



# Forum on HDB Heartware<sup>CH</sup>

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership

24 Jul 07

Mr Mah Bow Tan  
Minister for National Development

Dear Minister,

In November 2006 you asked me to lead a public consultation exercise to explore how we can better build HDB communities, in response to the challenges of globalisation, changing demographics and increasing expectations among Singaporeans. I launched the Forum on HDB Heartware with a team of Parliamentary colleagues to engage the public on this issue. Our vision was to build a HDB community where residents do not just own their own homes, but also share a collective ownership of the entire community.

The Forum has now completed its study after several rounds of discussion with the public, and deliberation with Government agencies. We propose to enrich the character of the HDB Town, enhance the neighbourhood precinct and raise the community involvement of schools. We also feel that it is important to support the family unit within the community, engage residents more and encourage local voluntarism.

The Forum is mindful that community building is essentially a ground-up process. Much will depend on the response of residents and the leadership of local institutions such as the grassroots, the schools and the voluntary welfare organisations. Besides policy measures and recommendations relating to facilities and other hardware, the Forum has kick-started a few pilot projects at the local level, and highlighted some existing ones in our Report, with the intention of catalysing similar efforts at community building in other neighbourhoods.

The wide-ranging scope of our recommendations is a reflection both of the complexities of community-building and the richness of the public discussions. Indeed, we are grateful and heartened by the whole-hearted participation of the public in the Forum's focus group discussions and dialogue sessions.

The Forum members and I thank you for your support and advice, and we are pleased to submit the Forum's report for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Grace Fu  
Chairman, Forum on HDB Heartware

**Forum Members:**



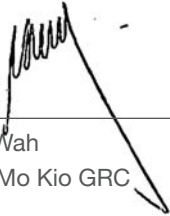
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Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman  
Parliamentary Secretary (ND)  
Ministry of National Development



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Mr Charles Chong  
MP for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC



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Er Lee Bee Wah  
MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC



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Mr Masagos Zulkifli Bin  
Masagos Mohamad  
MP for Tampines GRC



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Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim  
MP for Marine Parade GRC



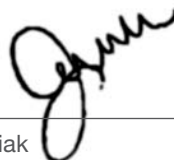
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Mdm Ho Geok Choo  
MP for West Coast GRC



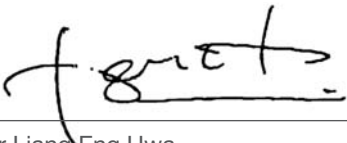
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Mdm Cynthia Phua  
MP for Aljunied GRC



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Dr Lim Wee Kiak  
MP for Sembawang GRC



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Mr Liang Eng Hwa  
MP for Holland-Bukit Timah GRC



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Ms Ellen Lee Geck Hoon  
MP for Sembawang GRC



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Mr Lim Biow Chuan  
MP for Marine Parade GRC

31 Jul 07

Ms Grace Fu  
Minister of State for National Development  
Chairman, Forum on HDB Heartware

Dear *Grace,*

**Report of the Forum on HDB Heartware**

Thank you for your letter dated 24 Jul 2007, submitting the Report of the Forum on HDB Heartware.

When I asked you to lead a public consultation exercise in Nov 2006 to see how we can build better HDB communities, I expressed the hope that the HDB living experience would continue to be a glue that binds Singaporeans to their country and to their fellow citizens. I am pleased to note the extensive discussion that have taken place since then, and the comprehensive Report that you and your team have submitted.

I agree with the key thrusts and recommendations that have been set out in the Report. The Forum's proposals are wide ranging and ambitious. At the same time, they are necessary in the face of major changes to our social fabric, if we are to create the right conditions to sustain resilient and closely-knit HDB communities.

In particular, I agree that it is timely to reconsider our approach towards precinct and flat upgrading. I also support the proposal to include the elements of resident consultation and community ownership in our physical upgrading programmes.

I will ask HDB to quickly review its upgrading programmes and follow up on the other recommendations contained within the Report.

Let me thank you and your team members for leading a successful Forum on HDB Heartware, and paving the way forward for community-building in our HDB estates.

Yours *Sincerely,*



MAH BOW TAN

# Forum on HDB Heartware

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Forum on HDB Heartware” was launched in Nov 06 to engage residents for fresh views and ideas on ways to build strong and cohesive HDB communities. The Forum sought to explore what could be done to create a more closely-knit HDB community that is resilient in a time of globalisation, changing demographics and lifestyles, as well as rising expectations amongst Singaporeans.

The public consultation exercise was overseen by a committee of Members of Parliament led by Ms Grace Fu, Minister of State for National Development. The public was engaged through various channels such as Focus Group discussions, public dialogues, radio talk shows, and the Internet. Over 1,000 Singaporeans participated in the Forum’s discussions.

Forum participants discussed the state of “HDB Heartware” along four major themes: community ownership, neighbourhood identity, community bonding and mutual support. To realise these outcomes in a holistic manner, the Forum has identified six key thrusts, each focussing on a key ingredient that defines the local community:

### Thrust 1: Enrich the Town

The HDB Town should have character and buzz; a place that residents easily identify with. The Forum recommends that dedicated programmes be developed to strengthen the heritage of individual Towns and promote heritage awareness among residents. HDB will work with NHB to jointly develop these programmes.

Some Forum participants expressed support for retaining wet markets and hawker centres to add flavour to the neighbourhood. On the other hand, there were other views, mainly amongst the younger participants who preferred modern supermarkets instead. In recognition of their role as a place for social congregation for the older generation, the Forum recommends that we resume building wet markets and hawker centres at selected estates where they are assessed to be viable. HDB will pilot at Sengkang Town Centre a standalone, naturally-ventilated wet market/hawker centre, to be built and run on a commercial basis by a private operator.

The Forum also proposes for Community Clubs (CCs) and other civic facilities to be sited at Town Centres, within existing shopping malls or as part of a “Civic District” for new or redeveloped towns. This will allow the CCs to benefit from the increased flow of human traffic and attract more residents to frequent it, especially the youths.

