HDB Chief refuses to answer opposition member's question on planning principle behind high population density

THE ONLINE CITIZEN, 24 April 2018

At the 3rd IPS lecture on "Shaping The Future of Heartland Living" in NUS yesterday evening (23 Apr), HDB Chief Cheong Koon Hean refused to answer question posed by former opposition candidate for Hong Kah, Ravi Philemon. Mr Philemon used to be the editor for The Independent online news blog but now writes for iCompareLoan.com.

During the Q&A session at the lecture, Mr Philemon asked Cheong what was the urban planning principle behind the higher population density plans, espoused by her at the last lecture when she said that Singapore's population density would increase from 11,000 people per sq km to 13,700 people per sq km between now and 2030.

"HDB chief today (23 Apr) chose not to answer that question," Mr Philemon revealed what happened at the lecture.

Earlier, an ST reader, Cheang Peng Wah, had also written to ST Forum expressing his alarm after hearing the 13,700 people per sq km density figure quoted by Cheong. In the letter, he pointed out that Singapore's land area is only about 720 sq km. Hence, with this high density figure, Singapore's population size could go up to 9,864,000, or nearly 10 million, by 2030. He said this was not the figure projected in the Population White Paper of 2013, which talked about 6.9 million population.

Cheong: I have the right to answer whichever questions I want

This was what Mr Philemon asked Cheong yesterday, "In the last lecture you mentioned that Singapore's population density will increase in the future. I can understand and appreciate that your views on urban planning are based on your role as a planner – not policy maker. But planners too don't plan in a vacuum. My question is, 'what underlying principles/philosophies guide your planning process.'"

The Q&A session was moderated by Professor Lily Kong, Provost of SMU. Because of the brevity of time, Prof Kong suggested that a few questions be asked before Cheong replied them. There were several other questions asked, including those from former Minister of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zainul Abidin, an RGS student, a representative from an NGO, and a property agent.

However, after the questions were asked and when it was time for Cheong to answer, she told the audience that she had the right to answer whichever questions she wanted to.

She then went ahead to answer all the questions, except two - one by Mr Philemon and another by a property agent. The property agent had asked about HDB flat resale price which has increased over the generations and is now viewed as a "ticking time bomb".

High population density idea comes from politics?

Mr Philemon continued, "At the end of the lecture as I was leaving the venue of the lecture, another participant (who was a total stranger to me) stopped me at the hallway and remarked with a wry smile: 'she didn't answer you did she? It was an important question.'"

"I agree with him that it was an important question, which the HDB chief should have considered answering," Mr Philemon added.

Urban planning is often described not only as a technical process, but also as a political one, which is concerned with the development and use of land protection and use of the environment, public welfare and the design of urban environment, including air, water and the infrastructure passing into and out of urban areas such as transportation, communication and distribution network.

Mr Philemon surmised that the philosophy behind the higher population density could be due to politics. That is, the PAP government is asking urban planners to cater for a larger population with a view of dramatically increase Singapore's immigration levels so as to get more new citizens in, who undoubtedly would be more "appreciative" of the PAP.

"The urban planners in HDB are indeed guided by prevailing political philosophies such as the Ethnic Integration Policy, Permanent Resident Quota policy, car-free town centre, etc," Mr Philemon remarked.

HDB has a clearly stated pricing principle – "to keep homes within the reach of the majority of flat buyers". But he noted, "Besides the overarching policy principle of 'universal home-ownership', it (HDB) does not seem to have an urban planning principle."

In any case, Cheong's predecessor, Dr Liu Thai Ker, has been touting a 10 million population figure for Singapore on and off in public media.

HDB: 13,700 people per sq km is living density, not population density

Meanwhile, Cheong's subordinate Jaffrey Aw, the Director of Strategic Planning for HDB, replied to Mr Cheang Peng Wah in ST Forum today (24 Apr):

We refer to Mr Cheang Peng Wah's letter (Alarmed by population figures; April 20).

Housing Board chief executive Cheong Koon Hean's lecture was about how Singapore can anticipate its urban future and develop "liveable density". The figures cited were, hence, on living density, and not population density.

Living density takes into account only the land available for urban areas, and excludes land used for ports, airports, defence and utilities, among others. It would be inaccurate to extrapolate the population size from the living density figure.

Still, we are talking about some 25% increase in "living density" for Singaporeans in the next 12 years or so.

