themselves as major traders and landowners in colonial Singapore. Aljunied Road was named after them in 1926 to honour their contributions to Singapore.

Tan Tock Seng was one of the earliest Peranakan Chinese migrants from Melaka. He was a wealthy merchant and served as the acting Kapitan China of Singapore, a government-appointed head of the Chinese community. Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Jalan Tan Tock Seng, a road within the vicinity of the hospital, were named after him.

Hoo Ah Kay, better known as Whampoa, migrated from China to Singapore and became a businessman and community leader. Whampoa Road in Novena was named after him.

Mohamed Eunos bin Abdullah was a well-known Malay intellectual in the 1920s. Known as the "father" of modern Malay journalism, he was a champion of education. A Malay settlement originally called Kampong Melayu was renamed the Jalan Eunos Malay Settlement to commemorate his legacy.

Lim Boon Keng was a Peranakan Chinese physician who actively promoted social and educational reforms in the early 20th-century. He was the co-founder of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School, which sought to provide more educational opportunities for girls at a time when female education was neglected. Boon Keng Road and Upper Boon Keng Road were named after him.

## The Places Where We Live, Work & Play (1960 – Present)

### (1960 – Present)

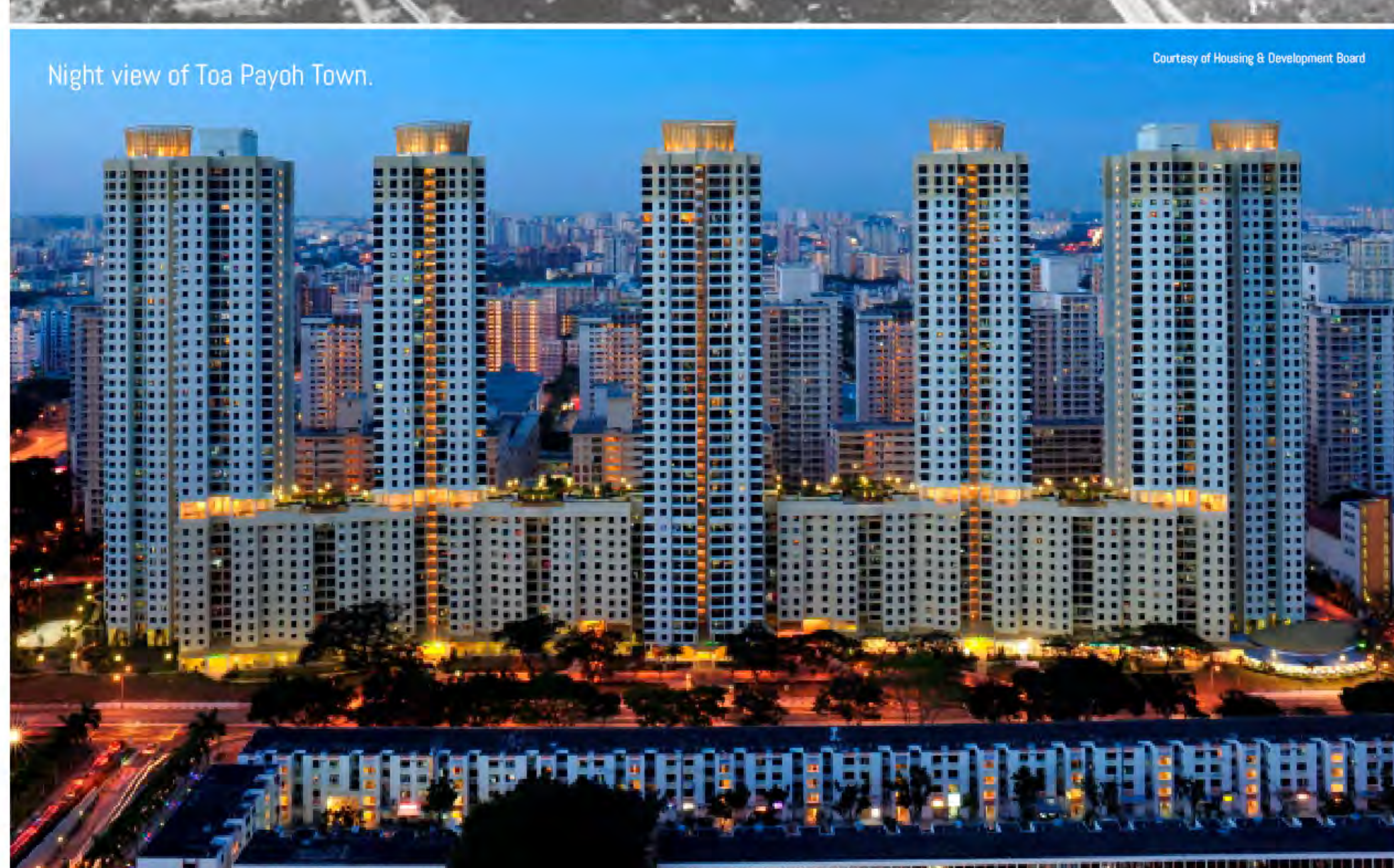
After attaining self-government in 1959, Singapore sought to forge her own identity. In addition to the introduction of national symbols such as the anthem, flag and crest, the government introduced new systems in place to build a solid foundation for a young nation to grow and thrive.

Slums and urban areas were cleared and redeveloped when the Housing and Development Board was set up in 1960. Residential areas were organised to provide low-cost public housing to serve a growing population and to get rid of unsanitary living conditions.

## Housing Estates

Each public housing town in Singapore is planned with different neighbourhoods and districts. Each neighbourhood would comprise eight to ten precincts consisting of about eight to ten blocks each. To identify the neighbourhood, the first digit of each block number is a clue of where one is at and how to navigate your way through. Each estate is named according to its surroundings and historical significance.

## Toa Payoh Town



With a rapidly growing population in the 1960s, Toa Payoh Town was one of the first satellite towns with community facilities and a town centre developed. The town was built to tackle the overcrowding problem within the city area and to provide housing solutions.

Before this big construction undertaking, the area mainly comprised swamps, forests and plantations.

Toa Payoh was spelt as Toah Pyoh in the 1842 map of Singapore. There were several versions of the origins of the name "Toa Payoh". One version was that the name referred to the big swamp in the area. This was reflected in the words "Toa" (which means "big" in Hokkien and Teochew) and "payoh" ("swamp" from the Malay word "paya").

Another version refers to how Toa Payoh had brick kilns. The 1873 and 1885 maps of Singapore reveal that there was a large government brickfield in the Toa Payoh area. Hence, it was believed that this changed the spelling of the area from Toah Pyoh to Toa Payoh 大巴窰. The Chinese character (窰) refers to the kiln in the area.





**Fun Fact**

"Singapore must retain the sense of space. We are going to build taller buildings, but we can't build them closely together. There must be a sense of playing fields, and recreational areas for children and old people – a sense that this is a full country with all the facilities which you expect of a large country but in a confined space."

Singapore's urban landscape as envisioned by Mr Lee Kuan Yew, founding Prime Minister of Singapore.

Faced with land constraints in Singapore, this grand vision of our local urban landscape led us to build our homes in the sky.

The Pinnacle @ Duxton is believed to be the world's tallest public housing development with the longest sky garden. The name "Pinnacle" not only reflects this feat in height but is also a hallmark of our achievement in the realm of public housing.

