



# URBAN SYSTEMS STUDIES

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RESETTLING  
COMMUNITIES:  
CREATING SPACE FOR  
NATION-BUILDING

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CREATING SPACE FOR  
NATION-BUILDING**



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# URBAN SYSTEMS STUDIES

## RESETTLING COMMUNITIES: CREATING SPACE FOR NATION-BUILDING

CENTRE for  
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SINGAPORE

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Cover photo:  
Aerial view of Singapore’s Central Area taken in the early 1970s, where communities were resettled to create space for the rejuvenation of the city centre.  
Photo courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

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## FOREWORD

In 1964, I was a young architect-planner tasked with starting the Housing & Development Board's (HDB) Urban Renewal Unit. This was a year after Singapore, which attained self-government from the British in 1959, had merged with Malaysia. At the time, the People's Action Party government had inherited a city-state facing a severe housing shortage and a vulnerable economy. In the 1950s, some three-quarters of the population were living in cramped subdivided cubicles without proper ventilation and sanitation in run-down properties in the city area. The suburban and rural areas were largely occupied by communities of squatters, farmers and backyard industries. Singapore's subsequent separation from Malaysia in 1965 only intensified the urgency to address the problems.

To eradicate the housing shortage and kickstart industrialisation, urban slums, squatter settlements and farms that occupied many parts of Singapore had to be cleared quickly to make space for the new government's housing and economic development plans. In particular, the government had set an ambitious target of building 10,000 flats each year under the HDB's first five-year public housing programme in 1960. The HDB set up the Resettlement Department to undertake the crucial task of clearing encumbered state land and resettling the occupants on a large scale, creating vacant land on which HDB new towns would take shape. This paved the way for the HDB's mass public housing programme, which quickly broke the backbone of the housing problem.

The government also recognised that the city centre had to be modernised to support fledgling economic development, check urban blight and improve the living conditions of those in urban slums. This work was undertaken by the Urban Renewal Unit of the HDB, which later grew to become a statutory board, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). Urban renewal depended on the success of clearance and resettlement initiatives. At the time, many properties in the city area were occupied by rent-controlled tenants, while the ownership of such properties was under private hands and fragmented. With the enactment of the Land Acquisition Act in 1966, the government could acquire and assemble privately owned land into larger plots for development. It also allowed the government to proceed with the clearance of urban sites and resettle affected occupants. Only then could comprehensive redevelopment and rejuvenation of the city centre take place.

To minimise the hardship faced by people affected by clearance works, special policies were devised for farmers, residents, shopkeepers and industries. Occupants were relocated to alternative accommodation built by the government—in the form of HDB flats and shop premises, resettlement centres, factory premises and warehouse facilities—or offered cash grants so that they could find their own accommodation or new livelihoods. The government also exercised flexibility in its clearance strategies to address the special needs of an area and preserve existing communities. One example was the development of Outram Park Complex in the late 1960s to rehouse a large community of Chinatown residents and shop owners. The impact was two-fold—the community was kept intact, while the comprehensive redevelopment of Chinatown, one of the oldest precincts in the city centre, could proceed smoothly. Within the city area, the URA also piloted the building of transit and permanent resettlement centres close to clearance sites, so that affected businesses could continue to serve their customers.

The conditions surrounding clearance and resettlement in Singapore in the early years were no easier than in many other countries, but the government demonstrated foresight and determination to stay the course. Many of those affected by clearance and resettlement programmes had to make sacrifices and endure the disruptions to their lives. However, the physical and economic development that followed undoubtedly brought dramatic improvements to the lives of Singaporeans. By the early 1990s, Singapore had been transformed into a modern metropolis and squatters had become a thing of the past. The unsung heroes in this journey were the resettlement officers and field inspectors who managed the clearance and resettlement process with a firm but fair hand. Their dedication and tenacity played no small role in enabling Singapore's transformation.

*Resettling Communities: Creating Space for Nation-Building* gives readers an insight into the pressing need to clear land for development during Singapore's formative years of nation-building, the policies and processes enabling resettlement, and the role of resettlement in catalysing urban renewal. I hope that readers will find this publication useful.

**Alan Choe**

Former General Manager  
Urban Redevelopment Authority

## PREFACE

The Centre for Liveable Cities' research in urban systems unpacks the systemic 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 Centre has identified under the Singapore Liveability Framework, attempting to answer two key questions: how Singapore has transformed itself into a highly liveable city over the last 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. *Resettling Communities: Creating Space for Nation-Building* is the latest publication from the Urban Systems Studies (USS) series.

The research process involves rigorous engagement with our stakeholder agencies, and numerous oral history interviews with Singapore's urban pioneers and leaders to gain insights into development processes. The tacit knowledge drawn out through this process allows us to glean useful insights into Singapore's governance and development planning and implementation efforts. 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.

The Centre would like to thank the Housing & Development 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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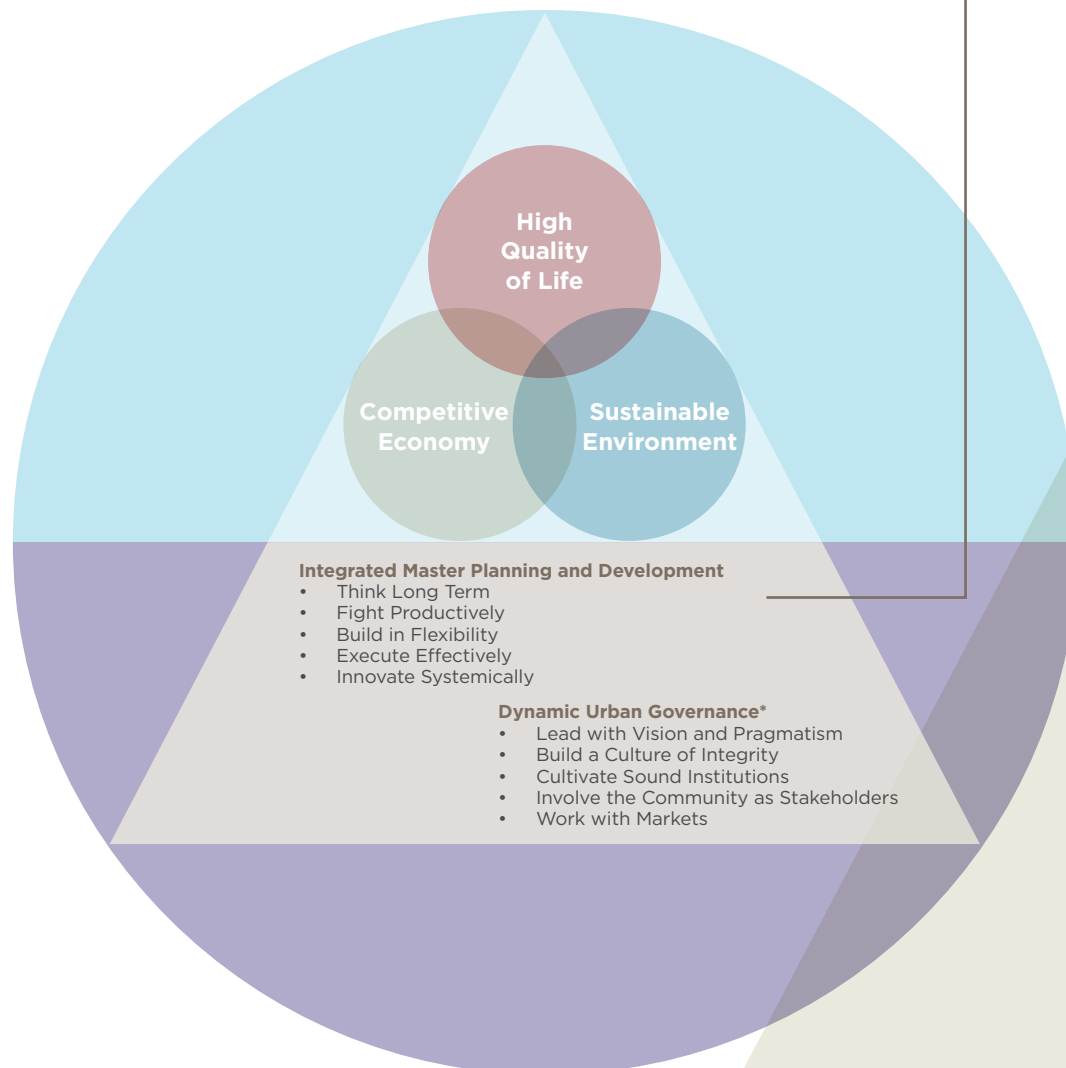
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# THE SINGAPORE LIVEABILITY FRAMEWORK

The Singapore Liveability 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 *Resettling Communities: Creating Space for Nation-Building*.



## Integrated Master Planning and Development

### Think Long Term

In a city-state with land constraints, it was imperative to clear encumbered state land so that Singapore's physical and economic development could progress smoothly. Clearance and resettlement actions—identifying the sites, providing resettlement accommodation and clearing the occupants—were among the first steps to be initiated, before fragmented plots of land could be assembled and provided with public infrastructure. This required long term planning by the government to identify and clear suitable sites, and resettle those affected, so that vacant land would be available as and when needed for development.

