

# 1 dwellings

HARMONIOUS LIVING AT ITS BEST

ISSUE FEB/ MAR 2019



## Distinctive HDB Towns

Town Design Guides help plan and steer development of HDB towns

### Heartland Play

From playgrounds to endearing icons

### LIVINGSPACE

HDB's revamped gallery takes you behind the blocks

### Meet the Dwellers

Kicking up new-feathered love for *chaptch*



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## A Note from the Editor

In this issue, we dive into the HDB Town Design Guides that were unveiled in September 2018 at the annual HDB Professional Engagement and Knowledge-sharing (PEAK) Forum, a gathering of building professionals to exchange industry best practices. As our towns continue to evolve, the Town Design Guides steer and unify the developments in each town, while helping estates maintain their unique flavour. Learn more about the planning process as we chat with the team behind the first Town Design Guide for Woodlands.

Scattered within HDB estates are numerous playgrounds and recreational areas where our residents come to meet and play. Many of them have grown into cherished icons of the heartlands. These communal spaces are set to evolve into exciting facilities as HDB embarks on new-generation thematic playgrounds to improve the towns' unique identities. Take a look at some of these playgrounds in our 'Heartland Play' story.

In a central part of Singapore, a *chaptah* group is keeping traditions alive, reigniting an old-school sport at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park. The group has turned a nostalgic pastime into a community of enthusiasts with its welcoming and supportive atmosphere. We bring you their *chaptah* stories here.

The outcomes of preserving the old while embracing change can be felt in the heartlands as they are thoughtfully rejuvenated. We invite you to go behind the blocks and experience the journey at LIVINGSPACE, our revamped gallery at HDB Hub. As you walk around the multimedia exhibits showcasing Singapore's public housing and its dramatic evolution, take a peek into the future of HDB towns and discover HDB's pursuit of more and bigger things.

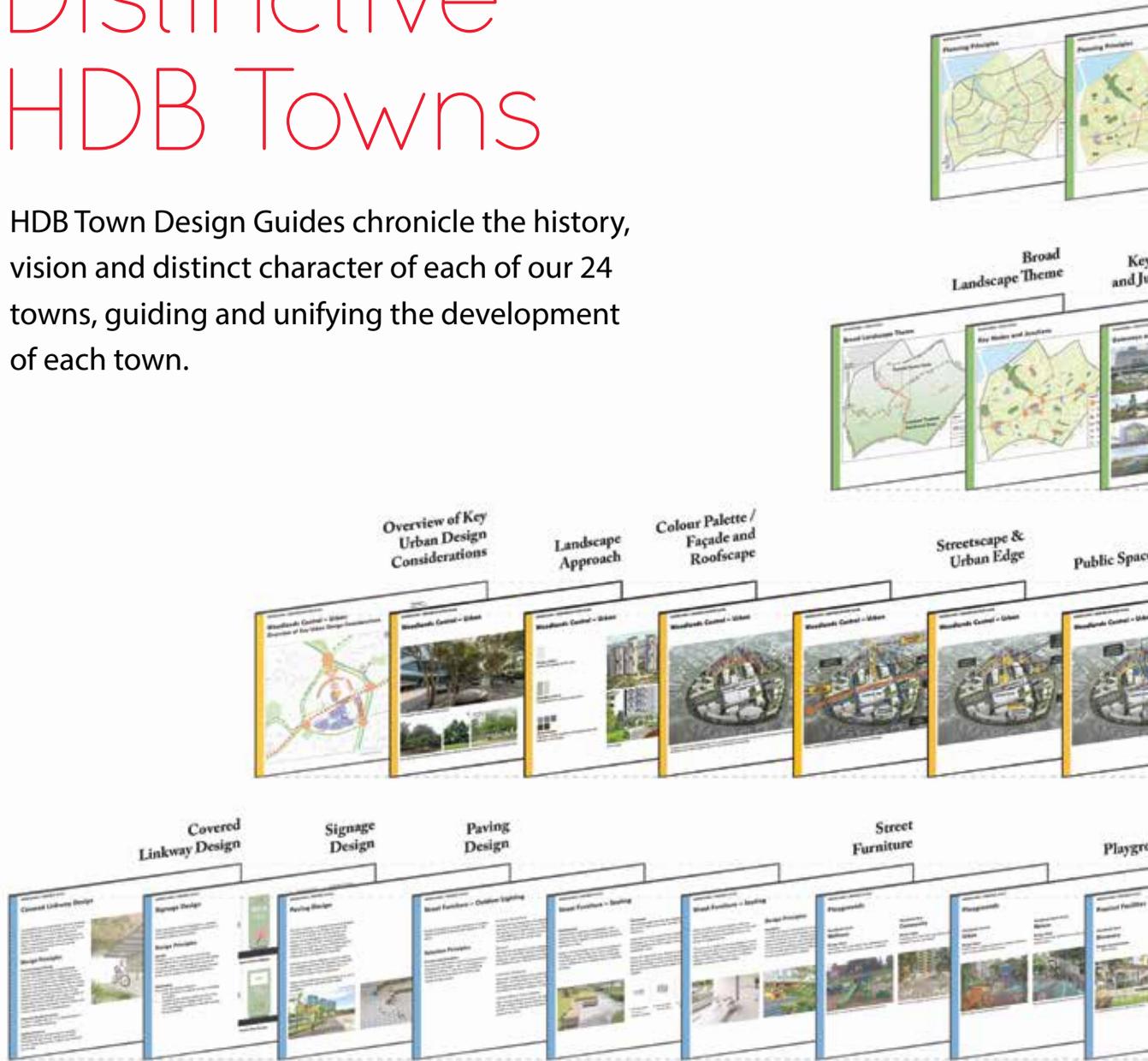
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## About Dwellings