Consisting of seven blocks of 50-storey skyscraper buildings, they are all linked by 500-metre long sky-garden bridges at the 26th and 50th levels, combining function with leisure and architectural beauty.

**Bidadari Estate and Bidadari Park Drive**



Bidadari Park Drive is one of the street names in Singapore that is inspired by historical heritage. The word "Bidadari" means "fairy" or "angel" or "nymph" in Malay.

Located along Upper Serangoon Road and near the Woodleigh MRT station, the former Bidadari Cemetery was one of the oldest cemeteries in Singapore. Some prominent figures who were laid to rest here include Dr Lim Boon Keng, Koon Vayloo Pillay, John Laycock and Ahmad Bin Ibrahim. The exhumation of the graves began in 2002 and the area is currently being developed as a public housing estate, named the Bidadari Estate.

The naming of roads and the precincts in the Bidadari new housing estate took reference from the rich heritage of Bidadari. For example, Bidadari was once home to the Alkaff Lake Garden, which was a popular place of attraction with both visitors and residents. Hence, one of the roads in the southern part of Bidadari Estate is named as 'Alkaff Crescent.'

Bidadari Park Drive is a new major road that serves as the main transportation spine of Bidadari. The road was named to reflect the vision of Bidadari Estate as a community in a garden where six distinctive districts will be integrated with parks and communal spaces to create a tranquil urban oasis.



Aerial photo of the Bishan Park between Bishan Town on the top left side of the photo and Ang Mo Kio Town on the right side of the photo.

**Fun Fact**

During the 1980s, some streets and areas in Singapore were named using *Hanyu Pinyin*, a romanized system of transcribing Chinese characters based on Mandarin. Hence, some names such as Bishan came about. It was the phonetic spelling of the Cantonese term *Peck San*.

Bishan Town derived its name from the large 155-hectare burial land known as Peck San Theng, which means "pavilions on the jade hills". The burial land was acquired and the graves were exhumed in the late 1970s for the development of Bishan Town from 1983 to 1990.



**Fun Fact**

The Teachers' Housing Estate located at the fringe of Ang Mo Kio was initiated in 1967 by the Singapore Teachers' Union to provide affordable housing for teachers. The streets in the estate were named after Asian poets and literary figures in 1968.

Tagore Avenue named after Tagore (1861-1941), the first non-European Nobel Prize winner in Literature in 1913.

Tu Fu Avenue named after Tu Fu 杜甫 (712 – 770), a Tang dynasty poet.

Li Po Avenue named after Li Bai 李白 (701 – 762) also a Tang dynasty poet.

Iqbal Avenue named after Muhammad Iqbal (1877 – 1938), a Pakistani poet.

Munshi Abdullah Avenue named after a Malay writer (1797 – 1854) who also served as a secretary to Raffles and was widely recognised as the "Father of Modern Malay Literature".

Omar Khayyam Avenue named after a Persian mathematician and poet (1048 – 1131).

Khalidasa Avenue named after a 4th century Sanskrit writer.

Tung Po Avenue named after Song dynasty writer and poet, Su Dong Po 苏东坡 (1037 – 1101).







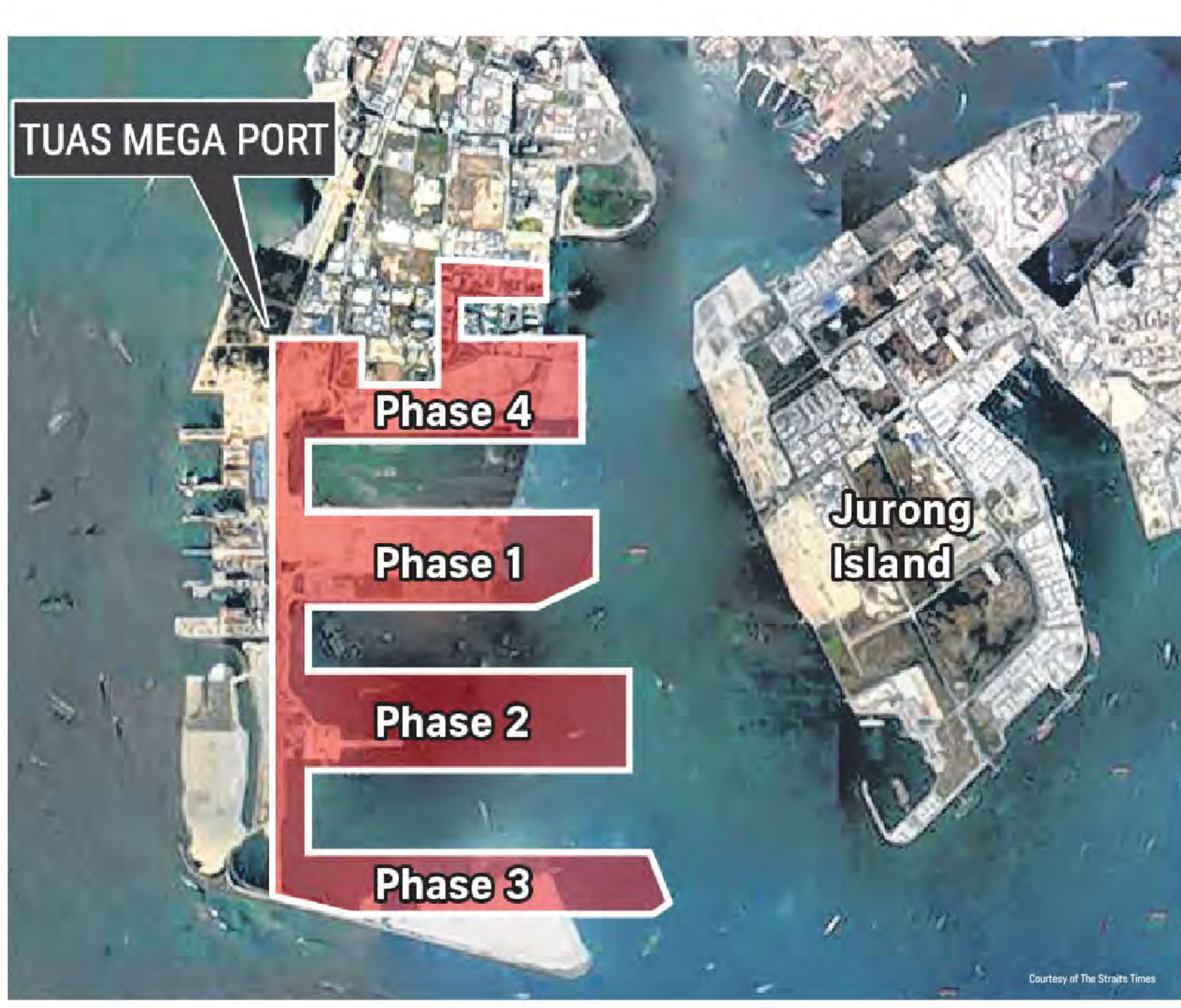


Taking inspiration from sci-fi movies as well, the Sandcrawler is a building modelled after the huge mobile fortresses named Sandcrawler in the Star Wars films. The building houses the regional headquarters of American digital animation studio Lucasfilm.

However, ALICE @ Mediapolis was not taken from Alice In Wonderland. Rather, it is an acronym which stands for "Astonishing, Living, Imaginative, Curious, Explorative". These are qualities the business park development strives for.