Shaping the future of Singapore's heartlands

CHEONG KOON HEAN
TODAY, 25 April 2018

An artist impression of Tengah new town, which breaks new ground with its car-free concept. It will also be Singapore's first "forest town" that is planned to be integrated with the area's surrounding greenery and biodiversity.

Amidst Singapore's demographic changes, the threat of climate change, and trends such as Singaporeans increasingly working from home and turning to shopping online, how can public housing continue to evolve to better meet the needs of residents? Addressing this issue at an IPS-Nathan lecture on Monday (April 23), Housing and Development Board CEO Dr Cheong Koon Hean spelt out how Singapore's largest developer plans, designs, harnesses technology and reaches out to the community to help build better homes for Singaporeans and to foster a stronger community spirit. Below is an excerpt of the lecture, the final in a series of three lectures.

Someone once told me that in Singapore, HDB flats are 'like the air we breathe'.

They are so much a part of our life because more than 80 per cent of our residential population live in them.

Even if you do not live in an HDB flat, you would have used some of the amenities in an HDB town, be it to frequent the market or hawker centre, the neighbourhood shop or clinic.

The public housing programme implemented by the Housing & Development Board (HDB) over the last 57 years has provided affordable housing for the people of Singapore. By and large, HDB has provided a comfortable and convenient living environment for its residents.

Going forward, there will be trends that will impact our HDB towns.

So what are the considerations that will influence the way in which we should plan and build our towns?

In this lecture, I would like to focus on how HDB plans, designs, harnesses technology and reaches out to the community to help build better homes together.

Singaporeans are living longer and having fewer babies. By 2030, the number of Singaporeans aged 65 and above will double to 900,000, making up 25 per cent of the population, from just one in eight today.

The planning of towns and estates must consider the change in social composition and demographics.

We need to meet the continuum of needs of our residents as they age.

Our designs should include suitable accommodation for them, complemented by services that take care of their social well-being and healthcare needs so that they can age-in-place.

For example, elderly residents seeking independent living may now prefer to buy a smaller flat as it is easier to maintain.

These should be close to neighbourhood amenities and public transport for convenience, and be served by healthcare and elderly activity centres.

In terms of detail design, universal design principles should be applied within the flat and in public areas, so that mobility is not impeded.

We want to encourage and enable the elderly to be physically and mentally active in and outside their homes, so that they are not socially isolated.

Universal design principles are used to encourage the elderly to be active in and outside their homes, so that they are not socially isolated, says Dr Cheong.   TODAY file photo.

As a small city state, Singapore is inevitably a high density environment. However, through innovative planning and design solutions, planners and architects can create 'liveable density' so as to continue to ensure a pleasant living environment.

Climate change is another phenomenon that we must consider in the formulation of our plans. Increased urbanisation and economic activities globally has led to higher carbon emissions and an upward trend in temperatures.

Since 1972, Singapore has experienced an increase in warm days and warm nights, and a decrease in cool days and cool nights. From 1980 to 2016, annual total rainfall rose at an average rate of 101 millimetres per decade.

It is projected that the intensity and frequency of heavy rainfall events will increase as the world gets warmer.

These climatic changes require us to plan and build in a more sustainable way.

Our buildings should be designed to reduce energy use and to encourage natural cooling rather than the use of air conditioning.

Today, HDB already uses renewable energy, such as energy generated from solar panels. There are opportunities to use less water and reduce waste, and to re-use and recycle whenever possible.

Innovative ways, such as the adoption of water sensitive urban design could be used to mitigate floods. We should strive to build greater resilience into our infrastructure.

Recognising that our towns will mature and age over time, HDB has already been carrying out extensive estate renewal and upgrading of several towns since the 1990s.

Where possible, the cycle of improvements and rejuvenation should continue, the pace of which will be subject to the availability of resources.

This will ensure that our towns remain a pleasant place to live, and municipal and estate services are well maintained.

We now have a much more diverse population as we begin to see more inter-ethnic and transnational marriages.

More new citizens have also joined us in recent decades. These trends will increase our diversity in culture, language and lifestyle.

The complexion of our estates will evolve organically with this change in social composition. We need to find ways to increase community connections so as to promote better understanding and social cohesion amongst residents in our towns.

The use of design and technology to encourage greater inclusivity and to facilitate social interactions becomes even more important. If we can do this successfully, it will help to create a cultural richness and a new definition of the community spirit.