### Build in Flexibility

In order to minimise the hardship and inconvenience to affected occupants, and to speed up the clearance process, the government exercised some flexibility in the provision of resettlement benefits. For example, farmers were offered cash grants or a free three-room Housing & Development Board (HDB) flat in lieu of replacement farmland, while commercial resettlement cases were given alternative retail or industrial accommodation, or they could opt for cash grants. To reduce the disruption to their operations, businesses in the Central Area were first accommodated in transit resettlement centres, and subsequently in permanent resettlement centres near their original locations. Where possible, communities of residents and businesses were relocated en bloc to preserve their community ties. Resettlement policies were also reviewed periodically to take into account rising costs and changing circumstances.

### Execute Effectively

To expedite clearances, the government ensured that the processes for clearance of encumbered state land, resettlement of affected occupants and provision of resettlement benefits were clear, transparent and fair, and backed by legislation and enforcement. For instance, cash grants were offered when replacement land or accommodation was limited. This helped to accelerate clearances. To ease the hardship of relocation, farmers and residential occupants were paid disturbance and transport allowances, while residential families were accorded rental rebates. The public sector agencies carrying out clearance and resettlement adhered to a common set of resettlement policies, ensuring consistency across various clearance cases. In addition, having agencies like the HDB in charge of both clearances and public housing development meant that replacement accommodation could be provided on a large scale, and resettlement and redevelopment processes were better coordinated.

## \* Dynamic Urban Governance

### Lead with Vision and Pragmatism

The clearance and resettlement processes were often viewed with suspicion and faced resistance, especially in earlier years. To acquire land and clear encumbered state land, political will and effective leadership were consistently demonstrated from the top to the grassroots levels, to position clearance and resettlement as being necessary—although painful—steps to eradicate the housing shortage, clear slums, attract investment, generate employment and rejuvenate the city centre.

### Cultivate Sound Institutions

The Resettlement Department was instrumental in implementing the government's resettlement programmes. The resettlement officers and field inspectors were fair but firm and exercised flexibility in assisting the affected occupants in relocation. The process of clearance and resettlement was centralised under the HDB, the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Jurong Town Corporation, which took on the dedicated responsibility of carrying out the entire process.

## OVERVIEW

### ROLE OF CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT IN SINGAPORE'S PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

When Singapore attained self-government in 1959 after more than a hundred years of British colonisation, it faced the problems that confronted many young nations—a lack of proper housing, high unemployment and inadequate transport systems and infrastructure. Attaining full independence following the collapse of its short-lived merger with Malaysia in 1965 only intensified these problems against a backdrop of political and economic survival. Singapore was then a Third World city with overcrowded slums, squatters, backyard industries, street hawkers and polluted rivers. A large proportion of the population was either living in congested, dilapidated and insanitary urban slums, or occupying crown land without authorisation in squatter settlements in rural areas and fringes of the town.

The issue of decrepit, overcrowded and haphazardly-built housing, as well as inadequate housing had been festering over several decades. With the influx of new immigrants in the early 20th century, the population in Singapore, which had been less than 95,000 in 1871, rose to more than 300,000 in 1911.<sup>1</sup> Living conditions had deteriorated severely due to overcrowding. Slums sprung up everywhere, especially in the more densely populated town areas.

In 1918, a Housing Commission set up by the British colonial government reported that poorer segments of the population could not afford to pay rent. Housing units such as those in shophouses—traditional structures that featured shop fronts on the ground level and living accommodation above—were subdivided into small cubicles, further aggravating the housing condition and leading to the spread of diseases.

To address the proliferation of urban slums, the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) was set up in 1927 as a body separate from the municipality, with the mandate to improve the infrastructure of the town and other areas of Singapore. Its work included demolishing insanitary buildings, installing modern sanitation facilities and providing better lighting and ventilation, i.e., constructing back lanes between rows of overcrowded, back-to-back shophouses. The SIT was initially tasked with rehousing people affected by its improvement schemes. It was only in 1936 that the SIT started to build low-cost housing in modest numbers, in areas such as Tiong Bahru, to alleviate the acute housing shortage.<sup>2</sup>

However, the Second World War left thousands of houses destroyed and disrupted the work of the SIT. By the end of the war in 1945, tens of thousands of people were living in unauthorised structures made from whatever materials they could muster. These included wooden boxes, rusty corrugated iron sheets or any other salvageable materials. The baby boom in the immediate post-war years also led to a population spike. By 1947, the population had increased to 938,000, with some 700,000 people—almost three-quarters of the population—living within an area of about 81 km<sup>2</sup> in the city centre.<sup>3</sup> As Singapore grew in population, the pressure on housing increased (see Exhibit 1).

### Exhibit 1 Population and Building Density in Early Singapore

Year	1907	1931	1945
Population	250,000	567,000	938,000 (700,000 in city centre)
Dwellings	20,000	37,000	38,500
Building Density (persons per building)	12.5	15.3	18.2

Source: Colony of Singapore, *Report of the Housing Committee, 1947*; Colony of Singapore, *Master Plan 1955*.

The combination of wartime destruction and rapid population growth in the post-war years led to a mushrooming of slums and squatter settlements. Living conditions for a large segment of Singapore's population became even more appalling. People even started erecting makeshift structures in air-wells, back lanes, roof tops and on every bit of vacant land they could find. The slums in Singapore were described as being among the world's worst and were "a disgrace to a civilised community".<sup>4</sup> In such an environment, diseases spread easily, causing deaths from preventable diseases like pneumonia, tuberculosis and bronchitis.<sup>5</sup> The town area became an eyesore, while large populations lived in congested squatter settlements with no water and sanitation facilities.

To address the housing crisis in the face of a fast-growing population and extensive wartime destruction, the colonial government planned to initiate an extensive development programme to build housing and other public infrastructure like schools, hospitals and roads. However, the colonial government had difficulty obtaining cleared sites for these projects. The occupants of the land to be cleared were often resistant to moving for various reasons, such as the lack of government assistance in finding alternative housing, financial losses incurred from building new accommodation and loss of livelihoods in not being able to continue with their business activities or farming, in the case of farmers whose farmlands had to be cleared.

Urban dwellers who were to be resettled, owing to the nature of their employment or business activity, required accommodation in the city, but many could not afford even the cheapest SIT accommodation. Business tenants living in pre-war shophouses in urban areas that were subjected to rent control<sup>6</sup> depended on low rents and their central location to carry out their trades and vocations.

Squatters on the semi-urban sites on the fringes of the city centre, in areas such as Alexandra, Telok Blangah, Tiong Bahru, Kallang and Toa Payoh, were reluctant to move to resettlement sites that were often far from their places of employment. Many squatters, who also grew vegetables and fruits or reared poultry on small plots near their houses to supplement their incomes, lamented the lack of space to continue doing so in the resettlement sites.

Many of the sites required for the development projects were in rural areas occupied by farms. As these farms were on crown land, the farmers paid ground rent to the government and were in rightful occupation of the land. They relied on farming for a living and had carried out improvements to the land, such as erecting huts and shacks and cultivating vegetable plots and fruit trees. These farmers were now to be resettled to other agriculture lands with the security of tenure, so that they could continue with their livelihood. Though they were also paid ex-gratia payments to be resettled, they were not satisfied as these payments, which were based on the values of their existing houses, were insufficient to build replacement houses.

The government also faced difficulties in providing resettlement facilities, such as basic houses and farming plots, as much of the crown land was already occupied by squatters. Besides relocation to agricultural





A vegetable farm at the village in Jalan Kayu/Seletar in the 1950s.  
Image from the Philip B. Gower Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

resettlement areas or SIT flats, there were few other resettlement facilities available. At the same time, the City Council<sup>7</sup> refused to allow the construction of temporary resettlement facilities within the city area, which would have been the most palatable relocation sites for urban dwellers. Much time was wasted in overcoming objections to clearance. As a result, up till the 1950s, not much was achieved in terms of clearance of encumbered crown land for development.

In 1955, the colonial government appointed a committee, the Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party, to look into squatter and resettlement problems, and the clearance of land required for public purposes. The Working Party estimated that some 2,800 families, comprising urban dwellers, semi-urban dwellers and farmers, would have to be resettled.<sup>8</sup> It recommended that future rehousing and resettlement schemes cater for the needs of these people by providing better compensation for the improvements that they had made to the land, and offering them similar accommodation at a rent within their means.

The Working Party also recommended that the SIT undertake both the roles of clearance and providing resettlement facilities to the occupants of the land to be cleared. At that time, the Land Office had been responsible for clearance, which included the processes of terminating

Temporary Occupation Licences, evicting the occupants and recovering possession of the crown land, with monetary compensation to those affected based on improvements that they had made. This assignment of the two roles to a single agency was to ensure ease of administration and to avoid potential confusion.

In 1957, the Land Clearance and Resettlement Department was set up to take on the role of resettling occupants to clear land for development. To ease the process of resettlement, the government also recognised its responsibility to (1) rehouse those affected by land clearance and provide them with compensation for improvements, and (2) give business-owners a choice of resettlement schemes and alternative sites so that they could continue with their livelihood. Despite these changes, clearance of encumbered land remained slow and mired in difficulties, while the housing problem worsened.



Map of Singapore showing the municipal area and rural areas demarcated as Rural Committee Districts (1946).