The Mediacorp Campus located at Stars Avenue is equipped with state-of-the-art production and digital broadcast facilities. Its address 'Stars Avenue' was chosen to relate to Mediacorp Campus as a place where famous artistes in the local entertainment scene congregate.



## Tuas Mega Port

Located at the south-western corner of Singapore, Tuas mega port is envisaged to be the world's largest fully automated container terminal and will double Singapore's port capacity in the future when fully operational in 2040. To be developed in four phases, it will replace the existing container terminals at Tanjong Pagar, Keppel, Pulau Brani and Pasir Panjang.

Tuas means to raise by levering or hauling up in Malay. The name of this area is said to be derived from a daytime fishing method that is no longer common today. Mainly used by the coastal Malays in the past, a large net was spread and suspended below floating coconut fronds and leafy branches kept close by the rising tide. The shade provided drew in schools of fish and the net will be hauled up by the fishermen at a given signal.



## Changi & Changi Airport

Changi Airport was built in 1981 on reclaimed land as a replacement for the Paya Lebar Airport, which had run out of space for further expansion. It has become a world-renowned airport and is still expanding with Terminal 5 to be built by 2025.

Changi was spelt as changhi or changei in early days. There was a Changei River in an 1848 survey report. One version of the origin of the name Changi was that it was named after Changei River while another version believed that the name is derived from chengai trees that used to grow in the area.

## Central Area Developments



## Orchard Road

Best known as the busiest shopping belt and luxurious tourist attraction in Singapore, Orchard Road is a 2.2-kilometre long major road situated in Central Singapore. Its name references the nutmeg, pepper and fruit plantations found in the area during the 19th century.



### Fun Fact

Located at Somerset Road is the building named as The Red Box, which houses the Youth Corps Singapore. The building was also painted red to symbolise the red briefcase used by Singapore's Founding Prime Minister, the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

Belonging to Mr Lee, the renowned red box was a representation of his love and conviction towards improving the lives of Singaporeans and creating a better Singapore.

Similarly, Youth Corps Singapore's website explained that its mission is to encourage youths to embody the same spirit of our founding generation – 'service to the community' and 'commitment'. Hence, "The Red Box" building is named as such to rally young Singaporeans to gather, exchange ideas and co-create solutions to make Singapore a better home for all.



Day and Night views of Marina Bay.

Courtesy of Singapore Tourism Board



Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

## Marina Bay

Another literal name would be Marina Bay, which is a bay located on reclaimed land in Central Singapore. Plenty of iconic buildings can be found in this area, such as Marina Bay Sands, Asia Square and Marina One. This area is envisioned as a vibrant work-live-play district that never sleeps.

## Emerald Hill

Emerald Hill in the 1970s



Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Emerald Hill in the 2010s.



Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board



Emerald Hill used to be a former nutmeg orchard that was owned by William Cuppage. He began his career as a postal clerk and rose to the rank of Assistant Postmaster General of Singapore in the 1840s.

The plantation became a residential neighbourhood at the turn of the 20th century. It features many homes with Chinese Baroque architecture and was home to many local Peranakans.

## Cuppage Terrace

Cuppage Terrace in the 1970s and 1980s.



Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



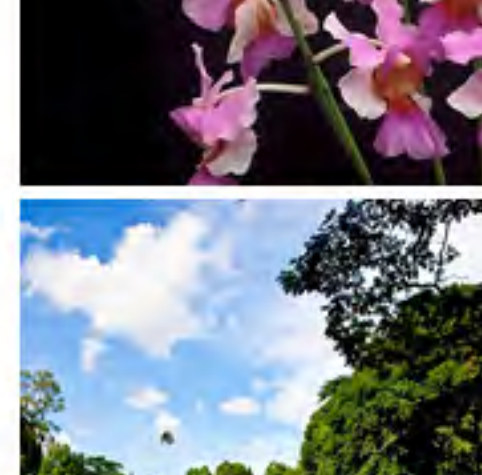
The two-storey terrace houses that line the area share a uniform façade design with full-height French windows on the upper floors unique to the era. Other features include arched openings and moveable shutters.

Cuppage Terrace is made up of a row of 17 such Malacca-style terrace houses built from 1905 to 1907. These houses were built for the growing demographic of middle-class residents who sought to live away from the congested city centre.

Now, it is a lifestyle destination with many wine and dining establishments.

## Singapore Botanic Gardens

Main gate at Singapore Botanical Gardens in 1890s and now.



Courtesy of National Parks Board

In 1822, Sir Stamford Raffles established Singapore's first "Botanical and Experimental Garden" on Government Hill. 30 years later, the Singapore Agri-Horticultural Society was granted 32 hectares of land in Tanglin by the British government. This marked the beginnings of the present-day Singapore Botanic Gardens.

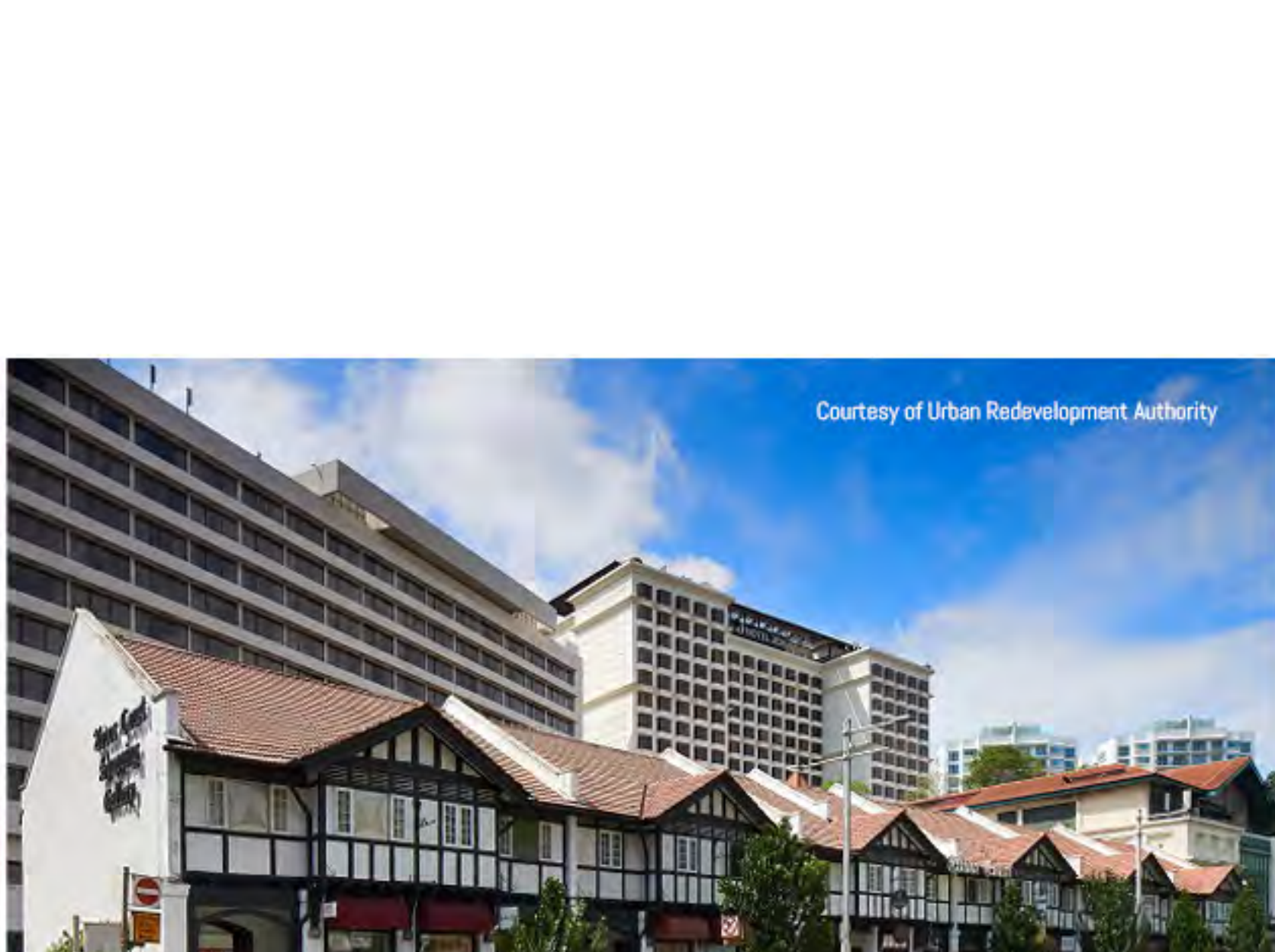
The Singapore Botanic Gardens was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015. It is also a world-class scientific institution for research and plant conservation.

