

PLANNING FOR TOURISM: CREATING A VIBRANT SINGAPORE

A common misconception is that tourism policy primarily focuses on promotion and marketing campaigns. While these activities are essential, another important but sometimes overlooked aspect is how creative city planning can support tourism promotion, and consequently, how the needs and goals of tourism policy can influence development and planning decisions.

In Singapore, tourism has shaped the built environment, influenced conservation and heritage policies, and enhanced quality of life for Singapore's residents. The industry has also helped to anchor Singapore's global reputation and attractiveness as a place to conduct business, study and live.

This book will examine how Singapore's tourism strategies and city planning support each other. It should be noted that even though the Singapore Tourism Board does not typically own the tourism assets in Singapore, it nonetheless plays an integral part in aligning government agencies, private firms and civil society to Singapore's long-term tourism plans.

"No one ever dreamed tiny Singapore could accommodate millions of tourists. Yet, we made it happen.

We did not build castles in the sky. Based on calibrated decisions, made hand in hand with the urban planners with inputs from private sector developers, we built what we needed. The pages of this book share how it all happened."

Pamelia Lee, Former Senior Consultant to the Singapore Tourism Board

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PLANNING FOR TOURISM: CREATING A VIBRANT SINGAPORE

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SINGAPORE

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Set up in 2008 by the Ministry of National Development and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) has as its mission “to distil, create and share knowledge on liveable and sustainable cities”. CLC’s work spans three main areas— Research, Capability Development and Knowledge Platforms. Through these activities, CLC hopes to provide urban leaders and practitioners with the knowledge and support needed to make our cities better. www.clc.gov.sg

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Cover photo:
The Merlion at the mouth of the Singapore River, with the Fullerton Hotel and the Central Business District in the background. Photo courtesy of Redbean De Pte Ltd.

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FOREWORD

In the early 1960s, Singapore was ill-prepared to tap the tourism sector for economic growth. We had few tourism offerings and both our tourism infrastructure and industry were under-developed. With growing prospects arising from introduction of mass commercial aviation and growing curiosity in an exotic region, the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (STPB) was formed in 1964 to realise tourism's economic promise.

Working together with like-minded stakeholders in government and industry, tourism in Singapore began to take shape with more products and services to entice the visitor. In 1997, the STPB was renamed the Singapore Tourism Board, to better reflect the larger mandate that had by then moved beyond marketing and promotions, to encompass other functions such as sectoral planning, development, and regulation.

50 years after embarking on its tourism journey, Singapore is a leading tourist destination with a clutch of global accolades to its name. What it offers the visitor today—vibrancy and diversity in food, culture, shopping, events and entertainment—makes for not just a top leisure destination, but a leading international business events city.

It has certainly been an exhilarating 50 years for Singapore tourism, with many high points and not without its fair share of tribulations. It is therefore timely to conduct a retrospective, and offer a deeper and more insightful study of its development over the years. It is also a story worth telling and sharing.

Planning for Tourism: Creating a Vibrant Singapore is a study into these five eventful but fulfilling decades. Starting with an elaboration of the tourism landscape in the 1960s, it provides a comprehensive account of the challenges faced by a struggling nation. It takes readers through land use planning, development of tourism infrastructure, expanding and enhancing tourist attractions, up till the recent transformation of Singapore into a vibrant global city. It recounts challenges faced at each phase of growth and how key policies and decisions for sound urban and development planning have helped to provide a much needed boost to tourism development.

We hope you will find this account of Singapore's tourism journey both informative and inspiring. Thanks to the visionary leadership and strategic pragmatism of Singapore's tourism pioneers, the foundation was set for us to arrive at where we are today.

But the journey continues. We invite you to join us as we move towards a Singapore that is not just a compelling destination for tourists, but also one that Singaporeans can proudly call home.

I would also like to thank the Centre for Liveable Cities team working on this as they have accomplished something quite special. Thank you.

Lionel Yeo
Chief Executive Officer
Singapore Tourism Board

PREFACE

The Centre for Liveable Cities' (CLC) research in urban systems tries to unpack the systematic components that make up the city of Singapore, capturing knowledge not only within each of these systems, but also the threads that link these systems and how they make sense as a whole. The studies are scoped to venture deep into the key domain areas the CLC has identified under the CLC Liveability Framework, in attempting to answer two key questions: how Singapore has transformed itself to a highly liveable city within the last four to five decades, and how Singapore can build on our urban development experience to create knowledge and urban solutions for current and future challenges relevant to Singapore and other cities through applied research. *Planning for Tourism: Creating a Vibrant Singapore* is the latest publication from the Urban Systems Studies (USS) series.

The research process involves close and rigorous engagement of the CLC with our stakeholder agencies, and oral history interviews with Singapore's urban pioneers and leaders to gain insights into development processes and distil tacit knowledge that has been gleaned from planning and implementation, as well as governance of Singapore. As a body of knowledge, the Urban Systems Studies, which cover aspects such as water, transport, housing, industrial infrastructure and sustainable environment, reveal not only the visible outcomes of Singapore's development, but the complex support structures of our urban achievements.

CLC would like to thank the Singapore Tourism Board and all those who have contributed their knowledge, expertise and time to make this publication possible. I wish you an enjoyable read.

Khoo Teng Chye
Executive Director
Centre for Liveable Cities

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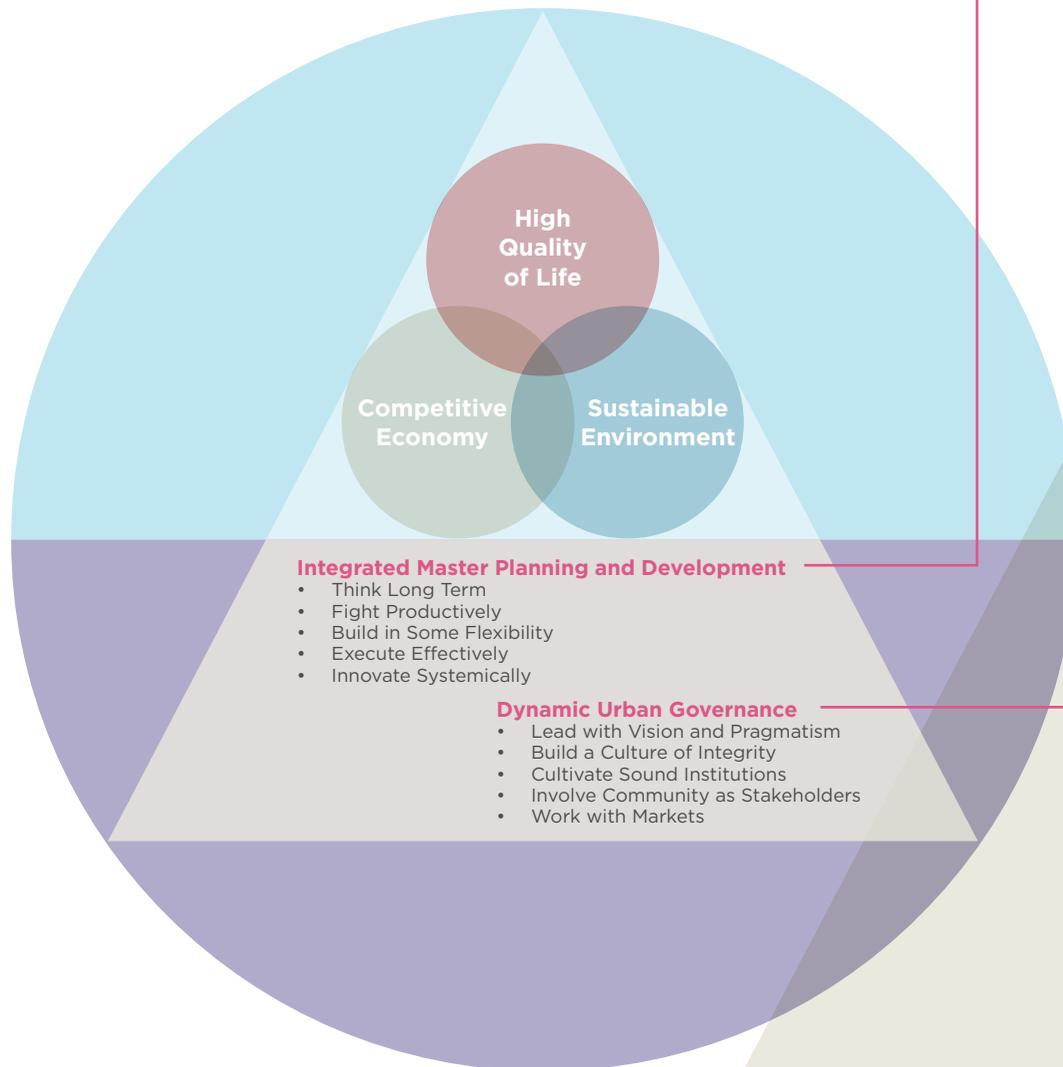
The CLC would like to extend special thanks to Pamela Lee and Lim Neo Chian, for their guidance and continuous support. The Centre is also grateful for the assistance and advice from the following urban pioneers (in alphabetical order): Jennie Chua, Foo Chek Chia, Goh Hup Chor, Bernard Harrison, Edward Koh, Michael Koh, Kwek Mean Luck, Leong Yue Kheong, Jasmine Lew, Loh Lik Peng, Gopinath Menon, Pek Hock Thiam and Tan Chin Nam.

Cheong Kay Teck, the researcher, would like to extend special thanks to his CLC colleagues, cluster mates and the late Joanna Yong. He would also to thank the following people who provided advice and encouragement throughout (in alphabetical order): Chang Chee Pey, Chiang Hai Yin, Eddie Choo, June Gwee, Peggy Lai, Anna Lim, Pauline Low, Samantha Seah, Edmund Tan, Margaret Teo, Toh Boon Kwan, Wu Wei Neng and Ivan Wong.

THE CLC LIVEABILITY FRAMEWORK

The CLC Framework is derived from Singapore's urban development experience and is a useful guide for developing sustainable and liveable cities.

The general principles under **Integrated Master Planning and Development** and **Dynamic Urban Governance** are reflected in the themes found in *Planning for Tourism: Creating a Vibrant Singapore*, detailed on the opposite page:



Integrated Master Planning and Development

Think Long Term

Singapore's primary objective of tourism has been to create "a good public image of Singapore in the world". The idea is not only to provide work and income for residents, but also to give Singapore a distinctive and favourable identity in the map of the world, to ensure repeat visitors. Tourism was also pursued in line with other aspects of national development and national objectives.

(see Formation of the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board, p. 11)

Fight Productively

Moving Singapore's airport from Paya Lebar to Changi was a multi-agency effort that involved exhuming graves, reclaiming land, resettling residents and landscaping a major expressway. This process was expedited and completed within six years, down from the originally scheduled ten.

(see Transport Infrastructure to Support Tourism Promotion: Changi Airport, p. 22)

Innovate Systemically

In Singapore, tourism is promoted as an economic sector. This not only facilitates tourism development and planning efforts as funds can be readily obtained on the basis of future investment returns, but also enables other economic and industrial development agencies to support such efforts.

(see Formation of the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board, p. 11)

Tourism development and conservation policy have been complementary to each other, to strike a balance between retaining the heritage of a city and maximising the economic potential of land. From the 1980s, the adaptive use of conserved buildings was promoted, allowing them to be used in new ways rather than insisting on retaining the original occupants and trades which may not be sustainable and supportive of other livelihoods in the area.

(see Inspiring Local Conservation: Tanjong Pagar, p. 46)

Dynamic Urban Governance

Lead with Vision and Pragmatism

Tourism promotional efforts to increase visitor arrivals were partly financed by a cessation tax levied on first-class hotels, which were considered "the direct and principal beneficiaries of any expansion of the tourist trade in Singapore". The cessation tax was later extended to food and beverage charges for first-class restaurants and first-class bars (or public houses), and subsequently broadened to cover all sales, and charges levied and collected by all first-class tourist food establishments.

(see Formation of the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board, p. 11)

Work with Markets

The mission of the Tourism Board has evolved from being "first class regulators" to "efficient facilitators" of business activity. Flexible allocation mechanisms, for instance through the Sale of Sites programme, enable the government to respond to the private sector's demand for land.

(see Lessons and Future Directions, p. 94)

OVERVIEW

CONTEXT OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY THEN AND NOW

In 1958, Mr William Tan, Assemblyman for Tiong Bahru, argued against the S\$300,000 budget allocated for tourism promotion. He claimed that Singapore had only three attractions to offer visitors: swamps, some fine buildings, and the death houses of Sago Lane.¹

“This amount that we are going to spend is most ridiculous, unless we are going to develop our place here so that more people can come to Singapore, because tourism is another invisible export from which Singapore can get more income besides trade.”

William Tan, Assemblyman for Tiong Bahru²

In the 1960s, Singapore was confronted with a problem common to many developing countries at the time—a dire lack of urban infrastructure. It was a small country with a population of 1.6 million, a per capita income of S\$1,310 (US\$428 in 1960 dollars), and no natural resources. Historically, Singapore had been a thriving entrepôt economy that relied on maritime trade, and as a result had few domestic industries and little foreign direct investment. Government revenue was insufficient for the construction of key urban systems such as public transport, public utilities and public housing.

Singapore’s leadership identified tourism as a viable economic industry, and a source of much-needed employment, whilst juggling other national priorities—building physical infrastructure to house and feed a fast-growing population, and developing the manufacturing industries that paved the way for economic development. Against all odds, Singapore managed, systematically, to set up extensive and effective urban infrastructure while taking care of its culture and heritage, which is, essentially, part of developing a city well.

“Tourism will make Singapore attractive because we want to make the experience of the visitors memorable... effectively increasing the choices for Singaporeans, enhancing the quality of life for Singaporeans, making the city a lot more liveable.”

Tan Chin Nam, Former STB Chief Executive Officer³



Singapore was covered in swamp lands in the 50s and early 60s, making it difficult to imagine the place as a tourist destination.

Image courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

There is a common misconception that tourism policy is primarily focused on promotion and marketing campaigns. While these are undoubtedly essential, another important but sometimes overlooked aspect is how sound and creative city planning can facilitate and support tourism promotion, and consequently, how the needs and goals of tourism policy influence development and planning decisions.

More so than many other economic sectors in Singapore such as financial services or electronics, tourism has visibly shaped the built environment, influenced conservation and heritage policies, and offered leisure and entertainment options that also enhance the quality of life for Singapore's resident population. A successful tourism industry has also helped to enhance Singapore's global reputation and attractiveness as a place to conduct business, study and live.

This book will examine how Singapore's tourism strategies have influenced planning decisions, and how city planning has, in turn, facilitated tourism promotion. This is particularly noteworthy since the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is usually not the owner of tourism assets such as heritage districts and monuments, but is nonetheless deeply involved in the early alignment of government agencies, private firms and civil society in its long-term tourism plans.

While circumstances differ greatly between countries, some useful lessons stand out. Developing venues simply for the sake of tourists may not always work well, nor be sustainable. Conversely, clear, transparent objectives and sound planning can galvanise stakeholders and inspire confidence in long-term investments, resulting in economically viable tourism attractions that are sensitive to cultural heritage. More often than not, these cases also illustrate how cooperation between various government agencies with different areas of expertise creates better planning and public outcomes.

COLONIAL LEGACY AS A FREE PORT OF CALL



Something should be done by government to bring home to tourists and holiday seekers of the world the great attractions of Malaya.

Straits Settlement Legislative Council (1930s)⁴

Before attaining self-government in 1959, the potential of tourism as an economic industry for Singapore was voiced as early as the 1930s in the Straits Settlement Legislative Council. However, the British colonial authorities did not view tourism promotion as a priority, given the effort and cost involved.

The continued lack of progress on tourism development in the 1950s was largely due to disagreement over whether the government or the commercial sector should foot the bill for tourism promotion. Private firms strongly resisted any levy or subscription fee to raise funds for a tourism bureau, arguing that many of them were not receiving substantial income from tourists yet. On the other hand, the government maintained that a cost-sharing arrangement was reasonable as companies in Singapore would reap future benefits from tourism promotion.

A working party with representatives from the private sector was set up in 1955 to examine the pros and cons of a centralised tourism board. Unsurprisingly, it recommended that the government allocate S\$400,000 to S\$500,000 annually to fund a centralised tourism board, and that the private sector's contribution be limited to the provision of advice and some commercial advertising.⁵ However, the government insisted that the tourism board should be a "joint effort" with commercial interests, where the commercial interests played the "major role."⁶ This was not well received by the business community. The government subsequently offered to pay 50% of the bureau's cost, but this was likewise rejected.

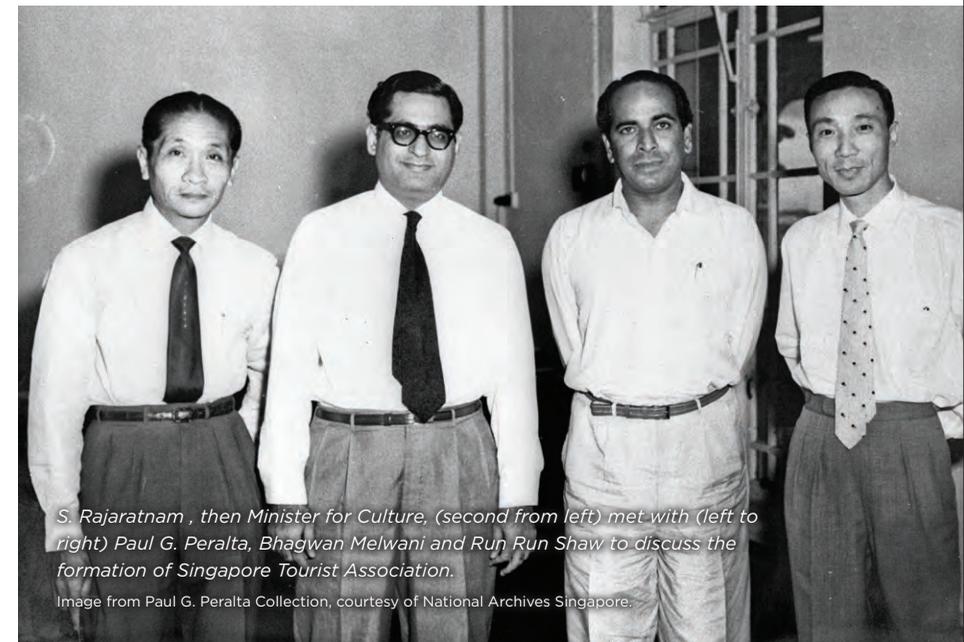
The following year, the government invited a tourism expert from New Zealand, Mr R. W. Fenton, under the Colombo Plan. His task was to advise on the prospects for the tourism industry and tourism promotion measures.⁷ In his report, Mr Fenton emphasised the revenue potential of the tourist industry, and recommended that the government fund a tourist promotion body with contributions from those commercial interests that stood to profit.⁸

While these developments were taking place, Singapore joined the National Union of Travel Organisations, a subsidiary body of the United Nations, and the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) in 1955⁹ to raise its international profile and promote the local tourist industry.¹⁰ With a last-minute bid through cable by Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock in 1957, Singapore successfully became the host of the annual conference of the Pacific Area Travel Association in 1959.¹¹ Winning the bid gave additional impetus for Singapore to establish a national tourism board prior to the conference.¹² With the private sector still reluctant to contribute, the government decided to provide the required S\$30,000 in annual financing, and set forth to appoint a Director of Tourism assisted by an advisory committee.¹³ At the inaugural meeting of the Tourist Advisory Board, then Minister for Commerce and Industry, Mr J. M. Jumabhoj commented that it was “the first time in the history of Singapore that a concerted and organised effort has been made to promote tourism and to attract tourists to the Colony.”¹⁴

The post of Director of Tourism was later assigned to Mr Robert Howlett from Fiji, the past General-Secretary of Fiji Visitors' Bureau.¹⁵ He recommended various survey methods and tourist promotion means, highlighting the need for Singapore to coordinate “its tourist facilities and its available tourist attractions in a manner in which the whole picture can be presented to the potential visitor.”¹⁶ Unfortunately, not long after the successful 1959 PATA conference which helped establish early regional networks to cooperate in bringing more attention to the Pacific area,¹⁷ the Tourism department was closed to save money, and its work—mainly to do with publicity—was subsumed under the Ministry for Culture.¹⁸

Following that, a suggestion to form a tourist association came from Mr E. J. C. Gardner, manager of the travel department of Mansfield & Co., Ltd., in a letter to the Singapore Chamber of Commerce on 4 December 1959, which the Chamber supported. A group of prominent businessmen, bankers, traders, travel agents, shipping and airline executives attended a meeting at the Ministry of Culture in City Hall on 6 January 1960, chaired by Mr S. Rajaratnam, then Minister for Culture. The decision was made to form a tourist association, with the Minister as honorary president.¹⁹

The event marked the first time a private, non-profit making organisation undertook the important task of promoting, developing and facilitating travel to Singapore with the support and cooperation of the government. This was to be the state of affairs until the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board was formed in 1964.