At the same time, with increasing wealth and education, we are mindful that people do value their privacy and personal space more.

Whilst some may advocate the return of the traditional slab block and common corridor design to encourage more neighbourly encounters, the reality is that the majority of our residents prefer a building layout, which gives them more privacy.

Building the 'Kampung Spirit' will require new design interpretations.

More creative designs should strike a balance between building community and making available multiple layers of different spaces – a gradation of public, semi-public and private space.

Shops in the heartlands serve an important social role, says Dr Cheong. Photo: Facebook / HDB

More and more people are now connected through social media regardless of where they live. We can no longer define 'neighbours' by proximity and distance alone.

Whilst promoting neighbourly ties by physical design remain important, we need to recognise the presence and power of online communities.

By leveraging technology, virtual communities can nourish a sense of belonging and civic-mindedness, involving more people to shape and take greater ownership of the environment that they are living in.

Netizens with common interests can be brought together to enliven community life. A matching of skills to needs, and bringing together of residents with common interests across online communities, could also be constructive ways to engender a kampung spirit.

ANTICIPATING DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY CHANGES

Technology and artificial intelligence (AI) will impact almost every aspect of the town, affecting the way we live, work, play and learn.

The nature of employment is likely to become more transient with the advent of the gig economy and new freelance jobs.

It was reported that in 2017, there are about 167,000 individuals in freelance work as their primary job.

More people will also turn to telecommuting and home offices to perform various jobs from the comfort of their home. These are potential considerations for future flat designs.

In fact, some 17,000 HDB flats already operate as home-offices today. How can we better support citizens in these new roles?

For example, we could provide more flexible living spaces that could accommodate suitable types of work that can be done in a home environment, supported by digital infrastructure.

As the home businesses grow, we could consider providing shared working spaces nearby in the neighbourhood or town centres which allow these businesses to expand into, and provide connectivity facilities and spaces for larger group meetings.

These spaces would encourage greater entrepreneurship and facilitate start-ups.

Our commercial complexes and shops in the heartlands serve an important social role.

They provide convenience and more affordable goods and services for residents. Entrepreneurs just starting out can find more affordable rentals within the heartland shops.

Many of the shops serve as social nodes, particularly the coffee shops where people meet over a cuppa. Residents enjoy familiarity with the shop keepers unlike larger shopping malls with chain stores.

At the same time, omni-channel shopping has been growing in popularity. Some have projected that by 2028, the e-commerce market will grow by more than five times, it would be worth up to S$7.5 billion, and make up 6.7 per cent of all retail in Singapore.

HDB shops need to evolve to cater to the changing shopping preferences of consumers. We could rethink the design of our HDB commercial centres towards a more 'experiential' focus, to attract footfall. In terms of trade mix, more personalised services could be introduced.

For example, Nespresso provides a personalised coffee experience by baristas at a tasting bar.

With online shopping, the design of neighbourhoods should be more delivery-friendly. This could mean providing more drop-off and parcel collection points for each block and precinct.

The potential introduction of autonomous vehicles will also impact the way we plan our towns for commute. The Land Transport Authority's (LTA) push towards a car-lite environment and the introduction of autonomous buses require us to rethink the road system in our towns.

For example, priority may be given to bus transit corridors while reducing the number of lanes for cars. Many of our multi-storey car parks could be repurposed or redeveloped, should car ownership fall.

A ROADMAP TO BETTER LIVING

HDB ramped up its building programme from 2010 onwards to meet the surge in demand for public housing.

Between 2010 and 2017, we launched about 167,000 units of flats. This is equivalent to about five Toa Payoh towns, all launched within the short span of eight years.

This is a massive building programme. However, it provided a golden opportunity for HDB to develop a new generation of public housing that would take into consideration the various trends I highlighted above.

Rather than just doing more of the same, we wanted to refresh our public housing towns and developments so that they will meet the changing lifestyle needs and rising aspirations of our people.

In 2011, we launched the HDB Roadmap to Better Living, which will guide our large development programme over the next few decades. The goal is to build well-designed and community centric towns which are sustainable and smart. Let me share how this roadmap will impact the future of Heartland Living.

Thrust 1: Well-designed towns

HDB does not only build housing. As a master planner and developer, HDB is in the business of developing entire townships.

Over the years, the physical planning of HDB towns has evolved in tandem with the changing socio-economic and demographic conditions of Singapore.