## Tanglin

Tudor Court, located at Tanglin Road, was built in the 1920s with white plastered walls framed by dark timber beams. Photos showing Tudor Court in 1970s and in 2010s.



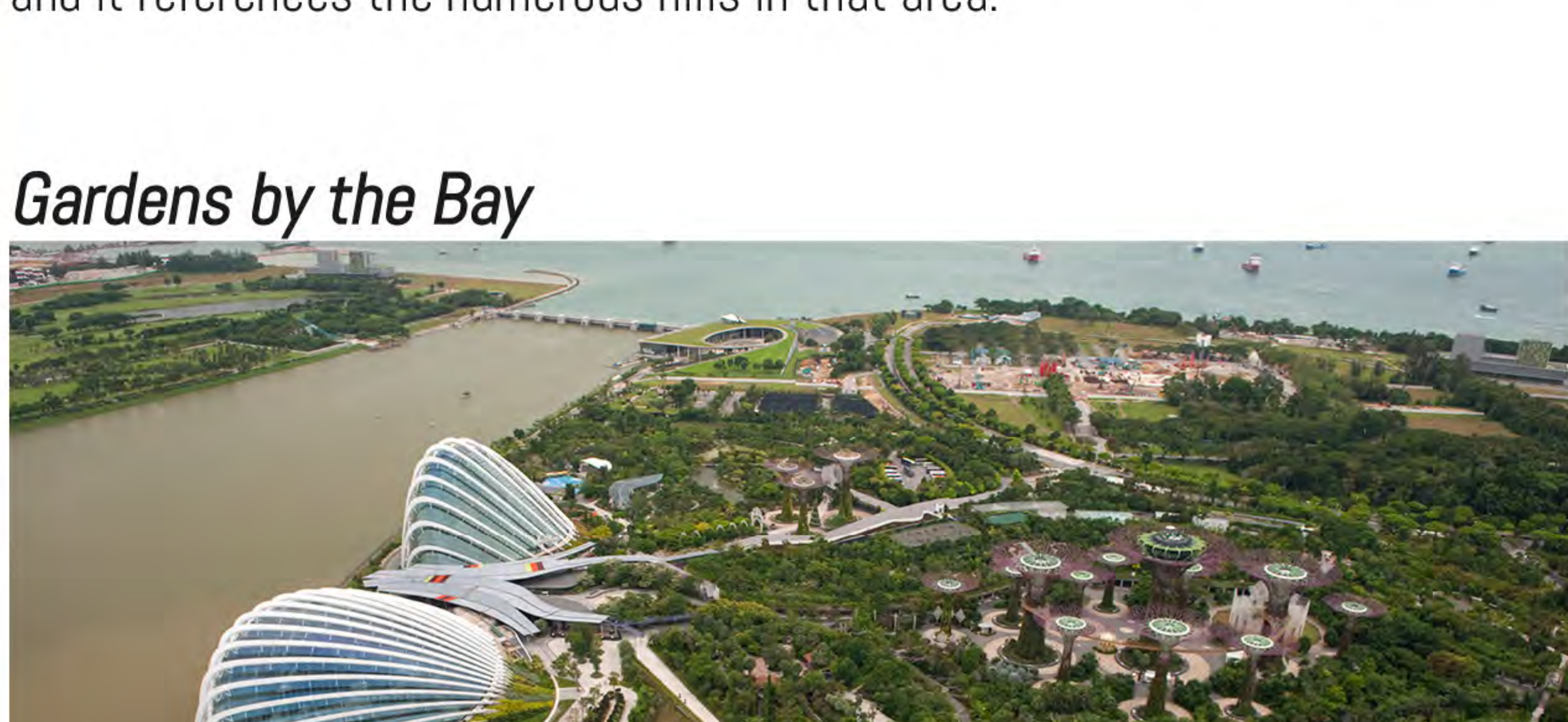
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority



Tanglin received its name from William Napier's house which was constructed in 1854. William Napier was a lawyer and newspaper editor of the Singapore Free Press.

Napier's house, called *Tang Leng* in Hokkien, was constructed in 1854. It is speculated that the name *Tang Leng* came about from the area's Chinese name *Twa Tang Leng*, which means "great east hill peaks" in Teochew dialect and it references the numerous hills in that area.