S. Rajaratnam, then Minister for Culture, (second from left) met with (left to right) Paul G. Peralta, Bhagwan Melwani and Run Run Shaw to discuss the formation of Singapore Tourist Association.

Image from Paul G. Peralta Collection, courtesy of National Archives Singapore.

Singapore cityscape.

Image courtesy of Thomas Timlen.



CHAPTER 1

EARLY TOURISM CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT (1960S—1970S)

“ We can broaden our service and export base in several ways. The first and most obvious is tourism, and that is providing services to tourists from Europe and America who want to see the Orient.

Dr Goh Keng Swee, Minister for Finance, 16 April 1967²⁰

Although tourism was identified as a potential economic growth area, there were significant challenges since Singapore had few historical landmarks, and no outstanding natural scenery or even good beaches.²¹ To tourists at that time, Singapore was more a transit stop than a destination in its own right.²²

Starting from an almost clean slate, Singapore took decisive steps to develop tourism as an economic sector. The government set up a national tourism organisation to develop tourism policies and strategies, and coordinate these with other national priorities. It made the most of Singapore's British colonial heritage, worked with the private sector to provide the infrastructure required to support the fledgling industry, and developed facilities to attract business and conference travellers.

FORMATION OF THE SINGAPORE TOURIST PROMOTION BOARD

The Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (STPB) was formed on 1 January 1964. Then Minister for Finance Dr Goh Keng Swee announced that it was “the first time in Singapore's history that the [independent] government has decided to accept as a conscious policy the promotion of an increasing inflow of tourists into the State. Until now, the matter has been left almost entirely in the hands of private enterprise”.²³ The Board was a timely platform for the government and private enterprise to cooperate to increase visitor arrivals, in view of the “phenomenal expansion” of the international tourist trade after World War II.²⁴

Back in 1963, then Minister for Culture, Mr S. Rajaratnam, had already emphasised that Singapore should regard tourism “more as an industry than an exercise in publicity promotion”.²⁵ In line with this approach, Dr Goh tasked STPB with two objectives: first, to “get as many tourists as possible from abroad to visit”; and second, to “ensure that these tourists get good value for their money” and leave Singapore satisfied, so that “the word gets around”, encouraging more visitors.²⁶



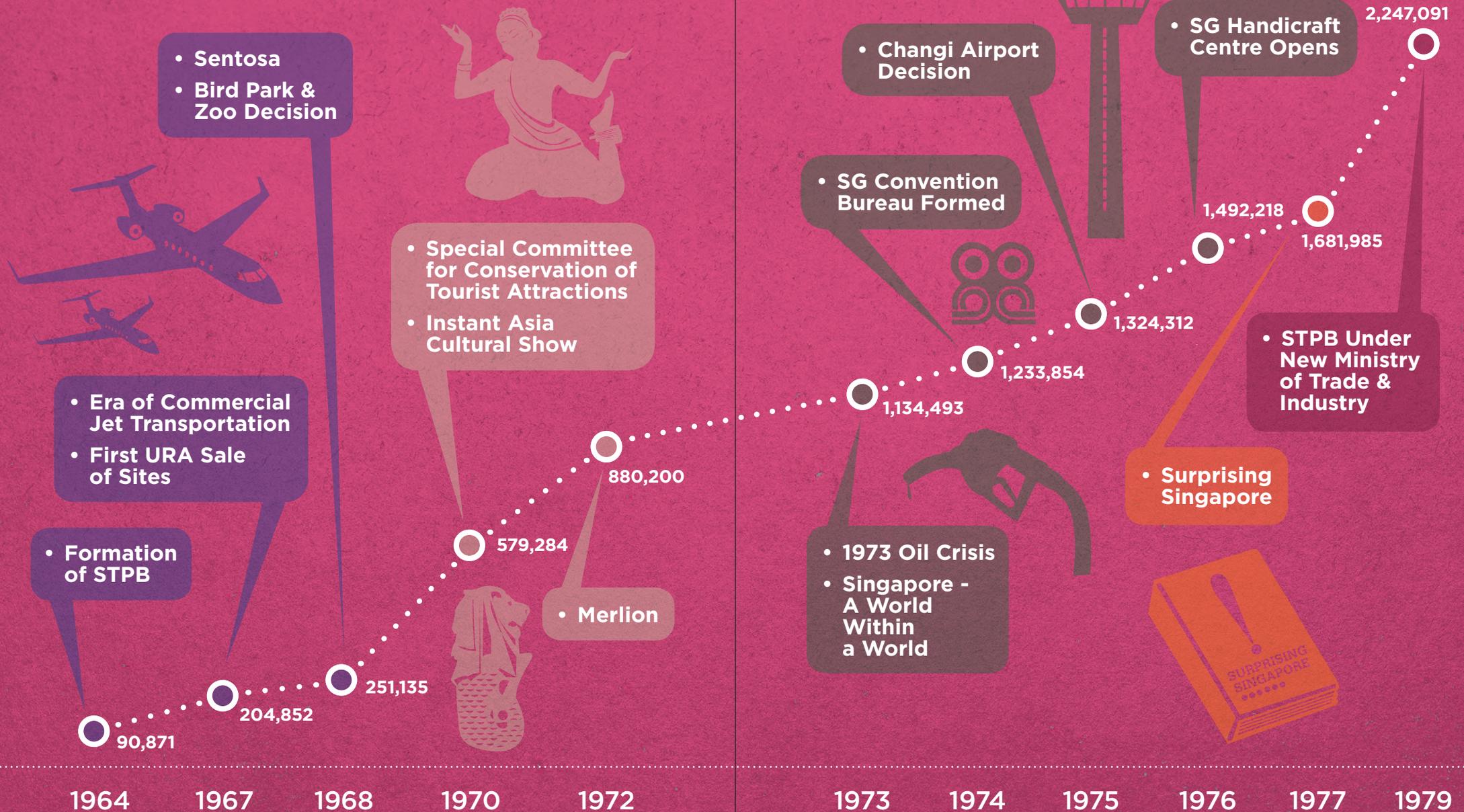
Dr Goh Keng Swee, then Minister for Finance, at the opening of the Tourist Promotion Board Office at the John Little Building in Raffles Place, in 1964.

Image from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

EXHIBIT 1

Significant Tourism Developments and Total Visitor Arrivals from 1964-1980

**Excludes Malaysian Citizens arriving by land*



The first goal of increasing visitor arrivals was to be achieved through “judicious and effective” advertising as well as partnerships with private tourism agencies from countries which made up the tourism market. These promotional efforts were partly financed by a cessation tax levied on first-class hotels, which were considered “the direct and principal beneficiaries of any expansion of the tourist trade in Singapore.”²⁷ Standards were introduced to classify hotels as either gazetted or non-gazetted hotels for the purpose of this tax. In March 1970, the cessation tax was expanded to food and beverage charges for first-class restaurants and first-class bars (or public houses), and subsequently broadened to cover all sales, and charges levied and collected by all first-class tourist food establishments.²⁸

Dr Goh explained that the 3% tax on sales in tourist establishments and the levy on every occupied tourist hotel room were justified because the “Republic’s hotels and restaurants benefit from the government’s efforts, and it was only equitable that they should contribute.”²⁹ These levies were implemented gradually. Initially, they only applied to “direct and principal beneficiaries” of the tourism industry, but as the tourism market grew, a broader segment of the tourism industry was required to subscribe to the upkeep of the Board. As a result, the commercial sector shared the responsibility of greater overseas promotion efforts to attract more tourists to Singapore.

A related concern was that the tax “would have an unfavourable reaction on the tourist trade”, if the owners of hotels and food establishments passed on the taxes to the consumer in the form of higher prices.³⁰ Even so, the government assessed that the tax levy was not as hefty as those imposed by other countries and was thus unlikely to result in resentment by tourists or local consumers.

Dr Goh understood that the second function of “ensuring tourists get good value for their money” was a relatively more complex task. STPB had to understand what tourists wanted, and what Singapore could offer. Dr Goh assessed that good hotel accommodation, to be furnished by the private sector, was “one of the conditions necessary” to attract tourists. This led to Singapore’s strategy of developing “first-class hotels” to appeal to leisure and business visitors. However hotels were only one aspect; there was also a need to ensure that the time spent by tourists was “pleasant, interesting and, if possible, even memorable.”³¹

While it was important to provide a range of quality attractions and understand tourists’ desires, this had to be balanced with important social objectives at the time. For instance, Dr Goh cautioned against a relaxation in extension of licensing hours for the sale of liquor, a relaxation on nightclub entertainment and the possibility of a casino. He reasoned that “the main beneficiary—or victim, depending on how you look at it—of the [a] free approach to public entertainment will be the native of Singapore and not the overseas tourist.”³²

Finally, Dr Goh pointed out the final objective of tourism was to create “a good public image of Singapore in the world”, because “the first and basic object of sales promotion is to create a distinctive and favourable public image of the product [Singapore].”³³ He suggested that Singapore’s image and branding could be enhanced by a distinctive symbol or emblem that people would immediately associate with Singapore. Such a symbol could also serve as the focal theme for a domestic souvenir industry to increase employment and revenue. As Dr Goh put it, “we will provide not only work and income for our citizens, but most important we will give Singapore a distinctive identity in the minds of the tourist.”³⁴

Given its goal of promoting tourism as an economic sector, STPB was initially under the charge of the Ministry of Finance (MOF), and later transferred to the Ministry of Trade & Industry (MTI) when it was formed in 1979. From its inception, STPB’s focus on economics was different from that of national tourist organisations (NTOs) in many other countries, where tourism promotion typically came under a ministry responsible for cultural and heritage development.

This economic focus helped to facilitate tourism development and planning efforts, because STPB could obtain the funds to support its undertakings more easily on the basis of future investment returns, and was supported by economic and industrial development agencies such as the Economic Development Board (EDB) and Jurong Town Corporation (JTC). This was particularly beneficial because although categorised as a service industry, tourism actually requires large upfront infrastructure and capital investments by both the private and public sectors. While “production or supply can be geared as close as possible to match demand” in sectors such as electronics or retail, such a strategy cannot apply to tourism, where “the capacity has to be built first and if there is growth in demand, the increases in capacity have to be done ahead of time if the demand is ever to be adequately catered to.”³⁵

MAKING THE MOST OF THE BRITISH LEGACY

Taking stock of Singapore's limited land, lack of resources, and competition from upcoming regional ports, Singapore's first Minister for Finance Dr Goh Keng Swee decided that industrialisation, instead of entrepôt trade, was the way forward. To this end, Dr Albert Winsemius, a Dutch economic advisor leading a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mission to Singapore, gave advice on how industrialisation could complement trade and generate jobs quickly.³⁶

In Winsemius's first report to then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, he outlined in 1961, two fundamental preconditions for Singapore's success: the first was to "eliminate the communists who made any economic progress impossible";³⁷ and the second was to "let Raffles stand where he stands." As Winsemius explained, Singapore would probably "be the only former colony where a statue of the imperialist is still standing. Let him stand. It's your presentation to the outside world that you accept the heritage of the British. Some time in the future we will need the British and the Americans and the Germans and whoever we will need with their know-how. We will show them they are welcome."³⁸ With hindsight, Singapore's decision to convince international investors of its political stability and acceptance of foreigners, to capitalise on its British heritage and position itself at the crossroads of the East and the West, supported both Singapore's tourism and branding efforts.

As economic development proceeded, news of the British decision to withdraw their military forces from Singapore broke on July 1967. Many feared that national security and investor confidence would be compromised. The withdrawal spelt the end of British military protection, and translated into a loss of military spending which made up some 20% of Singapore's gross national product and also a loss of some 40,000 jobs.³⁹ Dr Goh decided that Singapore would focus on growing four specific economic sectors in order to weather this challenge: trade, tourism, ship-building and manufacturing. Therefore since the 1960s, tourism has been at the heart of Singapore's economic development plans.

However, Singapore faced a challenge as it had few natural tourist attractions, and funds for domestic tourism development were scarce. Dr Goh came up with an ingenious but seemingly paradoxical solution: Singapore would help develop the nearby Indonesian island of Bali as a major tourist attraction together with the Indonesian government and American financial interests. At that time, Singapore was at the tail end of the enormous Pacific tourist traffic flow moving southwards, and as

such, received only a small fraction of the total visitors.⁴⁰ However, if Bali became an international tourist resort south of Singapore that was as appealing and popular as other tourist attractions located north of Singapore such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Bangkok, then Singapore would serve well as a major transit point for tourists en route to Bali. These tourists might even stop over for a few days in Singapore. This would yield mutual benefits for Indonesia and Singapore.⁴¹ This strategy conceded that although Singapore did not have "the makings of a major tourist attraction in its own right", it would endeavour to develop better facilities in order to be acknowledged as being worthy of a stopover.⁴²

The British handed over another important tourism asset to Singapore in September 1967: the island of Blakang Mati. Besides having been a British artillery military base, the island served as a natural break-water for Singapore's main harbour in the southern part of the island. Blakang Mati was placed under the administration of Singapore's Bases Economic Conversion Department, a government agency tasked to find the best use for the facilities and infrastructure left by the British.⁴³

Then Minister for Law and National Development Mr E. W. Barker related how numerous ministries staked claims on Blakang Mati. According to him, "[the] Defence Minister wants the security guns there first. The Finance Minister wants part of the island for industries and the Port of Singapore Authority needs it for more deep water berths."⁴⁴ Earlier, the EDB had invited a Canadian team to Singapore under the Colombo Plan, to study if the island could be converted into an industrial depot; if there were suitable areas of development to justify the construction of a bridge or tunnel to connect to the mainland;⁴⁵ and if further expansion of harbour wharves at Jurong was possible.⁴⁶ Subsequently, Barker mentioned his sincere hope that tourism would not be left out.⁴⁷

Blakang Mati had considerable economic potential. Dr Winsemius recalled that Esso had expressed their willingness to establish an oil refinery in Singapore if it could be done on Blakang Mati. With characteristic far-sightedness, he took a contrary stand, and predicted that in 10 to 20 years, "we would have a much higher level of living than we had at that time. That meant that we needed room for people to spend their time and part of their money. So I started protesting and suggested to try and keep Blakang Mati for recreation and tourism purposes... [It was] the only large empty place in Singapore. I got hold of the Urban Renewal Administration [sic Department], Mr Alan Choe,⁴⁸ and with him... Blakang Mati was saved from the manufacturing industry and reserved for recreational purposes, and changed its name into Sentosa."⁴⁹ Today, Sentosa remains one of Singapore's top recreational attractions for tourists and residents alike.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: AN ECONOMIC RESPONSE TO THE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

Following Singapore's independence, the permanent withdrawal of British military personnel in 1968 led to a corresponding fall in spending and employment. To counter the immediate threat of recession, the government planned to inject an additional S\$900 million into the economy from 1968 to 1971, in the form of defence spending, public sector and infrastructure development, and urban renewal.⁵⁰ In addition, to moderate the outflow of domestic spending on imports, the government planned to embark on a rapid industrialisation programme, and to encourage private investment through the provision of loans, guarantees and equity participation.⁵¹

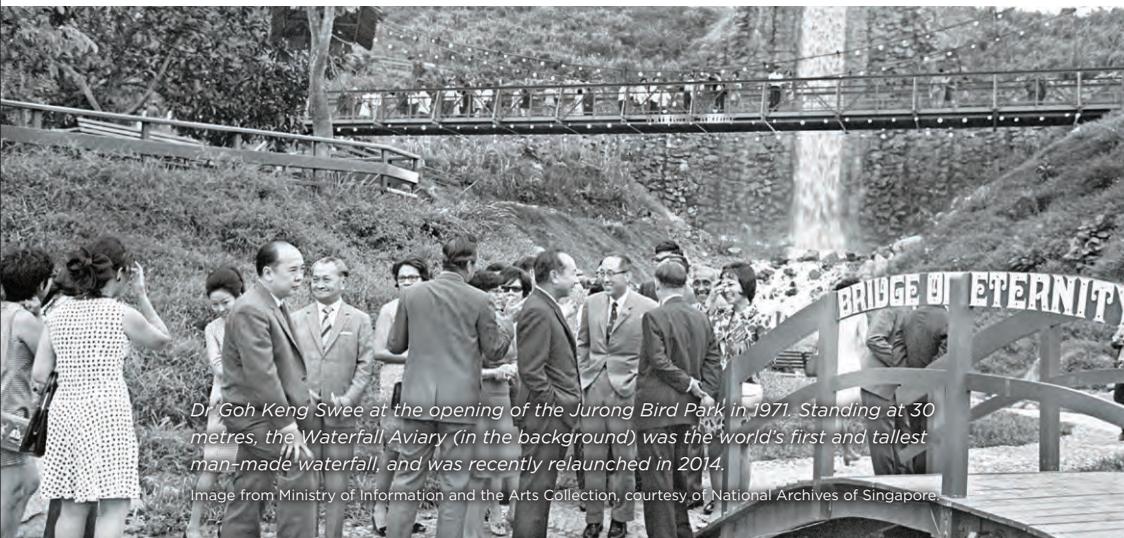
Seeing that the earlier 1958 Master Plan⁵² was inadequate and needed "something more flexible and more suited to fast growth and change", in 1962, Erik Lorange, a UN Town Planning Adviser, found that a framework of long-term programmes to organise redevelopment alongside short-term implementation plans at precinct scale was necessary. Building on the experience of a UN team comprising architect-planner Mr Otto Koenigsberger, land and legal adviser Mr Charles Abrams, and traffic economist Mr Susumu Kobe (collectively known as "the KAK team"), who had helped plan development in Lagos, Nigeria, previously, the outline of "a new planning system that accepted initiative and leadership from the public sector and yet did not deny private investors opportunity for legitimate profits" emerged.⁵³

Beyond this, there was a need to give coherence to these plans and programmes, and to provide a broader framework for national development. Singapore achieved this through the Concept Plan, a strategic land use and transportation plan that sets out the directions for the next 40 to 50 years. The Concept Plan takes into consideration all projected land use demands for housing, industry and commerce, recreation and nature areas, transport and utility infrastructure, as well as defence requirements.

Shortly afterwards, the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) was formed in May 1968. JTC was tasked with the provision of facilities and the management of industrial estates, sites and flatted factories in Singapore; and also the provision of amenities for the people living in such estates and sites. With the rapid growth of industrial estates in Jurong, JTC founding chairman Mr Woon Wah Siang said, "It will not be merely an estate of factories to which workers go only for their livelihood. The corporation will also be responsible for the well-being and happiness of the people of the town."⁵⁴

As it happened, the Jurong Bird Park was realised because then Minister of Finance, Dr Goh Keng Swee, shared his vision of creating a free-flight aviary at the inaugural meeting of the JTC. Dr Goh had visited a similar aviary at a World Bank meeting in Rio de Janeiro. He later remarked that "compared with other enterprises of this kind, for example, a zoological garden or a marine land, the great advantage of an aviary is that it does not cost much to feed birds."⁵⁵ Dr Goh believed the Bird Park would be a self-sustaining venture like the Bangkok Aviary, and that it would "add to the enjoyment of our citizens, especially our children."⁵⁶

According to Mr Ho Kah Leong, then Member of Parliament for Jurong, "The centre of industrialisation is [was] now at Jurong... as the Minister for Finance pointed out in his Budget Statement, there is an urgent need to improve the social amenities of Jurong Town... We also know that the corporation (JTC) is trying its best to develop Jurong into a tourist centre."⁵⁷ The central issue was "the question of providing practical social amenities and recreational facilities for the workers [in Jurong town] so that they can actually enjoy themselves... what the workers need is a place where they can rest or take part in recreational activities."⁵⁸ Consequently, JTC conceptualised and built a number of attractions, including a lake with man-made islands created by dredging Jurong River, the Jurong Bird Park, and Japanese and Chinese Gardens.



Dr Goh Keng Swee at the opening of the Jurong Bird Park in 1971. Standing at 30 metres, the Waterfall Aviary (in the background) was the world's first and tallest man-made waterfall, and was recently relaunched in 2014.