*Dwellings* is published by the Housing & Development Board (HDB), Singapore's public housing authority and a statutory board under the Ministry of National Development. For over 50 years, HDB has provided quality and affordable public housing for generations of Singaporeans. Currently, more than 8 in 10 resident households in Singapore call an HDB flat their home. Through *Dwellings*, we want to share how we create the kind of public housing that is uniquely different, and also uniquely Singapore.

# Distinctive HDB Towns

HDB Town Design Guides chronicle the history, vision and distinct character of each of our 24 towns, guiding and unifying the development of each town.



(Above) The Town Design Guide presents opportunities for HDB and its partners to collectively shape new developments and rejuvenation of existing areas in HDB towns



## TOWN SCALE LAYERS



## NEIGHBOURHOOD SCALE LAYERS



## PRECINCT SCALE LAYERS



**L**ook around Singapore, and you will not find 2 towns that are exactly the same. Each of the 24 HDB towns is planned with its own distinct character, with features that reflect the town's unique history.

As the master planner of these towns, HDB seeks to preserve the distinctiveness of each town, even as it undergoes enhancement, development and rejuvenation by different government agencies and the town council throughout its life cycle.

Enter the Town Design Guide. Launched in September 2018 for Woodlands, Town Design Guides will be progressively published for all HDB towns over the next 5 years.

Chronicling the history, planning vision, and design intent of each town, Town Design Guides serve as a useful reference to guide all the different agencies' efforts and ensure a coherent design and town identity.

From the town's theme and concept, to its broad connectivity plans and precinct facilities such as playgrounds and street furniture, the Town Design Guide sets out the context and history, as well as the planning, urban design, and architectural design intents conceived for the town at 3 scales: town, neighbourhood and precinct.

With a holistic understanding of the context, the various agencies, town council, and their design consultants will be better placed to preserve and strengthen the town's identity as they carry out regular enhancements and improvements to the town.



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- 01 Punggol was developed as Singapore's first Eco-Town with iconic waterfront housing districts
- 02 Residents enjoying a good game of basketball at an outdoor court in Whampoa
- 03 Family time at a playground in Woodlands
- 04 A couple taking a stroll around the rejuvenated Bedok Town Centre

*Dwellings* catches up with the team behind the launch of HDB's first Town Design Guide, *Our Town, Woodlands: Design Guide 2018* to learn more about the planning process, and how the guide will shape the development of HDB towns.

### **Q: What spurred the development of the Town Design Guide?**

Every town is planned with its own distinct character and features that reflect the town's history. Throughout the life cycle of the town, regular enhancements and upgrading works are carried out by different government agencies and town councils. The Town Design Guide was born out of the need to unify the developments within our towns as they evolve over time.

Through the Town Design Guides, HDB hopes to provide our partners with a holistic understanding of the planning vision for each town, so that they can continue to build on its unique identity and character when they carry out enhancements and improvements to the town. This will help preserve the distinctive local flavour, and deepen the sense of belonging among residents to their home.

### **Q: What were some of the challenges and learning points in developing the Town Design Guide?**

Developing the themes for the town was one of the most critical yet challenging parts of the process, as it required a good understanding of the local context and history, and translating the architectural intents into clear principles that can be applied and implemented by our consultants and partners.

Within HDB, the close collaboration between the Research & Planning Group and the Development & Procurement Group brought together a team of professionals — from planners to landscape architects — each infusing their expertise and ideas into the formulation of the town guide.

Equally important was the feedback and support we garnered from our partners — the various government agencies and town councils with whom we work closely. They gave us a clearer understanding of the considerations and needs of our stakeholders and residents, and helped us produce a guide that would be truly useful to everyone.

### **Q: How were the other agencies and residents consulted during the development process for the Town Design Guide? How were their feedback incorporated?**

In developing the Town Design Guide, we tapped into various programmes to engage the community and seek residents' feedback. For example, in unveiling the masterplan for new areas like Bidadari, Tampines North and Tengah, we held exhibitions to showcase the key planning concepts for the towns, and invited the public to give their feedback on the plans.

Similarly, in existing towns that are identified for renewal under the Remaking Our Heartland (ROH) programme, residents would be invited to share with us their suggestions on the improvements they hope to see in the town through focus group discussions and exhibitions.