## Gardens by the Bay



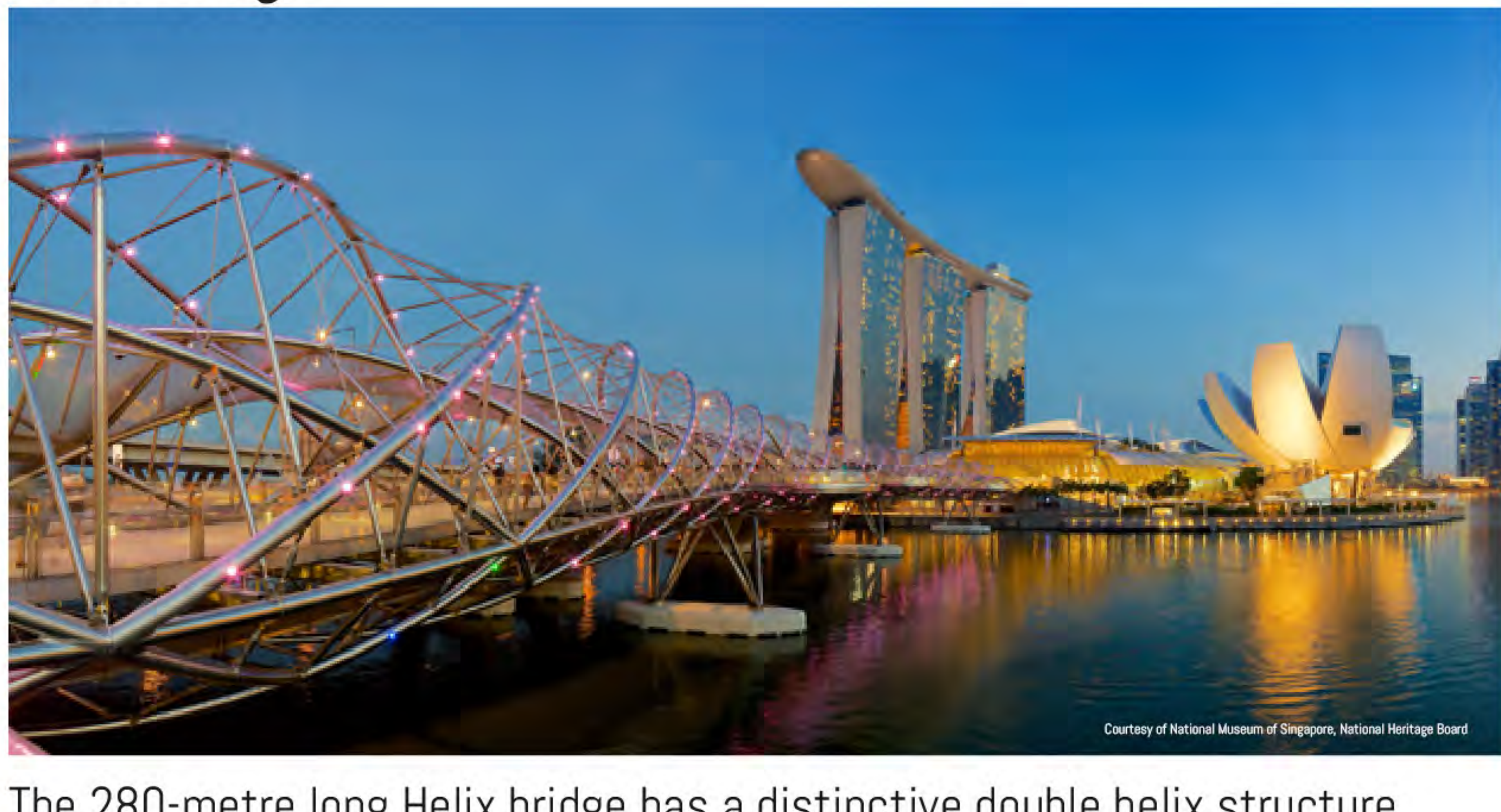
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Built entirely on reclaimed land, Gardens by the Bay is a nature park spanning 101 hectares and is part of Singapore's plan to transform from a Garden City to a City in a Garden. This is part of the overall initiative to raise the quality of life in Singapore with flora and fauna in the city centre.

The park consists of three waterfront gardens: Bay South Garden, Bay East Garden and Bay Central Garden.



## Helix Bridge



The 280-metre long Helix bridge has a distinctive double helix structure modelled on the DNA structure. This association with the structure of DNA was meant to symbolise “life and continuity, renewal and growth”.

It overlooks Marina Bay forming a curve next to the vehicular Bayfront Bridge and the Youth Olympic Park, and connecting Marina Centre with the Bayfront area.



Photo showing the curved Helix Bridge connecting Marina Centre with Bayfront area.



The interactive “emo-lightscape” is a “hop-scotch” with tiles that will light up when stepped on.

### Fun Fact

Youth Olympic Park is Singapore’s first art park developed by the National Parks Board to feature art installations using different media by local youths, depicting their aspirations.

The 04-hectare park was built at the junction of Bayfront Avenue and Raffles Avenue. It was named to commemorate the inaugural Youth Olympic Games hosted by Singapore in August 2010.



### Fun Fact

McNally Street was named after Brother John Joseph McNally, who was a pioneer arts educator and leader in Singapore. He was a brother from the La Salle Christian Brotherhood.

The street was named in 2007 to honour his contributions in promoting and developing arts education in Singapore. LASALLE College of the Arts is located at McNally Street.



### Fun Fact

Established in 2008, the School of the Arts (SOTA) is located along Zubir Said Drive. This is a tribute to Zubir Said who composed the National Anthem “Majulah Singapura” in 1959. The National Anthem is sung every day at schools during the flag-raising ceremony and at state events.



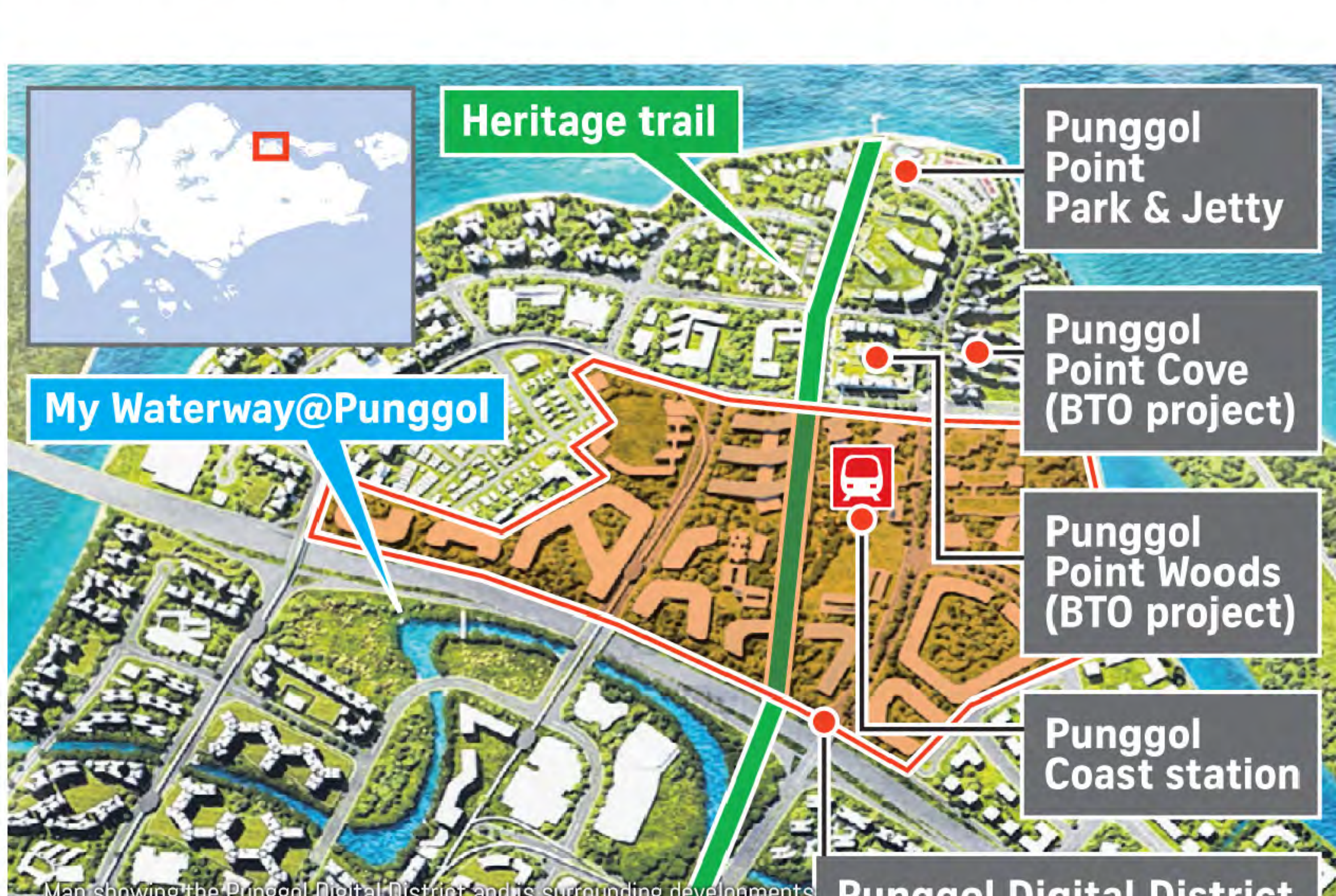
Issued on 31 May 2005, this 60-cent stamp featured the music score of the National Anthem that was composed by Zubir Said.

Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

## The City of Tomorrow

As we enter a new era of digital transformation, Singapore is also working to transform itself into a Smart Nation as the way forward to secure our future.

To realise this vision, there are various initiatives to improve our urban environment to increase the quality of living for all and to remain competitive to attract businesses and talent for the benefit of Singaporeans.



Map showing the Punggol Digital District and its surrounding developments.

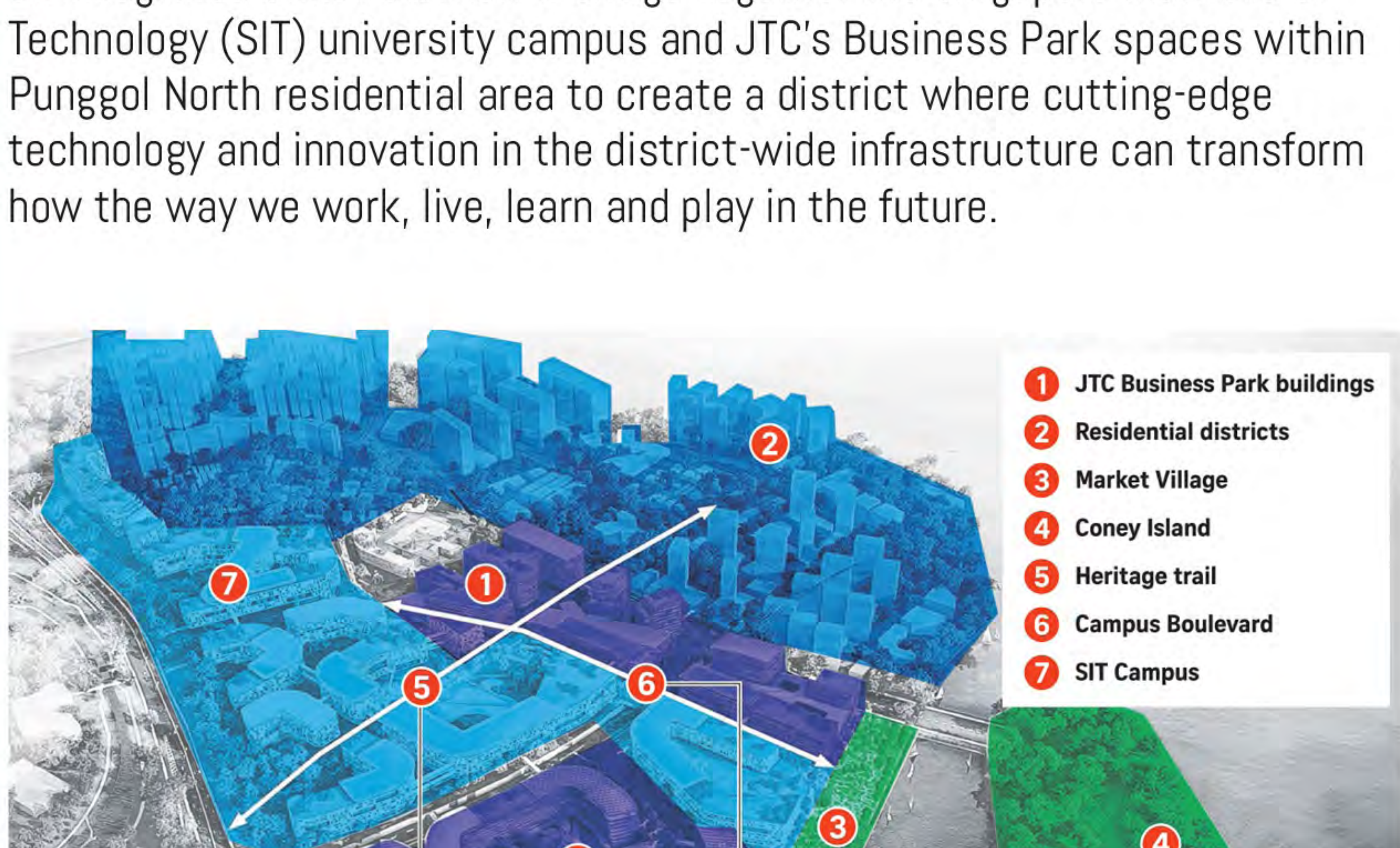
### Punggol Digital District

The name Punggol is said to have many different origins. In the 1844 land survey map, the spelling variation Pongol was used. Currently spelt as Punggol, the name literally means “hurling sticks at the branches of fruit trees to bring the fruits down to the ground” in Malay.

It could also refer to “a place where fruits and forest produce are offered for wholesale”, which reflects how Punggol used to be a rural agricultural area.

Another suggestion was that it was derived from Ponkal, a Tamil festival feast of boiling the rice.

Punggol Digital District (PDD) is developed to be the next generation of an integrated smart district. It brings together the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) university campus and JTC’s Business Park spaces within Punggol North residential area to create a district where cutting-edge technology and innovation in the district-wide infrastructure can transform how the way we work, live, learn and play in the future.



Map showing the Punggol Digital District integrated with the various land uses.

In PDD, there will be an estate operations centre to manage all the buildings in the estate, an underground district logistics hub, a district cooling system, estate fibre network, a smart energy grid that integrates gas, electricity and thermal energy and an underground pneumatic waste collection all planned on a district-wide basis.



## Tengah Forest Town



Map of Tengah Forest Town showing the 5 housing districts. Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

“Tengah” is a Malay word that means “central”, “centre” or “middle”. The name Tengah may have also been derived from the nearby Sungei Tengah (Tengah River).

Aside from being a farming area, Tengah also has a history of British military presence. This is seen in Tengah Airfield (currently known as Tengah Airbase) which was completed in 1939 and used by the British Royal Air Force until 1971 when the British withdrew their military forces from Singapore.

There used to be a village named Kampong Tengah outside the Tengah Airbase at Old Choa Chu Kang Road.

The new Tengah Forest Town will have a 700-metre long, 40-metre wide farm way which weaves through the housing precincts where residents can enjoy community gardening and urban farming. It will have a 5-kilometre long and 100-metre wide Forest Corridor as part of its landscape as well as hiking trails for nature-lovers.

Beyond green living, Tengah Forest Town is also a smart town which will leverage on the power of information and communication technology to enable smart living in its design so that residents can enjoy a quality living environment.

The innovative features include smart lighting, the urban water harvesting system which collects rainwater for irrigation and to wash common areas. These features will help save energy and water, while sensors in the pneumatic waste conveyance system make maintenance and waste collection more efficient.