Image from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

A WATERING HOLE FOR THE PEOPLE: SINGAPORE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS



Before 1968, the sizeable water catchment areas under the Public Utilities Board (PUB) were closed to the public. That year, the PUB started to consider how to open up some of these areas for public recreational use. “This land in the Seletar, MacRitchie and Peirce catchments added up to a few thousand acres,” said Dr Ong Swee Law, chairman of the PUB then.⁵⁹

In January 1968, Dr Ong asked his Chief Water Engineer, Mr Khong Kit Soon, for his opinion on creating a zoo at the former Seletar catchment forest. Being a PUB official with no previous experience or knowledge in planning zoos, Khong was understandably shocked. As he put it, the project was one that “no water engineer looking after a drinking water supply would want to take on. I looked up all the textbooks I could to see if there were any precedents. There were none.”⁶⁰

Singapore eventually set the precedent for building a zoo in a water catchment area, and accomplished this by building a stormwater drain that surrounded the zoo, protecting the reservoir water from animal pollution.⁶¹ A sewerage plant was even built inside the zoo to process animal waste, which was subsequently pumped far from the water catchment area. Dr Ong managed to persuade the government to provide the initial development budget of S\$9 million, and the zoo opened in 1973, helping to educate the young in Singapore’s rapidly urbanising society, as well as becoming one of Singapore’s top attractions.

According to Mr Bernard Harrison, former Chief Executive Officer of the Singapore Zoological Gardens, “The PUB has always been our landlord and they are very concerned about pollution. Water catchment areas were ‘dead areas’ that you cannot do any development on, so we couldn’t have used it for anything else. Dr Ong argued for the zoo because it is compatible with nature, and they were not going to destroy anything and they were inherently going to enhance the place. At that time he was trying to open up the reservoir parks like MacRitchie, Pierce and Seletar so that people could go in and enjoy these very beautiful tracts of land. In fact, because of him, we already started having nature trails into the catchment. So we felt that the zoo was an extension of that. Simple trails were put in and the serious nature trails were put in by the National Parks Board later. He certainly opened up the parks to the public. They were closed before that.”⁶²



The Singapore Zoological Gardens were built from the Seletar catchment forests, to allow people to enjoy nature.

Image from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT TOURISM PROMOTION: CHANGI AIRPORT

By the early 1970s, Singapore's rapidly growing air traffic and visitor numbers were straining the capacity of its international airport at Paya Lebar. This airport had served its purpose well for about twenty years, but Singapore now needed a bigger airport with at least two runways to handle annual passenger movements of four million.⁶³ There were two feasible solutions: first, to build a new, larger airport at the former Royal Air Force base at Changi, and second, to expand Paya Lebar Airport and build a second runway. The government had approved the second option, on the basis that work would commence in February 1972 and the two runways would be operational by 1977 or 1978. It was estimated that Singapore would not have two runways by 1977 if the government decided to move the airport to Changi.

Changi Airport in 1986.

Image from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



Shortly after, the October 1973 oil crisis unfolded, and rising oil prices led to a slowdown in the world economy. The resultant higher airfares put a dent in the global demand for air travel, and delayed the need for a second runway in Singapore. Then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew took this opportunity to reconsider the option of moving to Changi. This was a bold move. Building a new airport was a much costlier undertaking, and S\$800 million worth of investments had already been committed for the expansion of Paya Lebar. This expansion was to have a bigger airport with at least two runways—one by the existing Paya Lebar terminals and another built by filling up the Serangoon River.⁶⁴ Lee appointed Mr Howe Yoon Chong, then chairman of the Port of Singapore Authority, to head a Special Committee on Airport Development, to study if the move to Changi could be completed before a second runway became necessary.⁶⁵

The committee convinced Mr Lee in 1975 that the airport should be moved to Changi as the latter was a superior location with the taking-off and landing over the sea causing less noise and air pollution, disruption to the city centre, and that that construction would be on time. The construction of the airport was expedited from ten years to six, and the S\$800 million worth of investments in the old airport was written off, together with S\$1.5 billion spent on relocating to Changi and investing in more facilities at Paya Lebar to meet the increasing yearly traffic during the years between 1974 and 1981.⁶⁶

The development of Changi Airport was, in retrospect, a vital decision for Singapore, cementing its status as a regional aviation and transit hub. The greater availability of land at Changi also enabled the construction of additional terminal buildings and facilities over the decades. Speaking in 1968, even before the development of Changi Airport, Mr Alan Choe noted that “the major infrastructure for promotion of tourism [was] without doubt our airport” because 92% of Singapore's tourists arrived by air then.⁶⁷

At the time, Singapore's Ministry of Communications was in charge of air, sea and land transport issues, including civil aviation and airports. This also meant that Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communications, Mr Sim Kee Boon, was responsible for coordinating the Changi Airport project. In building Changi Airport, Mr Sim explained that "we were concerned about combining two things [objectives]: it must be functional, it must be efficient. At the same time, it should be something the people of Singapore could be proud of.... We finally decided that the airport should be an extension of our garden city. This is because the first point of contact—apart from your SIA girl in the plane—for the tourist coming to Singapore, is the airport. So we took great care to combine the aesthetic with the functional."⁶⁸

Likewise, former Deputy Permanent Secretary of Communications Mr Pek Hock Thiam recalled that the construction of Changi Airport was not a simple endeavour. It was a massive inter-agency project that involved exhuming graves, reclaiming land, resettling residents and landscaping a major expressway. All this was completed within five years.⁶⁹ Thus, what began as a project to improve the quality of life for residents and leave a memorable first and last impression on tourists, ended up having a lasting impact on the government as well, by showing how close cooperation and coordination were essential for national projects.⁷⁰

As an aviation hub, Singapore's connectivity and efficiency has benefited the tourism sector. More airline offices have been established as a result and more overseas airlines transit through Singapore, enabling its national carrier Singapore Airlines to have a stronger bargaining position when negotiating air traffic rights to fly, land and transit in other countries. These flight connections bring mutual benefits to both countries involved, facilitating business and leisure tourism that stimulate the retail, hotel and restaurant industries, generating revenue and employment. Higher flight frequencies help bolster foreign investment by projecting the image of the country as a modern business centre. While geography is one determinant of flight routings, the importance of infrastructure cannot be overlooked.⁷¹ On top of promoting tourism, Singapore has also increased leisure and travel options for its residents through the rights obtained to fly to various other countries.

TOURISM PROMOTION INFRASTRUCTURE: HOTELS, URBAN RENEWAL & PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENTS

In 1964, visitor arrivals to Singapore numbered 91,000 annually, and under STPB's first director Mr Lim Joo Hock and his staff of 25, STPB's first tasks included the operation of a mobile information van to serve the largely maritime-based tourist trade. At that time, there were daunting incidents of racial riots and industrial unrest. Despite this, the government approved the construction of four luxury hotels in Tanglin Road and Orchard Road during that period, establishing Singapore's now-famous shopping and tourist belt. These early decisions on the siting and construction of hotels and their impact on the tourism industry today cannot be overlooked.⁷²

By the mid-1960s, the demand for hotel rooms had been mounting due to increasing tourist traffic. This situation worsened by 1967. The popularity of commercial jet transportation had revolutionised long-distance travel and a record number of passengers were travelling by air.⁷³ Visitor arrivals soared from 90,871 in 1964 to 204,852 in 1967, an increase of 125% within three years. According to the Singapore Tourist Association's 1967 annual report, the hotel room shortage at that point was dire: there were only 1,148 rooms in 16 tourist hotels in 1963, and no new tourist hotels had been built since.⁷⁴ Hotel occupancy rates shot up to 93%, and Singapore quickly acquired a reputation for expensive hotels. More hotels, entertainment and shopping facilities were urgently needed.⁷⁵

However, the supply of hotels continued to lag behind demand for several reasons. First, the location of these hotels had to be coordinated with long-term urban renewal plans for the redevelopment of the old city centre, in order to optimise land use and economic value. Redeveloping the city centre was challenging, as described by Mr Alan Choe, then head of the Urban Renewal Department (URD), because "in those days nobody would dare to put up a spanking new building—a high investment—when the surroundings [were] still slums."⁷⁶ Understandably, there were also other immediate national priorities in the early 1960s: to relieve overcrowding in Singapore's central area, to implement urban renewal, to resettle the families and businesses affected and to provide adequate housing and retail space for them.⁷⁷

Second, Dr Goh Keng Swee, Minister for Finance at that time, acknowledged that while the government recognised tourism as a necessary economic sector, they were nonetheless “pessimistic about Singapore’s prospects as a tourist centre”, which led to “inadequate preparation in the building of enough high-class tourist hotels.” As a result, when the tourist boom took place, Singapore was caught very short of hotel rooms.⁷⁸

Given the shortage of hotels and tourist amenities such as shopping areas, department stores, entertainment centres and recreation, there was a need to encourage the private sector to invest. From the outset, the implementation of the Urban Renewal Plan was seen as a joint venture between the government and private enterprise, and that “for such a gigantic task as envisaged... maximum co-operation between the private and public sector is sine qua non.”⁷⁹ This public-private partnership would ensure that national goals and economic objectives were taken into account in planning, while tapping into private financial resources and expertise.

However, conditions were not conducive for private sector investment. Many plots of land in the city centre were smallholdings owned by different individuals, encumbered by squatters and surrounded by slums. The standpoint of the authorities, according to Choe, was that “unless [the] government assists in acquisition, clearance, re-parcelling of land and planning, the private sector on its own will have great difficulty in obtaining choice sites for proper development, thereby giving indirect rise to urban sprawl.”⁸⁰ The urgency of the problem was compounded by the deterioration of the city centre caused by traffic congestion and parking issues.

Heeding advice from United Nations (UN) experts on urban renewal and redevelopment, a Sale of Sites programme was developed to engage the private sector with clear plans and a timetable for each phase. Fragmented parcels of land were first acquired under the Land Acquisition Act (1966)⁸¹, amalgamated, and released for comprehensive redevelopment. These parcels were sold to the private sector via a tender system, offering a combination of conditions and concessions tailored to achieve planning objectives.

In order to emphasise the clear objectives, due fairness and transparency of the exercise, Choe highlighted, “We made known the rules of the Sale of Sites, which was that we will not negotiate. If we negotiate, people will suspect that the government favours certain developers. So it was a public tender, and the permitted uses for the land were publicly announced in the newspapers.”⁸²

Furthermore, the URD worked closely with economic agencies, in particular the Economic Development Board (EDB) and the STPB to understand the needs of industry, “especially in the field of tourism, development, real estate and commerce.”⁸³ In response to the urgent needs of the tourism industry, the first Sale of Sites launched in June 1967, was designed to encourage the use of the land for hotel and entertainment complexes that would cater to the urgent needs of the tourist industry.

In fact, the 1958 Master Plan did not foresee the growth of the hotel industry. At that time, hotel developments were placed in the same zoning category as shopping complexes, since the planners then did not think that the small number of existing hotels justified a separate land use category. By the late 1960s, the government faced constraints when private sector demand for more land for hotels increased. Due to the lack of a statutory zoning category, sites could not be zoned specifically for hotel use when they were put up for sale. To address this need, the first Sale of Sites utilised administrative means in order to achieve this objective. It listed technical criteria such as hotel room numbers and parcel sizes that the successful bidder would need to comply with.⁸⁴ As a result, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, hotels were built on land originally zoned for residential use in the 1958 Master Plan. This arrangement persisted until the 1985 Master Plan established a separate zoning category for hotels.⁸⁵ This illustrates how the government took pragmatic steps to facilitate urban redevelopment in response to private sector demand, in the absence of clear legislation.

Apart from the “stick” of tender specifications, the government offered several “carrots” in the form of attractive incentives to encourage private investment into redeveloping the city centre. These included the Property Tax Order (1967), where concessions were given for new hotel construction projects, reducing the property tax from 36% to 12%, a rate guaranteed for 20 years.⁸⁶ These concessions were later extended to the construction of “prestige buildings other than hotels... to meet increasing demands for modern office space and commercial accommodation in the inner city.”⁸⁷ Other incentives included the waiver of development charges,⁸⁸ and favourable loan arrangements such as a low 20% down payment.⁸⁹ These concessions remained in place until 1970 when investor confidence was built up.⁹⁰

Mr Choe assessed that the land sales programme was “a real good start” and “fired the way for the renewal of the city centre with private participation” instead of simply being an exercise in slum clearance.⁹¹ It stimulated the local construction industry, created employment and attracted foreign investment, paving the way for the expansion of the tourism industry.

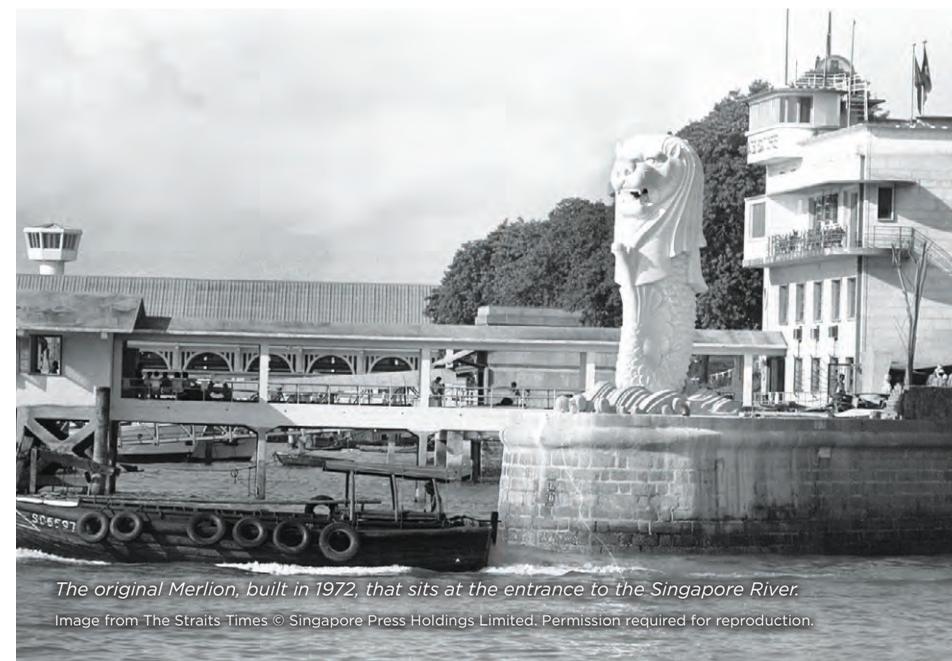
The strong support from the government and enthusiastic reaction from private investors changed the hotel situation in Singapore from an acute shortage to an adequate supply of first-class hotel accommodation by the early 1970s. More than 9,000 rooms in 71 tourist hotels were available by 1974, an eight-fold increase over the 1,148 rooms in 16 tourist hotels ten years earlier.⁹² Building on the success of the first Sale of Sites programme, developers continued to acquire much-needed land for hotels through periodic land sales from the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) between 1967 to 1994.⁹³

DEVELOPING THE LOCAL SOUVENIR INDUSTRY: THE MERLION AND THE SINGAPORE HANDICRAFT CENTRE

Soon after its formation, the STPB cooperated with the EDB to manufacture souvenirs. Mr Don Jordan, an Australian industrial designer and trade promotion expert advising EDB under a United Nations technical assistance programme, explained that Singapore needed the “technical assistance to produce and distribute top quality souvenirs to tourists” because this would also showcase the production abilities of Singapore’s industries.⁹⁴

As early as 1969, the government recognised the need to grow the market share of the local souvenir industry as tourist arrivals increased. Around 1970, tourists were spending as much as S\$5 million a year on souvenirs in Singapore, and yet only about one per cent of this was spent on Singapore-made souvenirs.⁹⁵ Then Minister for Finance, Dr Goh Keng Swee, believed it was feasible to tap the market potential of Asian handicrafts.⁹⁶ Mr Wilburt Feinberg, project development advisor of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), who was attached to the Light Industries Services of the EDB, mooted the idea that a National Trade Centre be set up to display and sell local goods, while providing advice for Singaporeans on production and marketing techniques. This made it possible for tourists to buy souvenirs, while allowing local craftsmen to improve their skills, quality and production capacity.

At the same time, Singapore recognised that the primary intention of tourists was to see things that made a country unique. A Special Committee for Conservation of Tourist Attractions was set up in 1970 to induce tourists to spend more time in Singapore. This committee conceived of the Merlion Project to create a tourism symbol of Singapore, among other early projects such as the Raffles Landing Site and Soo Chow Gardens.



The original Merlion, built in 1972, that sits at the entrance to the Singapore River.

Image from The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Permission required for reproduction.

The Merlion statue—now a famous icon of Singapore—was built in 1972 at a cost of S\$165,000 at the time. Then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said, “If you go to Paris, you take a picture against the Eiffel Tower and you don’t have to say, ‘Here I am in Paris’. You just say, ‘with best wishes from’, and everybody knows you have been to Paris.”⁹⁷ Mr Runme Shaw, then chairman of the STPB, thought that the Merlion—the STPB’s emblem since its establishment—could play a similar role for Singapore. This proved to be a sound decision.⁹⁸ The hope that the Merlion, “a distinctive identity in the minds of tourists” as earlier suggested by Dr Goh,⁹⁹ could also “become the nucleus of a successful souvenir industry”¹⁰⁰ has likewise materialised.

Plans for a Singapore Handicraft Centre were drawn up by STPB earlier in 1971. It was decided then that other craftsmen from Asia should participate in the project to represent a wider cross-section of Asian culture, and to showcase the unique heritage of the entire region around Singapore. The S\$5 million project was calculated to have a payback period of six years and in the words of Katong Member of Parliament, Mr J. F. Conceicao, was “a remarkably cost effective way to finance cultural development.”¹⁰¹

The Singapore Handicraft Centre opened in 1976. It was conveniently located at the corner of Tanglin Road and Grange Road, near the STPB office at Tudor Court and Orchard Road, the centre of tourist activity.¹⁰² Soon after in 1979, the STPB opened its S\$1.4 million Singapore Cultural Theatre next to the Handicraft Centre. This served as a permanent home for the Instant Asia Cultural Show performances reflecting the rich heritage of Singapore's various ethnic communities. It also featured an internal plaza for open-air art exhibitions and a Beer Garden serving refreshment and snacks.¹⁰³ Following that, the Rasa Singapura food centre was opened nearby. Each of these complemented the other, forming a cluster of tourist attractions.¹⁰⁴

Public infrastructure upgrades also supported these developments. The Public Works Department (PWD) constructed a network of wide pedestrian walkways termed "pedestrian malls", linking Orchard Road and Tanglin Road, along the Handicraft Centre, and up to the Botanic Gardens. Seeing that "Singapore was getting quite popular" and that "Orchard Road was making a name for itself", PWD and the drainage department of the Ministry of Environment worked together to cover the newly-widened Stamford Canal between Cuscaden Road and Grange Road.¹⁰⁵ This canal, according to Professor Gopinath Menon, former Chief Transportation Engineer of PWD, was essentially an unattractive drain. Covering it up improved pedestrian safety and improved the overall environment. Landscaping, trees, signage and lighting were also improved. This enhanced Orchard Road as an attractive and safe shopping corridor for pedestrians.

These efforts were timely, as Singapore had recently been removed from the list of rest and recreation centres for the American soldiers deployed in the Vietnam War in 1971. President Richard Nixon had reduced the troops in Vietnam, and US soldiers' interest in Singapore was dwindling due to competition from nightlife and attractions in other Asian locations.¹⁰⁶ The "GI exodus" meant the loss of US\$25 million a year in foreign exchange earnings from tourism spending.¹⁰⁷ STPB's efforts to plan and deliver a series of quality attractions boosted the leisure tourism sector, and visitor arrivals continued to climb throughout the 1970s despite the GI exodus.

GROWING THE BUSINESS ASPECT OF TOURISM: SINGAPORE CONVENTION BUREAU (SCB)

Even as the STPB focused on marketing Singapore to leisure tourists, it recognised that business and convention travellers were a very different and lucrative market segment. The Straits Times noted in the 1970s that "such delegate-visitors spend three times as much as the average tourist and more often than not, bring their wives along with the luggage—tourists who are even bigger spenders than their husbands."¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, in the past, the average convention delegate spent some 2.5 times more than a tourist, while the average exhibition delegate spent some 3.5 times more.¹⁰⁹

To cater to the needs of business travellers, a separate entity—the Singapore Convention Bureau (SCB)—was set up in April 1974. Former head of SCB Ms Jennie Chua recalls that its initial goal was to get the world to "think Asia" when hosting conventions and meetings. To accomplish this, SCB cooperated with various Asian entities to form the Asian Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (AACVB). This represented a collective effort to bring attention to Asia, without which "nobody [would] have a chance because [clients would] go back to USA and Europe."¹¹⁰ Separately, SCB worked to establish Singapore's reputation as the best in Asia for conventions and exhibitions.