Woodlands, one of the towns that will be transformed under the ROH programme, is the first town to have its own Town Design Guide. We incorporated the ROH blueprint into the guide, as an opportunity to shape the new and upcoming areas that have been earmarked for development.



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In addition to public feedback, our partners, such as the town councils and other government agencies, were also an important source of feedback. From them, we gained valuable inputs on what would be useful to them and their consultants in the design and planning of our towns.

As we progressively develop the design guides for other towns, we will refine our process and incorporate learning points from the ones before. Ultimately, we hope to achieve a clear identity for each town and sustain the quality of design in the overall built environment.



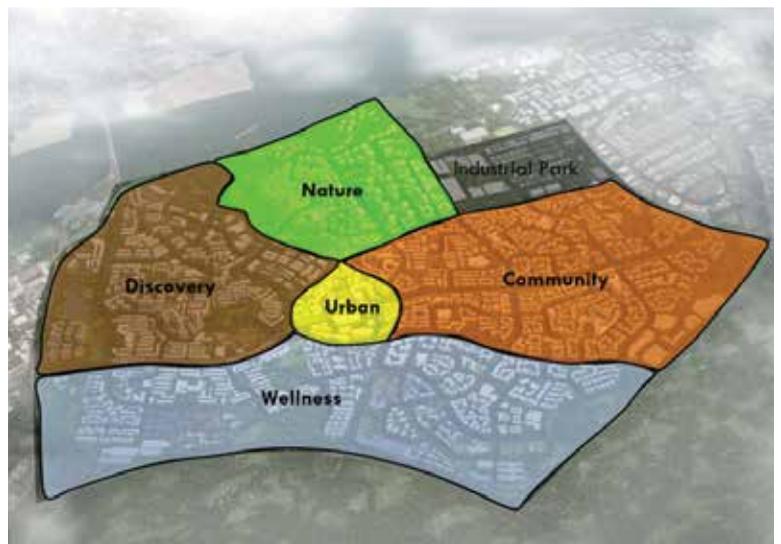
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The HDB Town Design Guide is a joint effort between the Research & Planning Group and the Development & Procurement Group

- 05 Research & Planning Group (from left): Executive Architect Heng Ching Lin, Senior Architect Lloyd Ng, Deputy Director (Urban Design Studio 1) Rachel Hoh, Executive Architect Joyc Leong, Group Director (Research & Planning) Dr Chong Fook Loong, Director (Urban Design Department 1) Wong Li Eng, Deputy Director (Urban Design Studio 3) Derek Chik, Architect See Yong Feng
- 06 Development & Procurement Group (from left): Deputy Director (Design Policy) Jeremiah Lim, Senior Architect Petrina Yeap, Executive Landscape Architect Benjamin Leow, Director (Landscape and Design) Brian Low, Senior Architect Terence Ku



(Right) The 5 themes that underpin the planning of Woodlands town



## Our Town, Woodlands: A Design Guide 2018

Woodlands is the first HDB town to have its own Town Design Guide. The bustling Regional Centre of the North comprises new and old areas, and is one of the towns identified for renewal under the Remaking Our Heartland (ROH) programme.

Many exciting developments have been lined up for Woodlands, including new facilities and housing developments. In existing neighbourhoods within the town, various renewal projects are also being carried out under the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme (NRP).

The Woodlands Town Design Guide, comprising 3 key layers — town, neighbourhood and precinct — is a useful reference to shape and strengthen the identity of Woodlands.

### Town Layer

From as early as the 1880s, the area was known as 'Woodlands'. The name originated from the many Keranji trees that dotted the coastline, which, when viewed from the Johor side of the Straits, gave the area a heavily wooded appearance. When planning for Woodlands began in 1966, a 'wooded' theme was selected for the town to reflect its history and the gentle undulating terrain of the area.

Building on the 'wooded' theme of the town, WoodsVista Gallery, a 1.9 km-long community link will be developed amidst lush greenery as part of the ROH programme. Residents will be able to walk, jog or cycle seamlessly from Woodlands MRT station to the Woodlands Waterfront, or simply relax and take in the scenic views of the town's strategically located rest points and activity nodes.

### Neighbourhood Layer

Within Woodlands, the town is further divided into 5 areas, each with a distinctive sub-theme that complement its overall 'wooded' theme: urban, nature, community, wellness, discovery. These sub-themes were developed based on the social and physical features of each area within the town, and will guide the design of public spaces, landscape, streetscape, and facades.

Woodlands Central, the heart of Woodlands, has been given an 'urban' theme to complement the plans to develop it into an activity centre with a variety of public open spaces and vibrant streetscape. Streets and thoroughfares with greenery interspersed at public open spaces, roof decks, and sky terraces are examples of how community spaces in Woodlands Central could be designed.

The design of the facades and roofscape, as well as the colour palette of the buildings, also play a key role in unifying the identity of the area. In Woodlands Central, facade designs can be varied and dynamic, while a bold roofscape is recommended for its landmark public housing development. The suggested palette has light greys with contemporary accents of deeper greys and browns, in keeping with the 'urban' theme.