Image from the Survey Department, Singapore Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

When Singapore attained self-government in 1959, one of the key political platforms of the People's Action Party (PAP) government was to eradicate the housing shortage. Although the SIT built a total of 20,907 housing units from 1947 to 1959, this remained inadequate as the population had surged to 1,579,000 during this period. By 1959, it was estimated that some 250,000 people were living in dilapidated and overcrowded pre-war housing in urban slums, while some 300,000 occupied insanitary shanty huts in other squatter areas.<sup>9</sup> More unauthorised housing continued to sprout out throughout the island.

The PAP government embarked on a systematic programme of island-wide clearance and resettlement of slums and squatters through the Housing & Development Board (HDB), its newly created statutory board for public housing development. To assist people affected by land clearance, the government implemented a series of resettlement policies with timely adjustments for inflation. These initiatives freed occupied or encumbered land for the development of low-cost public housing with piped water and modern sanitation, which offered much better living conditions than urban slums and squatter settlements. Public housing developments started in areas around the fringe of the city, such as in Queenstown and Toa Payoh. This was followed by high-rise developments in satellite new towns, which were areas outside and far away from the city, like those in Ang Mo Kio and Bedok. Today, more than 80% of Singapore's population live in public housing estates. This was made possible through the process of clearance of encumbered land.

Singapore also needed to diversify its economy beyond its traditional entrepôt trade, in order to provide more and better jobs for its growing population. To attract foreign investments into Singapore to jumpstart its manufacturing sector, vacant land was required for industrial development. The industrialisation efforts, which initially centred on Jurong in the west, required the clearance and resettlement of existing occupants of farms, fishing villages, *kampungs*, cottage industries, etc.

Land clearance and resettlement also paved the way for the much-needed redevelopment of the Central Area, the commercial heart of Singapore. By clearing underutilised buildings such as low-rise, dilapidated and overcrowded shophouses in subdivided lots, the fragmented lots could be amalgamated to form sizeable land parcels for redevelopment into new offices, hotels, and commercial and entertainment centres, which were needed to support the diversification and growth of the economy. In the historical districts, the existing occupants of state-owned properties were relocated to allow for the restoration and conservation of the buildings. Many of these buildings were later put to adaptive reuse as hotels, and retail and food and beverage outlets, which enriched the urban texture of the Central Area.

Encumbered lands were also cleared for new infrastructure projects to improve the physical environment and for environmental improvements, such as the removal of water pollutants at its source and the formation of river reservoirs to help overcome Singapore's water constraints.

Land clearance and resettlement have supported Singapore's development by facilitating the construction of economic, environmental and social infrastructure. The government's land clearance and resettlement policies evolved with changing circumstances. For example, with dwindling agricultural land available, affected farmers could instead opt to rent hawker stalls or shop premises in HDB estates. By 1990, Singapore was declared squatter-free. Since then, there has been a marked improvement in living conditions and the quality of life. Singapore has been physically transformed from a nation of slums and squatters into a highly liveable and sustainable modern metropolis.

This Urban Systems Study aims to document the objectives of clearance and resettlement, resettlement policies and processes, as well as the resettlement strategies for the Central Area to meet Singapore's physical and economic development needs. The next chapter provides the details of the rationale and objectives of clearance and resettlement for different land use needs.

## CHAPTER 1

# DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC AND OTHER NATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF CLEARING ENCUMBERED STATE LAND



“We give everyone a home at cost or below cost and as development takes place, everybody gets a lift. All boats rise when the tide rises.”

Lee Kuan Yew

As a city-state constrained by its limited land resource and water supply, it is essential for Singapore to judiciously utilise every square inch of state land for national development projects involving housing, commercial and industrial development, or even national defence. At the same time, Singapore has to minimise pollution, improve the living environment and find new sources of potable water supply. Land clearance and resettlement were crucial parts of the process of accomplishing these challenging tasks, particularly in the early years after independence.

## PAVING THE WAY FOR LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

With self-government in 1959, the People's Action Party government came into power. Among its top priorities were to solve the acute housing shortage, eradicate overcrowded slums and improve the quality of life. Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, explained:

*This was a plan which we had from the very beginning. We give everyone a home at cost or below cost and as development takes place, everybody gets a lift. All boats rise when the tide rises.*<sup>10</sup>

The prerequisite for a successful public housing programme was the availability of vacant and developable land. The government's strategy was to focus on acquiring suitable sites and clearing state land, which would then allow for the construction of public housing flats for those affected by clearance works. Compared to the single- or double-storey *kampung* (village) dwellings and shophouses, moving people into high-rise blocks of flats intensified the use of land, which allowed the land acquired and cleared by the government to be used for various national development projects.



Toa Payoh was the first satellite HDB new town built after Singapore's independence.

Image from the Ministry of Culture Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

However, the process of land clearance and resettlement of the occupants in these areas was not without challenges, especially during the early years when the resettlement process gathered momentum. The government recognised early on that strong institutions, clear and fair policies, and an effective process were critical in carrying out land clearance and resettlement of occupants on state land<sup>11</sup> throughout the island.

To tackle the pressing housing problem, the government established the Housing & Development Board (HDB) on 1 February 1960 as the national housing authority, which took over the housing and land clearance functions of the colonial-era Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT). The HDB in turn set up its Resettlement Department to carry out the functions of land clearance and resettlement of slums and squatter areas. Hence, the government could avoid dislocating residents without the ability to rehouse them.<sup>12</sup> Much rode on a smooth system of resettlement to support the overall development of Singapore. Lim Hoon Yong, the Head of the Resettlement Department from 1963 to 1989, recalled that Howe Yoon Chong, the first Chief Executive Officer of the HDB, when asking him to take charge of resettlement, said, "All the government's five-year development plans depend on this department."<sup>13</sup>

Between 1959 and 1984, the government acquired some 177 km<sup>2</sup> of land—close to 30% of the total land area then—for redevelopment. About half of the land acquired was allocated to the HDB for public housing.<sup>14</sup> The provision of adequate housing for those affected helped to facilitate relocation and soften public resistance on the ground. Starting with the development of the Queenstown housing estate, which the HDB took over from the SIT, other HDB new towns such as Toa Payoh, Bukit Merah, Kallang, Bedok, Clementi and Ang Mo Kio took root in various parts of Singapore. By the end of its first decade in existence, the HDB had built some 117,000 flats,<sup>15</sup> compared to the 20,907 housing units completed by the SIT between 1947 and 1959.<sup>16</sup> This put the government on firmer ground to continue the clearance of encumbered state land, as the public housing programme accelerated in the late 1960s to 1980s.

Public housing accommodated an increasing share of the populace, even as the numbers grew. From 9% of the population in 1960, the proportion of those living in HDB housing rose to 67% in 1980. The figure stands at more than 80% today. The success of the HDB's building programmes not only helped to accommodate a growing population but also enabled large-scale clearance of squatters and slums in the city centre, paving the way for much needed urban renewal.



Scene along the five-foot walkway of a row of shophouses.

Image from the Urban Redevelopment Authority Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

## SUPPORTING URBAN RENEWAL AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

While the HDB embarked on its mass public housing programmes in the 1960s, the city centre was also crying out for urban renewal and modernisation to serve the growth of a newly independent Singapore. The traditional entrepôt trade that Singapore relied on as a British colony was no longer sufficient to drive economic growth for future needs. Not only was unemployment looming and large swathes of the population poorly educated and unskilled, Singapore was also experiencing a population growth spurt. To kickstart economic development, Singapore turned to industrialisation and manufacturing by attracting investments from multinational corporations, and also to tourism. At the same time, Singapore needed to remake its city centre to fit the needs of modern businesses, serve as an attractive business hub for such enterprises and support tourism.

At the time, many of the buildings in the Central Area built before the Second World War were only two to three storeys high. This included pre-war shophouses occupied by tenants living in squalid subdivided cubicles under rent control. Many buildings had fallen into a state of disrepair due to the lack of maintenance, exacerbated by the rent control legislation that was in place. Urban renewal was thus an opportunity to modernise the city centre, improve the poor living conditions, intensify the use of land in prime locations and build modern high-rise office, hotel and shopping developments to support the diversification of the economy. The Urban Renewal Unit was formed in 1964 under the HDB to take on the task of rejuvenating the Central Area. By 1974, it became a separate statutory board, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA).

The enactment of the Land Acquisition Act in 1966 gave the government legislative power to acquire land quickly for a public purpose at reasonable compensation rates. From 1973 until 2007, land acquisition compensation was pegged to the lower of either the market rate at a specified statutory date, which was revised periodically, or the current market value. Acquisition of the land was followed by clearance and resettlement of its occupants. Residential cases were resettled into HDB flats, both within the city and in new towns, while commercial cases were offered alternative accommodation in HDB new towns or resettlement centres in the city. Fragmented parcels of land could then be assembled to create more sizeable plots for more intensive redevelopment and tendered out to the private sector for commercial, residential and hotel development. In the 1980s, as the focus turned towards preserving Singapore's built heritage, some historical shophouses within designated conservation areas in the city centre were given conservation status, and later sold to the private sector for restoration and adaptive reuse.



Land was also cleared for the building of new public infrastructure that formed the foundation for the overall development of Singapore. These included roads and expressways, sewerage and drainage systems, the seaport and airport, and in later years, the construction of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system, telecommunications infrastructure and even agrotechnology parks. Some of the cleared land in the city centre was used for the development of much-needed infrastructure, like roads and utilities, and the construction of the MRT system, which were critical to supporting urban renewal.