The next step was to improve the infrastructure required to support these meetings and conventions. Ms Chua says that in the 1970s, "what we could offer were only halls in hotels."¹¹¹ SCB made the best of these facilities, and even turned the car park of the Hyatt Regency, now the Grand Hyatt, into an exhibition space by working with the Ministry of National Development (MND) for the necessary permits and Temporary Occupation Licence (TOL). SCB also targeted smaller conventions.

In the medium term, STPB sought the help of the Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) to cater to the demand for purpose-built convention facilities. Together, they converted some unused godowns at the World Trade Centre, which is now VivoCity, into an exhibition space. Ms Chua credits PSA for its initiative in developing the World Trade Centre site, and paying for the new exhibition and convention space upfront, prior to cost recovery from venue rental. This inter-agency cooperation helped to resolve the space crunch issue.

Having provided the infrastructure, the next goal was to guide the conference industry towards commercial viability and profitability. SCB was concerned about many conference organisers' lack of professionalism. Ms Chua recounted that they would leave patrons "high and dry", venue owners "out of pocket for the rental" and Singapore "out of pocket for the reputation."¹¹² To improve industry standards, the SCB catalysed the formation of a professional association, the Singapore Association of Conventions and Exhibitions Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS) in 1979, so that the industry could regulate itself. STPB also facilitated the development of this industry cluster by including representatives from Singapore Airlines, SACEOS, SCB and major hotels in its tourism promotion trips overseas.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Apart from its primary economic rationale, tourism was also "pursued in line with the government's policy of creating a 'clean, green garden city', to stimulate and develop local culture and handicrafts and to promote the multi-racial, multi-cultural aspects of life in the republic."¹¹³ These objectives required the formation of the STPB as the government agency in charge of promoting tourism, even as key public and tourism infrastructure were being developed in the 1960s and 1970s. However, STPB could not do this alone. As the representative from the Ministry of Communications on STPB's Board, Mr Pek Hock Thiam recalled that the STPB needed many partners to do its job well, including practically every government agency, where some were more involved than others.¹¹⁴

The private sector also played an important role. Market allocation of land through the URA Sale of Sites programme enabled the public and private sectors to collaborate in the building of hotels, which Singapore needed badly then. Early tourist attractions such as the Jurong Bird Park, Sentosa, Siang Lim Temple and Soo Chow Gardens were developed with both tourism and the recreational needs of local residents in mind, increasing their relevance to Singaporeans. At each stage, the guiding hand of development policy facilitated private initiatives through public investments in infrastructure and attractions such as the Handicraft Centre and Cultural Theatre, and national branding efforts such as the development of the Merlion and Raffles Landing Site. These steps would lay the foundations for further tourism strategies and initiatives in the 1980s.

The Raffles Landing Site in 1990.

Image from Singapore Tourist Promotion Board Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



CHAPTER 2

EXPANDING AND ENHANCING TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE (1980S—1990S)

“ Why should anybody come to Singapore to begin with? What did we have? We only had a name, then Raffles Hotel.... A few quaint habits and customs and the mediums and the temples, the Indian with his kavadi walking over heated charcoal... that is not going to bring in six million. But we created the attraction. We created the interest that brought the six million tourists. We developed a marketing strategy. And we made ourselves useful to the world.”¹¹⁵

.....
Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew



The annual Thaipusam festival, where devotees wear kavadis.
Image from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Broadly speaking, tourism promotion in the 1960s and 1970s was driven by action-oriented government agencies, reflecting the leadership of the public sector. In the 1980s and 1990s, the development of formal planning systems and legislation envisaged and encouraged greater private participation.

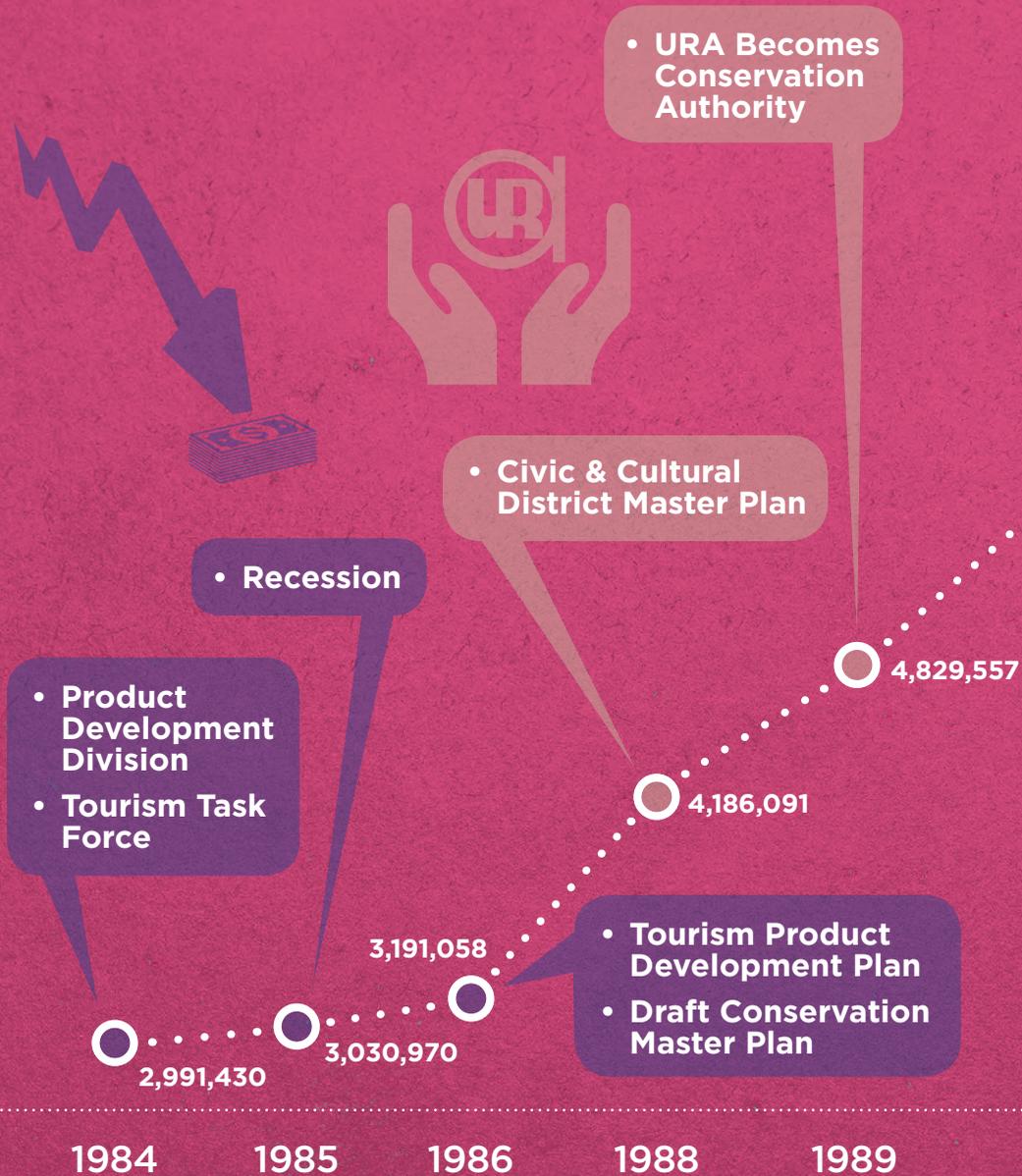
If the 1960s and 1970s saw a focus on marketing Singapore to the world, the 1980s witnessed greater emphasis on looking inwards, appreciating local heritage and culture, and working with planning authorities to restore and enhance historical and cultural landmarks. With limited land available for development, not every place or building could be retained. Decisions had to be made on what to conserve, how to ensure conservation, and how best to conserve without constraining future redevelopment plans.

As Exhibit 2 shows, the STPB—renamed the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) in 1997—played a more active role in planning and coordinating tourism development. It stepped in at decisive points that required multi-agency cooperation, such as promoting conservation efforts, reviving the idea of Singapore River cruises, and supporting district lighting efforts. Meanwhile, the experience of Haw Par Villa taught Singapore that sustainable tourist attractions needed to appeal to the local resident population as well, and that good timing was also crucial.

EXHIBIT 2

Significant Tourism Developments and Total Visitor Arrivals from 1980-2000

**Excludes Malaysian Citizens arriving by land*



RECOVERING FROM THE TOURISM SLUMP OF THE 1980S

By the 1980s, tourism had developed into a major export industry, comprising 6% of Singapore's gross domestic product (GDP). It also contributed some 16% to Singapore's total foreign exchange earnings, trailing only the manufacturing, and transport and communications services sectors as a source of foreign exchange.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the tourism industry provided 6% of direct employment and many more indirect jobs.

However, tourism growth began to slow in the 1980s. In 1982, tourism growth was just 4.5%, the weakest since STPB's establishment. The following year, tourist arrivals fell by 3.5%, and alarm bells began to ring. Hotels cut their rates, some by as much as 40%, to try to attract guests. The situation in 1984 was so dire that business visitor growth, typically a slow-growing market segment, outpaced recreational visitor growth.¹¹⁷

These setbacks prompted the Ministry of Trade and Industry to set up a Tourism Task Force in September 1984, to identify underlying problems and propose solutions. This high-level Tourism Task Force comprised a Minister of State and four Permanent Secretaries, as well as representatives from STPB and the tourism industry. At the same time, STPB established a Product Development Division to coordinate the planning and development of tourism infrastructure beyond the development of individual tourist attractions. STPB's deputy chairman at the time, Mr Alan Choe, explained, "Besides aggressive promotions and seeking new markets for Singapore, the Board will develop attractions which the private sector will not undertake."¹¹⁸

But it was no longer enough to simply develop attractions. Mrs Pamela Lee, who headed the Product Development Division, recalls a journalist reprimanding, "You're overselling Singapore. You're losing all your historic areas, your Raffles Hotel is run down, what are you doing to save your city? Your heritage?"¹¹⁹ With a strong Singapore dollar and the rising cost of living, Singapore could no longer be the inexpensive

shopping paradise it once was. At the same time, Singaporeans themselves were enjoying rising affluence, resulting in growing aspirations and a more pronounced desire for the preservation of cultural heritage and buildings of architectural significance. In response to both of these trends, the government launched a more coordinated effort to preserve Singapore's distinct ethnic and cultural features, in order to satisfy residents and tourists alike.

In its November 1984 report, the Tourism Task Force assessed that in its quest to build a modern metropolis Singapore was losing its "oriental mystique and charm", of which old buildings, traditional activities and bustling roadside activities were key ingredients. The 1983 tourism slump was attributed to this loss.¹²⁰ Furthermore, expensive hotel rates, high rental and labour costs had further reduced the attractiveness of Singapore as a tourist destination.

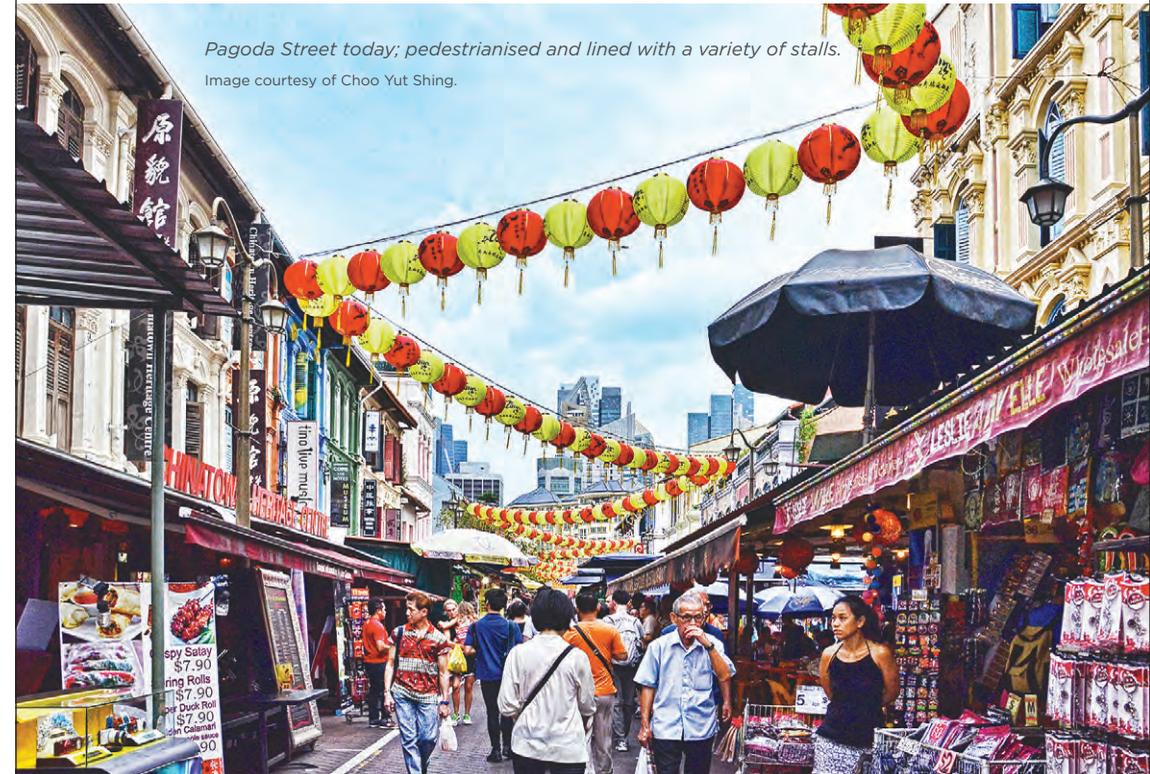
The report unveiled several bold ideas to attract more visitors. Parts of Chinatown and other historic districts would be conserved, and existing attractions such as Haw Par Villa would be enhanced. All shops would be required to display price tags. The Task Force further recommended an ambitious target of hosting five million tourists a year by 1990—an increase of two million over the number hosted in 1984.

"We in Singapore, came to a critical point of change. Sad to say, the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board and Singapore had no macro or long-term plan for the development of Singapore's infrastructure. In fact, the Tourism Task Force Report, a document rushed out within three months, was the first high-level document to recognise the importance of tourism industry and tourism infrastructure. The prevailing philosophy had been to allow market forces to rule; to let the private sector take the lead... The STPB had to change from a passive to an active role, with a crisis on our hands, none of us could afford to sit around and wait for others to do the job."¹²¹

Pamela Lee, Head of Product Development Division, STPB

The government had long perceived old Chinatown and other historical districts as places of value, and had been reluctant to clear these areas.¹²² However, it was also challenging to restore and enhance these districts due to the fragmented nature of land ownership, and the existence of rent controls. Landlords had little incentive to maintain their buildings well, since they could not charge higher rent for the improved buildings.

To resolve these problems, Mrs Pamela Lee organised a conservation study trip and invited the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Heritage Committee to conduct a study of Chinatown together with STPB and URA in May 1985.¹²³ This presented a window of opportunity for URA, which had been “waiting for the right time”,¹²⁴ to unveil some of its existing conservation plans.



The PATA Task Force report entitled Singapore's Chinatown: Planning for Conservation and Tourism, recommended that tour bus parking be situated at the periphery, so that tourists could experience Chinatown on foot with the introduction of carefully designed interpretive markers. Several urban planning steps were proposed, including the rehabilitation of existing housing and preparation for new residences, and the designation of the adjoining Tanjong Pagar area as an “architectural conservation laboratory.” The “software” attractions of Chinatown were also enhanced by re-introducing street hawkers and night markets. The Task Force advised that Singapore “approach rehabilitation work in a slow, deliberate manner. Let it take place over a number of years to assure minimal impact on the present residents and businesses.”¹²⁵

A SINGAPOREAN THEME PARK: HAW PAR VILLA

Haw Par Villa was one of Singapore's top leisure spots from the 1950s to the early 1980s, a marvel to both tourists and residents.¹²⁶ Built in 1937 by Mr Aw Boon Haw for his brother Mr Aw Boon Par, with whom he made a large fortune from a menthol ointment called Tiger Balm, Haw Par Villa was a millionaire's mansion with a huge fantasy garden.¹²⁷ As it was customary in pre-war Singapore for successful entrepreneurs to perform philanthropic deeds, the brothers decided to open the gardens to the public, so that people could "enjoy and learn about traditional and moral values from Chinese folklore and mythology."¹²⁸

In line with the Tourism Task Force's proposals to revitalise the tourism industry, Haw Par Villa was acquired in 1985 for development into a world-class cultural theme park. US-based Economic Research Associates, which had conducted feasibility studies for Disney and other leading theme park conglomerates, was commissioned by STPB to study the viability of developing a theme park at Haw Par Villa. Being the only "Chinese Mythological Theme Park in the world",¹²⁹ attempts were made to appeal to a global audience by marrying cultural specificity with technological wizardry, a tried and tested formula for theme parks all over the world.¹³⁰

Private enterprises were invited to invest, in the hope that their commercial expertise would promote Singapore's positioning in the global leisure market. The tender was won by International Theme Parks (ITP), a conglomerate led by the beverage group, Fraser and Neave, and Times Publishing. It was given explicit instructions to develop the park as an Oriental Disneyland that would attract locals and tourists, just like Disneyland and the Epcot Center in the US.¹³¹ Following a revamp costing some S\$44.5 million, Haw Par Villa, also popularly known as Tiger Balm Gardens, was renamed Dragon World.¹³²

Unfortunately, Dragon World was a losing venture. It was avoided by both locals "who found the park too expensive and too commercialised", and tourists "whose short length of visit of 3.5 days meant that shopping took a higher priority."¹³³ The initial popularity of the park had been due to novelty, and more had to be done to cater to the locals who comprised the bulk of the visitors.

Eventually, the park's name reverted to Haw Par Villa in 1995, and both the Aw family's history and Chinese culture were consciously emphasised and marketed. In the face of weak interest from the young and competition from other entertainment and lifestyle options, Haw Par Villa fought an uphill battle.

In 2000, with the park lacking signs of revival, suggestions emerged that it could be demolished to make way for more lucrative investments. An argument cited in a journal claimed that "we have to answer to the taxpayers... if indeed the visitorship is poor, we have got to move on. We will run it... if it does not work out, we will have to give it up and return the land to the government."¹³⁴

Haw Par Villa was returned to STB in March 2001.¹³⁵ Responding to passionate pleas for its conservation and growing concerns over the destruction of cultural heritage in the course of economic development, STB planned for the restoration of the park to its pre-1985 form by the end of 2002. Haw Par Villa was "reconfigured" to its original, smaller size and all traces of theme park fixtures were removed.¹³⁶ Entry was made free-of-charge and by April 2003, the National Heritage Board designated it as a historical site. STB stated that it would prefer for the exhibits to "tell their own stories" instead of commercialising it.¹³⁷ Today, STB is committed to maintaining Haw Par Villa's relevance, continuing to seek ways to maintain its unique heritage and relevance, through organising special events at heritage sites.¹³⁸



INSPIRING LOCAL CONSERVATION: TANJONG PAGAR

Conservation policy presents a challenge for many governments trying to strike an optimal balance between retaining the heritage, history and “soul” of a city, and maximising the economic potential of scarce land through redevelopment and intensification of land use. In Singapore, tourism development and conservation policy complemented each other.

The pilot project from the Master Plan for conservation in May 1987 involved 32 vacant shophouses along Tanjong Pagar Road.¹³⁹ Was conservation economically worthwhile for Singapore? Mr Goh Hup Chor, former Deputy Chief Planner, explained that “the best way to know the answer is to restore one building and see how much it costs. We restored one building in Neil Road. From the process, we learnt the costs. We then generated the details.”¹⁴⁰

The restoration of conserved buildings requires considerable expenditure. Some of these went into details such as roof detailing to suit Singapore’s tropical rainfall,¹⁴¹ proper drainage to protect the foundations of the already dilapidated shophouses, modern plumbing and fire safety measures.¹⁴² In view of this, the government did not acquire and restore conservation buildings prior to selling them to private developers. Instead, the government provided incentives such as lifting rent control under the Controlled Premises (Special Provisions) Act to enable landlords to recover possession of their building for conservation and restoration, and waiving car parking charges. It also waived development charges, which are levies imposed when approval is given to carry out development that will increase the value of the land, for instance through the re-zoning of land to a higher value use.¹⁴³

To encourage businesses to conserve and use conservation buildings and support other livelihoods in the area, there was even a moratorium of three years before the government will intervene and reacquire the land. In the interim, to facilitate development before the Sale of Sites, the URA trimmed the elongated shop-houses and cleared their backyards to allow for the installation of a sewerage sanitation system.