### Precinct Layer

By drawing on the neighbourhood theme, character, heritage or historical context of the area, the design of precinct facilities and children's playgrounds can help to reinforce the precinct identity, and form part of the social memories of residents. For example, playgrounds in Woodlands Central could be designed with bright colours and sculptural elements to bring out the bold and vibrant character of its 'urban' theme. A variety of street furniture, such as seating areas in the void decks and landscaped areas, could also be provided to create interest and express the precinct design concept. <sup>d</sup>







# Heartland Play

The ubiquitous playgrounds in HDB estates have evolved from being just simple play areas into vibrant civic spaces and iconic landmarks.

(Left)

At the playground at Toa Payoh Crest precinct, children can re-create the experience of wading through the swampy area that Toa Payoh used to be. Located in front of Block 131 Lorong 1 Toa Payoh, the playground features raised mounds creatively designed to resemble stepping stones in a 'big swamp'



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Playgrounds bustling with energy from young children are a familiar sight in Singapore's public housing estates. Walk around and you will find playgrounds in all forms — from giant creatures and fruits created out of concrete tiles to family playgrounds incorporating fitness corners.

More than just adding colour and bustle to the HDB heartland, these playgrounds are also shared social spaces that promote social bonding between family, friends and neighbours. With the changing playtime needs of children over the years, public playgrounds have evolved in their form and function.

## 5 Key Eras of HDB Playgrounds

### 1960s–early 1970s: Basic Play

The earliest playgrounds comprised basic play structures such as slides, swings and see-saws. Made mostly of steel and timber, they served as a communal node for children of all backgrounds to gather over play.



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- 01 Dragon Playground at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3
- 02 Steel 'globe' playground at Toa Payoh in the late 1960s
- 03 Metal play structures at a playground in MacPherson estate in the 1970s
- 04 The 'Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe' playground at Serangoon North
- 05 Dove playground in Ang Mo Kio town
- 06 The Watermelon playground in Tampines town was originally built in 1989



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### Mid-1970s-1980s: Concrete Playgrounds

Between the mid-1970s and 1980s, playgrounds took on more elaborate and creative forms, inspired by our heritage and culture. Made mostly of concrete, they comprised designs such as animals, fruits and vegetables. The Dragon Playground is the most notable design from this era, and remains a cherished icon today.

Along with these, HDB designed a series of playgrounds based on nursery rhymes, including childhood favourites like Humpty Dumpty and the Shoe House. There were also others, such as the Snake and Ladder playground based on the popular board game, and the Petrol Kiosk, Fire Engine and Clock playgrounds, based on common everyday objects that children could easily identify.



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07 The Dragon playground at Toa Payoh Lorong 6 still remains an endearing icon for many Singaporeans

08 Whimsical fun around a giant teapot at Woodlands Vista Park



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## 1990s: Proprietary Play Equipment

In the 1990s, proprietary play equipment was introduced into our playgrounds. Featuring a combination of structures designed for imaginative play, they allowed a large number of children to play together, thus encouraging greater interaction across various ages. With parts designed by play equipment specialists, these new playgrounds also met new safety standards and were easier to build and repair.

## 2000s: Family Playgrounds

In the 2000s, with the focus shifting to the needs of the whole family and not just the children, HDB introduced the family playground, or 3-Generation (3G) Fitness Corner. With play and exercise equipment located side by side, everyone in the family could enjoy some play time together.

- 09 Playgrounds designed and built by play equipment specialists can be found in most BTO projects
- 10–11 Some recent BTO projects may feature playgrounds with nearby exercise facilities for adults and the elderly



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## Today: Thematic Playgrounds

In 2016, HDB embarked on a new generation of playgrounds in new housing projects. These playgrounds are designed to enhance the children's play experience while reflecting the history and heritage of the town. Novel play features have also been incorporated to help build closer bonds between friends and family.

12-13 At the Keat Hong precincts in Choa Chu Kang, military-themed playgrounds pay homage to the army camps that once occupied the sites. In these distinctive playgrounds, children can enjoy playing around watch towers, trucks and even 'drive' a military tank



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14 In Sembawang, children set sail on a thrilling voyage aboard a 'double-decker ship' anchored at the playground. Inspired by the town's past as a naval base, it features rope ladders and rubber flooring designed to resemble the sea and shore. Stilt-like climbing structures with netting hark back to the *kelongs* (fishing jetties) that used to dot the area



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- 15 Woodlands, once a heavily wooded area, was also home to many common insects. Today, giant insects come alive at the playground at Woodlands Glen, echoing the area's richness in bio-diversity and forest-like appearance in Singapore's early days. Find these enormous critters between Blocks 573B and 573C Woodlands Drive
- 16 The mosaic playground-inspired gallery at 'The More We Get Together: Singapore's Playgrounds 1930–2030' exhibition showcases several HDB heritage playgrounds
- 17 An assortment of merchandise inspired by HDB playgrounds created by local designers



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## Celebrating Playgrounds

HDB playgrounds are an important source of our collective memories and identity — many of us hold fond personal memories of our childhood playgrounds and the friends we made there. Today, local designers have caught on the love for these memorable places and created heritage-themed merchandise. The Dragon playground at Toa Payoh, which has won the hearts of many, is perhaps the most common motif.



