



CASE STUDY

Singapore | Tanjong Pagar

Continuing Life After Hours

Fifteen years ago, Tanjong Pagar was mainly an office district, quiet at night and over weekends. To liven up the area, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) enhanced the mix of uses in the area to introduce more diverse people and activities.

The Challenge

Tanjong Pagar is a historic neighbourhood located in the central area of Singapore. A key precinct in the city's central business district, it has a large high-rise office cluster.

Its modern form took shape after Singapore gained independence in 1965, when the new government kickstarted urban renewal in the area by acquiring old shophouses for redevelopment. A major commercial and residential precinct from the 1900s, it was mostly filled with two- to three-storey shophouses that doubled up as living quarters for migrant workers in the upper floors and commercial spaces on the ground floor. However, by the early 1960s, the shophouses became dilapidated and overcrowded, and many were demolished to make way for a comprehensive public housing precinct.

Some of the demolished shophouses came to be replaced by high-rise commercial developments. Land parcels were also sold to private developers. Starting from 1989, shophouses that remained were gazetted for conservation and allowed for commercial use, which gave them a new lease of life. Hence these conserved shophouses and other historic buildings also established the area's identity as a heritage district.

By the 2000s, the precinct's unique urban scape, which continues till today, was formed. High-rise modern buildings stand alongside rows of orange-roofed conserved shophouses. But with a lack of post-work activities and just a small number of residents living in the precinct in self-contained estates, overall Tanjong Pagar remained quiet at night and over weekends.



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The empty space shown here was originally set aside for a six-storey development.





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The Solution

To rejuvenate the precinct, the URA implemented a range of policies in the 2000s that enhanced non-commercial uses in the area to encourage more activity outside working hours.

One measure was to boost the hotel industry. In the mid-2000s, the URA released more land for sale, specifically for hotel developments. This resulted in three mid- to high-end hotels being built, adding to the existing two large hotels—M Hotel and Amara Hotel—which were built in the 1980s to cater to business travellers. Collectively, the new hotels added over 900 rooms.

A sizeable hotel cluster was formed and this helped draw tourists to Tanjong Pagar. The hotels also introduced more dining and retail options, and coupled with the resurgence of new food and beverage concepts in the conserved shophouses, helped attract patrons to the area. Most recently, another 222-room luxury hotel, Sofitel, also opened at the Tanjong Pagar Centre (TPC), an integrated mixed-use development. Well connected to public transportation via a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) station, the development's sizeable retail and residential components also spurred more human traffic.

Another measure that boosted vibrancy in the area beyond office hours was to increase

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the live-in population. Before 2000, most of the area's housing were clustered at Tanjong Pagar Plaza, a mixed-use, multi-storey complex that housed key amenities such as a childcare centre, wet market, hawker centre, post office and eateries for six high-rise blocks of public housing residents.

Then, the government sold three residential sites for high-rise residential developments—these became the 46-storey ICON (2007), 62-storey Altez (2014) and 71-storey Skysuites@ Anson (2014), which altogether added over 1,200 private housing units. Even the owners of two office buildings—Lumiere and Eon Shenton—have converted them to residential developments to add 300 more units to the precinct. The public housing population also increased with the completion of Pinnacle@ Duxton, a 50-storey, 1,800-unit public housing development that replaced two older public housing blocks. The proximity of homes to offices became a boon for residents, who can now easily walk to work.

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- 01 Tanjong Pagar is well-known for the South Korean restaurants that have sprung up among the conserved shophouses.
- 02 The local market at Tanjong Pagar Plaza is popular with both residents and office workers.
- 03 Tanjong Pagar Centre's basement atrium seamlessly connects from the MRT to the building's shopping mall.



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At the same time, shared spaces and facilities for the community to enjoy were also added. For example, the developer for TPC built an open space atop the MRT station at street level, known as the Urban Park. Spanning 13,900 m², the park has become a green focal point and also offers a 2,970 m² civic and events space where the community, from residents to office workers, could gather for fitness workouts, performances and other events. This Urban Park will merge with a green belt that the URA has planned for the area, which will link Tanjong Pagar to surrounding parks like Duxton Plain and Pearl's Hill. This will add even more greenery and public spaces for the community's enjoyment.

- 01 The newest public housing development in the central business district, the award-winning Pinnacle@Duxton, is an impressive sight to behold.
- 02 Tanjong Pagar's skyline, comprising public housing, new hotels and private residences, as seen from Duxton Plain Park.
- 03 The Urban Park at TPC bustles with vibrant activities even at night.



“The planning measures to enhance the mix of uses ... generated round-the-clock activities at shared spaces and amenities throughout the area.”





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The Outcome

Tanjong Pagar today attracts an interesting variety of people, thanks to the planning measures to enhance the mix of uses. Tourists and business travellers are drawn by the sizeable hotel cluster. Dining and retail options that have sprung up alongside these hotels have also introduced dynamic activities. For instance, the Japanese food outlets at Orchid Hotel attract both tourists and locals, who sometimes form snaking queues to dine in.

The increased residential population, coupled with the provision of public spaces, has also generated round-the-clock activities at shared spaces and amenities throughout the area, where people mingle and enjoy themselves. Three additional office sites that were recently built also added 13.9 ha of premium office space, inviting even more footfall to the precinct daily.

The emergence of new developments and intensified mixed uses in the district have shaped its distinct skyline and character. Modern skyscrapers juxtapose with rows of conserved shophouses, while visitors and locals share parks and urban spaces. This interesting urban landscape, together with the diverse uses that continuously generates life and activity, has given Tanjong Pagar an edge as an attractive and inclusive mixed-use district, beyond its commercial importance. ◉

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