Goh recalled that the Sale of Sites for conservation buildings was conducted in phases, and the unsold units from each phase were repeatedly offered again in successive sales. Detailed guidelines were provided so that developers could restore the buildings without much hassle. In time, the demand for conservation buildings grew. Ironically, the least desirable units were sold in later phases for the highest prices. Today, the shophouses in the Tanjong Pagar area house a range of unique restaurants, shops and other attractions for tourists and residents alike, demonstrating the wisdom of the early decisions to retain the historical significance of the area.



The shophouses along Neil Road in the Tanjong Pagar area have maintained their historical façade, but house a wide range of businesses that attract both locals and tourists.

Image courtesy of Nicolas Lannuzel.

TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PLAN: THE FIRST TOURISM MASTER PLAN

Singapore experienced its first economic recession since independence in 1985. This prompted a fundamental re-examination of Singapore's economic development strategies and, consequently, its tourism development plans.

The weaknesses of Singapore's economy and the causes of the recession were brought to light by the Economic Committee in February 1986, a high-level public-private sector initiative led by Mr Lee Hsien Loong, then Minister of State for Trade and Industry. The Committee assessed that the recession was due to a loss of competitiveness given the higher costs of doing business in Singapore, the construction slump and its effects, and excessive saving in a slow economy.¹⁴⁴ A third of Singapore's annual economic growth came from construction—an unsustainable trend. When the construction boom ended, there was an oversupply of office and commercial buildings.¹⁴⁵ To make matters worse, 20 new hotels were scheduled to open from 1985 to 1990, adding 12,000 more rooms to the existing 17,000. Visitor arrivals had to increase by 32% in 1986 alone, to fill the additional 6,400 rooms that would be completed that year.¹⁴⁶ Many were concerned that the vast sums of money spent on large hotels and shopping centres would go to waste.¹⁴⁷

The private sector had been developing some of Singapore's major tourist attractions such as the Haw Par Villa and the Singapore River. But in 1986 only 25% of Singapore's major tourist attractions were privately run. This was considered an unhealthy and inefficient situation. Dr Wong Kwei Chong, former chairman of STPB, said, "Tourism is a major industry and we must rely on private enterprise to sustain and develop the industry."¹⁴⁸

With the need to fundamentally rethink Singapore's tourism strategy, Pannell Kerr Forster, a business consultancy and accountancy firm from the United States, was commissioned to follow up on the work of the Tourism Task Force. Five consultants with experience in heritage conservation, architecture, theme parks and tourism development planning prepared the report. They projected that "the enhancement of Chinatown and the Singapore River as historic preservation districts can increase potential occupancies of hotels by 369,000 room nights in 1988." Meanwhile, the increased hotel occupancy would increase total expenditure in Singapore by about S\$70 million in 1988.¹⁴⁹ The consultants recommended that "Singapore should be promoted for what it is—a modern city with a historic past."¹⁵⁰

Consequently, in October 1986, the government released the Tourism Product Development Plan which featured three main objectives: increasing the number of visitors, their length of stay, and tourist expenditure.¹⁵¹ The plan allocated S\$1 billion to preservation and restoration projects for key buildings; upgrading historical areas and landmarks through a Heritage Link; redeveloping Fort Canning Park and Haw Par Villa; the re-creation of Bugis Street; and development of Sentosa and Lazarus Islands. The conservation project in Chinatown would serve as a pilot for other historic areas such as Little India and the Malay cultural districts of Geylang Serai and Kampong Glam.

Five major themes in the plan emphasised the exotic east, colonial heritage, tropical island resort, a clean and green garden city, and international sporting events. Two of them dealt primarily with heritage conservation, while the others dealt with recreation and programmes. The report also highlighted the need to provide a sense of place to the local population, fostering national pride while encouraging greater acceptance of tourism by residents as visitor numbers grew.

TOURISM AS A CATALYST FOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION

The underlying philosophy of the conservation of Singapore's historical areas was that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts."¹⁵² This meant that conservation did not stop at individual buildings of historical value, but sought to preserve the distinctive look and character of an entire area, including traditional activities that were characteristic of the place.¹⁵³

In 1984, the URA began restoration efforts in Emerald Hill. This was followed by joint conservation studies with STPB in Chinatown, the Singapore River, Little India and Kampong Glam in 1985. The findings resulted in the URA's draft Conservation Master Plan, released in December 1986. Many residents in these historic districts were relieved that their properties would be conserved, rather than compulsorily acquired for redevelopment.¹⁵⁴ In February 1989, Parliament passed the Planning (Amendment) Act. The Act established conservation as a planning function, and designated the URA as Singapore's national conservation authority, which would issue guidelines for the conservation of any buildings or land within a conservation area. Several conservation areas were also officially gazetted. Most significantly, any construction works carried out within conservation areas would be subject to planning control, empowering the URA to impose conditions and require compliance with the guidelines it had issued.¹⁵⁵

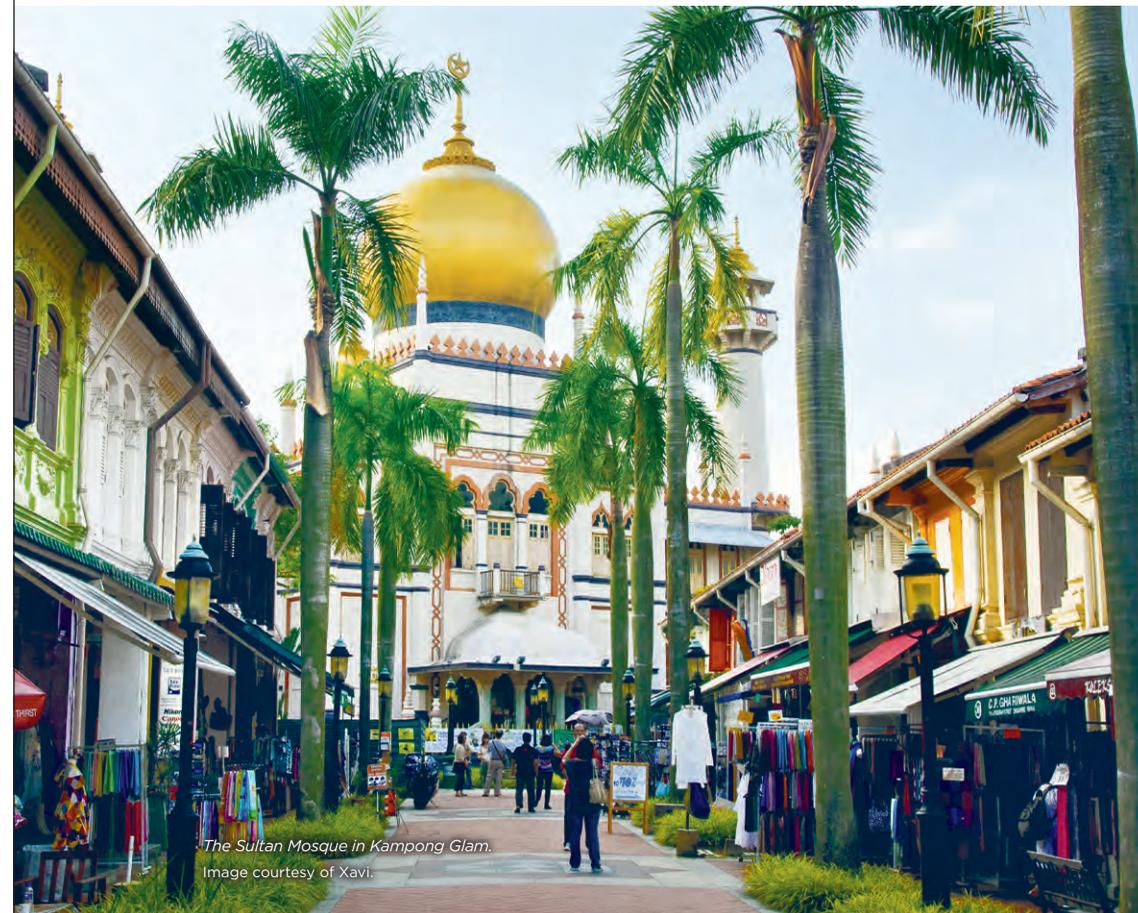
The local context of conservation is best described by former Deputy Chief Planner Mr Goh Hup Chor, who said, “The terminology ‘conservation’ is used in a more relaxed sense here; it is ‘preservation’ that is more strict.”¹⁵⁶ From the 1980s, Singapore promoted the adaptive use of conserved buildings, allowing them to be used in new ways rather than insisting on retaining the original occupants and trades. The government did not want to artificially sustain obsolete trades by imposing rent controls, as this would reduce the owners’ incentives to maintain their buildings. As Mrs Koh-Lim Wen Gin, URA’s former Chief Planner and Deputy Chief Executive Officer commented, “We see our heritage buildings and areas as living areas, living museums. Not as a ‘museum-museum.’ Clarke Quay does a bit of that. But it cannot be expected that every conservation area will become a ‘museum-museum’.”¹⁵⁷

Mrs Pamela Lee explained that Singapore’s prior approach to conservation had been vastly different, because the earlier Preservation of Monuments Board Act required the Board to maintain whatever it had decided to preserve. This approach was based more on cultural and historical priorities, and resulted in the preservation of many churches, temples and mosques.¹⁵⁸ However, the maintenance of an ever-growing list of preserved buildings and sites might have proven unsustainable in the long run. It was more financially feasible to allow the adaptive usage of conserved buildings. This lowered the cost of conservation, and allowed more buildings to be conserved.

The low-rise, historic districts were mostly located on prime land in the central area, so there was a significant economic opportunity cost to conserving them. However, according to Mr Goh Hup Chor, “[conservation was] saved by the fact that there was slow economic growth [in the mid-1980s], and there were [large tracts of] available reclaimed land” at Marina South.¹⁵⁹ This alleviated the pressure to redevelop the historic districts. The planners compensated for the lost plot ratio¹⁶⁰ and gross floor area (GFA)¹⁶¹ by increasing the plot ratios and intensifying the land use in the Marina area instead. The Central Business District could now expand towards Marina South, ensuring sufficient land in the city centre for future commercial use,¹⁶² and lowering the opportunity cost of conservation.

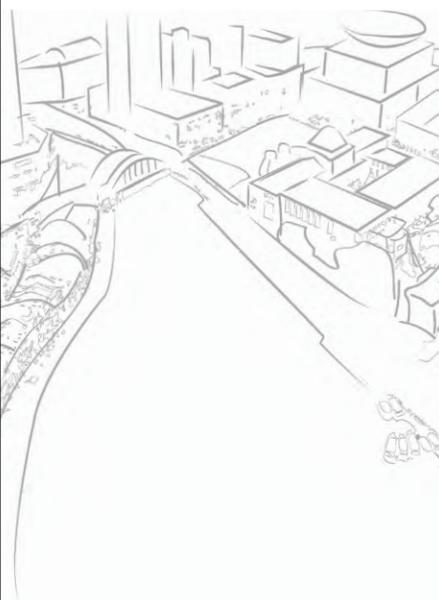
CONSERVATION AND REVITALISATION OF HISTORICAL AREAS

Some of the conserved historical areas needed more attention than others. Chinatown was a concern because it had lost its original population and was too quiet. Fortunately, the other ethnic districts of Little India and Kampong Glam needed less attention. The former continued to be a vibrant hub of cultural and business activity, while the latter “maintained the dignity of its history and religious focal point around the great Sultan Mosque.”¹⁶³ Similarly, the Civic District needed less urgent attention because the government buildings and institutions were still being used and therefore maintained.



The Sultan Mosque in Kampong Glam.
Image courtesy of Xavi.

EBB AND FLOW OF AN ECONOMIC ARTERY: THE SINGAPORE RIVER



In 1977, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew initiated a project to clean up and rejuvenate the Singapore River and its banks. Historically a prime artery for maritime cargo and trade flowing in and out of the city centre, it had become heavily polluted and congested, and the surrounding godowns and shophouses were not well maintained.

As the project progressed, the 1984 Tourism Task Force recognised that it “opened up numerous prospects to develop [the Singapore River] into a unique tourist attraction that [would] appeal to a diverse mix of tourists of all nationalities. If properly developed, it [could] bring back romance and life into the inner city.”¹⁶⁴

The regeneration of the river was more than a physical cleaning process. Earlier resettlement of the various activities along the riverbank had left many vacant buildings behind. In the absence of further action, the area was susceptible to desertion, illegal occupancy and crime. The government had to plan ahead to prevent this. Two years before the clean-up was completed, a Singapore River Concept Plan was prepared in May 1985. This Concept Plan envisaged the Singapore River as a corridor for commercial and leisure activities, and planned to enhance the character of the area by retaining old buildings with historical and architectural merit, while constructing new buildings on a compatible scale.

Three development zones were identified—Boat Quay, Clarke Quay and Robertson Quay. These zones were later linked by a 15-metre wide promenade along the river bank. With the earlier relocation of the port and wharves, the redevelopment of the river bank would give the area a new economic role, initiate a sustainable revitalisation process and enhance the value of land along the river bank, while conserving the rich architectural heritage along the river.¹⁶⁵

Once again, close collaboration between government agencies played a key role in delivering results, such as putting boats back on the river. The Environment Ministry controlled the upper length of the river, which served as a large drain to clear off excess monsoon rainfall. The Port of Singapore Authorities controlled boat and taxi boat licenses, and had jurisdiction over the brackish section of the river where freshwater met with the sea. The Public Works Department managed the walkways along the river banks, where the little kiosks for boat ticket sales had to be built. The Urban Redevelopment Authority controlled land use at the jetty points, and the Land Office had to grant Temporary Occupation Licences (TOL) before any landings could be used.¹⁶⁶

While government agencies exercised flexibility to facilitate the success of the rejuvenation project, hygiene and safety standards had to be maintained. Dr Tan Gee Paw, then Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment, recalled that riverside dining was allowed within strict guidelines such as prohibitions on cooking and washing outdoors, and dumping of waste into the river. The government installed a mechanical system to drain flotsam, dredged the riverbed regularly, and tested water samples to ensure an acceptable level of cleanliness. Dr Tan stressed that tourism and leisure developments at the Singapore River should not affect the Ministry’s larger objective of ensuring healthy waters in Singapore.¹⁶⁷

Building on these efforts, the detailed Development Guide Plan (DGP) for the Singapore River established in 1994 aimed to transform it into “an exciting activity corridor that capitalises on the river frontage and reflects the unique historical character of the area.”¹⁶⁸ The URA and STB were instrumental in giving the Singapore River a new lease of life. On the one hand, URA was concerned with the hardware of heritage conservation and preservation of buildings; on the other hand, STB was more focused on the software of activities and attractions.

EBB AND FLOW OF AN ECONOMIC ARTERY: THE SINGAPORE RIVER

Continued...

The Singapore River Businesses Committee was formed in April 1996 to bring stakeholders together. Among the members were river cruise operators, relevant government agencies such as the URA and the Land Transport Authority (LTA), developers with riverside projects (Development Bank of Singapore Land, City Developments Limited and Far East Organisation), and the Boat Quay Association of Businesses.

Interestingly, a government study visit to the San Antonio River, Texas, in 1998 yielded valuable insights, including the importance of stabilising the water level to create a more intimate experience and raise the value of the riverside land. This was especially significant for the Singapore River, because the tidal difference was three metres and the river looked unsightly at low tide.

To stabilise the water level, a dam had to be built across the Marina Basin to create a large fresh water lake. Then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had, in fact, raised this possibility after the clean-up of the Singapore River in the 1980s, but existing technologies at the time could not treat the water in the basin at a reasonable cost.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Mrs Pamela Lee saw an opportunity to plan ahead. While the URA, Ministry of the Environment and the Public Works Department could not yet build the Marina Barrage, the agencies could decide what the optimal water level in the Marina Basin and Singapore River should be. This would establish a common parameter for agencies to plan and build around, so that there would be no need to rebuild the sea wall or jetty points if the water level was stabilised in the future.¹⁷⁰

This vision was eventually achieved. The construction of the Marina Barrage separated water in the Marina Basin from the sea. Today, the barrage serves as a water catchment reservoir, a tool for flood control, and a recreational attraction. It has also increased the value of the surrounding waterfront land.

These initiatives over the decades illustrate how sound planning and developmental interventions can transform and rejuvenate the spatial and social fabric of an area, turning dilapidated river banks and polluted river into a popular lifestyle attraction for residents and tourists alike. Success depended on cooperation between various public and private stakeholders, and careful balancing of conservation and environmental factors against economic and financial considerations.



Marina Barrage.

Image courtesy of Jimmy Foo.

In 1986, URA announced its first Conservation Master Plan, focusing on the conservation of entire districts rather than individual buildings. It formed part of the Central Area Structure Plan to guide Singapore's future growth and development. Private sector cooperation was crucial for success, because some 75% of the target areas were privately owned. As such, while the URA designed and implemented some conservation projects on state land, its larger role was that of a facilitator. It coordinated the provision of infrastructure like pedestrian malls and plazas, and provided guidelines for private participation. Meanwhile, it made efforts to understand the difficulties faced by owners and tenants in implementing its conservation programme.¹⁷¹

Within hours of publicising this draft Conservation Master Plan, URA received a call from the French Embassy in Singapore, inviting them to visit conservation sites in France as guests of the French government. The French further offered to hire a consultant of STPB's choice, and attach him to STPB. Didier Repellin, a French expert who had overseen conservation in whole districts in Lyon, was selected. With his assistance, the government developed a common set of conservation guidelines to facilitate active involvement by the private sector.

HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT AND LIGHTING UP THE CITY

Subsequent development efforts in the city focused on the Civic and Cultural District. This District comprises a "cultural" belt from Fort Canning Park through Bras Basah Road to Empress Place,¹⁷² and features unique colonial-era buildings, as well as historical sites that commemorate milestones in Singapore's history. While tourism product development was one objective, URA's overall Master Plan for the Civic and Cultural District also sought to address the growing need for cultural and entertainment venues in the city. A Heritage Link project was proposed, to improve accessibility and link the developments between the adjacent areas of Orchard, Marina South, the Singapore River and Fort Canning Park.

Raffles Hotel had been considered the anchor attraction for the Heritage project and the "Crown Jewel" of the tourist industry.¹⁷³ Built in 1887, the hotel was Singapore's most famous monument and synonymous with Singapore. However, the building itself had deteriorated considerably over the years. Restoring the hotel to its former splendour would benefit the adjacent Raffles City project and Marina Centre hotels, while enhancing the character of the Civic District.

There was one major complication: Raffles Hotel stood on land owned by two major banks—the Development Bank of Singapore and Overseas Chinese Banking Corporation Limited. This complicated the process of restoring the building. To facilitate the process of restoration, Raffles Hotel was subsequently gazetted as a national monument in 1987, and came under the legal protection of the Preservation of Monuments Board. Next, the government acquired and put out the lease for the land adjacent to the hotel for public tender, because the government and the STPB were keen to enlarge the hotel by developing adjacent land behind it.¹⁷⁴ Enlarging the hotel was seen as a way of increasing the economic viability of the hotel and therefore helping to preserve it. Eventually, the two banks won the bid because their design closely followed "the architectural style and intensity of use of Raffles Hotel."¹⁷⁵ Given the significance of Raffles Hotel, URA formulated specific guidelines for the project, and appointed an Architectural Design Panel to oversee the conservation work.¹⁷⁶

PERFECTING THE JEWEL

By the 1990s, Singapore's tourism infrastructure was generally well developed, and her clean and green environment was an asset that appealed to visitors. In 1993, a Strategic Plan for Growth was released. It took stock of the achievements since the implementation of the Tourism Product Development Plan, and called for the refinement of existing attractions, rather than creating new ones. This strategy was termed "Perfecting the Jewel." With growing public awareness among Singaporean residents of the value of heritage landscapes, planners had to ensure that the historical and cultural resources of the city-state were carefully managed in order to cater to both locals and tourists.¹⁷⁷

As part of this initiative, planners began work on a district lighting plan for the city centre. They hoped that this would enhance the image of Singapore as a vibrant night city, leave a lasting impression on visitors, and serve as a source of pride for Singaporeans. In concrete terms, good and aesthetically pleasing lighting would encourage strolling at night, enhance the architectural wealth of the Civic District, and highlight parks and open spaces.¹⁷⁸

LIGHTING UP THE CITY: ORCHARD ROAD AND THE CIVIC DISTRICT



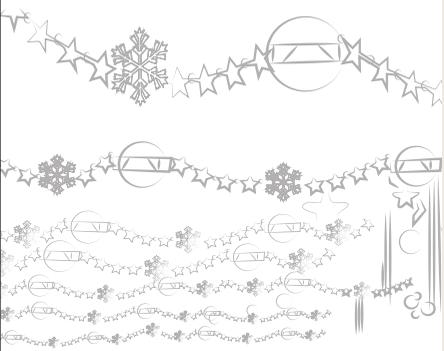
The annual Christmas light-up along Orchard Road is a popular attraction during the festive season.
Image courtesy of Hitachi Group of Companies.