### Thrust 2: Enhance the Precinct

The HDB precinct must provide an environment which brings residents together; a place that residents can call “their own”. The key point that emerged from the Forum discussions was that there should be more flexibility and greater resident consultation in the design of the precinct.

The Forum therefore recommends that HDB review its approach to both precinct and flat upgrading, with a view to strengthening the mechanism for engaging residents. This should be accompanied by more flexibility in the provision of upgrading works and facilities to meet residents’ needs.

### Thrust 3: Involve the Schools

The schools are effective channels for the community to reach out to the youths. To facilitate this, there should be regular communication and interaction between the school leaders and grassroots leaders.

The Forum supports existing initiatives to strengthen community-school partnership, and feels that more can be done. In this regard, we recommend greater sharing of facilities between the school and the local community. This will bring the school closer to the community; at the same time, it is practical and cost efficient. A cross-agency work group led by MOE has been formed to look into this, with a pilot trial to be conducted at Tampines Primary and Secondary Schools.

### Thrust 4: Support the Family

The family is the basic unit of society. To strengthen the family within the community, the Forum proposes to refine the Married Child Priority Scheme (MCPS) to further improve chances of success for newly-weds to stay with or near parents. This underscores our belief in the need to preserve and strengthen family ties. For those who do not live so close to their parents, HDB will implement a Family Carparking Scheme, which will provide a discount for the second season parking ticket for residents who visit their family members regularly.

### Thrust 5: Engage the Resident

HDB residents should be positively and actively engaged in their local community. There were several suggestions by Forum participants on how Residents' Committees can reach out to more residents, including targeting the youths, putting greater effort on publicity and doing more to welcome new residents. The Forum feels that these are worthwhile ideas but we should also be cognisant of the limited time and resources that RCs have.

The Forum feels that we can better exploit IT for resident engagement in this age of educated and Internet-savvy residents. MND is developing a Resident Community Portal that leverages on new media to allow residents to interact via the Internet.

Beyond social activities and interactions, the Forum supports expanding the scope for residents to be involved in decision-making on matters affecting their immediate neighbourhood. This will nurture community ownership and allow residents' needs to be better met.

The Forum recommends that RCs work within resource constraints to build up their capability to reach out to residents more effectively for consultation and feedback. Forum member Dr Lim Wee Kiak will conduct a pilot project in Sembawang GRC, to give more room for residents to make collective decisions through the RCs.

## Thrust 6: Encourage the Volunteer

Rooting voluntary activities within HDB estates will make these activities more relevant to local needs and resonate better with the residents. Mobilising residents to help their needy neighbours can serve as a meaningful platform for community building, and will generate greater awareness of social work. In any case, residents are often in the best position to help their own neighbours, especially those who do not have family support to rely on.

The Forum supports having more VWOs establish themselves physically within the housing estates. We note that one critical factor is how well grassroots organisations and the Voluntary Welfare Organisations work together; there are several existing and successful programmes which demonstrate the value that such partnerships can bring.

## Conclusion

The Forum's vision for the HDB community is one where residents do not just own their own homes, but also share a collective ownership of the entire community. There is a sense of pride in belonging to a distinctive community. Neighbours are comfortable with one another and watch out for those who need more help.

Various agencies have begun to put in place action plans or reviews to implement the recommendations that have been raised. More importantly, the Forum is confident that HDB residents are passionate about their community, and are ready to make this vision a reality.



## SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS BY THE FORUM ON HDB HEARTWARE

Forum Recommendation	Status
<b>Enrich the Town</b>	
Launch dedicated programmes for each Town to preserve its own heritage and history.	HDB will work with NHB to first develop a pilot programme at a selected Town. It may also involve schools and RCs. The programme will be extended to more Towns if successful.
Build new wet markets and hawker centres in selected estates where they are assessed to be commercially viable on their own.	HDB will pilot a private-built and operated wet market/ hawker centre at Sengkang Town Centre.
Build more Community Clubs (CCs) in Town Centres, within shopping and entertainment buildings and near transportation hubs.	PA and URA will work together on this.
For new and redeveloped Town Centres, to plan for a “Civic district” with community facilities (eg. CCs and library) and offices of government agencies (e.g. CPF, HDB, Town Councils).	HDB and other agencies will incorporate this concept when planning new HDB Town Centres or redeveloping existing ones.
<b>Enhance the Precinct</b>	
To have greater resident consultation in both precinct and flat upgrading. There should also be more flexibility in the provision of improvement facilities and amenities to meet residents’ needs.	HDB will review how to incorporate these points for future precinct and flat upgrading, including the possibility of developing new upgrading programmes.  HDB will also start consultation of SERS residents regarding the precinct facilities at their replacement site.
Expand the menu of items funded by the Community Improvement Projects Committee (CIPC) to better meet residents’ needs.	CIPC will add 10 new items into the funding menu. These new items include community hall, community plaza and closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs).
<b>Involve the Schools</b>	
Share more facilities between the school and the surrounding community.	The Steering Committee for Collaboration between Schools & Community has been formed to establish the principles and framework for such facility sharing. There will be a pilot project involving Tampines Primary and Secondary Schools which have been selected to undergo Programme for Rebuilding & Improving Existing School (PRIME) by MOE.