## SECURING LAND FOR INDUSTRIALISATION

Faced with high unemployment and a fast-growing population, it was vital for Singapore to diversify its entrepôt trade-reliant economy through industrialisation. It was equally crucial to attract foreign investments to the manufacturing industry and create jobs for the people. For that, the government had to ensure that there was vacant land with basic infrastructure, such as roads, power lines and water pipelines, ready for the setting up of factories.

In 1961, a massive stretch of rural land in Jurong in the west—much of which was state land—was designated as Singapore's first large-scale industrial estate for the initial phase of labour- and capital-intensive industrialisation. However, Jurong comprised swampland, secondary forests, *kampungs* and squatter settlements, plantations, farmland, fishing villages, fish ponds and fruit trees. There were also existing industries such as brickworks and pottery factories. By September 1961, land clearance commenced in Jurong; it marked the beginning of the new Jurong Industrial Estate.

While the development of the Jurong Industrial Estate was led by the Economic Development Board and later, the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC), resettlement and clearance were initially carried out by the HDB's Resettlement Department. By 1975, however, the scale of the resettlement needed had grown, such that the JTC had to set up its own resettlement team to clear land for industrial use. The JTC also developed complementary residential estates nearby, such as Taman Jurong and Teban Gardens. These housing estates were also used to resettle those affected by clearance and to provide dormitory housing for the labour force. Some of the cleared land was also used for parks and recreational facilities to complement the township development.

## SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FACILITIES

Following Singapore's separation from Malaysia and independence in 1965, one of the most pressing tasks was to build up the nation's defence capability. The Resettlement Department was tasked to complete the clearance of a site identified for military use at Pasir Laba within nine months. This massive area in the west of Singapore was developed into a military academy, later named the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute.<sup>17</sup> This was followed by the clearance of the Sungei Gedong area for a military camp site.

Lim Hoon Yong, former head of the HDB's Resettlement Department, recalled that the clearance progress was on a tight schedule and closely monitored by Dr Phay Seng Whatt, then the Chairman of the Public Service Commission who was also heading the development project, and George Bogaars, then the head of the civil service and chairman of the co-ordinating committee. It had initially been difficult to relocate people from the rural area of Pasir Laba to the Queenstown housing estate in the city fringe, where the available housing units were at that time. The reason was that the replacement flats were far away from the clearance site and would take them away from their original communities. Moreover, having lived in traditional single-storey attap (thatched) houses in *kampungs*, they had to get used to living in high-rise HDB buildings of 12 to 16 storeys.



Former Minister of Defence Dr Goh Keng Swee reviewing the passing-out parade at Pasir Laba Camp (1966).

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



Given the urgency of clearing the site for the defence project, the Resettlement Department expedited the payment of compensation to occupants for the loss of their attap houses and other improvements to the land, so that they could put down the booking fees for new flats and cover other relocation expenses. Residential households were eventually relocated to the Tanglin Halt neighbourhood in Queenstown, while farmers were allocated farming plots in a Resettlement Area<sup>18</sup> in Lim Chu Kang in the northwest of Singapore.

## CREATING A CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Many uses and activities on the land, such as pig farming, street hawking and backyard industries along the river catchment, polluted the environment. Such activities produced waste that was discharged directly into drains and rivers, polluting potential sources of water supply. Squatters living in such areas also contributed to such pollution. In a country faced with water shortages, this was unacceptable. Many of the structures built by squatters for such activities were also unsightly and disorganised.

The Environmental Public Health Act was thus passed in 1969 to govern health-related matters in public cleansing services, markets, hawkers, food establishments and the general environment. A few years later, in 1972, the government set up the Ministry of the Environment (ENV) to tackle environmental problems relating to pollution control, sewerage, drainage and environmental health. One of the key tasks of the ENV was to clear polluting activities and structures to improve the physical environment and create a more liveable and environmentally sustainable city.

### Relocation of Pig Farms

Pig farming, which produced large volumes of solid waste, was a main source of pollution in the rivers. By 1975, the Public Utilities Board (PUB) developed plans to convert the rural areas in Jurong, Choa Chu Kang and Lim Chu Kang into water catchment areas for the development of Pandan and Kranji Reservoirs, respectively. At the time, there were 2,926 pig farms within the Kranji catchment area with a total of 217,000 pigs.<sup>19</sup>

To comply with strict water pollution controls, the pig farms scattered around the proposed water catchment area were relocated to designated agricultural areas in Punggol and Seletar South in the northeast of Singapore.

These areas were outside the PUB's water catchment areas and were to be used exclusively for intensive commercial pig farming.<sup>20</sup> Pig farms with more than 100 pigs were given the option of resettling in Punggol, while smaller farms were phased out and converted to less pollutive forms of farming, such as vegetable or chicken farming. Compensation was based on the floor area of the pigsties and cesspits, and the length of fencing enclosures. Those who ceased farming were given rehousing benefits. Some bigger farms, such as Cheng Siong Pig Farm, Tan Chye Huat Farm<sup>21</sup> and Lee Choon Huat were given time extensions to relocate or scale down their operations. Lim Kim San, the founding Chairman of the HDB, recalled his encounter with pig farmers unhappy with being relocated:

*I was told there was a delegation of pig farmers to see me—women. Well, I'll face a mob of angry men any time after the angry women...they were very angry in our moving them and their pigs...Some of them were resettled several times. We always give them ample notice so that they don't have to rear a new brood. Sell what you have. And those of you, if we have land, we resettle you out. You have the choice: either Housing Board flat or you go and get your resettlement.<sup>22</sup>*

By 1985, the government announced that it would phase out pig farming altogether. Pig farming was considered to be taking up too much land and water, two resources that were in short supply in Singapore. To make up the shortfall for pork, former Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Goh Keng Swee, then in charge of the Primary Production Department (PPD), proposed importing live pigs and frozen pork instead.<sup>23</sup> The first phase of closing down pig farms centred around the Lim Chu Kang area and 403 pig farms were closed by June 1986. The second phase in the following year involved the closure of 359 farms in Jalan Kayu. By November 1988, clearance in the last phase in Sembawang, Punggol, Tampines and Pulau Ubin, which affected 223 pig farms, culminated in the closure and clearance of all pig farms in Singapore.<sup>24</sup>

### From Street Hawkers to Hawker Centres

In earlier decades, unlicensed street hawkers were a common sight, especially in the city and residential areas. However, they posed major public health and environmental pollution problems because of unhygienic food handling practices, with water and food waste being discharged directly into drains and rivers.

These unlicensed street hawkers were eventually relocated to permanent stalls in purpose-built hawker centres equipped with basic amenities. Such permanent stalls were more hygienic as they were connected to the

sewerage system and were provided with running water and proper waste disposal facilities. Such hawker centres were either built by the HDB in new housing estates or by the ENV within or adjacent to wet markets. The URA also incorporated hawker stalls in its resettlement centres to house street hawkers affected by land acquisition and clearance in the city area. While hawker centres were primarily meant to accommodate street hawkers, farmers affected by resettlement programmes elsewhere could also apply for a hawker licence and take up stalls at the hawker centres based on hardship grounds, for example, the farmer being the sole breadwinner of his family.<sup>25</sup>

An example of street hawkers in the city area being relocated during the 1970s were those along Hock Lam Street and Chin Nam Street; these streets do not exist anymore today. These street hawkers had been popular among locals—office workers in the vicinity of City Hall and Supreme Court, and staff and customers at the thriving High Street-North Bridge Road shopping area—and tourists alike. However, in line with the comprehensive redevelopment of the area, the street hawkers were relocated to a new hawker centre in the Capitol Shopping Centre, a resettlement centre built by the URA. This hawker centre, being a stone's throw away from where the hawkers were originally located, ensured that they would continue to serve the needs of their customers in the area despite being relocated.

Other examples of hawker centres built to house hawkers resettled from nearby street stalls included the Telok Ayer Food Centre along Shenton Way (the current site of One Raffles Quay), the Empress Place Food Centre



Hawker stalls at Hock Lam Street (1975).

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

(since demolished) and the North Bridge Road Market and Food Centre, a two-storey market and hawker centre comprising 425 stalls that housed displaced hawkers from the Beach Road area and Clyde Terrace Market.<sup>26</sup> Many squalid and unsightly back lane stalls gradually disappeared as street hawkers were relocated into hawker centres. By 1986, there were no longer any unlicensed hawkers in Singapore.



Empress Place Food Centre in the 1970s.

Image courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.

### Moving Vegetable Wholesale Businesses to a Purpose-Built Wholesale Centre

Other small or informal businesses also had to be relocated for public health reasons. For example, some 224 vegetable wholesalers from the Clyde Terrace Market, Maxwell Market and other locations in the city areas were relocated in 1983 to the new purpose-built Pasir Panjang Wholesale/Auction Centre for vegetables, fruits and dried goods. This relocation prevented vegetable waste from polluting the surrounding areas and drains in the original places of business and cleaned up the environment. Centralising the wholesale activity at Pasir Panjang also improved the logistical efficiency of distribution.

Developed and managed by the HDB,<sup>27</sup> the wholesale centre sits on a 15-ha site and comprises 242 shops, 354 stalls, a cold room with storage space of 52,000 m<sup>3</sup> and an auction area of 8,200 m<sup>2</sup> for vegetables and dried goods.<sup>28</sup> With the new facilities, another 351 vegetable wholesalers who operated their business in the early hours of the morning near the Singapore River along Upper Circular Road, New Bridge Road and Carpenter Street, were also relocated to the wholesale centre.<sup>29</sup> The Pasir Panjang Wholesale/Auction Centre has since become Singapore's main wholesale market and distribution point for imported fruits and vegetables.