With the ramp-up of our building programme since 2010, we have had the opportunity to formulate several new master plans for areas such as Punggol North, Bidadari, Tampines North and Tengah.

These plans have incorporated new fresh ideas, including the following:

1.1) More distinctive neighbourhoods and districts

HDB aims to create more distinctive identities for a new generation of towns in green field sites and in larger areas of older estates that will undergo redevelopment and rejuvenation. Building 'identity' can help us to better root residents to home and community. In our planning, we capitalise on 'heritage and place character' to safeguard social memories and to create a stronger sense of belonging.

1.2) Living in Green to mitigate high densities

Our homes will be nestled within a garden as we introduce more tropical green and blue water elements in our planning and design.

These elements provide the green lungs and recreational spaces to relieve urban density.

More blue elements, such as ponds and streams, will be weaved in with the landscaping – these elements will be multi-functional, serving to collect storm water, and provide aesthetic and recreational features for the towns.

Waterway Woodcress, a Build-to-Order housing project in Punggol. Introducing water elements in HDB planning and design helps to relieve urban density.   TODAY file photo.

1.3) Develop New Building Typologies and Layouts

We have adopted new building typologies and flat layouts to meet changing lifestyle needs, providing variety and choice, as well as adding interesting features to the townscape.

In addition to the traditional tower and slab blocks, we have introduced typologies such as courtyard housing, terraced housing, housing with decked roof gardens, etc.

Sky gardens and terraces will also be selectively introduced to provide residents with more spaces to relax and to interact.

The interior of the flat unit is also undergoing change to meet new lifestyle needs and trends. Kitchen walls have recently been done away with as many young couples prefer open kitchens. Columns are pushed to the sides wherever possible so that residents can have more flexibility in reconfiguring their flat layout.

All these improvements enable residents to stamp their flat's interior with their very own personality.

1.4) A car-lite environment

In line with national efforts, HDB also aims to develop a 'car-lite' environment by encouraging the use of public transport. Almost all our towns are well served by a rail network and well connected bus routes to encourage the use of public transport.

Recognising that some may still need to use a car occasionally, LTA has worked with HDB to launch the national Electric Vehicle Car-Sharing Programme in 2017 where 1,000 cars supplied by BlueSG are being deployed in stages for our residents' use.

In addition, MOT/ LTA are exploring a pilot deployment of Autonomous Vehicles as a form of public transport in Punggol and Tengah towns as well as in the Jurong Innovation District from 2022.

To promote the use of alternative modes of transport, comprehensive cycling networks are being weaved into HDB towns to encourage cycling and the use of personal mobility devices. The cycling network will also link to parks and park connectors.

Towns will be planned to be even more pedestrian-friendly with conveniently connected footpaths, covered link ways, and second storey connections where appropriate, which connect precincts and also lead directly to the aboveground MRT/ LRT stations.

2) Designing an Environment for All Ages

Today, HDB already adopts universal design principles – to ensure that the built environment is usable and accessible to everyone, regardless of age and physical ability.

All new flats come with no steps, toilets that can accommodate a wheelchair, and rocker switches which are suitable for the elderly.

All existing towns have been retrofitted with ramps to facilitate wheelchair mobility. Through the Lift Upgrading Programme, a majority of flats have access to a lift on every floor.

HDB has actively looked into special housing typologies that are more tailored to elderly needs. Today, a range of housing choices are available for our elderly.

3) Creating Synergies from Integrated Developments

HDB has been co-locating our residential blocks with smaller, compatible facilities such as precinct shops, childcare centres, active ageing hubs, and other social services.

However, as integrated developments can yield greater convenience and potential synergies between mixed uses, HDB will consider building larger integrated developments where appropriate.

In the design of its new generation towns, HDB has increased the provision of more social and communal places to encourage interaction.   Photo: Facebook / HDB.

Thrust 2: Community-centric towns

Beyond being just a provider of homes, HDB also builds active and cohesive communities anchored on the three pillars of 'software, hardware and heartware'.

Software – To foster social cohesion, the Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) has been a key policy pillar on which we have managed to maintain a good ethnic mix in HDB estates for racial integration and harmony.

In recent years, we have introduced the Singapore Permanent Resident (SPR) Quota which was layered over the EIP to facilitate better integration of SPR households in public housing estates.

Hardware – With the community in mind, HDB plans and designs shared spaces and facilities such as civic plazas, void decks and community living rooms, common green spaces and even 3-generation playgrounds to encourage the mixing of different age groups.