Forum Recommendation	Status
<b>Support the Family</b>	
Improve chances of success in HDB sales exercises, for newly-weds wanting to stay near their parents.	HDB is refining the priority schemes for flat allocation. More details will be released shortly.
Introduce a family season parking scheme for HDB car parks, to facilitate children visiting their parents.	HDB will offer 50% off the second season parking ticket, to facilitate residents who visit their family members regularly.
Relax criteria for Joint Selection Scheme for SERS Replacement Flats, so that more neighbours with good relations can have the opportunity to stay close to one another at the replacement site.	HDB has changed the Scheme to allow joint selection for any group of up to 6 SERS lessees who are offered replacement flats. Previously joint selection of flats is allowed only for neighbours on the same floor or related families, up to 4 households.
<b>Engage the Resident</b>	
Leverage more on IT to engage the resident.	MND is developing a Resident Community Portal to create a platform for residents to interact via features such as chat room, blog, forum discussion, photo gallery, calendar of events, podcast, vodcast, etc. The target is to launch the portal by December 2007.
RCs to enhance their capability to reach out to residents effectively for consultation and feedback.	PA will explore how to encourage RCs to develop more in this aspect.
Expand the scope for residents to be involved in decision-making on matters affecting their immediate neighbourhood.	Dr Lim Wee Kiak, MP for Sembawang GRC and Forum member, will conduct a pilot project to give more room for his residents to make collective decisions through the RCs.
<b>Encourage the Volunteer</b>	
More VWOs to establish themselves physically within the housing estates, and to work more closely with the grassroots organisations.	This recommendation is for grassroots leaders and VWO leaders to consider.

## INTRODUCTION



Each HDB precinct is planned and built with a mix of flat types to bring households of different incomes and social profiles together.

### ■ The Context

Our HDB estates are the melting pots of Singapore society, where Singaporeans of different races, backgrounds and age live together, interact and share common experiences. Strong, closely-knit HDB communities form the basis of a Singapore that is cohesive and inclusive.

Over the years, we have put in place various policies and measures to preserve HDB living as the common point of emotional reference that all Singaporeans can relate to. Each HDB precinct is planned and built with a mix of flat types to bring households of different incomes and social profiles together. We have the Ethnic Integration Policy in place so that each HDB block and neighbourhood has a balanced mix of different ethnic groups. Finally, our ongoing efforts in Lift Upgrading and in making our estates barrier-free help ensure that the elderly and the physically challenged are not prevented from being involved in community activities.

To foster the community spirit, we have built common spaces and facilities such as playgrounds and fitness corners to create the physical space for HDB residents to interact. Residents' Committees (RC) provide the "software" to engage residents and involve them in community-based activities.

### Why HDB Heartware, and why now?

These policies and measures have worked well. However, moving forward there will be major trends that will impact our social fabric.

**Globalisation.** First, people are becoming increasingly mobile in the globalised economy. More Singaporeans will be working overseas, sometimes for long stretches. At the same time, there will be foreign talents and new citizens among us, many of whom will stay in our HDB estates. Our HDB communities must be able to root Singaporeans to Singapore, while integrating new immigrants to their new home.

**Dual income family.** In the past, the housewives in the estate would create and maintain community ties among neighbours. Today, with more women working, there is a change in lifestyle and a consequential decline in the everyday interactions between neighbouring families.

**Ageing population.** We are also seeing a demographic shift in our population profile. There will be more elderly among us, who need to be meaningfully engaged in their own local communities.

**Increased expectations.** Finally, HDB residents are becoming increasingly educated and technology-savvy. They have higher expectations of their physical environment; they want their views and suggestions heard. For the youth, a wide array of activities compete for their free time, from blogging to Xbox. It will become increasingly challenging to draw their attention to the community and participate in it.

Given these trends, it is timely for us to rethink the measures that we can take to strengthen communities in our HDB estates. With a strong "heartware" in our HDB communities, we can remain cohesive as a people even as we face structural changes to our society. For this reason, the Forum on HDB Heartware was launched in Nov 2006 to solicit fresh views and new ideas from the public on how stronger communities can be built.

## ■ Forum Composition and Terms of Reference

The Forum was led by Ms Grace Fu, Minister of State for National Development, and comprises the following Members of Parliament: Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, Mr Charles Chong, Er Lee Bee Wah, Mdm Cynthia Phua, Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Mdm Ho Geok Choo, Mr Liang Eng Hwa, Dr Lim Wee Kiak, Mr Masagos Zulkifli Bin Masagos Mohamad, Ms Ellen Lee and Mr Lim Biow Chuan.

The Forum wished to explore with the public how a greater sense of belonging and closer neighbourly ties can be engendered in our HDB estates. Its terms of reference are:

- To understand the aspirations and needs of residents in HDB towns with regard to their community;
- To solicit ideas on how Government and residents can contribute to building the “heartware” of our communities in HDB towns, to foster greater rootedness, community ownership and mutual support amongst residents; and
- To recommend “hardware” and “software” strategies that can help to build strong, cohesive communities in HDB towns.

## ■ Consultation process

The public’s views on community bonding were sought through various channels such as Focus Group discussions, public dialogues, radio talk shows, and the Internet. A two-stage consultation process was adopted. In the first stage, five Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) of 20-30 participants each from different age groups were conducted, to brainstorm ideas. In the second stage, the Forum canvassed views from a larger representation of Singaporeans through seven Public Dialogues. Four of these were conducted in English, while three smaller dialogue sessions were conducted in Mandarin, Malay and Tamil respectively. Public feedback was also gathered online.

Over 1,000 Singaporeans from all walks of life came forth to have their say on how to foster strong HDB communities. Ideas ranged from providing more conducive precinct facilities for interaction, to giving residents more say in local community issues. While some suggestions received near-unanimous support, there were mixed responses for a good number of other ideas.

These wide-ranging views from the public reflect the complexities of community building. As the ideas raised span the boundaries of several ministries and statutory boards, a cross-agency panel<sup>1</sup> was established to discuss and follow up on the various suggestions.



## Findings

After 8 months of intense public consultation and deliberation, the Forum is now ready to share its findings on how to enhance heartware in our HDB estates. We have gleaned, from the public discussions, a comprehensive suite of proposals to address the different aspects of community building.

At the same time, we also recognise that community building is fundamentally a ground-up process and is most effective when the residents initiate and spearhead the effort. We cannot prescribe, through policy measures or construction of physical hardware, how residents interact with one another. We will nevertheless remove policy impediments should our pilot projects encounter any.