Singapore's first Christmas light-up in December 1984 was the initiative of Dr Wong Kwei Cheong, former Minister of State for Trade and Industry, and chairman of the STPB. The event was jointly organised by the STPB, Singapore Hotel Association, Singapore Retail Merchants Association and National Association of Travel Agents, Singapore. The STPB financed the entire project with the goal of promoting Singapore as a vibrant city, and for the benefit of both Singaporeans and tourists.

STPB's Assistant Facilitation Officer Mr M. H. Sajid, who coordinated the project together with the Divisional Director of Tourism Services Ms Sharon Wong, related how they spent many nights supervising and testing the lights beforehand. He felt then that "Singaporeans had missed the cheer that lights could bring during a festive season." More than 100,000 Christmas bulbs were installed over a two-kilometre stretch from Ming Court Hotel (now known as Orchard Parade Hotel) to the Istana, which cost S\$30 per hour to light at the time. The display formed a "tunnel" of light linking the entire hotel and shopping belt.

LIGHTING UP THE CITY: ORCHARD ROAD AND THE CIVIC DISTRICT

Continued...



Once again, close cooperation among agencies was required to make the light-up a success. Electrical power for the display was tapped with permission from the Public Utilities Board (PUB) from the high-power overground boxes along the route, as well as from the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) worksite at the Orchard Road and Paterson Road junction.¹⁷⁹ Approvals, permits and assistance were also sought from the Traffic Police, PUB, the Public Works Department (PWD), Parks and Recreation Department (now the National Parks Board, or NParks), and MRT Corporation.

Following the positive response and great enthusiasm from the public, it was decided that the Christmas street lights and illumination contest would be an annual affair. Festive light-ups were later organised in other locations during other festive seasons such as Chinatown during Chinese New Year, Little India during Deepavali and Geylang Serai during the Hari Raya Puasa period.

Singapore's approach to lighting the Civic District was qualitatively different. The lighting would be permanent rather than seasonal, and cover all public and private buildings, street lamps and parks in the Civic District. In 1991, The Civic District Steering Committee invited tenders for a lighting plan for the Civic District, with two test zones—Istana Park and Empress Place. Mr Louis Clair from Light Cibles, a renowned lighting consultancy from France, won the bid.¹⁸⁰

A few years later in 1993, Mr Ong Beng Seng, then managing director of Hotel Properties Limited, agreed with the Committee that the bridges along the Singapore River would also benefit from such lighting.¹⁸¹ He paid for the first consultancy session of the project, which STPB subsequently took over. Four bridges along the Singapore River: Anderson, Cavenagh, Elgin and Coleman bridges were lit up as part of this project.¹⁸² By 1995, with Mr Clair as consultant, URA completed the Civic District Lighting Plan and Guidebook—a comprehensive lighting plan for public and private developers to refer to when lighting their projects.

As before, close cooperation between government agencies and private building owners was a crucial factor in achieving results. PWD was in charge of public works and roads, and oversaw the lighting of roads, bridges and public buildings; NParks controlled the lighting of parks; URA provided guidance on the city centre's appearance and style; and private property owners managed the lighting of their buildings.

Today, the glittering lights that dot the Singapore skyline at night exude elegance and accentuates the vibrancy of the city centre, creating an area of distinctive identity on par with great cities like London and Paris.¹⁸³

TOURISM 21 MASTER PLAN

With the completion of the 1986 Tourism Product Development Plan, the STB formulated a new master plan in 1996. Entitled “Tourism 21—Vision of a Tourism Capital”, the plan aimed to achieve 10 million visitor arrivals and S\$16 billion in tourism receipts by 2000, with an initial budget of S\$600 million.

Fundamentally, the Tourism 21 plan was a response to rapid changes in the tourism and leisure industry worldwide, as well as within Singapore. Regional tourist destinations were opening up, and many of these were situated in larger countries blessed with a diversity of natural landscapes, rich cultures and historical attractions.¹⁸⁴ Singapore’s attractiveness as a tourism destination had also been affected by the rising cost of living, high labour costs and a strong Singapore dollar, as well as the high cost of air travel to and from Singapore relative to other Asian destinations. Major technological changes such as online travel websites were radically changing the business environment for the tourism industry, and changing lifestyles were creating in new preferences and travel patterns.

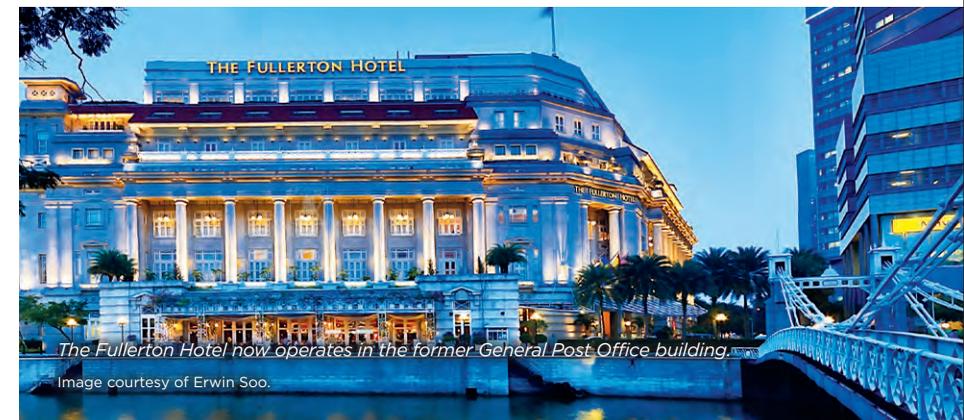
Tourism 21 sought to capture a larger share of the growing Asia-Pacific tourist market, while offering international tourists more memorable holiday experiences to encourage longer stays and repeat visits to Singapore. This required a renewed focus on “software”—quality activities and programmes, and on revitalising different neighbourhoods.¹⁸⁵ The plan recommended the development of Chinatown into a “colourful ethnic zone”.



*The General Post Office (left) at Fullerton Square in the early 1900s.
Image from Arshak C Galstain Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

This would serve as the pilot project for a larger scheme to create eleven distinct tourist districts. A new Tourism Development Assistance scheme was introduced to promote the upgrading of tourism industry standards. Lastly, a 60,000-square metre exhibition centre would be built to replace the former World Trade Centre exhibition halls, and to cater to the future growth of the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions & Exhibitions (MICE) industry.¹⁸⁶

These plans complemented Singapore’s larger strategy of regionalisation in the 1980s and 1990s. Earlier, the 1986 Economic Committee had raised concerns over the limits to growth in Singapore due to land and resource constraints and rising costs. The perceived solution was for Singapore to grow its external economy and forge mutually beneficial economic partnerships beyond its shores. For tourism, it was hoped that regionalisation would encourage more visitors and stimulate the industry, in line with the Japanese principle of “shakkei” (借景), or “borrowed scenery”, which uses the attractiveness of external elements to achieve greater overall attractiveness. To reflect this, a new destination branding, “New Asia—Singapore” was proposed. Dr Tan Chin Nam, former STB Chief Executive Officer, explained that Singapore would be repositioned as a unique mix of heritage and modernity.¹⁸⁷ This would be reflected in projects such as the refurbishment of Raffles Hotel, and the conversion of the colonial-era Fullerton Post Office headquarters into a luxury hotel. Finally, various districts with a “unifying character or storyline,” and a distinctive culture and heritage, arts or entertainment scene were identified by STB and URA.¹⁸⁸ These included Chinatown, the Singapore River and Orchard Road.



*The Fullerton Hotel now operates in the former General Post Office building.
Image courtesy of Erwin Soo.*

A SOFTWARE BLUEPRINT: THE CHINATOWN EXPERIENCE GUIDE PLAN (EGP)



In the early 1980s, Chinatown was Singapore's top tourist attraction. An important heritage area, it was classified as a "Historic District" in the 1986 Urban Conservation Master Plan, and an "Ethnic Quarter" in the "Ethnic Singapore" thematic zone within the Tourism 21 Master Plan. It was hence a natural candidate for the pilot project on thematic development.

Since 1983, the dynamics and life of Chinatown had changed. The government relocated all street hawkers into a centralised hawker centre—Chinatown Complex—with improved sanitation and hygiene. The rapid development of self-sufficient HDB housing estates also removed the need for Chinese families to shop at Chinatown. Inadvertently, Chinatown had become less relevant to many people's lives. According to former STB Chief Executive, Mr Yeo Khee Leng, Chinatown then lacked activity and spirit. "We had the hardware, but there were encumbrances such as the heat, lack of packaging and absence of life. We needed to recapture the spirit and recreate it in order to bring it alive."¹⁸⁹

Unlike previous efforts that focused on physical changes, the multi-agency effort to revitalise Chinatown prioritised activities, programmes and lifestyle. Because STB was primarily an experiential planning agency rather than a development agency, the effort was termed an "Experience Guide Plan" (EGP), a nod to URA's Developmental Guide Plans in the 1990s. Immediately, the agencies recognised that the Chinatown of old could not be recreated. The EGP did not seek to bring back the past, but to revitalise the spirit of Chinatown.

However, the public launch of the EGP resulted in public concern and strongly-worded media articles, with titles like "Chinatown as theme park?", "For residents, not tourists", "Don't



freeze or pretty it up, let it grow to meet our needs" and "Don't sanitise Chinatown". Some were concerned that the result would be an inauthentic and contrived Orientalist theme park for tourists, instead of organic development that catered to the needs of the local community.¹⁹⁰

In response, STB held a public briefing at the Kreta Ayer Community Centre, inviting the public and media to share their views and proposals for the revitalisation of Chinatown. Following this, the EGP committee reviewed its initiatives and continued to consult with various groups, including Chinatown residents and academics. As a result, proposals such as the Village Theatre and Elemental Gardens were shelved, and the "theming" of Chinatown was withdrawn. This episode emphasised the growing need for tourism development strategies to be developed in tune with public sentiments, with more involved consultation from the public in order to encourage acceptance.

In spite of these initial setbacks, there were positive outcomes. Street hawking returned after a hiatus of about 20 years, and instrumental partnerships such as the Chinatown Business Association (CBA) in 1999 were created to spearhead further place-making efforts. CBA has been appointed the operator of the Chinatown Street Market since 2004.¹⁹¹ Today, Chinatown is once again bustling with activity. And although the vibe is different from that of yesteryear, its refreshed atmosphere is still popular with both tourists and residents.

CHAPTER 3

SEEKING DISTINCTION AS A CITY (FROM THE 1990S)



Will Singapore be part of this new world, or will we be bypassed and left behind? We seek to be a global city, attracting talent from around the world, lively, vibrant, and fun to live and work in. We want Singapore to have the X factor—that buzz that you get in London, Paris or New York.... We cannot stand still... if we become a backwater, just one of many ordinary cities in Asia, instead of being a cosmopolitan hub of the region, then many good jobs will be lost, and all Singaporeans will suffer. We cannot afford that.¹⁹²

Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore

BECOMING A GLOBAL CITY

By the early 2000s, tourism had become a highly visible industry. Landmark attractions like the Singapore River, Clarke Quay and the Esplanade had come to define Singapore's city centre and skyline for both locals and tourists.

However, the tourism sector did not fare well, relative to the rest of Singapore's economy in the 1990s and early 2000s. From 1993 to 2002, visitor arrivals stagnated at between 6.5 to 7.5 million a year, while tourism receipts tumbled 17% from S\$11.3 billion to S\$9.4 billion.¹⁹³ In the face of growing regional competition from destinations such as Malaysia and Thailand, visitors were also staying in Singapore for shorter periods—just over three days. Minister for Trade and Industry at the time, Mr Lim Hng Kiang, revealed that tourism's contribution to Singapore's GDP (gross domestic product) had fallen by half, from 6.1% in 1993 to 3% in 2002.¹⁹⁴ With Singapore's scarce land and limited labour force, the tourism sector was also facing increased competition for talent and resources from other growing industries.

To make matters worse, Singapore had been significantly affected by global developments: the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-1998, the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York in 2001, and the United States dot-com bust of 2000-2002 shook global confidence and hit Singapore's export-dependent economy hard. Soon after, a regional outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) diverted tourism away from East Asia. Overall, business arrivals fell to six million in 2003, and average hotel occupancy rates fell to around 20% to 30%, compared to normal levels of 70% and above; retail sales declined between 10% to 50%. Some restaurants' revenues were halved and taxi drivers' incomes were significantly reduced. During the worst months, hotel occupancy fell below 10% in April and May, and inbound visitor arrivals fell by 15% in March and 61% in the first 13 days of April.¹⁹⁵ The outbreak was arrested by May 2003, through rigorous and concerted efforts by the government, private enterprises, civil society and the public, but economic sentiments remained sluggish.

In the face of these various setbacks, the government saw the need to coordinate and facilitate the periodic intensification and renewal of the tourism industry. Mr Lim stressed the importance of sustained commitment to, and investment in the tourism industry. He explained that “the more attractive we are as a tourism destination, the easier it is for us to develop our convention and exhibition industry, and grow as an aviation hub... Apart from a number of sizeable investments in cultural attractions such as the Esplanade and the museums, we have not made major investments in tourism attractions over the past decade. The last significant investment in a tourist attraction was really the Night Safari in 1994. Moreover, several tourism investments made in the early 1990s turned out unsuccessful, like the Haw Par Villa, Tang Dynasty City, Asian Village and Fantasy Island.”¹⁹⁶

In the 2000s, familiar tourism attractions such as Orchard Road were spruced up, while newly-built, iconic attractions reshaped the Singapore skyline and waterfront to a far greater extent than in previous decades. The government also made a concerted effort to draw top quality global sporting and cultural events such as the Formula One race and Broadway musicals to Singapore for the benefit of both residents and visitors. These initiatives required constant collaboration with the private sector. For instance, through the Sale of Sites programme using a fixed land price, a “Request for Concept” tender was called to build two integrated resorts, tapping on private sector networks reaching beyond Singapore. Government efforts at place-making and rejuvenation of historical areas displayed more sensitivity and sophistication than in previous decades, reflecting the more discerning preferences of both Singaporeans and tourists for authenticity and local flavour.

GROWING ECONOMIC VOLATILITY AND THE REVITALISATION OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

In response to the economic downturns in the late 1990s and early 2000s, an Economic Review Committee (ERC) comprising representatives from the private sector, public sector and academia was set up in December 2001 to review current policies and advise on future economic strategies.

The ERC recommended that Singapore become a fully globalised economy and a key node in the global network of major economies; seek new growth prospects as a “creative and entrepreneurial nation” encouraging new ventures and innovation; and diversify its economy by encouraging dynamic local start-ups and companies to complement multi-national corporations (MNCs).¹⁹⁷

A Tourism Working Group (TWG) under the ERC Sub-Committee on Service Industries was formed to examine challenges faced by the tourism industry, and recommend measures to boost tourism’s economic contributions. The TWG recommended that Singapore proactively engage key and emerging markets, and focus on lucrative market segments with good potential such as education and medical tourism; encourage regional tourism; create distinctive tourism products and experiences; and establish a conducive environment for enterprises to thrive in a tourism ecosystem. Through these proposals, the Sub-committee assessed that Singapore could double both its visitor arrivals and tourism receipts, to 15 million visitors and S\$20 billion a year respectively, by 2012.¹⁹⁸

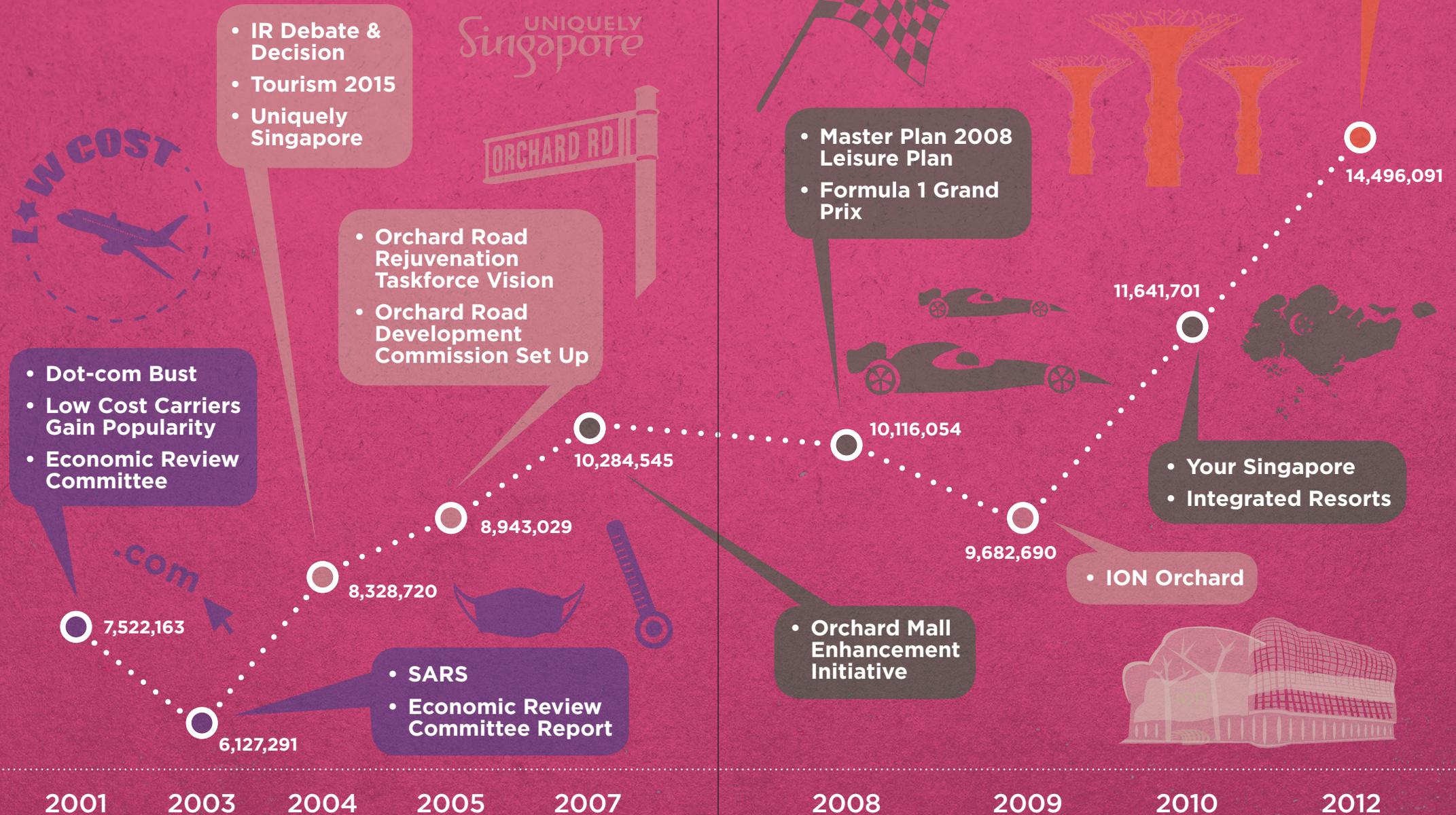
Shortly after the end of the SARS outbreak, visitor arrivals began to increase. In 2004, STB launched a “Tourism 2015” roadmap in consultation with industry partners in a bid to revitalise the sector. A more ambitious target of doubling visitor arrivals to 17 million, tripling tourism receipts to S\$30 billion and creating 100,000 new jobs was set. Tourism 2015’s three focus areas closely matched the ERC’s recommendations: to strengthen Singapore as a leading convention and exhibition city in Asia with a strong and dynamic business environment; to develop Singapore as a leading Asian leisure destination with engaging experiences that were “Uniquely Singapore”; and to establish Singapore as a top Asian destination for high-end services such as healthcare and education.