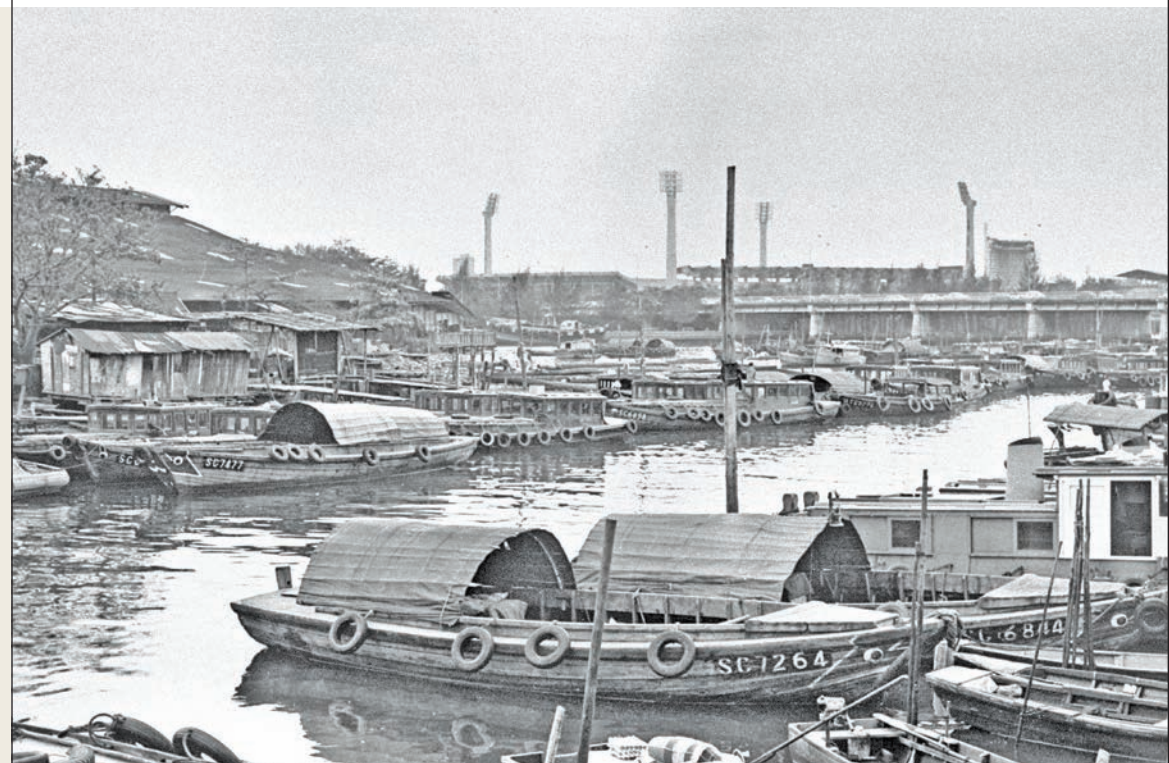


# ROLE OF CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT IN THE SINGAPORE RIVER CLEAN-UP

By the early 1970s, both the Singapore and Kallang Rivers were heavily contaminated by organic and industrial wastes from activities, such as street hawking, cottage industries and farming along and upstream of the rivers. The waters were fetid with little marine life—the rivers were essentially dead.

The pollution to the rivers had several sources. Insanitary and unsewered slums in the city and densely populated squatter colonies in the city fringes treated the Singapore River as an open sewer by discharging untreated waste directly into it. Liquid and solid waste from street hawkers, vegetable vendors and markets also went straight into the rivers. The waterways also received animal waste from pig farms operating in the upper reaches of the rivers.

Many trades and businesses such as wholesale trading and lighterage, boat building and repair services operated in dilapidated premises along the banks of the two rivers. Near the Kallang Basin, there were also cottage industries such as charcoal traders who disposed their rubbish directly into the river. Despite occupying a prime location close to the heart of Singapore's Central Business District, the Singapore and Kallang Rivers were in a sorry state.



The Kallang River, which was polluted by squatters and riverine boatyards (1975).

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

Then Prime Minister (PM) Lee Kuan Yew recognised the urgent need to clean up the rivers to conserve and protect Singapore's scarce water resources and complement the modernisation of Singapore. In his speech made at the opening of the Upper Pierce Reservoir on 27 February 1977, PM Lee outlined his vision for the Singapore and Kallang Rivers:

*It should be a way of life to keep water clean. To keep every stream, culvert and rivulet free from pollution. The Ministry of the Environment should make it a target in ten years. Let us have fishing in the Singapore River and Kallang River. It can be done.<sup>30</sup>*

# ROLE OF CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT IN THE SINGAPORE RIVER CLEAN-UP

*Continued...*



The strategy to clean up the rivers was to tackle the pollution at its source and this involved a multi-agency effort that included the HDB's Resettlement Department. The task was huge; it involved a mammoth exercise to clear all pollutive and unsightly riverine activities as well as dredging the riverbeds. The Resettlement Department drew up a programme to clear insanitary squatter settlements from a zone of 8,800 ha (88 km<sup>2</sup>) comprising households, shops, industrial establishments and farmers within the catchment areas of the two rivers.

Pig farms in the catchment areas, which posed a serious pollution threat, were among the first to be cleared. This was completed in 1982 with the help of the PPD. The squatter colonies in the catchment areas were cleared and rehoused in HDB new towns. Some of the squatters were given several eviction notices and repeated warnings to relocate, and severe actions such as physical eviction and demolition of structures were taken after a Warrant to Dispossess was obtained from the court against non-compliant squatters and those who delayed their departure without valid reasons.

Resettlement for businesses was more difficult as most owners continued to reject the replacement sites. At the same time, industries such as boatyards, shipyards, godowns (warehouses) and street hawkers along the Singapore River and Kallang Basin were cleared and resettled. The JTC, which was in charge of sourcing for suitable land for industries requiring waterfront access, offered the businesses replacement sites at Jurong, Tuas and Senoko.

The clearance and resettlement of squatters along the Singapore and Kallang Rivers was a major exercise. Former Principal Administrative Officer of the HDB, Goh Choon Ngwen, who was involved in the process, recounted that it took a full eight years to complete the clearance and resettlement exercise.<sup>31</sup> The process started in 1979 and was only completed in 1987, within the 10-year target set by PM Lee. In all, a total of 46,537 cases comprising residential households, shops, industrial establishments and farmers were resettled during the river clean-up.<sup>32</sup>

The clearance of catchment areas by the Resettlement Department was a critical component of the cleaning up of the Singapore River and Kallang Basin. With the rivers rejuvenated, this later provided a firm foundation for the development of Marina Reservoir—Singapore's 15th reservoir—and the new Marina Bay financial district in the 2000s.



In October 1984, the government announced an accelerated resettlement programme to clear all remaining squatter areas—with an estimated 35,000 to 38,000 squatters—by the end of the decade. By then, economic development and the prevalence of public housing had brought about better standards of living. Then Senior Parliamentary Secretary for National Development, Lee Yiok Seng, pointed out that “[t]he aspiration of Singaporeans living in slums and squatter areas for a better standard of living had made resettlement an accepted fact of life.”<sup>33</sup>

Coupled with the government’s efforts to accommodate the specific needs of those affected in order to minimise disruption and dislocation, the remaining phases of the programme were completed on schedule. At the same time, under the government’s Remnant Squatter Clearance Programme, private owners of land with remnant pockets of squatters were also required to clear unsightly structures to improve the environment.<sup>34</sup> Singapore was declared squatter-free in 1990.<sup>35</sup>

Clearance and resettlement remained a sensitive issue for many, but it was clearly necessary for the modernisation of Singapore following its independence, and the scale of redevelopment needed meant that many were affected. There had to be clear, transparent and equitable resettlement policies and processes for different affected groups such as resident households, farmers and businesses. The details of such policies and processes are provided in the next two chapters.

## CHAPTER 2

# ACHIEVING CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT THROUGH FAIR AND EFFECTIVE POLICIES

For many who had been living in insanitary and fire-prone huts or congested and squalid shophouses, HDB flats were a vast improvement to their living conditions and a form of social upgrading....As people warmed up to the idea of living in HDB flats, many started asking for early clearance.

Following the end of the Second World War, the colonial government faced a dire housing shortage. To address this, it initiated an extensive development programme to build houses, schools, hospitals, roads and other public projects.<sup>36</sup> However, progress was hindered as vacant land was scarce in the 1950s. The urban areas were dotted with slums, while most areas outside the city centre were occupied by farmers and squatters. The clearance efforts of the colonial government were delayed because of a lack of resettlement sites and facilities to rehouse those affected by clearance.