Among the success stories of community building that were cited, the key ingredients were invariably the dedication of residents, and the initiative of grassroots organisations and other local institutions such as schools and VWOs. Hence, besides recommending policies and “hardware” measures, the Forum will also highlight in its report some successful community building efforts initiated from the ground. It is hoped that these success stories can inspire other residents to explore and adopt similar strategies for their own neighbourhood.

<sup>1</sup> The ministries/agencies represented in this cross-agency panel are HDB, LTA, MCYS, MND, NEA, NParks, PA, SCDF and SPF.



# Forum on HDB Heartware<sup>OT</sup>

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership

Key Themes and Thrusts







For community ownership to work, there has to be commitment from residents to participate in the decision making process.

### ■ Key Themes

Forum participants discussed the state of “HDB heartware” along four major themes: community ownership, neighbourhood identity, community bonding and mutual support.

**Community ownership.** Many Forum participants want to have more say in matters concerning their neighbourhood, for instance, in the facilities to be built within their precinct and in other matters regarding the running of their estates. There was a sense that greater and more deliberate consultation by HDB and other agencies will nurture a stronger sense of belonging and responsibility amongst resident towards their immediate neighbourhood. This will allow us to move beyond home ownership to community ownership.

Participants did acknowledge that, realistically, gathering feedback and seeking consultation involved time and energy on the resident’s part. For community ownership to work, there has to be commitment from residents to participate in the decision making process. There was also a need for residents to accept that it was not possible to satisfy all the different views and opinions, no matter how rigorous the consultation process.

**Neighbourhood identity.** Many Forum participants wanted a HDB neighbourhood that they can identify with. They want something “special” about where they live to talk about with their fellow residents, and to proudly share with outsiders.

Physical features and landscapes can help to set one’s HDB neighbourhood apart from others. Beyond this, we should also help to foster a certain social buzz or vibrancy to give character to each HDB Town. We should also leverage on the heritage of the area to give residents a sense of its history.

**Community bonding.** There need to be more avenues for residents to get to know each other better; to inculcate a sense of closeness and familiarity. Participants suggested many ideas ranging from what more the Residents’ Committees can do,





to how schools can get involved in their community. There is a recognition that the challenge today lies in reaching out to different target groups in different ways, eg. youths, busy young working couples, and the elderly.

**Mutual support.** Participants recognise that there ought to be more mutual support at the local level, between residents. Families should be encouraged to live close together, in the same neighbourhood, for greater mutual care. Local voluntarism should be encouraged to provide assistance to those without family support.



## ■ Key Thrusts

To achieve the above outcomes, the Forum has developed six key thrusts to address the main components and stakeholders that make up the fabric of HDB living:

- **Enrich the Town.** We want to inject more character for the neighbourhood at the town level. We envisage a town with distinctive physical features, a vibrant town centre and a lively, dynamic community.
- **Enhance the Precinct.** At the precinct level, residents should be more engaged in the design of their physical environment. Correspondingly, there should be more options to customise the precinct environment to residents' needs. There is scope to leverage on the hardware to build the software in our heartlands.
- **Involve the Schools.** Many participants recognise that the schools are a key avenue to reach out to the youth and involve them in the community. We want to see greater collaboration between schools and the surrounding community.
- **Support the Family.** The family is the basic building block of society. Supporting family ties will in turn strengthen the community.
- **Engage the Resident.** For the individual resident, greater space should be afforded for him to have a say in his own neighbourhood. He should be more engaged to contribute actively as a member of the community.
- **Encourage the Volunteer.** We need to kindle a spirit of voluntarism and mutual support within the neighbourhood. Residents should share a commitment to support the more needy among them and make the HDB estate a more caring place.

The following chapters will outline the specific recommendations of the Forum for these 6 key thrusts.





# Forum on HDB Heartware

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership

Thrust 1: Enrich the Town



There is a buzz about the neighbourhoods, and you would know that you have arrived at the Town because there is a certain character about the place.

It is appropriate to inject a sense of local identity at the level of the Town. There is enough scope and scale within a HDB Town to build and sustain a distinctive character for the place. Today, many residents already identify well with the Town that they live in. Nevertheless, many Forum participants have expressed the desire for even greater distinctiveness.

The Forum's vision of a Town is a place that moves to its own rhythm. The Town Centre is a dynamic, lively place that the young and old enjoy. There is a buzz about the neighbourhoods, and you would know that you have arrived at the Town because there is a certain character about the place.

## ■ Recommendation 1: Dedicated programmes to preserve town heritage

There should be dedicated programmes for each Town to preserve its own heritage and history. At the physical level, these can range from introducing simple infrastructure like road signs and historical write-ups at heritage corners, to architectural features in flats and other buildings. But for the town's history to be meaningfully appreciated, such efforts must be accompanied by the generation of awareness and interest among the residents through events and publicity material. Through the schools, the neighbourhood's youth can also be exposed more to the local history.

Such a programme will require joint effort by HDB, the local school leaders and grassroots leaders. Advice from the National Heritage Board (NHB) can also be sought.

HDB is following up on this suggestion and will work with NHB to first develop a pilot programme at a selected Town. If it is successful and enjoys residents' support, HDB will consider extending similar programmes to more Towns.



### ■ Recommendation 2: New wet markets and hawker centres

Many Forum participants have argued for wet markets and hawker centres to be retained but adapted to meet the changing lifestyle of Singaporeans. Such places can serve as the unofficial “social hub” of the neighbourhood. This is especially for the older folk and housewives who will frequent the markets, catch up with each other and share the latest neighbourhood news.

At the same time, we need to recognise the impact of changing lifestyle and demographic trends on our buying patterns. Some prefer supermarkets to wet markets. This is evident from the response of some younger Forum participants who indicated that they would rather shop in more convenient and comfortable supermarkets.

On balance, the Forum recommends that we resume building new wet markets and hawker centres in selected estates where they are assessed to be commercially viable on their own. These markets and hawker centres will be built by commercial operators on commercial terms. Such establishments will add to the character of the place, and encourage elderly residents to engage and socialise in the community.