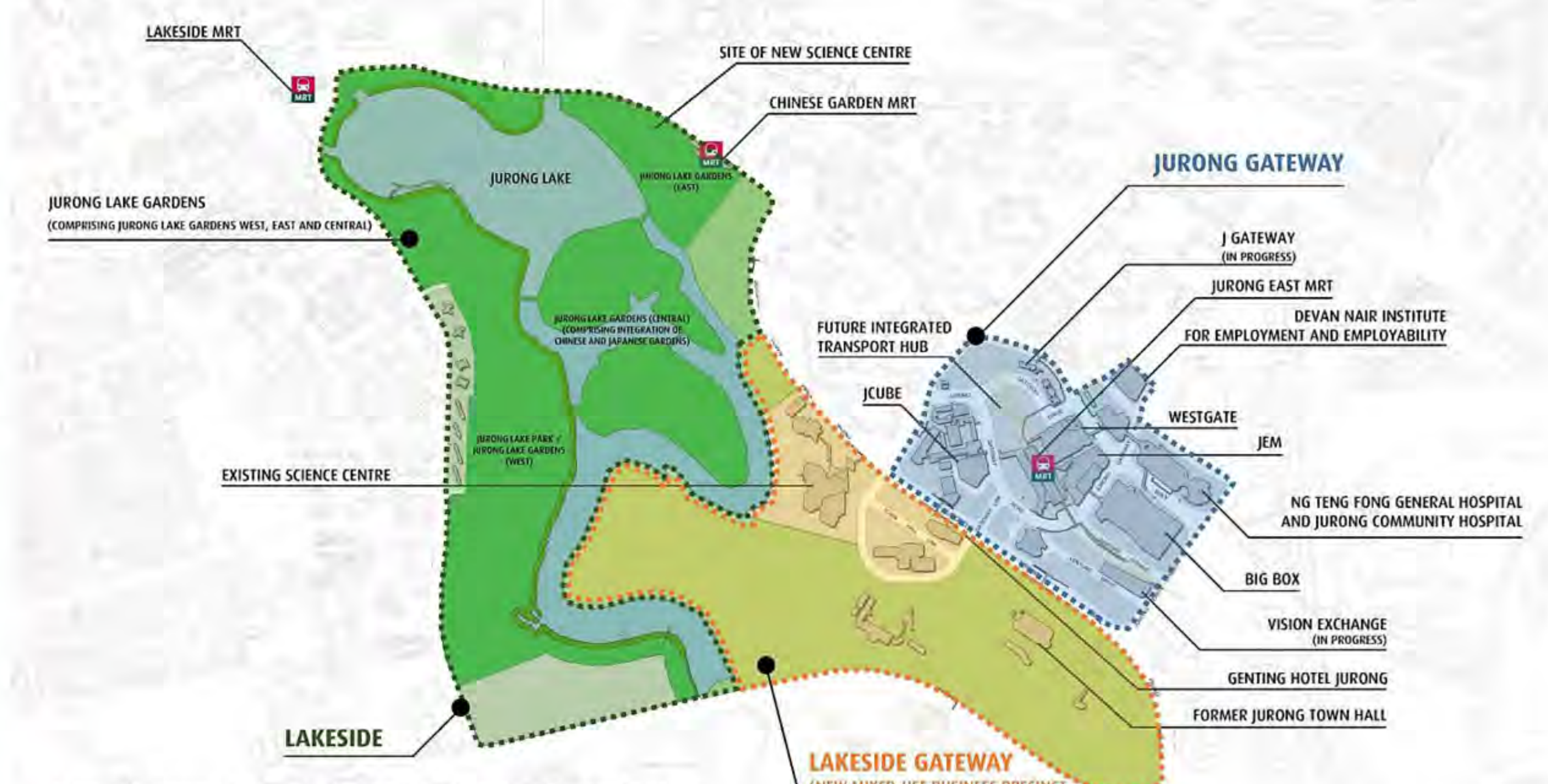
There will be five new housing districts within Tengah Forest Town: Plantation District, Garden District, Park District, Brickland District and Forest Hill District. The new streets within the five districts were named after their respective district, for example, Forest Hill Crescent, Plantation Loop, Tengah Park Avenue, Tengah Garden Walk as well as the HDB precinct named as Plantation Grove.

Brickland Crescent and Brickland Rise are new roads named in reference to the existing Brickland Road which was associated with the many brickworks located in the wider Jurong-Tengah area in the past.

Brickland Crescent and Brickland Rise are new roads named in reference to the existing Brickland Road which was associated with the many brickworks located in the wider Jurong-Tengah area in the past.

Brickland Crescent and Brickland Rise are new roads named in reference to the existing Brickland Road which was associated with the many brickworks located in the wider Jurong-Tengah area in the past.

## Jurong Lake District



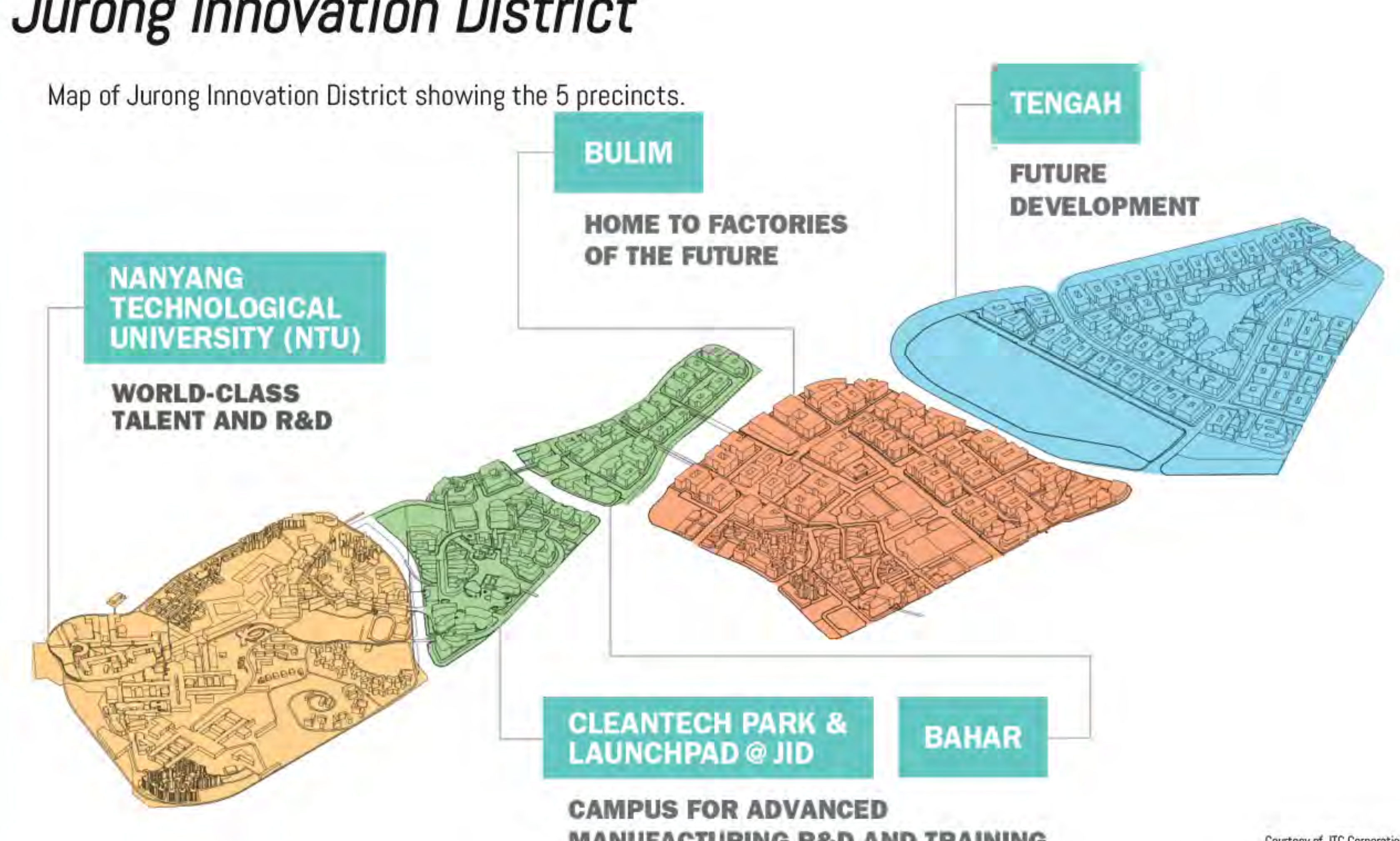
Map of Jurong Lake District showing the 3 precincts. Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority

Planned as part of government’s decentralisation efforts to bring more jobs, amenities and recreational options closer to homes, Jurong Lake District came about as part of the first blueprint which was unveiled in 2008.