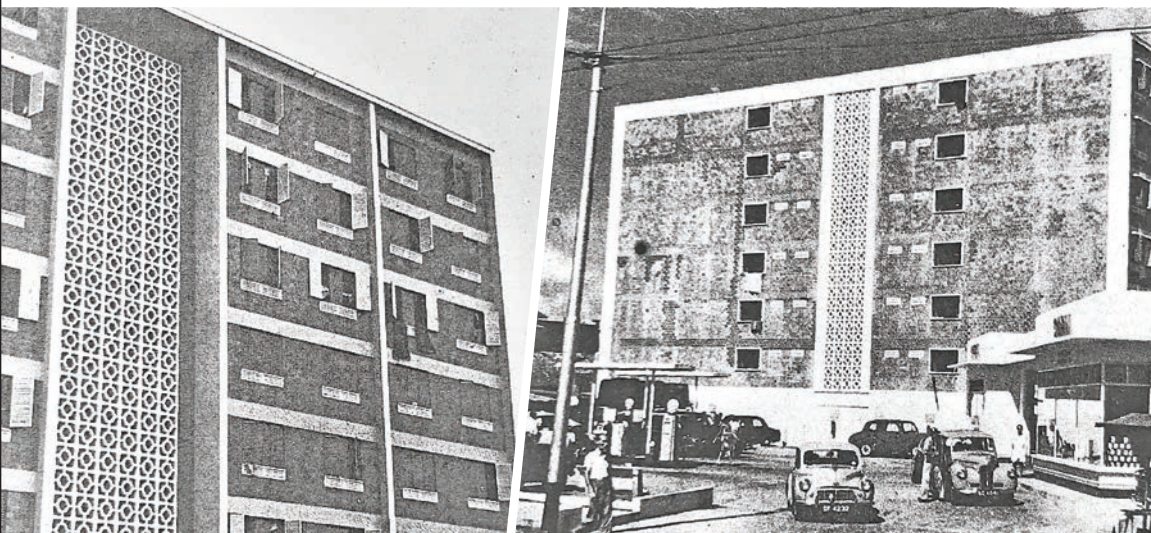
The government decided to review its resettlement policies, processes and institutional setups to facilitate large-scale land clearance and rehousing of the population. The evolution of the resettlement policies is discussed in this chapter, while Chapter 3 focuses on the institutions and processes that enabled resettlement.

## EARLY RESETTLEMENT POLICIES OF THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

Prior to the mid-1950s, there were few major infrastructure developments by the colonial government that required extensive clearance of occupied crown land. Land clearance was carried out primarily by the Land Office and the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT). The Land Office cleared and recovered crown land in urban and rural areas as and when they were required for public works such as road building, whereas the SIT carried out slum clearance under its General Improvement Plan for urban areas. The government generally did not pay monetary compensation to those being displaced, but instead provided alternative farming land or accommodation. For the relocation of displaced farmers and residential squatters,<sup>37</sup> the Land Office prepared specially designated Resettlement Areas with basic infrastructure like access roads and drains in the rural parts of Singapore.

The first clearance of farmers took place in 1955. A small community of farmers in Queenstown—over two hundred families had been farming for many years in an area of some five hundred acres—had to be resettled to make way for the SIT's development of the new Queenstown public housing estate. However, it was difficult to obtain suitable agricultural land to resettle the vegetable and livestock farmers.<sup>38</sup> Eventually, each farmer was given a farming lot in a rural Resettlement Area at 11 milestone Jurong Road where they could continue farming. Farming lots between two to three acres on 30-year leases at low rental rates were allocated depending on the size of the original plots that were given up. The farmers were also provided with house lots and ex-gratia payments—in the form of cash and materials for rebuilding houses and farming facilities—based on the value of assets lost due to clearance.<sup>39</sup> Those who refused to accept the resettlement terms faced legal proceedings to evict them. By October 1955, most had moved out to the Resettlement Area.

In carrying out slum clearance under its General Improvement Plan for urban areas, the SIT's functions included condemning insanitary buildings and implementing infrastructure improvements, such as road building and constructing (or widening of) back lanes, and providing replacement housing to those displaced by its schemes.<sup>40</sup> The SIT erected tenement buildings specifically for the decanting of slum areas, while a portion of SIT flats was also set aside for such relocations. For example, a tenement building was constructed at Manila Street in the 1950s to provide for the decanting of slum areas in Short Street and Middle Road.<sup>41</sup> However, such alternative housing was not well-received—less than 50% of those being displaced took them up—because the rent was higher than what they were used to paying.



A tenement block built at Manila Street for the decanting of slum areas in Short Street and the Middle Road area in the 1950s.

Images courtesy of the Singapore Improvement Trust.

### Recommendations of the Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party

With plans for more extensive development, the colonial government needed more land. To expedite the clearance process, it had to formulate a more effective resettlement approach. In 1955, the colonial government appointed the Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party, which comprised representatives from the Rural Board, the Land Office, the City Council, the Public Works Department, the SIT, as well as the Singapore Attap Dwellers Association,<sup>42</sup> to address the problems of land clearance and resettlement. In its 1956 report, the Working Party recommended four compensation schemes targeted at farmers and residential squatters, including a proposal to provide monetary compensation and/or specially built houses for affected occupants. The implementation of this scheme entailed substantial construction of resettlement facilities such as houses and farm lots, as well as basic infrastructure such as roads and drains for rural Resettlement Areas.

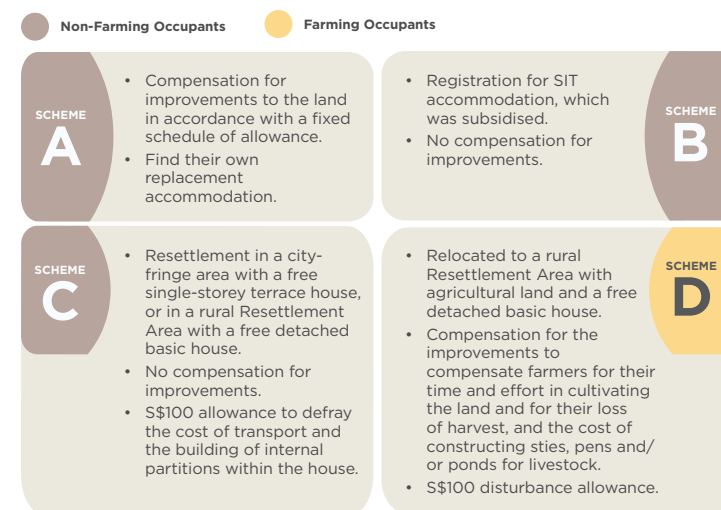
As the production of food was important for feeding Singapore's growing population and considered a significant economic sector of Singapore, the Working Party recommended that farmers be given replacement

farming land in designated rural Resettlement Areas. They were also to receive better resettlement benefits than residential squatters, including a free basic house<sup>43</sup> and compensation for improvements that they had carried out on the land, such as planting and the erection of pens and ponds for livestock. Costing about S\$1,000 to construct, a basic house in a Resettlement Area typically had a floor area of 3,850 sq. ft. (357.67 m<sup>2</sup>) and comprised plank outer walls, an attap roof and a cemented floor.

Residential squatters, whether in farming areas or elsewhere, would also be provided compensation for improvements, provided they found their own accommodation. They could also opt to take up subsidised SIT flats, or be resettled in a city-fringe area or a rural Resettlement Area with a house provided free-of-charge, in which case they would not be given compensation for improvements made to the land. During this period, commercial and industrial premises were by and large unaffected by the colonial government's clearance works and they were not included in the Working Party's resettlement framework.

### Exhibit 2

#### Four Resettlement Schemes Proposed by the 1955 Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party



Source: Burlock, S.G. *Report of the Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party*. Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1956.





A prepared Resettlement Area with basic houses.  
Images courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.

As recommended by the Working Party, the SIT took over both functions of clearance and resettlement from the Land Office and set up a Land Clearance and Resettlement Department in 1957. Between 1957 and 1959, the SIT cleared a total of 866 cases involving farmers and residential squatters. Of these, 344 cases were moved to rural Resettlement Areas, 185 cases were rehoused in SIT accommodation in places such as Tiong Bahru, Queenstown and Short Street-Prinsep Street, while 337 cases found their own accommodation.<sup>44</sup> A total of S\$898,000 was paid out in compensation. However, resettlement remained a difficult exercise. Affected residential families were often reluctant to move as the replacement housing was far from their areas of employment, or involved higher rents and service charges, such as those for a SIT flat.

## RESETTLEMENT POLICIES AFTER SELF-GOVERNMENT

With the advent of self-government in 1959, the government led by the People's Action Party established a new statutory board—the Housing & Development Board (HDB)—in 1960 under the auspices of the Ministry of National Development (MND) to address the acute housing shortage at the time. The Resettlement Department of the HDB took over from its predecessor, the Land Clearance and Resettlement Department of the SIT.

The HDB initially adhered to the Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party's recommendations on resettlement policies and scheduled rates of compensation for improvements.<sup>45</sup> Toa Payoh was an early resettlement project by the HDB in 1961 where the area had to be cleared for the development of a new public housing estate. The farming and residential occupants were given options similar to what had been offered by the colonial government:

- i. Apply for an HDB flat, and no compensation for the improvements to the land; or
- ii. Monetary compensation for improvements according to a fixed scale and to find their own accommodation; or
- iii. A house in a city-fringe area with about 10,000 sq. ft. (929 m<sup>2</sup>) of land; or
- iv. A farming plot of about two acres (8,093 m<sup>2</sup>) with a house and monetary compensation for improvements (only for bona fide farmers).