HDB will pilot a standalone, naturally-ventilated wet market/ hawker centre, to be built and run by a private operator, in Sengkang Town Centre.

### ■ Recommendation 3: Better location of community facilities

Forum participants have given feedback that Community Clubs (CCs) have to be “re-invented” to be more appealing. In particular, many of the younger participants mentioned that they did not find CC activities particularly exciting.

The Forum is of the view that one key issue could be location. If youths are not coming to the CCs, then perhaps the CCs should be located where the youths are.

Hence, the Forum recommends for more CCs be built within the more “happening” locations in Town centres, in particular, within shopping and entertainment buildings and near transportation hubs like bus and MRT interchanges. This will allow the CCs to be better exposed to a natural flow of human traffic. It will give them greater accessibility and help them project a more “hip” image to attract a younger crowd.

Such CCs will be restricted in the type of activities they can run by virtue of their location. For example, there may not be sufficient space for a basketball court if the CCs were located in commercial buildings. Nevertheless, they can complement other CCs that are nested deep within housing estates by focussing on activities that appeal to a younger crowd.

One practical issue is how the cost of siting CCs in such prime locations can be lowered. There are existing URA guidelines that incentivise the integration of community facilities in private commercial development. URA will study how to raise awareness of such existing incentives, and match-make suitable community facilities with commercial developers. URA will also study the scope for further measures to encourage and incentivise developers of shopping malls in Town Centres to rent space to CCs or other civic institutions. The People’s Association is also actively studying these ideas.

Expanding the idea beyond CCs, the Forum further recommends that, when building new HDB Town Centres or redeveloping existing ones, HDB and other agencies should plan deliberately to create a “Town Plaza” where there is a “civic district”. This concept is similar to the existing Woodlands Civic Centre which houses the HDB Branch Office, the CPF Board and the National Library, among others. This will build on the current practice, where URA will work with relevant agencies to encourage them to jointly develop and cost-share a multi-user facility to be typically sited at a prime location. Residents will be able to go to this “civic district” for community activities, to use facilities such as the library or carry out transactions with agency offices (eg. CPF, Town Council, HDB etc).





# Forum on HDB Heartware<sup>OF</sup>

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership

Thrust 2: Enhance the Precinct







The Forum’s vision of a precinct is a physical environment that brings residents together, a place where residents can call “their own”.

While we want the HDB resident to identify with his Town, it is at the precinct level that he is most likely to know and to bond with his fellow residents. The flat and the precinct constitute the resident’s immediate living environment. There is scope to leverage on the precinct hardware to build the software of the neighbourhood.

The Forum’s vision of a precinct is a physical environment that brings residents together, a place where residents can call “their own”.



### ■ Recommendation 1: More consultative, customised approach to precinct and flat enhancement

At the Forum discussions, it was recognised that different residents have different needs: the youths need space for sports and other physical activities, families need play areas for their young kids, and senior citizens would like cosy corners in the neighbourhood to gather and chit-chat.

Many participants also commented on the duplication of precinct facilities. There was a sense that there can be better coordination in providing facilities for neighbouring precincts so that they complement, rather than duplicate, one another. For example, instead of two playgrounds, two neighbouring precincts can share one playground plus a different facility that complements the playground, say, a fitness corner. This will allow the residents to benefit from a greater variety of amenities with the same space and resources.

The key point that emerged from the discussions was that there should be more flexibility and greater resident consultation in the design of the precinct. Precincts should not be done in a “cookie-cutter” style; facilities that are provided should better reflect the needs and views of the residents themselves<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Participants however did acknowledge that there were existing channels to air their preferences; it was both a matter of more engagement from the various agencies, as well as more participation from the residents.



In addition, there should also be more flexibility in flat upgrading. Instead of a “one-size-fits-all” approach, residents should have flexibility to opt out of certain features of the upgrading programme for their flats. This recognises that some residents may have already carried out renovation works on their own for their flats.

Hence, the Forum recommends that HDB reviews its approach to both precinct and flat upgrading, with a view to strengthening the mechanism for engaging residents so as to better meet their needs. There should be more flexibility in the provision of flat improvement works and precinct facilities. These facilities should be planned with an overview of 2-3 precincts to allow more optimal utilisation and to avoid duplication.

The Forum also recommends that HDB introduce greater consultation for SERS (Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme) lessees on the precinct facilities at their replacement site. This will allow them to decide on the precinct facilities and shape their immediate neighbourhood.



## ■ Recommendation 2: Expansion of CIPC-funded items

In line with the above intentions, the Forum also recommends expanding the menu of items funded by the Community Improvement Projects Committee (CIPC)<sup>3</sup>.

The CIPC has reviewed its menu of items for funding based on requests received from grassroots organisations and residents. It has decided to add 10 new items into the menu. The 10 items are as follows: provisions of community garden paraphernalia, football field, bird hangers/pergola, stage, amphitheatre, community hall, community plaza, integrated family playgrounds, closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs), and lift landing improvements.

The greater variety of CIPC projects will allow the HDB estates to better cater to the diverse needs of its residents.



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<sup>3</sup> The CIPC provides funding support for infrastructural and recreational facilities, as well as general amenities in HDB estates, for the benefit of the residents.



# Forum on HDB Heartware<sup>07</sup>

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership

Thrust 3: Involve the Schools





The Forum's vision is for the school, its activities and its facilities to become another "social landmark" for the community to come together.

The school is an important part of the neighbourhood's social fabric. It is where our youth spend most of their time and energy.

The Forum's vision is for the school, its activities and its facilities to become another "social landmark" for the community to come together. The resident youth can get involved in community activities through the schools. This will inject greater vibrancy and continuity to community building.

### **Where we are today**

Many Forum participants, especially teachers and students, spoke enthusiastically about how schools can be more involved in the local community. Suggestions include greater recognition of such efforts (for both teachers and students). For instance, there should be more inclusion of grassroots and community work within the CCA framework. Also, more school students and teachers could be involved as grassroots members so that they would be exposed to grassroots activities.