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For the first time, HDB collaborated with the National Museum of Singapore on an exhibition on the development of Singapore's playgrounds. Held in 2018, 'The More We Get Together: Singapore's Playgrounds 1930–2030' took visitors on a journey that chronicled the evolving role of Singapore's playgrounds and explored the possibilities for future spaces of play.



## Let's Build Our Playground Together!

Not only are playgrounds becoming thematic and more imaginative, residents can have fun in building some of them too. Singapore's first community-built playground, Adventure Playground @ Canberra at Sembawang Close, was co-created with the community and residents there.

Under the Build-A-Playground (BAP) initiative, HDB transformed an open plot of land into a treehouse and *kelong*-inspired playground. The design of the playground, mooted by the residents themselves, reflects the heritage of Sembawang, which used to be home to fishing villages and jetties. Canberra residents, especially younger thrill seekers with a penchant for adventurous and interactive play equipment, also suggested the components that made up the playground. The eventual playground was completed with the help of residents, who added the finishing touches.

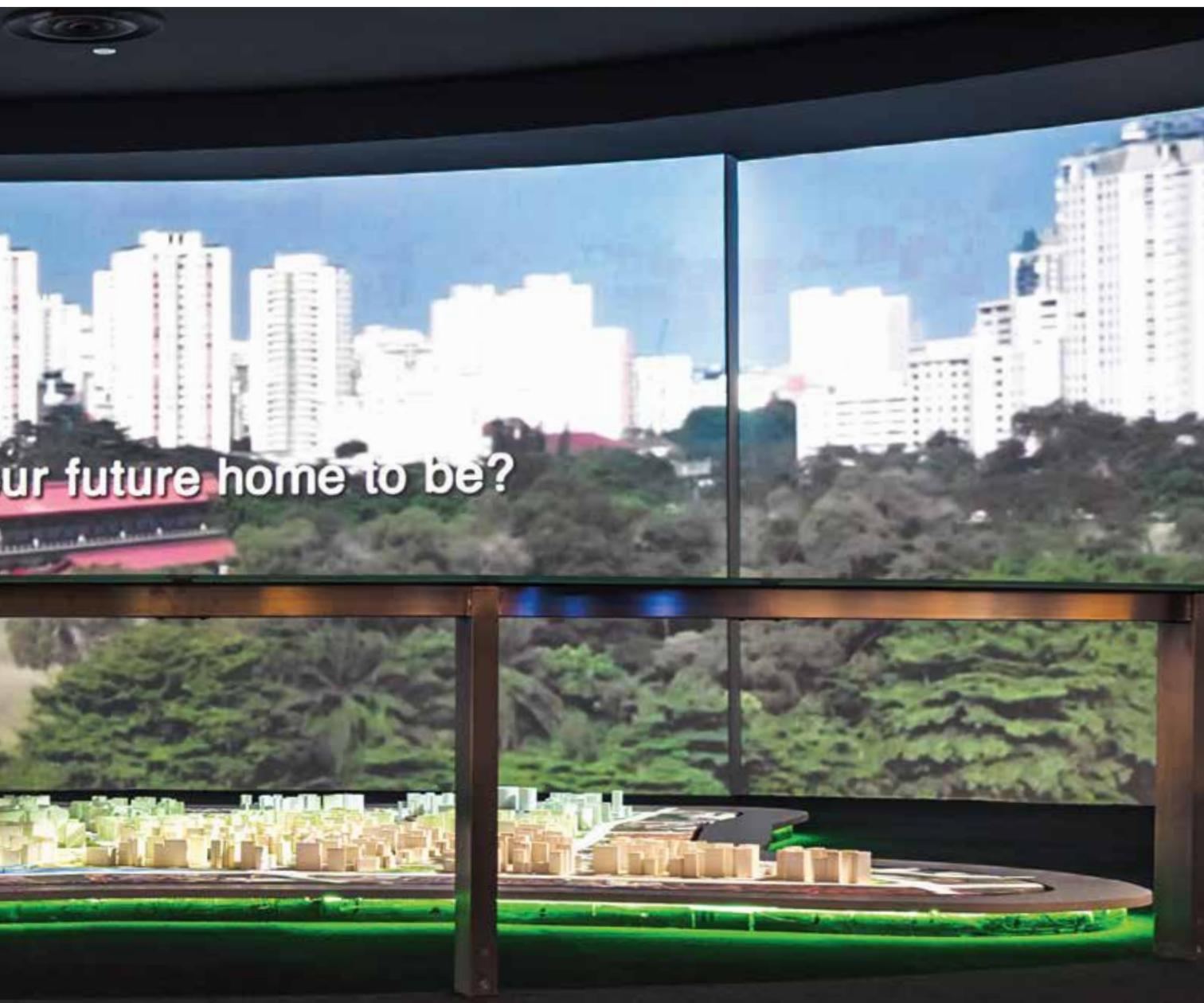
With the successful completion of the pilot BAP project, HDB will be expanding the initiative to 4 other HDB towns — Choa Chu Kang, Pasir Ris, Toa Payoh and Woodlands — to offer residents opportunities to co-create their estate's unique playground. [d](#)