Likewise, resettlement benefits for farmers were better than those for residential occupants because of the impact on their livelihoods and the greater hardship they suffered. If they had to cease farming because they were relocated to a non-agricultural area, they would lose their main source of income. Even for those who could continue farming after relocation, they practically had to start afresh. Farmers were relocated to rural Resettlement Areas predominantly in Lim Chu Kang, where the land was well suited for the cultivation of crops.



Clearance of a site for development in the early 1960s.  
Image courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.





A Resettlement Area for displaced farmers (left); a typical water standpipe provided in the Resettlement Area (right).

Images courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.

## RESETTLEMENT POLICIES IN THE 1960S AND EARLY 1970S

Compared to the SIT, however, the HDB had a far more ambitious public housing programme. For example, while the SIT constructed slightly more than 20,000 housing units in a decade from 1948 to 1959,<sup>46</sup> the HDB set a target of building over 50,000 flats in its first five-year building programme.<sup>47</sup> The scale and urgency of the HDB's mass public housing programmes in areas like Queenstown, Toa Payoh, Bedok, Geylang, Kallang and Bukit Merah, meant that the work of clearance and resettlement had to be expanded and accelerated. The clearance programme also affected businesses, particularly those in the Central Area, which was then undergoing urban renewal.

By 1964, the MND had put in place enhanced resettlement policies to address changing circumstances and to make resettlement more palatable to those affected. The government set out two key principles for resettlement policies: (1) resettlement should be efficient and speedy so that there would be sufficient land to meet the demand for development, and (2) the hardship of those being resettled should be

mitigated through sufficient assistance and incentives to gain their co-operation. The policies were aimed at providing equitable compensation, minimising the adjustments on the part of affected occupants as far as possible, and making tangible improvements in the housing conditions of the affected population.<sup>48</sup> The compensation rates were also more finely tuned for different categories of occupants. Policy reviews were carried out by a Resettlement Policy Review Committee, which was a multi-agency effort chaired by the Senior Parliamentary Secretary for National Development and comprised the Permanent Secretary for National Development, the Chief Executive Officer of the HDB, the heads of the Resettlement Department and the Primary Production Department, and the Commissioner of Lands.



Parliamentary Secretary for National Development, Ho Cheng Choon, holding a press conference on the government's new resettlement policies (1964).

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

## Introduction of Replacement Rates for Displaced Farmers

The policy on the allocation of agricultural land for resettled farmers went through major changes. Although the domestic agricultural sector was a significant economic sector and important to Singapore's food supply, the quickening pace of urbanisation and industrialisation meant that rural land for agriculture was becoming increasingly scarce. In 1963, the farming plots allocated to bona fide farmers were restricted to no more than two acres per family,<sup>49</sup> so as to ensure there would be enough agricultural land for distribution among dispossessed farmers.<sup>50</sup>

The government further tightened the allocation of agricultural land in 1964 and introduced a higher scale of compensation rates for improvements, known as Replacement Rates. The compensation for improvements to a plank and attap house with a concrete floor was more than doubled from S\$1 per sq. ft. (0.093 m<sup>2</sup>) to S\$2.50 per sq. ft., while improvements to cultivated land involved a Replacement Grant of S\$1,000 per acre (4,046.86 m<sup>2</sup>), which the farmer could opt for instead of land allocation.<sup>51</sup> These initiatives were intended to encourage farmers to relinquish their farms and take up HDB flats or find their own accommodation.

However, this initiative was not popular as the majority of farmers still preferred land to monetary compensation due to the shortage and spiralling cost of agricultural land. There were also growing rumblings among affected farmers that the value of the compensation had been eroded over the years by inflation. Those who wanted to quit farming and take up other occupations such as running HDB shops complained that they were unable to afford the shop rent.

To accelerate the clearance of farmers in the face of dwindling agricultural land for resettlement, the government decided in 1971 to offer higher compensation rates for improvements for farmers who opted not to have farmland allocation, compared to the compensation rates for farmers

who wanted replacement land. For example, the compensation for a plank and attap house with concrete flooring for farmers who opted not to have land allocation was increased to S\$4.50 per sq. ft., while the compensation for the same improvement for farmers who opted for land allocation remained at the 1964 rate of S\$2.50 per sq. ft. In addition, farmers who chose not to be allocated farmland were given priority allocation of a free three-room improved HDB flat<sup>52</sup> in a new town, or a cash grant of S\$7,800 in lieu of a flat, which was equivalent to the price of a three-room flat then. Compared to the 1964 Replacement Rates, this policy of providing free flats was much better received by the farmers.<sup>53</sup>

When Singapore experienced a bout of high inflation in the 1970s precipitated by the 1973 oil crisis, the government increased the compensation for improvements across the board in 1975 by an average of 50%. For farmers who did not take up replacement farmland, the cash grant in lieu of a free three-room flat was raised to S\$11,800 while the compensation rates for improvements continued to be higher for them than for those who continued farming.

In 1979, because the disparity in compensation rates for farmers (whether opting for land allocation or not) caused unhappiness and delayed the clearance, it was decided that both categories of farmers would be paid a uniform rate of S\$7.50 per sq. ft. There was also a policy change to cease the allocation of farmland.

## Providing HDB Flats for Resettled Families

With residential occupants, the strategy for clearance and resettlement focused on providing suitable replacement accommodation in the form of priority allocation of HDB flats. Having the Resettlement Department within the HDB meant that clearance and resettlement processes could be closely coordinated. The HDB would set aside a certain number of flats in its housing estates for allocation to those being resettled.



With the launch of the HDB's Home Ownership for the People Scheme in 1964, those who formed a family nucleus<sup>54</sup> and requested to be resettled into HDB flats were eligible to purchase their own flats, instead of renting. Those awaiting the completion of their new HDB flats were offered rental flats as temporary accommodation. A disturbance and transport allowance of S\$300 to S\$350 was also introduced for residential occupants. In 1968, the introduction of the scheme to allow contributions to the Central Provident Fund, a national compulsory social security scheme, to finance the purchase of HDB flats further eased the path to homeownership for those being resettled. Single persons who were not eligible to purchase HDB flats were given priority in renting a flat with another affected single person.

For those who could not afford to purchase HDB flats and opted to rent, rental rebates for the first three years were provided from 1971 onwards to ease their financial burden in the transition to HDB housing. This was needed as residential squatters who were previously paying only nominal rents or no rent, often could not afford even the lowest rents for HDB flats. Lim Kim San, the first Chairman of the HDB, recounted one incident where a group who had been resettled from the River Valley area returned within a few months. These people had found the costs of living in HDB flats difficult to bear.<sup>55</sup>

For many who had been living in insanitary and fire-prone huts or congested and squalid shophouses, HDB flats were a vast improvement to their living conditions and a form of social upgrading. The flats were located in self-sufficient HDB new towns equipped with electricity, piped water and modern sanitation, as well as amenities such as markets and shops, schools, eating places, sports facilities, community spaces and places of worship. Light industries sited close to the residential areas provided job opportunities. As people warmed up to the idea of living in HDB flats, many started asking for early clearance.



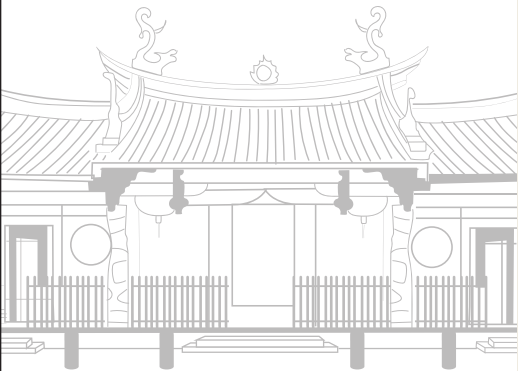
Residential squatters were typically relocated to HDB flats, which came with modern amenities.

Image courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.

# RESETTLING RELIGIOUS SITES

Another significant aspect was the resettlement of religious sites. For example, Chinese *kampungs* in the rural areas were largely organised along dialect lines, each with a temple serving as a nucleus around which village social life revolved. Many temples were established by early immigrants, usually in makeshift structures interspersed among the dwellings. Such religious buildings sometimes had to make way for redevelopment. The joint allocation of a replacement site facilitated the clearance of multiple religious buildings while preserving the community ties and serving the religious and social needs of the local community.

When Toa Payoh New Town was being developed in the 1960s, five different temples there serving the Hokkien, Hainanese, Teochew and Cantonese communities had to move. However, land within the new housing estate was costly and limited—the HDB could only allocate one new site along Toa Payoh Lorong 7 as a replacement. Eventually, the custodians and worshippers of the five temples agreed to pool their contributions and purchased the site. Completed in 1974, the united temple known as *Wu He Miao* (Five United Temples) was a pioneering example of how different houses of worship could be combined under one roof.



## Replacement Premises and Rental Concessions for Displaced Businesses

Unlike clearance carried out during the colonial era, the clearance and resettlement programmes to support comprehensive urban renewal in the Central Area from the mid-1960s onwards had a major impact on businesses. At the time, the Central Area was heavily built-up and densely populated. Many shops, trades, workshops and cottage industries in the Central Area were housed in traditional shophouses of two to three storeys. The first storey facing the street was typically used for business while the upper storeys served as living quarters. At the time, rent control imposed on older buildings in the Central Area allowed their tenants, such as shopkeepers, to benefit from a central location at historically low rental rates. Although such premises provided a means of livelihood for many people, many were, in fact, marginal businesses that depended on the low rents for survival. As a result of the low rents, many of the rent-controlled buildings suffered from neglect and were in poor shape. Several of such sites were marked for clearance.