The Forum notes that there are already several initiatives to encourage schools to be closely linked with the community. MOE's Community Involvement Programme (CIP) has been the main vehicle to structure students' involvement in the community. The People's Association will continue to increase the number of Service Learning Clubs in schools. There is also Project SPHERE (Students, Singapore Pools & HDB Enriching and Reaching out to the Elderly), a special programme through which school students reach out to support and enrich the lives of low-income elderly by adopting a block of rental flats.

The Forum supports these initiatives, and is of the view that school-community interaction can and should be further improved. The key, we feel, is to nurture closer ties between school leaders and community leaders, so that collaboration can be put higher on their priority list and they will also be more aware of the opportunities for "win-win" collaborations.

To this end, the Forum wishes to make a recommendation on resource sharing and to highlight a few successful partnerships that were initiated from the ground up.



### ■ Recommendation: More facility-sharing

The Forum recommends for greater sharing of facilities between the school and the surrounding community. This will help to strengthen the mutual bond. In addition, land constraints in Singapore mean that sharing rather than duplicating facilities is both practical and cost efficient.

The Steering Committee for Collaboration between Schools & Community has been established to look into the principles and framework for such facility sharing. Ms Grace Fu (Minister of State for National Development) and Mr Masagos Zulkifli (Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education) are the Project Advisors. The Committee intends to use Tampines Primary School and Tampines Secondary School as a pilot project to introduce school physical layout and design that allow for more facility sharing<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> These two schools are being scheduled for improvement works under MOE's school rebuilding/improvement programme.

### Successful partnership 1: Bedok South Secondary School & Siglap Community Club

One key feature of Bedok South's partnership with the Siglap Community Club is that it has been very much driven by the students themselves. Although the partnership started with the Club requesting for student assistance with its computer literacy programme for the elderly, the students subsequently took the initiative to involve themselves more in the Club's activities.

Also noteworthy is the all-rounded nature of the students' participation. Students sat in organising committees for community events, and contributed to both the planning and the execution. More recently, some students were involved in the redesign of some of the Club's amenities, such as the children's playground, as part of their Secondary 4 Project Work.

What contributed to this close relationship between school and club? First of all, there is a strong belief among the school leadership in the value of such partnerships. Secondly, school personnel are involved at all levels with grassroots activities; the result is a school that is well-networked to the community. A school liaison officer updates and links students to community events, and staff members work directly with grassroots organisations. The Principal is an active member of various grassroots committees, while a member of the School's Advisory Committee also holds a key position in a local grassroots organisation. Even the Parents Support Group is a link for the school to the grassroots. Such active and direct participation by school personnel and stakeholders allow the school to be involved in the community in a deep and sustained manner.





Finally, the school adopts a very deliberate and comprehensive approach to sustain and grow the collaboration with the community. School programmes are consciously planned to incorporate the element of community involvement. Project Work, for example, is being deliberately designed to support students' service learning within the community.

The Club and the local community have clearly benefited from the active participation of Bedok South's staff and students. Indeed, from its experience with Bedok South, the Siglap Community Club Management has now become more aware of how to engage other schools meaningfully. The school believes that it too has reaped benefits. Students were able to acquire life skills and learnt to work with different people. They also became more aware of community and societal issues. The school also found that its profile within the neighbourhood has been enhanced, with more parents and residents wanting to find out more about the school.

## Successful partnership 2: NYJC's mural project

Nanyang Junior College (NYJC) in Dec 2006 embarked on a community project to add colour, literally, to the neighbourhood by painting murals on 30 buildings in Braddell Heights estate. This project was conceived by students in the JC's Art Elective Programme (AEP) who wanted to do something for the community while commemorating the college's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It had the support of the CCC and the Marine Parade Town Council, as well as NTUC Fairprice who sponsored the paints.

The project helped beautify the environment and generated significant goodwill within the neighbourhood. Feedback from residents showed that they were genuinely appreciative of the students' effort; in fact, several residents took the trouble to buy food for the students while they painted. Teachers and students, in turn, found the experience to be a satisfying and meaningful one.

Hence, by sharing a special school event (30<sup>th</sup> anniversary) with the community and by leveraging on its area of strength in the arts, NYJC successfully brought its students and staff closer to the residents.







# Forum on HDB Heartware<sup>SM</sup>

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership.

Thrust 4: Support the Family







The Forum's vision for the family is one in which kinship ties will root well-travelled citizens to Singapore.

The strength of the family unit is the pillar of our society. The family will also be the critical first layer of support for our elderly, not just in terms of financial support, but also social and emotional engagement

The Forum's vision for the family is one in which kinship ties will root well-travelled citizens to Singapore. Family life will bind individuals to the larger local community.

Forum participants generally agree on the importance of a strong family unit, and many want to see more measures to help parents and married children live close together within the same estate. Based on this feedback, the Forum has proposed a set of policy changes to better support the family unit within the community.



## Recommendation 1: Enhance priority schemes for new flats

Today, a first-timer couple who applies for a new flat near their parents under the Married Child Priority Scheme (MCPS) can enjoy up to 4 times the success rate in the balloting process under HDB's sales exercises, compared to regular public applicants.

The current situation is such that the demand for new flats in mature estates is very high. As such first-timers and MCPS applicants may not be successful in their flat applications despite their enhanced chances. In recognition of the more pressing need among newly weds to buy a HDB flat so that they can settle down and start a family, the Forum recommends that HDB refine the existing priority allocation framework for first-timers and MCPS applicants to further improve their chances of success under HDB's sales exercises. The existing framework can also be improved to give more priority to such applicants who have been repeatedly unsuccessful in HDB's sales exercises. HDB will announce details of these refinements shortly.

The Forum acknowledges that changing the priority framework for the allocation of new HDB flats is a zero-sum game, in the sense that setting aside more new flats for some groups would mean a smaller supply available for the other groups. While the priority schemes can help to improve the chances of success for the target groups,

they cannot guarantee success for first-timers or MCPS applicants given the limited supply of new HDB flats. The Forum notes that such households can also pursue the option of buying resale HDB flats, where the first-timers are eligible for a CPF Housing Grant of \$30,000, with a higher tier grant of \$40,000 to encourage couples to live with or near their parents.