This roadmap complemented URA’s own plans to rejuvenate the new downtown area to meet the expanding needs of businesses, and to extend the tourist and commercial centres beyond the Orchard Road and Shenton Way belts.¹⁹⁹ URA further sought to create activity corridors for leisure and entertainment along Orchard Road, Bugis and Selegie, and from the Civic District to the new Downtown Core.

EXHIBIT 3

Significant Tourism Developments and Total Visitor Arrivals from 2000-2012

*Excludes Malaysian Citizens arriving by land





Gardens by the Bay.
Image courtesy of Jannick Timm.

REJUVENATION OF A SHOPPING CORRIDOR: ORCHARD ROAD

Orchard Road is Singapore's largest and most famous shopping and entertainment corridor. The development of Orchard Road and the growth of the tourism industry in Singapore are closely linked.

The former began as a stretch of nutmeg plantations and fruit orchards until the early 1900s. CK Tang department store, the first large retail centre along Orchard Road, opened in 1958.²⁰⁰ Subsequently, entertainment venues such as Lido Cinema, Orchard Theatre and Jackie's Bowl opened in the 1960s and 1970s, along with hotels such as Ming Court, Mandarin, Hilton and Singapura, to serve the bustling tourist trade. In the 1970s, it replaced High Street as the city's main shopping street after a devastating fire broke out at Robinson's Department Store in 1972.²⁰¹ By the 1980s, with three Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) subway stations—Orchard, Somerset and Dhoby Ghaut—located along the corridor, Orchard Road had become Singapore's "most accessible, intensive, and specialised shopping street" and the largest concentration of office space outside the Golden Shoe central business district.²⁰²

In contrast with many other attractions and districts in Singapore, Orchard Road was not originally conceived as a coherent shopping and entertainment street, but grew "piecemeal over time" through private entrepreneurial efforts.²⁰³ Much of the area is already fully developed. Land is scarce and planners must build upon what is already there. Constant innovation and rejuvenation is therefore essential to maintain the area's appeal.

The 2.5-kilometre road runs along a valley, and is naturally prone to flooding. Stamford Canal, which drains a catchment area of more than 600 hectares into Marina Bay, was built in the 1960s to alleviate the floods. From the 1970s, the Ministry of National Development (MND) and the Public Works Department (PWD) covered the canal to provide wide walkways or "pedestrian malls" on both sides of the street,²⁰⁴ and to improve its aesthetic qualities. Prior to that, in the words of Professor Menon, former Chief Transportation Engineer of PWD, the canal had simply been a "big unattractive *longkang* [drain]."²⁰⁵

Under the Tourism 21 plan, Orchard Road was identified as an opportunity area, as part of the "Mall of Singapore," which stretches from Orchard Road to Marina Square, with extensions to the ethnic districts. A facelift for Orchard Road was explicitly mentioned.²⁰⁶ STB worked closely with various development and planning agencies. The segmentation of Orchard Road into different zones targeting different consumer groups required URA's assistance with zoning and implementation, while LTA was closely involved due to the high traffic volume along Orchard Road, and NParks had been constantly maintaining the lush avenue of Angsana trees²⁰⁷ planted in the 1970s to provide shade for pedestrians.²⁰⁸ These agencies also collaborated with private stakeholders, such as the Orchard Road Business Association (ORBA), to ensure that the improvement measures addressed the needs of the businesses operating in the area.



REJUVENATION OF A SHOPPING CORRIDOR: ORCHARD ROAD

Continued...

Over the years, there have been various programmes and promotions to encourage more vibrant street life and attract more visitors, including the introduction of street busking and performances, temporary pedestrianisation and road closures on one Sunday per month between 1989 to 1992, and the annual Great Singapore Sale organised by STB in conjunction with the Singapore Retailers Association.²⁰⁹

The government has also used various incentives to achieve desired design and planning objectives. In the 1990s, mall developers were encouraged to build “urban verandas” which were really alfresco dining spaces on the second storeys of malls to provide vantage points of the street and serve as sheltered walkways for pedestrians. From 2004, developers were also offered extra gross floor area if they designed and constructed visually appealing building façades.

However, not all efforts to motivate the private sector to take on beneficial projects were successful. In 2004, URA offered grants for malls to construct underground pedestrian linkways beneath Orchard Road, but there was little interest. Underground construction was at least four times more expensive, and complex due to the need

to avoid utilities like cables and pipes, the underground canal, subway tunnels and the basements of other buildings. Ensuring ventilation to the tunnels was expensive, but building owners could only expect moderate rental yields for underground space. Furthermore, different stakeholders disagreed over the location of linkways, fearing a loss of human traffic from their premises. Undaunted, URA doubled the grant in 2012 but to no avail. With increasing pedestrian volumes, the authorities repaved the street-level walkways, installed street furniture, and closed one lane on the road to widen the pavements in front of Ion Orchard, Wisma Atria and Ngee Ann City shopping centres.²¹⁰ The underground linkways that exist today are largely due to pre-emptive planning and establishing conditions for planning approval, since such linkways are important to prepare for future increases in pedestrian traffic.²¹¹

To encourage greater private sector participation in the redevelopment of Orchard Road, the Orchard Road Development Commission (ORDEC) was set up in 2005. Based on ORDEC’s recommendation, proposals that are innovative and constructive were supported with development incentives and allowed some flexibility for deviations from existing planning parameters.²¹²

One significant use of planning instruments to rejuvenate Orchard Road was the designation of the land above Orchard MRT station as a landmark site, due to its location as the gateway to the shopping belt. This designation as a landmark site allowed for the development, Ion Orchard, to go beyond the 30-storey height limit of the surrounding buildings, as stipulated in the Master Plan 2003, providing opportunities for a prominent landmark to revitalise Orchard Road.²¹³ This led to the construction of the iconic Ion Orchard complex with cultural and civic spaces—an observation deck, an art exhibition space, space for public events, provisions for the surrounding tree-scape, as well as new or expanded underground links to Wheelock Place, Orchard MRT station and Wisma Atria.²¹⁴

To accelerate the growth of the tourism sector, to back the Tourism 2015 initiative launched by Minister Lim Hng Kiang in January 2015, the government set up a S\$2 billion Tourism Development Fund (TDF) to support initiatives in four areas—developing critical infrastructure to support tourism growth, encouraging Singapore-based tourism capability development, anchoring iconic and major events in Singapore, and developing strategic tourism products.²¹⁵ Mr Lim Neo Chian, former Chief Executive of STB, explained that “the whole idea of this S\$2 billion fund is to use the resources to build the necessary infrastructure and capabilities, and catalyse the developments of new products and events, in partnership with the private sector.”²¹⁶

By the early 2000s, Singapore had gained some ground as a tourist destination, but it was still largely considered a business city. Weekend occupancy at hotels was lower than weekday occupancy, as many visitors came for business rather than leisure travel. The business travel sector was important, but Singapore could gain further market share as a leisure and services centre of the region, offering travel opportunities for those seeking high quality healthcare, banking and education. Mr Lim noted that these areas were mutually dependent. For instance, organisers of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) events would want to locate their business events in destinations with exciting leisure options for their participants and delegates. Singapore needed to reinvent herself—it was not enough to be clean, efficient and safe; it had to be fun and vibrant as well.²¹⁷

Mr Lim stressed the importance of STB’s role in capability building, planning and coordination. This was to ensure that “when we market, when we push for new products, we’re in a position to handle the increased number of visitors.” For instance, under the Tourism 2015 Roadmap, Singapore had to manage an incremental capacity of some 100,000 tourists per day and “what it means is that you need to create a destination... in order to accommodate them, to service them, to entertain them and find new things to do for [them].” Even business and services visitors would require additional recreational and leisure offerings, as “businessmen [do] not only visit Singapore for business; they want to enjoy themselves as well.”²¹⁸

THE INTEGRATED RESORTS

Of all the strategic tourism products that Singapore has developed since independence, it is arguable that the two Integrated Resorts (IRs) built in the 2000s are the largest and most visible, as well as the most obvious indication that the government was prepared to explore new frontiers in reinventing Singapore as a global city for tourism, business and leisure.

Each IR—Marina Bay Sands (MBS) and Resorts World Sentosa (RWS)—comprises a variety of lifestyle, leisure and tourism attractions such as entertainment and concerts, hotels, restaurants, convention and exhibition spaces, shopping, public spaces and gardens, and a museum or an amusement park. Each IR also houses a casino, the first and only two of their kind in Singapore.

Prime Minister (PM) Lee Hsien Loong emphasised in 2004 that Singapore’s concept of an IR went beyond just a casino. Addressing Parliament, he explained that “three major developments caused us to re-examine our position [on gaming]: we are losing ground in tourism. Cities all round the world are reinventing themselves. [And] we are not considering a casino, but an IR—an integrated resort. The IRs will have all kinds of amenities.... The great majority will not be there to gamble.... But within this large development and slew of activities, there is one small but essential part which offers gaming and which helps make the entire project financially feasible. And as a result, there is no need for government grants or subsidies to the Integrated Resort. The investors will put in the money, and take the commercial risk.”²¹⁹ The following year, PM Lee explained again that cities around the world were reinventing themselves—New York, London, Paris, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur. He explained that Singapore needed “to do many things to become a global city. A casino itself is not essential to this vision. But an IR is not just a casino. An IR is a significant idea we must consider, that will help us reinvent Singapore.”²²⁰

Beyond the direct economic benefits of the IR, it would broadly stimulate growth in various service sectors, and potentially revive the sluggish construction industry in the early 2000s. The increased activity and visitor arrivals due to these mega-projects would spin-off a host of benefits for the entire tourism industry and the Singapore economy in general. Hotels would be upgraded, stimulating the property sector, and new businesses would compete for a share of the growing tourism market. The higher passenger volumes would likewise bolster Singapore’s position as an aviation hub and a centre for conventions and meetings.

Detailed planning and study went into the conception of the IR. The pros and cons of various gaming models, including London's private gambling clubs restricted to the wealthy as well as huge casinos in Las Vegas and Macau, were studied. Multiple venues, including the Southern Islands and Sentosa, were considered. A Request for Concept (RFC) was initiated in late 2004 to solicit proposals from interested bidders. The RFC defined clear government objectives as well as the regulations that would be imposed on the successful bidder. Nineteen proposals were received, many from world-class resort operators. This exercise allowed the government to evaluate the project's financial feasibility.²²¹

Simultaneously, a public consultation exercise was launched to weigh in public sentiments on the establishment of casinos. Although there were calls for a national referendum on the issue, they were rejected. PM Lee explained that a referendum was not necessary because there were already "many forms of legal gambling in Singapore. [...] It is a policy matter: whether to allow an additional outlet for gambling, and to weigh the pros and cons to decide whether the economic benefit to Singapore of doing so outweighs the social costs."²²²

During this research and consultation phase, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) suggested building two IRs instead of one, to which PM Lee responded, "I was not convinced because I thought one is already a big investment. Two... your problems will be in two places instead of one place."²²³

Despite PM Lee's initial reservations, further research and market testing was done, and it revealed the soundness of MTI's recommendation. A Straits Times newspaper article titled *From an Outright 'No' to a Reluctant 'Two'* announced the government's decision to build two IRs, and then to observe and learn from any problems faced over the next five to seven years.²²⁴ It was argued that the two projects would complement each other, providing market competition and establishing a critical mass to draw new visitors. The government gave its assurance that a concerted effort would be made to control and minimise adverse social consequences that could arise.

While the two IRs—MBS and RWS—are often jointly referred to, they are positioned differently. The IR at Marina Bay seeks to create a "compelling MICE precinct in the heart of the city". Its prime location in the city centre would allow it to take advantage of existing infrastructure and facilities and enjoy excellent visibility and accessibility. The IR would double MICE space to 200,000 square metres and double the number of hotel rooms in the area to 10,000, all within walking distance. This would offer logistical convenience, and attract major MICE events with thousands of delegates each. Planners understood that MBS should be an iconic development that enhanced the city skyline, given its prime location by the sea in the New Downtown. MBS was seen as an attractive way to achieve quick and coordinated development of the Bayfront. "Without the IR, it might take us 15 years or more to tender out the land in individual parcels, and to develop the area on the same scale. But if we build an IR, within four years the Bayfront will be developed. This will complement other major developments such as the Esplanade, the new Sports Hub in Kallang and the Marina Barrage, to bring new life and excitement to the new Downtown and our city."²²⁵

In contrast, the IR on Sentosa was conceived as a "large-scale family resort with its host of world class family leisure attractions."²²⁶ The IR would transform a huge 47-hectare area—as large as the Singapore Zoological Gardens and Singapore Bird Park combined—by bringing to Sentosa "a large scale, high quality anchor attraction which it has so far lacked."²²⁷

The consensus among Singapore's hoteliers is that the IRs are a positive force in the tourism industry, accounting for a major share of the surge in tourism receipts by attracting "incremental visitors"—people who would not have come to Singapore without the lure of the theme parks, conventions, entertainment options or casinos. The situation is best described by Mrs Tan-Wee Wei Ling, Executive Director (Asset Management) of Pan Pacific Hotels Group Limited, who observed that "domestic competition is constructive. For example, the IRs have not taken away our customers but have created a bigger customer pool for all as evident in the surge of arrivals when they opened."²²⁸

A MICE HUB AND RESORT IN THE CITY CENTRE: MARINA BAY SANDS

The Marina Bay Sands (MBS) Integrated Resort is built on reclaimed land bordering a freshwater reservoir, in the heart of the new Downtown Core. In addition to the IR, the Marina Bay area now houses a new banking and financial district, an expansion of the existing Central Business District. How was Singapore—one of the most densely populated countries in the world—able to locate a large, new Integrated Resort and a new business district in its crowded city centre, and how did the government decide on the best way to allocate the land?

In 1971, Singapore's first Concept Plan foresaw the need to build an adequate road network ahead of time, to prepare for the inevitable growth of the city centre. One part of this network consisted of a coastal highway on reclaimed land to the south. This would connect the east and west of Singapore, discourage urban sprawl, and relieve some of the traffic flow through the city. Large-scale land reclamation was also undertaken to create space for the future expansion of the city.²²⁹ By the 1990s, these far-sighted decisions had paid off—urbanisation had become a global trend, but few major cities enjoyed Singapore's competitive advantage of a large parcel of undeveloped, prime waterfront land adjacent to the city centre, available for planning and leasing by the state. In 1993, URA's Development Guide Plan (DGP) for

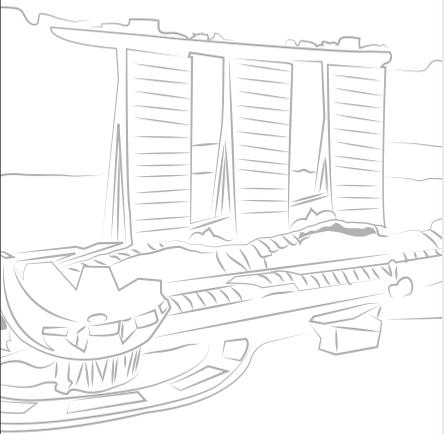
the new "Downtown Core" conceptualised Marina Bay as a focal point of nation branding, a national symbol and gathering place, the "face" and "showpiece" of Singapore.

Planning decisions shaped the Marina Bay area in other ways—the government decided not to completely reclaim the entire bay, leaving an attractive waterfront with a larger catchment area, which controlled flooding and enhanced the value of the existing land. Starting from a clean slate also permitted coordinated planning with sustainability in mind. Areas were zoned for mixed-use developments to create a vibrant live-work-play district even after office hours and on weekends, a comprehensive pedestrian network was built, and a new underground Common Services Tunnel was installed to house water, electricity, telecommunications, district cooling and other utility connections. Former Minister for National Development Mr Mah Bow Tan commented that "if we had [sic] not started many years ago and put in this infrastructure, it would have been difficult to sell the sites around Marina Bay in the way we had."²³⁰

When the decision to proceed with the IRs was made with STB as the main liaising agency, it was decided that, for the first time in the history of government land sales in Singapore, a fixed-price method would be used to allocate the land. The price of the land at Marina Bay was fixed at S\$1.2 billion, so that bidders could compete solely on the strength of the design and concept of their proposals.

This was done because the IR was not a normal development—there were no precedents in the country, and it was a mega-project of strategic significance for Singapore, with multiple uncertainties and commercial risks. The government was concerned that if it used the normal land tender process of awarding the land to the highest bidder, the winner of the tender might overbid for the land, and this would affect the subsequent quality of the design, construction and programming of the IR.

The process from conception to completion took about six years, and involved extensive coordination between multiple public agencies.



EVOLUTION OF A LEISURE ISLAND: SENTOSA

Sentosa is an offshore island of Singapore accessible by a road link, cable car, and a light railway line, and is about ten minutes' drive from the city centre. It has been designated for recreation and tourism purposes since the 1970s. The establishment of Singapore's second IR—Resorts World Sentosa (RWS)—can be seen as a move to qualitatively transform Sentosa into a world-class tourist destination, while enhancing its recreational and leisure options for tourists and locals.²³¹

Over the decades, the Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC)²³² has undertaken many planning efforts and projects to improve the convenience and attractiveness of visiting Sentosa. More transportation options were provided in the 1970s and early 1980s, and greater private sector involvement and investment was encouraged from the late 1980s. Mr Alan Choe, chairman of SDC then, recalled, "It's a question of [an] island. Everybody knows it's so inaccessible; nobody goes there, how to make money? [So] I talked to the business community."

From these discussions, a new formula for public-private collaboration was established. Investors were not keen on making a lump sum upfront payment for a long land lease on Sentosa.

Instead, SDC would provide the land and construct essential utilities and infrastructure, and private firms would develop and run the attractions on these sites according to SDC's designated themes. Payments to SDC were structured as a percentage of the firms' gross revenue.²³³ This unique Sale of Sites programme reduced the market risk and capital outlay, resulting in 12 major commercial projects, which include the presently active and accomplished Underwater World, being launched between 1987 and 1993.²³⁴ This increased and diversified Sentosa's recreational options. Meanwhile, infrastructure improvements continued. The opening of the Sentosa Causeway in 1992 was effective in generating a critical mass of visitors to improve the viability of Sentosa's attractions, while lowering the associated business costs.²³⁵

The Tourism 21 Master Plan proposed further steps to increase the number of night visitors and lengthen their visits to Sentosa. With the limited ability of theme attractions to sustain a regular flow of repeat visitors, other event programming, involving large parties and events was taken up. As such, hotel facilities on Sentosa were upgraded to meet demand from the corporate and MICE sectors.

The establishment of RWS, with its cluster of family entertainment, restaurants and attractions such as a Marine Life Park and the Universal Studios Singapore amusement park, provided Sentosa with an anchor tenant that could attract new groups of visitors and generate spin-off benefits for existing businesses on Sentosa. Today, Sentosa been transformed from a "rundown flop to booming pleasure isle."²³⁶ In spite of this, the subsequent challenges keep the development sustainable, to prevent the IR from overshadowing other attractions, and to preserve the character of Sentosa as a leisure island.

The Sentosa Causeway was critical in ensuring easy access for locals and tourists to visit the island.

Image courtesy of superjoseph.



The decision to introduce casinos in Singapore was not a straightforward nor easy one. The government conducted extensive research and consultation, including public engagement and feedback sessions.²³⁷ When the decision to proceed was made, strong regulatory measures and safeguards were implemented to mitigate the social costs.

Two new organisations, a Casino Regulatory Authority and a National Council for Problem Gambling, were established; the latter comprised of experts in areas such as psychology, rehabilitation, social services, counselling and religious services. Public education and community partnerships were strengthened to identify chronic gamblers and protect vulnerable segments of the population, and provide avenues for gambling addiction treatment and counselling.