(Left) Residents taking part in the Build-A-Playground activities around the Adventure Playground @ Canberra



(Above) Gallery visitors can experience the use of innovative technology and distinctive designs in planning Tengah Town



# LIVINGSPACE

Capturing nearly 6 decades of Singapore's public housing journey, HDB's revamped gallery tells its story through an immersive, multimedia experience.



Singapore's public housing story began in the 1960s amidst an acute housing shortage. With many then living in unhygienic slums and crowded squatter settlements, HDB's immediate task was to solve the nation's housing crisis — to house as many people as possible within the shortest time possible. Almost 60 years on, our HDB flats are home to over 80% of Singapore's resident population. Across HDB towns, vibrant communities have flourished as people come together to live, learn, work and play.

The success of HDB's housing programmes and policies in Singapore's nation-building and economic transformation has attracted foreign governments and delegations, who want to learn more. HDB's gallery, located at HDB Hub, serves as a platform to share our story with the community — both local and international. With its latest refresh in September 2018, the gallery presents an immersive showcase of the latest public housing initiatives and HDB's efforts in providing well-designed homes in sustainable and community-centric towns.



## Welcome to LIVINGSPACE

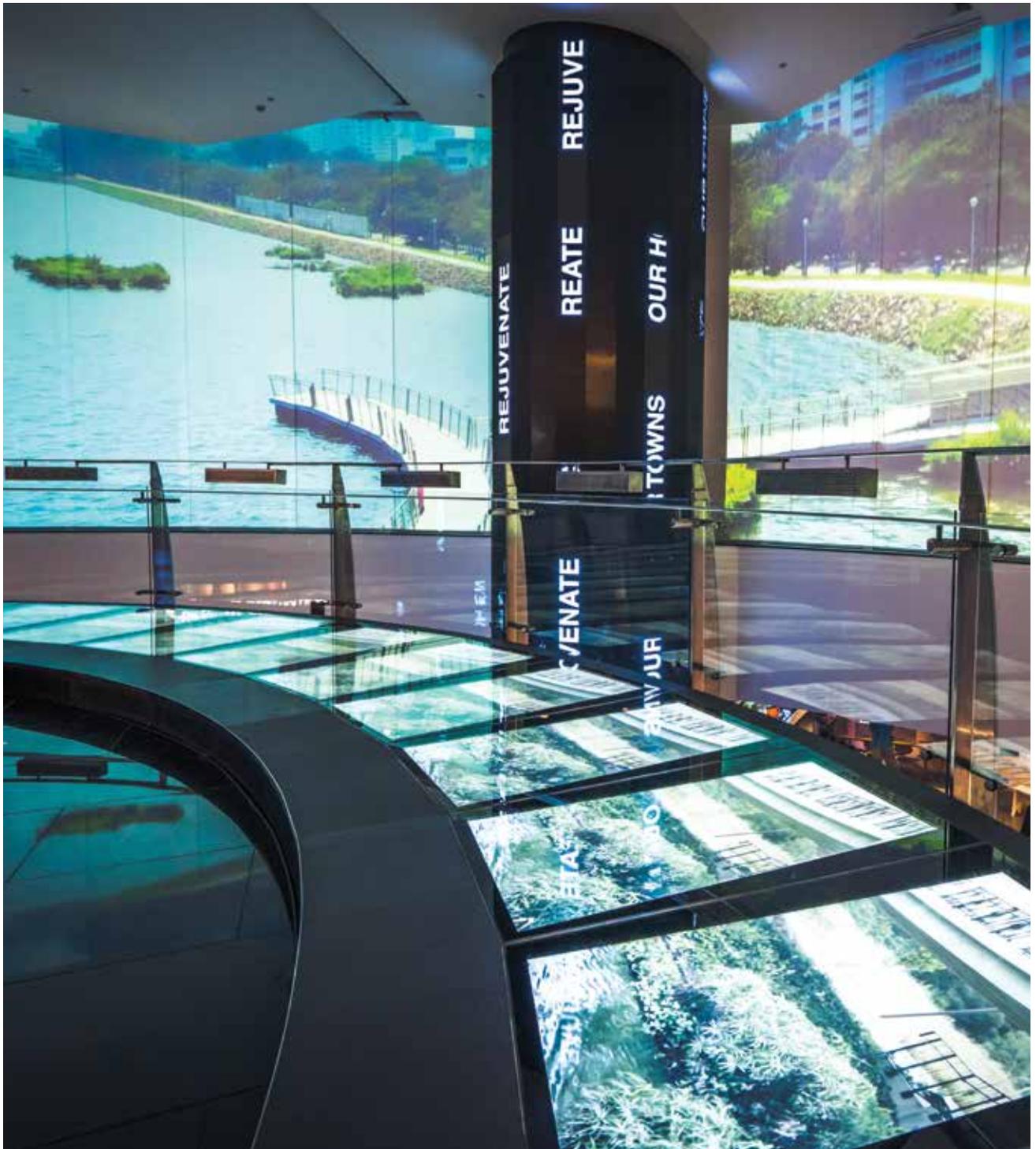
Named 'LIVINGSPACE', the gallery comprises 8 distinct areas that bring visitors through the stories 'behind the block', revealing the work that goes into planning and realising the vibrant living environments that Singaporeans call home.