## ■ Recommendation 2: Family season parking ticket

The Forum recognises that not all married children will be able to stay near their elderly parents, the MCPS notwithstanding. For those who drive regularly to visit family, the Forum recommends a “family-friendly” car-parking arrangement to facilitate their visits.

In response to this recommendation, HDB will introduce a family season parking scheme for its HDB carparks. Under this scheme, HDB will offer the second season parking ticket at a 50% discount, to facilitate residents who visit their family members on a regular basis.

### ■ Recommendation 3: Joint selection for SERS replacement flats

Currently, HDB has a Joint Selection Scheme for SERS lessees, which allows joint selection of replacement flats for neighbours on the same floor or related families, up to 4 households. This Scheme helps to preserve familial and neighbourly ties even as we redevelop our estates.

To allow more neighbours with good relations to have an opportunity to stay close to one another at the replacement site, the Forum proposes to relax the existing criteria for the Joint Selection Scheme. HDB has looked into this, and will henceforth allow joint selection of replacement flats, for any group of up to 6 SERS lessees who are offered replacement flats at the same site.





# Forum on HDB Heartware

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership

Thrust 5: Engage the Resident



The Forum's vision is for HDB residents to be positively and actively engaged in their local community.

The Forum's vision is for HDB residents to be positively and actively engaged in their local community. There should be a vibrant community life in the neighbourhood. Residents are actively involved in contributing ideas and views on how their precincts can be enhanced, because they feel a sense of community ownership and responsibility.

## ■ A vibrant community life

Today, the network of Residents' Committees (RCs), the Community Clubs and other Grassroots Organisations (GROs) offer a menu of different events and activities to reach out to residents of different demographic groups. The RCs, in particular, have played a key role in developing a sense of community within the precinct, through social activities like block parties and festive celebrations.

Forum participants acknowledged the ongoing work by the RCs in promoting community activities. Several felt that there was scope to do more. They suggested that RCs make deliberate effort to attract the youth, and invest in greater publicity for their activities. They also suggested that the RCs to reach out more to the new residents in the neighbourhood.

The Forum feels that these are ideas worth pursuing. However, when asking RCs to do more, we should recognise that members of RCs are volunteers, many of whom have full-time jobs. The RCs work with limited time and resources to implement their programmes and activities; RC members are volunteers who are already serving their community to their best efforts. Moreover, different RC zones have different resident demographics and hence different needs. Ultimately the residents themselves need to give their RCs in their outreach.

The Forum would like to highlight what a few RCs are already doing in their zones in terms of reaching out to youths, welcoming new residents and generating publicity. Other RCs may wish to consider whether these approaches are applicable in their own zones.

### Youth outreach: nurturing an active "Young RC club"

Jurong Central Zone 'B' RC has an active Young RC Club with about 20 members. This Club comprises primary school to junior college (JC) students, and it actively helps out in conducting local tours and major events organised by the RC such as Racial Harmony Day, Residents' Nite and Lantern Festival Celebration. They also accompany RC members on house visits to get to know the residents.

Another strategy adopted by the RC in youth engagement is to work closely with the neighbouring Jurong JC (JJC) to encourage its students to be involved in RC community events. For instance, 20 JJC students contributed to the RC's Racial Harmony Day 2006 with an exhibition booth.



### Outreach to new residents: welcome party

Toa Payoh Central Zone 1 RC has started conducting house visits to new residents. In Jun 07, the RC invited these residents to a “Welcome Party cum RC Open House”, for them to know more about the RC and meet fellow residents.

The new residents generally appreciate the gesture. Some have even volunteered to perform at RC events.

### Generating publicity: Exploiting IT

Sembawang Zone ‘E’ RC has a simple but effective approach to ensuring that its activities are well-publicised. It keeps an electronic database of the names and contacts of residents who have attended its past activities or courses. These residents will get to know about upcoming RC events through emails.

A dedicated team of RC members is in charge of maintaining and updating the database. The RC also makes effort to design its own event posters so that they can better catch the attention of residents.

## Recommendation: Resident community portal

The approach of Sembawang Zone ‘E’ RC demonstrates the effectiveness of using modern Internet communications to reach out to today’s residents who are more educated and IT-savvy. The Forum recommends for more to be done in this area, to create web-based platforms for resident interaction, and to allow Government to engage and consult residents more.

The Ministry of National Development has commenced the development of a Resident Community Portal that leverage on new media for residents to interact via the Internet. The portal will provide features such as chat room, blog, forum discussion, photo gallery, calendar of events, podcast, vodcast, etc. The target is to launch the portal by Dec 07.



## ■ Residents engaged in decision-making

Today's HDB residents are more educated and vocal; they have views and ideas about their estate that they want heard. During the public dialogues, participants expressed a strong desire for the Government to engage them more frequently and actively, on local community matters. However, there was also a concern as to how differing views among residents could be resolved. It was important for individual residents to understand that their suggestions may not be adopted all the time.

The Forum supports expanding the scope for residents to be involved in decision making on matters affecting their immediate neighbourhood. This will nurture community ownership and allow residents' needs to be better met. As mentioned under "Thrust 2: Enhance the Precinct", the Forum is recommending that HDB review its precinct and flat upgrading programmes to allow for more resident consultation and greater flexibility in the provision of upgrading works and facilities.

There can also be other areas concerning their precinct where residents should have more say and choice, for instance, in estate maintenance matters and in the use of common areas. One key consideration is how our RCs can mobilise residents effectively for decision-making, over and above what they already are doing. For consultation work to be effective and transparent, there has to be rigorous processes in place for polling, consensus-building etc. This will be an additional burden for the RCs to undertake.

The Forum recommends that RCs should work within their resource constraints to build up their capability to reach out to residents effectively for consultation and feedback. PA will explore how to encourage RCs to develop more in this aspect.