Key elements of the regulatory regime include strict licensing and licence renewal conditions for the casino operators; a casino entry levy on all Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents to discourage impulse gambling; empowerment of spouses and family members to exclude persons with gambling problems from entry to the casinos; automatic exclusion of persons on public social assistance programmes, who are insolvent, or with poor credit records; self-exclusion measures; and prohibition of advertisements that promote gambling.²³⁸

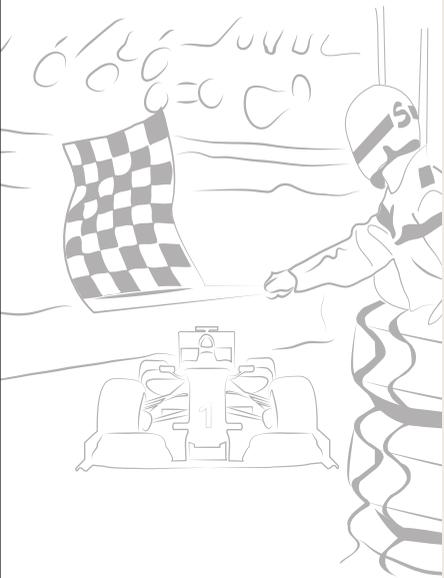
THE FORMULA ONE SINGAPORE GRAND PRIX

Singapore's annual Formula One (F1) Night Race, which first flagged off in 2008, is a premier branding exercise that aimed—in the words of Mr Lim Neo Chian—to change the image of Singapore as strait-laced and “boring”, and to show that “we're always prepared to try new ideas and to change things.”²³⁹ Such anchor events have an important role in tourism development and marketing that is distinct from, but yet complement the recreational attractions, business facilities and infrastructure such as the IRs. Once a year, in September, the world's attention is focussed on Singapore, with the beautiful night city skyline of Singapore as the backdrop for the F1 event. The F1 race is also an example of sports event tourism, along with the 2010 Youth Olympics and the Volvo Ocean Race, which help to boost the Singapore brand.²⁴⁰

The Singapore F1 Night Race in 2013.
Image courtesy of CaterhamF1.



THE LONG ROAD TO THE SINGAPORE FORMULA ONE RACE



Car races were popular in Singapore in the 1960s. These races, jointly organised by the Singapore Motor Club and the Ministry of Social Affairs, were discontinued in 1973 due to government concern that they would encourage reckless driving. Moreover, there had been seven deaths over 11 years from the races along public roads.²⁴¹

Dr Ahmad Mattar, then Acting Minister for Social Affairs, explained that “motor racing up to April 1973 was held at Upper Thomson Road. The Grand Prix was cancelled as the Thomson Road Circuit was proving to be a great danger to spectators and participants. It was also a great inconvenience to residents of the area as it required the closure of roads leading into it.”

The 1973 oil crisis also contributed to the government’s decision not to continue with motor racing on public roads. It explained that the organisation of motor racing under controlled conditions would require the provision of a proper motor racing circuit. Considerable expenditure would be entailed in acquiring a sizable acreage of land and building costs. It was also estimated that recurrent expenditure would be high.²⁴²



Race cars at the 1966 Singapore Grand Prix, rounding the infamous “Circus Hairpin”.
Image from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Singapore’s founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew initially believed that car races were for the masses, and did not help Singapore become a culturally refined city.²⁴³ However, in 2005, Lee mentioned that he regretted the decision to discontinue motor-racing, because it could have “made Singapore richer and more established” as a host country. He added that the Singapore government had come to consider popular culture, including F1 racing, as big business today.²⁴⁴

In 2006, a multi-agency task force was set up to seriously explore organising an F1 race, after STB had funded a study with URA assistance to define a possible city circuit around Marina Bay.²⁴⁵ Leveraging on private sector networks, Mr Ong Beng Seng, founder of Singapore-based Hotel Properties Limited, was asked to negotiate a deal with F1 President and Chief Executive Mr Bernie Ecclestone. This proved successful, and agreements were signed to host the first F1 race in Singapore.

The idea of a night race originated from a passing remark by Mr Ecclestone, and gained traction as the timing would allow viewership by European audiences, where the majority of F1 fans were based.²⁴⁶ However, it was also technically more challenging. No country had organised an F1 night race before, and it was critical to ensure that the lighting and visibility conditions would not affect the safety and performance of the drivers, the enjoyment of the spectators, and the visibility of the advertisers.²⁴⁷ Another key objective was to have the race within the city centre instead of a stadium or racetrack, against the backdrop of the Singapore cityscape, with its architectural icons and landmarks beautifully lit. This would yield the biggest global branding impact for Singapore.

STB and URA worked together to identify the best routes for the city race circuit. Apart from the branding advantages, a temporary circuit was deemed preferable to the alternative of a permanent F1 track at the Laguna National Golf and Country Club. A permanent track would require downstream efforts to ensure its sustainability by hosting other events throughout the year. To defray some of the cost of organising the Grand Prix, an F1 cessation tax was levied on gazetted hotels, with slightly higher rates for hotels nearer to the circuit, in recognition of the additional profits earned by these hotels over the F1 period.

STB is the government's lead agency and facilitator for the Singapore Grand Prix, and handles planning and execution in coordination with other agencies. For instance, STB works with the Singapore Land Authority to ensure land availability for the race buildings and marquee venues; the Land Transport Authority to facilitate road closures, road infrastructure and public transport requirements; and the Singapore

Police Force on security issues. STB also works closely with private organisers and engages commercial stakeholders to innovate and test ideas, increasing the benefits for the tourism industry and local communities. Finally, STB curates a range of lifestyle events including concerts, dance parties, and entertainment and dining promotions, to be held in conjunction with the race.²⁴⁸

The F1 race was a game-changer for Singapore as it “caught the attention of everybody around the world.”²⁴⁹ Following the inaugural race in 2008, major newspapers around the world carried the Singapore F1 race on their front pages, quoting Mr Ecclestone's remark that the Singapore Grand Prix was the “crown jewel of F1.”²⁵⁰ The Singapore Grand Prix has achieved other major objectives. It has helped shape global perceptions of Singapore as a fun and exciting place, increased incremental visitor arrivals by the global community of F1 fans, offered business and networking opportunities through industry partner events, given local firms the opportunity to learn the ropes of organising world class events by working with international experts, and catalysed the motor and tourism industries.²⁵¹

Useful lessons were also learnt: even governments have to be “business savvy” when working with the private sector in order to reach reasonable agreements on the sharing of responsibilities and costs, since such events provide lucrative opportunities for some firms to earn additional profits. Conversely, other private stakeholders may be negatively affected by the Grand Prix, such as businesses that lose customers during the F1 period due to road closures. There is a need to understand and address their concerns as much as possible. Ultimately, the sustained success of the Singapore Grand Prix also relies on public support from Singaporeans. The organisers have therefore taken steps to involve the community and make the race event more inclusive, such as providing school excursion opportunities, a diversity of side events for various audience groups, and allowing public access to exclusive areas such as the Paddock and the Pit Building where feasible.

LESSONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Today, Singapore's tourism sector contributes some 4% of GDP and supports some 160,000 jobs, but it could play an even bigger role as Singapore's economy matures.²⁵² Tourism as an economic sector has some unique characteristics—it bolsters Singapore's image as a vibrant global city that is a magnet for capital, talent and recreation, enhances the quality and diversity of leisure options for residents, and it provides further justification for projects that beautify and improve the living environment through the generation of economic spin-offs and tourism receipts.

Four key learning points can be distilled from the success of tourism development in Singapore. First, there is a need for long-term plans with clear targets. This makes desired outcomes and policy directions transparent, and aligns the various stakeholders and agencies. A consistent long-term plan improves investor confidence, given the high upfront capital investment and lengthy payback periods that are characteristic of large tourist attractions.

Second, better outcomes have been achieved through working with markets. The mission of the government has evolved from being “first class regulators” to “efficient facilitators” of business activity.²⁵³ Flexible allocation mechanisms, for instance through the Sale of Sites programme, enable the government to respond to the private sector's demand for land. There are often market failures in tourism development due to coordination problems and information asymmetry, which private firms are often unable to resolve by themselves. Properly targeted and implemented, government intervention can be effective to allocate scarce resources properly, align the incentives of private stakeholders, and harness zoning and other administrative tools to guide and organise tourism development.

Third, while Singapore has sought to harness the strengths of private initiative and investment, the government also has an important role to play. Over the decades, sound urban and development planning has given a much-needed boost to tourism development. Planning improves the siting of investments and the timely provision of infrastructure that can anticipate changing needs, and minimise overcrowding and

friction between different user groups. It has allowed Singapore to make the best use of its very limited land to cater to both tourists and locals. Coordinated planning also minimises failures due to lack of coordination, such as when one tourism attraction (e.g. a resort) cannot perform well in the absence of supplementary infrastructure such as a cruise terminal, or other complementary attractions such as good quality malls and restaurants. Software such as activity programming can also be better coordinated with hardware investments through government facilitation and incentives, and close collaboration with industry partners.²⁵⁴ Given the diversity and number of initiatives and developments, future challenges include better coordination between agencies for events, to avoid overlaps and situations where multiple events fight for a share of the same visitor pie. This will enable Singapore to better navigate the global tourism market as it grows more sophisticated, and better understand the complexity of the tourism industry and its relationship with various stakeholders.

Fourth, tourism development strategies must display sensitivity and address concerns from stakeholders and the public in order to win support and approval. This is especially important where emotive aspects of heritage, community identity and lifestyle are concerned. Public support and patronage, as demonstrated in cases such as Sentosa, is necessary for the long-term sustainability and financial viability of tourism attractions.

Above all, public attractions and recreational sites are shared spaces for both tourists and locals. Given its relatively small resident population, tourism development has enabled Singapore's citizens to enjoy a wider range of entertainment and leisure options than would otherwise be commercially viable. In the words of former STPB chairman, Mr Tan I Tong, in 1984, “Without tourism... you won't have the [Jurong] Bird Park, Sentosa would not have been developed as it is today. When you don't have three million tourists, you wouldn't need a big airport, you won't need so many good hotels and restaurants, and you won't have so many shopping centres. There are many things we cannot have without tourism.”²⁵⁵ This insight remains valid today as Singapore continues to pursue the successful management and innovative development of its tourism industry, in a manner that suits its unique national characteristics as an urbanised, global city-state.

PLANNING FOR TOURISM: CREATING A VIBRANT SINGAPORE

1959

- ▶ Designation of the Department of Tourism under the purview of the Ministry of Finance instead of the Minister for Culture in the State of Singapore Government Gazette Supplement of 1959.

1960

- ▶ Singapore Tourist Association formed on 20 February.

1960

- ▶ Tourist Promotion Bill presented by Dr Goh Keng Swee (Minister for Finance); Tourist Promotion Board Act passed on 20 December.
- ▶ Design of the Merlion gazetted in the Singapore Tourism Act of 1963 with the Merlion subsequently serving as the STPB's promotional emblem from 1964 to 1997.

1964

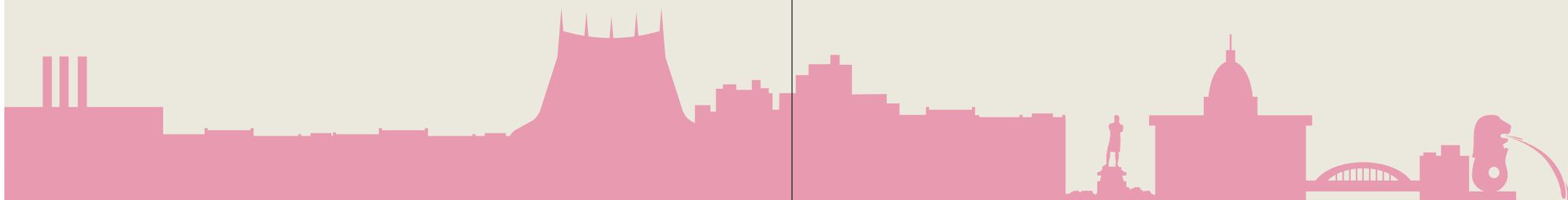
- ▶ Singapore Tourism Promotion Board (STPB) set up on 1 January.

1967

- ▶ Singapore named "The Garden City" by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Start of the Garden City campaign.

Before 1960

1960



1970

- ▶ Closure of the Singapore Tourist Association.
- ▶ Formation of Special Committee for Conversion of Selective Historic Sites into Tourist Attractions in December.
- ▶ Introduction of daily "Instant Asia" Cultural Show.

1971

- ▶ Opening of Jurong Bird Park on 3 January.
- ▶ Opening of Sentosa.

1972

- ▶ Official opening ceremony of Raffles Landing Site on 3 February.
- ▶ Merlion Project completed and installed at the mouth of the Singapore River, inaugurated by then Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew on 15 September.

1973

- ▶ Opening of Singapore Zoological Gardens on 27 June.

1974

- ▶ Formation of Singapore Convention Bureau in April.

1976

- ▶ Opening of Singapore Handicraft Centre by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on 25 September.

1979

- ▶ STPB came under the purview of the newly created Ministry of Trade & Industry in March.
- ▶ Official opening of Singapore Cultural Theatre by Mr Goh Chok Tong, then Minister for Trade & Industry, in March.

1981

- ▶ Singapore's new Changi Airport opened for commercial operations on 1 July.

1984

- ▶ Tourism Task Force was formed by Dr Tony Tan, then Minister for Trade and Industry, in August.
- ▶ The Product Development Division was established to coordinate the development of tourism infrastructure on 1 September.
- ▶ Introduction of Festival Light-Up with "Christmas at the Equator" on Orchard Road in December.

1985

- ▶ Introduction of Light-Up for Lunar New Year, Hari Raya and Deepavali.
- ▶ Haw Par Villa acquired by the government.

1986

- ▶ Redevelopment of Haw Par Villa into a Chinese mythological theme park awarded to International Theme Parks (S) Pte Ltd, a consortium formed between two local companies: Fraser & Neave (S) Pte Ltd and Times Publishing Berhad, in April.
- ▶ One billion dollars allocated by government to fund the Tourism Product Development Plan aimed at revitalising Singapore's existing attractions and building new ones.

1987

- ▶ Rebirth of the Singapore River as a cultural and entertainment centre. Traditional bumboats were reintroduced to provide regular cruises, Singapore River Cruises, on 14 November.

1970

1980

1991

- ▶ Development of a new strategic plan to identify mid-term to long-term goals of Singapore's tourism industry (1992-1995).
- ▶ Raffles Hotel re-opened after its restoration on 16 September.

1992

- ▶ Opening of a 710-metre land link to Sentosa.

1993

- ▶ Official opening of Boat Quay in August.
- ▶ Official opening of Clarke Quay by Dr Richard Hu, then Minister for Finance, in December.

1994

- ▶ Initiated Tourism Unlimited strategy with expansion of the STPB's role in tourism business development, in addition to destination promotion role.

1995

- ▶ New destination position branding, "New Asia-Singapore", was formulated.

1996

- ▶ Launch of the industry's National Tourism Plan, "Tourism 21", in July.

1997

- ▶ Singapore Tourist Promotion Board renamed Singapore Tourism Board (STB).

1998

- ▶ The Chinatown Experience Guide Plan first mooted.

2003

- ▶ Bridging Loan Programme for SARS-affected, tourism-related sectors. Programme administered by SPRING Singapore in consultation with STB, from 1 May to 31 December.

2005

- ▶ Tourism Master Plan—Tourism 2015 launched on 11 January.

2008

- ▶ First ever night circuit Formula One race launched.

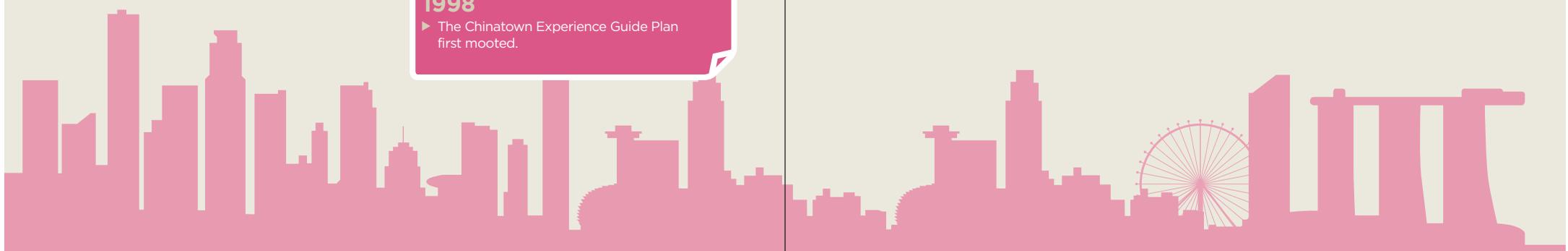
2010

- ▶ Opening of integrated resorts.

1990

2000

2010



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APPENDIX A

Governance Tools for Tourism Infrastructure and Development

(I) Legal Instruments

Tools	Description
Land Acquisition Act (1967)	An act empowering the government to acquire land for public development, which at the same time regulates the amount of compensation to be given to landowners who had their properties acquired. ²⁵⁶
Sale of Sites Programme	The Government Land Sales Programme was first introduced in 1967 as a means to achieve comprehensive urban renewal and redevelopment of Singapore's central area, stimulate the construction industry, create jobs and attract foreign investments. The programme has since been an important source of land supply for development since most available development land in Singapore is under state ownership. The two main objectives of the programme are to supply sufficient land to meet demand to ensure a stable property market and support economic growth; and to realise national planning and development goals
Property Tax Order (1960) Section 8	This property tax order provided concessions to encourage urban renewal and city development. The tax concessions were applied to commercial and/or industrial properties such as departmental stores and offices, shopping arcades, hotels, entertainment centres and other projects of special economic importance recommended by the Urban Renewal Department and the Competent Authority in line with the government's plan for comprehensive urban redevelopment. ²⁵⁷

(II) Executive Policies

Tools	Description
Tourism Product Development Plan (Oct 1986)	Plan to increase the number of visitors to Singapore, the length of their stay and their spending in Singapore. S\$1 billion of government funds were committed in a bid yield a three-fold return. Following the recommendations of the tourism task force, a five-year development plan was drawn up for the conservation and revitalisation of selected historical sites, as well as the development of new attractions such as Sentosa.
Conservation Master Plan (1986)	Master Plan for conservation of the central area allows for the integration of conservation efforts and city development.
The Strategic Plan for Growth (1993)	Plan aimed at attracting 6.8 million visitors annually by 1995. It assessed the achievements of the 1986 Tourism Product Development Plan and determined that tourism developments in Singapore needed to be refined through the "Perfecting The Jewel" plan and other measures.

Tourism 21—Vision of a Tourism Capital (1996)	Plan to turn Singapore into a regional tourism capital to attract 10 million tourists and some S\$16 billion in tourist revenue by the year 2000 on an initial budget of S\$600 million. Three key recommendations in the plan were: to develop Chinatown into a colourful ethnic zone, the first project under a proposal to create 11 distinct tourist districts in Singapore; to have a new Tourism Development Assistance scheme for upgrading the industry; and to construct a mega exhibition centre to replace the World Trade Centre exhibition halls that would be affected by the proposed North-East MRT line and also to cater for future growth.
Tourism 2015 (2004)	Plan to double visitor arrivals to 17 million and to triple tourism receipts to S\$30 billion by 2015. It focussed on three main areas: the business travel and meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (BTMICE) segment; leisure travel and services such as healthcare tourism; and education.

(III) Institutions

Tools	Description
Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau (SECB)	Creates, grows and attracts business events that reinforces Singapore's reputation as a business and intellectual hub. Started out as the Singapore Convention Bureau in 1974 and was renamed SECB in 1997.
JTC	Plans, promotes and develops the industrial landscape for Singapore. JTC started out as the Jurong Town Corporation in 1968 and was renamed as JTC Corporation in 2000.
Economic Development Board (EDB)	Plans and executes strategies to make Singapore a global hub for business and investment across manufacturing and internationally traded services.
Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI)	Parent ministry of STB, EDB and JTC. Its role is to identify opportunities for growth and give broad directions for the economy.
Sentosa Development Corporation	Formed on 1 September 1972 to oversee the development, management and promotion of the island resort, Sentosa.

APPENDIX B

Singapore Nation Branding

Year	Key Events/ Initiatives
Early period	"Lion City" coined by the Srivijayan prince, Sang Nila Utama, of Palembang.
1967	Singapore named "The Garden City" by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, as part of the "Garden City Campaign."
1970	"Instant Asia."
1973	"Singapore—A World within a World."
1974	"Come Share Our World."
1977	"Surprising Singapore"—a world of compelling contrasts, a shopper's paradise and a gourmet centre."
1981	"The Most Surprising Tropical Island on Earth"—Singapore as a vacation destination and shoppers' paradise, amidst modern, clean and green surroundings.
1995	"New Asia—Singapore."
2004	"Uniquely Singapore" (9 March 2004-2009).
2010	"YourSingapore" (5 March).