## Journey Space

Experience Singapore's public housing story as you revisit nostalgic sights captured in a tapestry of 'then and now' photos, and witness key moments come to life at an interactive video wall.



(Above) This display, an artillery shell casing from the gun salute at the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew's funeral, pays tribute to Singapore's pioneering leaders who have laid the foundation for public housing



## HomeScape

In this all-new mega video installation that is over 25m wide, let your vision take flight and enjoy breathtaking aerial views of Singapore's public housing landscapes and skylines. Come closer and step onto the

screens of the 'skywalk' located in front of the video wall and be enveloped in dramatic vistas featuring iconic sights from the heartlands.



## Plan Space

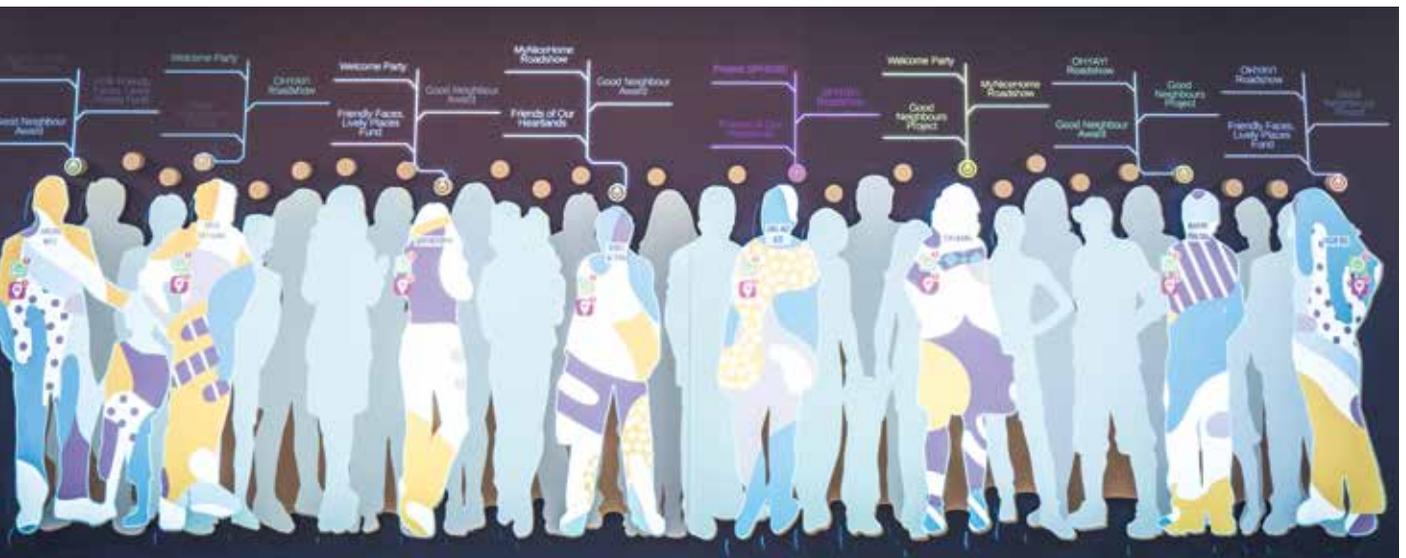
Learn about the strategies and principles behind the planning of well-designed and sustainable HDB towns with interactive and tactile exhibits.





## Create Space

Through the decades, continuous innovation and upgrading efforts have ensured that our heartlands remain cherished by Singaporeans. Learn about the policies and programmes that have helped house a nation and transformed the living conditions in Singapore from slums to the vibrant homes of today.



## Share Space

Beyond providing homes, HDB also supports vibrant, cohesive and inclusive communities. Learn how, through HDB's programmes and policies, residents can live together harmoniously in community-centric towns, and help weave a strong social fabric for the nation.

You can even relive fond childhood memories as you slide down a replica of the Dragon Playground, a heritage icon.





### Eco Space

Find out how HDB is creating better living environments through smart and sustainable design innovations, including the Floating Wetland system, prefabricated construction technology, and the dual bicycle rack system, which helps support green commuting.

### Future Space

Discover what the future of public housing may offer as you peer into the exciting plans for upcoming towns that will drive HDB's work in the next chapter of Singapore's public housing journey.