In addition, we have different flat types for each precinct and block to encourage a more socially inclusive environment.

HDB estates host a wealth of spaces where residents get to meet their neighbours incidentally (i.e. unplanned) and convivially (i.e. planned).

In a HDB-NUS study in 2014, it was found that HDB lift lobbies and void decks are conducive spaces for interaction, followed by coffee shops and retail shops.

There was positive correlation between amenities usage and a sense of attachment and belonging.

Therefore, well-planned and designed spaces and amenities are critical, as residents who reported a higher level of amenities usage also reported a higher sense of attachment and belonging to their community.

In the design of its new generation towns, HDB has increased the provision of more social and communal places to encourage interaction.

These include large town plazas for larger group activities, various roof and sky rise gardens and community living rooms for smaller groups of residents.

Heartware – The Heartware, comprising people and community, is what makes a town and place endearing to its residents. In the past five years, HDB has stepped up community-building efforts by organising activities such as Welcome Parties and HDB's Good Neighbours Awards.

Based on HDB's Sample Household Survey 2013, some 98 per cent of the residents gave feedback that they feel a sense of belonging to their town. More than 85 per cent of residents interacted with neighbours of other ethnic groups and nationalities. There is also increasing participation in community activities.

HDB continues to build on these positive trends by encouraging more citizen participation. We would like our residents to play an active role in shaping their environment and to take greater ownership in caring for their town and to contribute to building up their community.

HDB therefore has many programmes to encourage greater citizen participation.

First, HDB works to nurture change makers. They help to promote the spirit of neighbourliness and eco-friendly living in the HDB estates. For example, we have 'ambassadors' comprising students from schools and retirees who volunteer and help spread the eco-living messages to residents.

Some of our volunteers may also initiate activities that add liveliness to places like civic plazas, and foster care and neighbourly relations through organised activities.

Other volunteers facilitate community conversations to build consensus on local development and rejuvenation plans.

For example, our resident volunteers and student facilitators from the tertiary institutions help to lead focus group sessions with our residents on how to improve their living environment.

Mr Chong Teng Kok, a 64-year-old senior heartland ambassador, volunteers his time guiding learning tours in Punggol. Dr Cheong said HDB wants its residents to contribute to building up their community. Photo: Facebook / HDB.

Residents are often invited to help co-create places in their estates. One interesting project was the development of a 'Social Linkway' along a pedestrian corridor at Tampines that was very well used by residents as it leads to their neighbourhood centre.

Pop-up stations were set up along the corridor to gather ideas and inputs from residents who were making their way to the neighbourhood centre. Not only did the residents contribute ideas, they helped to implement several interesting activity nodes – one was for a neighbourhood incubator and others for play and learning. There is also an art link with artwork and murals contributed by the residents themselves.

To support ground-up ideas, HDB introduced a 'Friendly Faces, Lively Places Fund' in 2017. Residents are encouraged to draw on this fund to organise events together with their neighbours and the community

HDB also makes a point to consult the public on its plans. Numerous focus group discussions and exhibitions are held to gather ideas and suggestions for many of our plans before they are formulated or finalised.

Thrust 3: Sustainable and smart towns

As the largest housing developer in Singapore, HDB will play its part as a responsible developer to build sustainable towns.

Economic sustainability strategies focus on creating economic vibrancy and business diversity through the provision of innovative commercial facilities within the towns.

Environmental sustainability strategies are wide-ranging and include reducing carbon emissions, optimising the use of resources and achieving effective energy, water and waste management.

These will provide a clean, safe, healthy and comfortable living environment for our residents. Active research is being carried out by HDB in multiple areas on sustainability initiatives.

Mean sea level rise, particularly where it coincides with high tides, presents a risk of coastal inundation of buildings, infrastructure and assets.

Various coastal adaptation measures are already being studied by multiple agencies, such as permanent and demountable floodwalls, earth bunds, and flood gates with pumping stations.

Not many people are aware that HDB is one of the largest reclamation agencies in Singapore, having reclaimed much of the land in Singapore.

HDB would raise the minimum platform levels of reclaimed land to PUB's prevailing codes to anticipate future sea level rise.

To cater to a rise in annual total rainfall, HDB has updated its design requirements to cater for this and reviewed its drainage requirements for all new projects.