Touted as Singapore’s next Central Business District (CBD), it currently consists mainly of three precincts named Jurong Gateway, Lakeside and Lakeside Gateway.

Jurong Gateway will be built around the current Jurong East MRT station. It will bring together transport options, housing, employment as well as five retail shopping malls. Lakeside comprises the 70-hectare Jurong Lake Gardens, providing greenery and nature, such as water promenades, parks and attractions. Finally, Lakeside Gateway will become a mixed-use business precinct.

## Jurong Innovation District



Map of Jurong Innovation District showing the 5 precincts. Courtesy of JTC Corporation

The Jurong Innovation District (JID) is a new hub being built in Singapore for advanced manufacturing. The completed district will comprise five precincts, namely the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Cleantech Park and Launchpad @ JID, Bahar, Bulim and Tengah.

The five precincts come together to host a full value chain of manufacturing activities, ranging from prototyping and test-bedding to production and distribution.

For example, NTU will be helping the research and development phase, while cultivating talent through education. The Cleantech Park and Launchpad @ JID look into further research and test-bedding of early adopted technologies and solutions. The first phase of the 600-hectare district is expected to be completed by 2022.



## Epilogue

From historical places to districts that share commonalities, the streets and landmarks shared in this publication provides a glimpse to how Singapore came into being and the way how this young nation has evolved with the times.

Peranakan shophouses stand next to skyscrapers made of glass and steel. Alleyways of the past lead into the big roads of the present. Housing estates shape and mould the way our communities live and move around the country.

As Singapore continues to flourish, more streets and buildings will be built to accommodate new developments, that will continue to reflect our shared yet diverse cultures, values and history.

Today’s Singapore is set to look forward to the future while remembering the very history that brought us to the present.



# Naming of Streets and Buildings

## Street Naming Committee – Past & Present

In Raffles' brief to the Town Planning Committee in 1822, he specified that each street should receive an appropriate name and that the street names should clearly reflect the different Asian communities assigned to each quarter to prevent confusion and disputes.

In the 1880s, the task of approving street names fell upon the municipal councils which would deliberate on the proposed street and place names at municipal council meetings. Streets were commonly named after prominent people, usually as a mark of appreciation for their contributions or service to the community, society or state.

The 1996 amendments to the Property Tax Act officially empower the naming committee to approve building and estate names.

## Role of Street and Building Names Board (SBNB)



The Street and Building Names Board (SBNB) was established in 2003 and comprises representatives from government agencies and private sector, industry and academia. It evaluates all naming proposals against naming guidelines and principles developed over time to ensure that names are appropriate in the context of the location and physical attributes of the buildings and streets.

The appropriate naming of streets and buildings in Singapore is important to ensure clarity in identifying these streets and buildings by providing clear location or direction cues to the public. Today, SBNB continues its mission to approve the names of new streets, buildings, parks and MRT stations, commemorating Singapore's history through the naming process.

While the Street and Building Names Board (SBNB) and Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) have made efforts to ensure that the contents of this publication are accurate at the time of publication, SBNB and URA do not warrant or make any representation of any kind relating to the contents of the publication and accept no liability whatsoever, arising from the use of this publication.

Every effort has been made to trace all sources and copyright holders of images, news articles, figures and information in this book before publication. If any have been inadvertently overlooked, SBNB will ensure that full credit is given at the earliest opportunity.

Copyright © the Street and Building Names Board, Singapore  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by the Street and Building Names Board, Singapore  
Secretariat's office:  
45 Maxwell Road  
The URA Centre  
Singapore 069118

ISBN: 978-981-14-4563-7

## References

- Anderson, C., & Choo, I. (2015) *DP Architects on Marina Bay*.
- Auger, T. (2015). *50 days that changed Singapore 1965-2015*. [Place of publication not identified]: Editions Didier Millet.
- Azizah, S., Ang, S.L., Faridah, I., & Muhammad, A.P. (2011). Activity book *Stories behind Singapore streets*. Singapore: National Library Board.
- Dunlop, P. (2000). *Street names of Singapore*. Singapore: Who's Who Pub.
- Foong, K., Teo, M., Teo, M., & Teo, M. (2019). Streets and Places in Singapore – Resource Guides. Retrieved 24 November 2019, from <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/resourceguides/streets-and-places-in-singapore/>
- Guan, K., Derek, H., & Borschberg, P. (2019). *Seven Hundred Years*. SG: Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited.
- Inglis, K., & Termansen, J. (2017) *This is Singapore*.
- Koh, T., & Koh, R. (2015) *Over Singapore*.
- Lee, K. (2015) *Lee Kip Lin Collection*.
- Liu, G. (1999) *Singapore - A pictorial history: 1819 - 2000*.
- LI, H. (2019). *Behind every road name is a story of Singapore*. Retrieved 12 November 2019, from <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/behind-every-road-name-is-a-story-of-s-pore>
- Lloyd, R., & Hoe, I. (1985). *Singapore from the air*. Singapore: Times Ed.
- National Heritage Board. (2018) *Singapore trails - Singapore River Walk & Jubilee Walk*.
- National Library Board, S. (2019). *Streets and Places | Infopedia*. [online] Eresources.nlb.gov.sg. Available at: [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/Streets\\_and\\_Places.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/Streets_and_Places.html) [Accessed 12 Nov. 2019].
- National Library Board. (2012) *Stories Behind Singapore Streets: Exhibition Guide*.
- Ng, Y.P. (2018). *What's in the name?* Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte Ltd.
- Public housing in Singapore. (2019). Retrieved 12 November 2019, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public\\_housing\\_in\\_Singapore#Townships\\_and\\_estates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_housing_in_Singapore#Townships_and_estates)
- Roots.sg. (2019). Retrieved 12 November 2019, from <https://roots.sg/>
- Savage, V., & Yeoh, B. (2013) *Singapore street names*.
- Singapore Bicentennial Office. (2019). *The Bicentennial Experience Guide*.
- Street and Building Names Board. *Guidelines for Naming of Buildings and Estates*.
- Street and Building Names Board. *Guidelines for Naming of Streets*.
- Tan, T.Y. (2019). *Biblioasia (Volume 14 Issue 4) - Looking back at 700 years of Singapore*.
- Urban Redevelopment Authority. (1992). *Singapore River development guide plan*. Singapore.
- Viray, E., & Chan, T. (2019) *Contemporaneous architecture*.
- Yeoh, B., & Wong, T. (2007) *Over Singapore 50 years ago*.
- Zaccheus, F., & Lam, S. (2018) *Monumental treasures*.