## Central Theatre

Through a combination of projection mapping and immersive panoramic displays, uncover the bold plans and ideas for Singapore's first Forest Town, Tengah.

## Visit Us

LIVINGSPACE is located at HDB Hub, Level 1 (beside The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf café) and Basement 1.

Visit us Monday to Saturday from 8:30am to 5:00pm. The gallery is closed on Sundays and Public Holidays. [d](#)





# Meet the Dwellers – Championing the Community Spirit

Behind the neat, ordered facades of HDB blocks is a living compendium of lives, people and stories; some more colourful than others, but all unique and interesting in their own special way. A home-grown group of *chaptch* players is keeping the heritage activity alive, with hopes of reigniting its popularity across the heartland.

a traditional game that requires both dexterity and balance to keep a feathered shuttlecock in the air, *chaptah* used to be seen by some as a pastime for children. Today, a growing community of *chaptah* enthusiasts of all ages is breathing new life into the old-school activity at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park. Their story is a testament to how shared spaces in the heartland bring people together and forge lasting friendships.

## From Strangers to Friends

At the heart of the group is Mr Lim Kwang Yan, affectionately known as *laoshi* (teacher) among the players. A veteran who only picked up *chaptah* in his 70s, Mr Lim did not let age get in his way of developing the flexibility and nimbleness needed to play the game well.

"I trained and practised stretching exercises for more than 5 years before I finally achieved a full split," Mr Lim shares. At 85 years old, he is still able to pull off challenging moves, such as kicking the *chaptah* with his heel when it lands behind him. His personal record is kicking the *chaptah* in the air for more than 200 times.

Mr Lim started out practising with a small group of friends at Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West. "Our group mainly comprised regulars, as our practice spot was located slightly off the beaten track," he recalls. These days, Mr Lim cycles to Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park to meet his friends for *chaptah*. Over time, the group of players caught the attention of passers-by, and the numbers started to grow. "Whenever passers-by stop to watch us play, we will offer them a *chaptah* to try," Mr Lim says.



Among them is animation director Jun Yi. "I used to play *chaptah* when I was in junior college, and had been looking to get back into the game over the past decade, when I came across the players here," he shares. "What I like about *chaptah* is that it is gender-neutral, and every player is able to develop his or her own style, just like in other sports."

Mr Lim is generous with his advice and guidance toward the players, and the group's welcoming nature has fostered its diversity. Besides Singaporeans, its members include residents in the area who come from Vietnam and Japan.

## Multi-generational Bonding

Gathering 5 times a week, except on Wednesdays and Fridays, the players also stay in touch through group text messaging, with the retirees often heading to a nearby coffee shop at Teck Ghee for conversation over breakfast after practice.

The easy camaraderie of the *chaptah* club belies the wide age range of its members.





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Some of its younger members include a group of teenagers. "We are students from different schools who gather to play soccer near the Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park, and chanced upon *chaptch* on an occasion," 16-year-old Ryan explains. "The uncles were very friendly, and invited us to give it a try." The youths have been joining the group regularly on weekends ever since, and even help to keep an eye on other players' children and pet dogs while the parents and owners are in the game.

Families also make up this group, such as the Teos, a family of 3. "I was actually the first one in the family to start playing *chaptch*! I introduced my husband and 9-year-old son to the activity to encourage them to exercise more, and now they have become better players than I am," Crystal jokes.

01 Veteran Mr Lim Kwang Yan leads a group of passionate *chaptch* players

02-04 The players' skills and enthusiasm prove that *chaptch* is not mere child's play



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## Passion for the Game

Proving that *chapteh* is not mere child's play, the Bishan-Ang Mo Kio *chapteh* group takes part in an annual tournament with other clubs in Singapore, including one based in Bukit Batok. Each club has their different and unique culture, and engage in friendly rivalry through frequent matches.

Members of the group who did well in a recent competition include father-and-son duo Jim and Joven, who were crowned runners-up in the categories they participated in. "Our dream is to elevate the game to a higher level, and compete at bigger venues in the future," Jun Yi shares.

The supportive atmosphere contributes to the strong team spirit among the players, and motivates them to improve their skills. It is no wonder that most passers-by find it hard to resist the neighbourly friendship offered by the *chapteh* group. "Rain or shine, you will find us practising around the park, and we welcome anyone who wishes to join us!"



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05 The game of *chapteh* attracts both the young and young-at-heart

06 Father-and-son *chapteh* duo, Jim and Joven



**my**nicehome

Scan for more on the *chapteh* group or to see them in action. Visit [mynicehome.sg](https://mynicehome.sg) for more community stories!

# 1 1 dwellings

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## Contributions

We envision *Dwellings* to be a platform for the sharing of ideas, works and projects that promote and advance quality and sustainable housing. We welcome written contributions from all who share a keen interest in housing and habitats, whether you are an academic, industry practitioner or professional.

## Contact

For feedback and contributions, please email the *Dwellings* editorial team at [dwellings@mailbox.hdb.gov.sg](mailto:dwellings@mailbox.hdb.gov.sg). Please also let us know if you wish to receive a print magazine.

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