HDB is also building up a deeper understanding of climate change issues. For example, it is carrying out research in the use of Urban Water Modelling to simulate water flow and flooding in typical and extreme rainfall conditions so that we can better optimise our water sensitive urban design, and detention and retention features to mitigate flood risks.

THE SMART HDB TOWN

In line with Singapore's aspirations to become a Smart Nation, HDB will tap on significant innovations in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to develop smarter HDB towns – making them more liveable, efficient, sustainable and safe.

(a) Smart Planning

Increasingly, HDB is using sophisticated state-of-the-art computer simulations and data analytics to improve the way we design and plan our towns, precincts and buildings. Collaborating with other agencies such as National Research Foundation (NRF), Singapore Land Authority (SLA) and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), a 3-dimensional city model called Virtual Singapore has been developed which enables HDB to carry out applications like environmental modelling.

Using various computer models, the effects of sun, wind and noise can be simulated virtually so that we can improve our plans before actual development. For example, we could improve the placement and orientation of buildings to channel wind flow through the town to create a cooling effect and to improve air quality.

More greenery could also be introduced at hot spots to reduce heat build-up.

(b) Smart Environment

HDB is leveraging sensors to capture real time information about the environment, such as temperature and humidity.

Environmental data collected can be used to validate environmental models and carry out proactive upgrading of infrastructure in response to changing weather conditions in order to create a more pleasant environment for residents.

c) Smart Estate

Using ICT, we can monitor various estate services such as lighting, pumps, solar panels and lifts to better manage the services within the town.

HDB has developed a Smart Hub which will serve as a central repository of information received from these sensors, so that data analytics can be carried out to improve the performance and reliability of these services.

With artificial intelligence, predictive studies can also be carried out. Such data analytics could facilitate pro-active detection and intervention to minimise disruption to services.

HDB is also looking into the use of drone technology for façade inspections. Working with the Town Councils, it will enable timely repairs to be made.

d) Smart Living

HDB is building 'smart-enabled' homes in our test beds so that residents can benefit from the various smart home applications provided by commercial companies. Such applications include the Elderly Monitoring and Utility Management Systems.

e) Smart Community

With the collection of data and opinion surveys on demographics, social trends, and lifestyle preferences, HDB would be able to better understand residents' needs and preferences. Suitable applications can be developed to bring communities closer together and empower residents to take greater ownership of their environment, such as in the way common spaces are designed. Data can also be used to nudge residents with gamification tools to help promote eco living lifestyles.

HDB is mindful that its research cannot be limited to only technology and engineering solutions. To have a better understanding of societal needs and human behaviour, its research would include social and behavioural studies, which can then better inform HDB of its policy and spatial solutions.

Hence, HDB has recently linked up with the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) to carry out an extensive research programme called the New Urban Kampung Programme. The findings from this research programme will help to steer HDB in its planning and design of the HDB towns.

Using a combination of data from traditional surveys, from sensor networks placed around the estate and through engaging the community on and offline, we can better understand our resident's preferences and formulate more targeted improvements in our towns.

For example, residents may now place thermal comfort, access to amenities and urban greenery at higher priority.

HDB's designs should take these preferences into consideration. Sensors that identify patterns of movement can help HDB to identify under-utilised spaces and to fine-tune the design of these spaces to encourage higher usage.

The design of void decks can hence be improved to foster interaction.

Even as we develop a new generation of public housing, HDB has continued to upgrade our older towns/estates to keep them functional and pleasant to live in. HDB therefore has been 'age-proofing' its towns and flats since the 1990s through multiple upgrading programmes.

HDB needs a strong partnership with Singaporeans to build a good home together, says Dr Cheong.   TODAY file photo.

Our HDB towns will continue to be at the heart of Singapore living.

HDB has a huge task to develop and maintain an environment that will enable our people to live comfortably and to build families and friendships.

Planners and architects will need to draw on their creativity and resourcefulness to develop liveable environments within available land and resources.

HDB will also look to technology to set the stage for new urban solutions.

Today, in partnership with communities and residents, HDB is developing many exciting plans for our estates.

We know that HDB estates are not only about the physical buildings and infrastructure.

Our plans are only fully realised when they become homes for our communities and families. Our residents therefore play a very important role as they have a great impact on the living environment too.

They greatly influence the towns and neighbourhoods through their civic actions and consideration for neighbours, and their sense of ownership by caring for both their home and the surrounding environs.

HDB needs a strong partnership with Singaporeans to build a good home together.