In terms of expanding the scope for decision-making, Forum member and MP for Sembawang GRC Dr Lim Wee Kiak will conduct a pilot project in Sembawang GRC, to give more room for residents to make collective decisions through the RCs. Among other things, residents will be engaged in the development of a 5-year "precinct plan", and they will also be polled on their preferences regarding estate maintenance issues such as estate cleaning frequency.





# Forum on HDB Heartware<sup>07</sup>

Beyond Home Ownership to Community Ownership

Thrust 6: Encourage the Volunteer







The Forum’s vision is for a caring estate in which residents look after those who need more support, both in financial and emotional terms.

A culture of voluntarism strengthens social cohesion, and creates another source of support for those among us who need help, particularly the elderly and the low-income.

There is also scope to bring voluntarism closer to home for the HDB resident, and to root more voluntary activities within the estates. Mobilising residents to help their needy neighbours can serve as a meaningful platform for community building. It will generate greater awareness of social work by giving it local context and resonance. Finally, because of proximity and familiarity, residents are in good position to assist their neighbours.

Hence, the Forum’s vision is for a caring estate in which residents look after those who need more support, both in financial and emotional terms. There are avenues in place for residents to be aware of who needs help, and to organise themselves to reach out effectively to these needy households.

One key enabler to achieving this vision is closer communication and collaboration between grassroots organisations and the VWOs. The former are the bridge to the residents, while the latter bring with them the expertise and organisation to care for the needy.





### ■ More VWOs and other support organisations within housing estates

The Forum supports having more VWOs establish themselves physically within the housing estates. They can then work more closely with the grassroots organisations to mobilise residents to support their social work. Today, HDB has provisions to facilitate specific VWOs siting themselves in HDB blocks (eg. void decks) to provide services to the needy residents. For example, there are VWOs sited within the rental flat blocks to manage the Seniors' Activities' Centre.

One specific suggestion raised at Forum discussions was to make available HDB shopfronts at concessionary rent to VWOs and other organisations to conduct businesses to sustain themselves financially. The Forum discussed this at length with the various agencies involved, and found that there were serious issues concerning the proper regulation of such operations and the need for fairness to other businesses that pay for their shopfronts at standard rates. On balance, the Forum does not recommend having such a scheme in place. We also note that there are already existing schemes under MCYS to help VWOs and support organisations.

### ■ Successful partnerships

We strongly urge grassroots and VWO leaders to seek more “local” opportunities to collaborate on. The collaboration and synergy between the grassroots and VWOs are well-demonstrated in the following examples of existing successful partnerships between VWOs and grassroots:

### **‘Community Outreach Programme for the Elderly’ @ Tanjong Rhu**

Initiated in 1999, this is a collaboration between Tanjong Rhu RC and St Hilda’s Community Services Centre to organise social activities and provide health-related services for the needy and elderly. The health services include regular monitoring of those with poor health, and providing guidance on relevant government policies and the roles of different agencies. Together with the South East CDC and Changi General Hospital, the RC and the VWO also introduced a comprehensive health screening programme for needy, elderly residents.



### **‘Food From The Heart’ @ Geylang Serai**

Since 2004, the ‘Food From The Heart’ (FRTH) organisation has collaborated with Geylang Serai’s Balam RC to distribute bread and cakes to about 60 needy households on a weekly basis. This involves VWO volunteers and RC volunteers working hand-in-hand, as well as the Geylang Serai CCMC’s Culinary Cooking Club which prepares hot meals for these households.

### **‘Healthcare on the Move’ @ Southwest**

This collaboration was started in 2005 and involved Clementi CCC, South West CDC, Geylang Senior Citizens’ Health Care Centre Ltd and Toa Payoh Senior Citizens’ Health Care Centre Ltd. The programme provides free home-based healthcare services to about 40 needy households. The participating RCs identify the residents in need, and where necessary alert the neighbourhood nurses and/or doctors to provide requisite healthcare services to those residents who need them. The VWOs also train RC members to be befrienders to the families registered under the programme.



We are also grateful and very encouraged by the enthusiastic participation of Singaporeans from all walks of life in the Forum's public discussions.



The vision that Forum participants painted for the HDB community is a bold one. It is one where residents do not just own their own homes, but also share a collective ownership of the entire community. There is a sense of pride in belonging to a distinctive community that moves to its own "heartbeat". Neighbours are comfortable with one another and watch out for those who need more help.

Forum participants have thought deep and hard about the issues, and have given a wide-ranging suite of ideas and views. If the HDB community is a work of tapestry, then the individual threads must be the town, the precinct, the school, the family and the resident himself. In making its recommendations, the Forum on HDB Heartware has looked at all these threads to see how we can have an even more "closely-knit" HDB community that is resilient in a time of globalisation, changing demographics and lifestyles, as well as increasing expectations.

We are acutely aware that there is no silver bullet or magic formula to build the HDB Heartware. While the Forum believes that the ideas it has gleaned from its public consultation will go some way to building the HDB community, we also know that this is only an ongoing process, in which the Forum's work is but one chapter of.

The Forum is happy to note that the various agencies have already begun to put in place action plans or reviews to implement the recommendations that have been raised. As some of these recommendations are new and untested, we expect a certain degree of "messiness", experimentation and even inconvenience to some residents in the course of implementing them. However, such trade-offs are to be expected as we move away from the "uniform" HDB environment and try out new initiatives to instil greater neighbourhood distinctiveness and encourage a greater sense of ownership.

We are also grateful and very encouraged by the enthusiastic participation of Singaporeans from all walks of life in the Forum's public discussions, without which this report could not be possible. While the Government can encourage and support the process through policies and measures, the key to successful community building lies ultimately in our residents – whether they are ready to take ownership of their own community, and to commit to caring and supporting their fellow residents. In this light, the Forum is extremely heartened by the response of participants, which amply demonstrates the keen interest among residents to make the Forum's vision a reality.