Shophouses in the Central Area scheduled for clearance in the 1960s.  
Image courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.



The Central Area was packed with dilapidated, congested shophouses and urban slums that housed a large cluster of businesses reliant on their central location for survival. A customised approach to clearance and resettlement was adopted to minimise the disruption to these businesses' operations and ease the clearance process. For shopkeepers displaced from Central Area shophouses, the HDB offered them shop premises within its public housing developments in the Central Area or in HDB new towns. Resettled shopkeepers were given priority allocation of HDB shops at concessional rents without having to go through the usual tender required of other prospective shop tenants. Most of the early HDB shop premises were also designed with living quarters in the storey above, catering to shopkeepers who were used to having their residence onsite.

To ease the financial burden on resettled shopkeepers, the HDB adopted a rising rental rate scheme by raising the rent for HDB shops year by year until it reached market rates. It was first introduced in 1964 as a three-year rising rental rate scheme. In 1971, the scheme was spread over five years for those who were Singapore citizens and sole occupiers of the premises. In the first year, resettled shopkeepers paid 50% of the resettlement rent, which was pegged at 90% of the rent paid by the lowest successful tenderers of similar shops. The rent was increased by 10% each year until it reached the full resettlement rent in the fifth year.<sup>56</sup> The rental concession amounted to a significant sum that helped the resettled shopkeepers mitigate the initial difficulties of re-establishing their business in the new location.

The government also sought to minimise the impact on existing markets and shopping centres in the Central Area that had to be cleared for redevelopment. The HDB cleared and relocated hundreds of shops and stalls from the Chinatown area to a new and nearby shopping and housing complex at Outram Park (see Chapter 4).<sup>57</sup> This large-scale resettlement of shops within the vicinity was made possible with the demolition of the former Outram Prison in 1963, which freed up a site large enough for the development of the new complex. However, finding suitable alternative permanent premises for a large number of shops at the same time was particularly difficult. Hence the HDB constructed temporary shopping centres or shop units within the Central Area as interim premises for such businesses.<sup>58</sup> Such facilities would often be near the original shops. For instance, a prototype temporary shopping centre was constructed at New Market Road to house wholesale merchants affected by the redevelopment of the nearby Ellenborough Market. Another temporary shopping centre with 42 shop units was constructed in 1968 on a vacant site at Java Road-Palembang Road.

The HDB also built new shopping centres and markets as permanent facilities for resettled shops outside the Central Area. When an old market at 10 milestone Jurong Road was demolished for roadworks, the HDB built a new rural shopping centre comprising a market and a concourse of shops for the displaced shopkeepers and hawkers in 1968. The shops were sold to the affected shopkeepers at cost on a 99-year lease, and the shopkeepers could pay by monthly instalments over a period of 15 years. For the displaced hawkers, the Resettlement Department assisted them to form a limited company to purchase the market at cost (also on a 99-year lease). Payment was to be made via an initial deposit of 30%, with the balance to be paid through monthly instalments over 15 years. This scheme, the first of its kind, was devised to implement group resettlement of displaced shopkeepers and market hawkers and was very well received by those who were displaced.<sup>59</sup> A few years later, when some 200 businesses in Chinatown facing clearance took the initiative to develop their own resettlement facilities, they were allowed to purchase a nearby plot of state land to develop into a new complex with commercial and housing units for their resettlement (see Chapter 4).

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), a separate statutory board created out of the HDB in 1974 to focus on urban renewal, expanded the HDB's resettlement initiative of providing temporary shopping centres into a two-step process. It first moved affected businesses to temporary resettlement centres and subsequently housed them in permanent resettlement centres within the Central Area. The URA also deployed other resettlement strategies such as refurbishing state-owned shophouses to speed up the provision of replacement shop space in Orchard Road. Chapter 4 elaborates on the resettlement initiatives put in place by the URA in the Central Area.

Besides shops, there were also workshops and cottage industries in the Central Area that had to be cleared. The HDB built industrial premises for a wide range of displaced trades and small-scale industries, such as carpentry, motor repair, engineering services and food manufacturing. Workshops affected by clearance were mainly rehoused in purpose-built HDB terrace workshops in areas such as Bedok and Eunos Industrial Estates. The URA subsequently adopted this approach by building replacement industrial facilities outside the Central Area (see Chapter 4).

In some cases, similar trades were relocated collectively to help enhance their visibility and business synergy in the new location. For example, those in the motor trade were moved to an automobile spare parts centre at Waterloo Street, while eight egg hatchery shops at Crawford Street and Kallang Road were resettled in terrace workshops at the Kallang Basin Estate. A number of *towgay* (beansprout) growers in the North 1 and North 4 precincts in the Central Area were resettled into 33 units of specially designed two-storey terrace timber houses at a Resettlement Area in Bedok. The HDB also constructed terrace workshops in the Tanjong Rhu Resettlement Area for the six coffin makers that had been moved out from Canal Road and Rochor Road.<sup>60</sup>

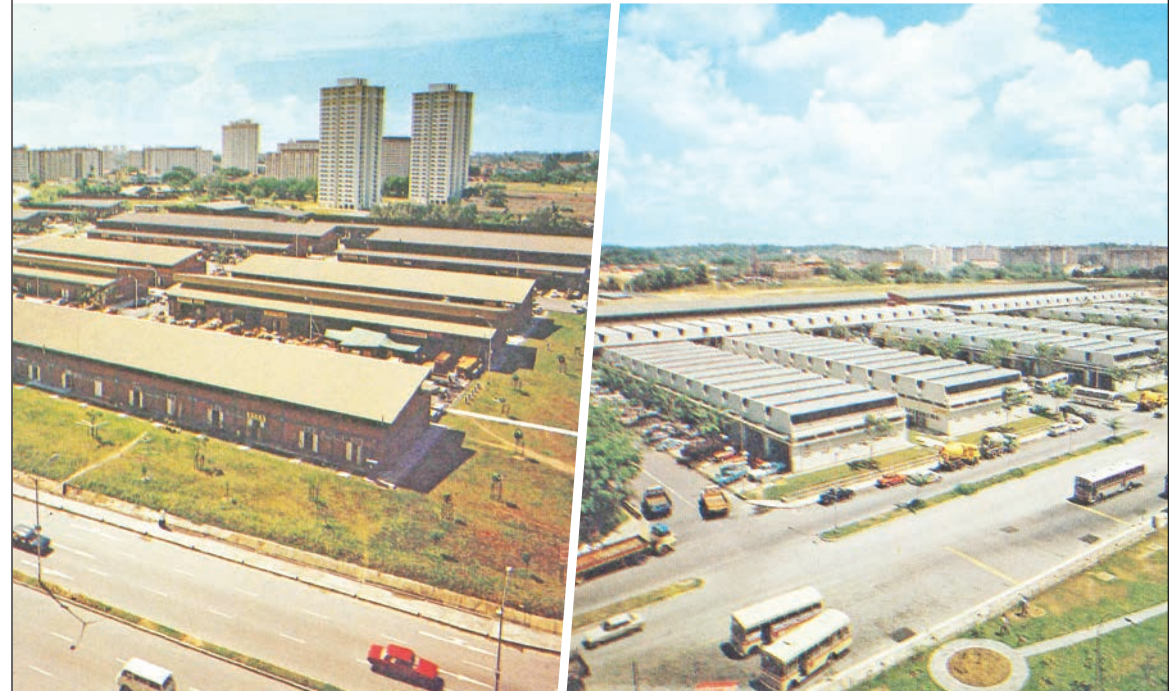
More pollutive industries were moved to designated areas such as Teck Hock (now known as Defu), Ang Mo Kio and Yishun Industrial Estates, where they would not pose a hazard to other users of the surrounding land.<sup>61</sup> For instance, the Teck Hock Industrial Estate accommodated 63 pollutive businesses, such as aluminium processing, furniture making, motor works and food processing, which were not allowed near residential areas.<sup>62</sup>

For sites where immediate clearance was required, a two-stage clearance and resettlement strategy was adopted by the HDB to minimise disruptions



Timber houses at the Bedok Resettlement Area for the resettlement of *towgay* growers.

Images courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.



New light industrial workshops in Geylang Bahru (left) and new motor workshops at Sin Ming Road (right) built by the HDB for businesses resettled from the Central Area.

Images courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

to business operations while expediting clearance. For instance, there was a concentration of motor repair workshops and allied trades operating on state land at Orchard Road-Penang Lane-Clemenceau Avenue that needed to be cleared in 1970 to enhance the Orchard Road shopping and tourist belt. In the first stage, a temporary repair yard was set up at Mackenzie Road. Each motor repair workshop was allocated a plot of land varying from 1,000 to 1,200 sq. ft. (92.9 to 111.5 m<sup>2</sup>) on a temporary occupation licence at a monthly fee of S\$90 to S\$100.<sup>63</sup> In the second stage, the motor repair workshops were moved to a permanent resettlement site at Upper Thomson Road.

Industrial resettlement cases were also given rental concessions under the rising rental rate scheme. For example, the HDB constructed 76 units of terrace factories at Geylang Square in 1968 for cottage industries displaced from urban areas. From an initial monthly rent of S\$206 in the first year,

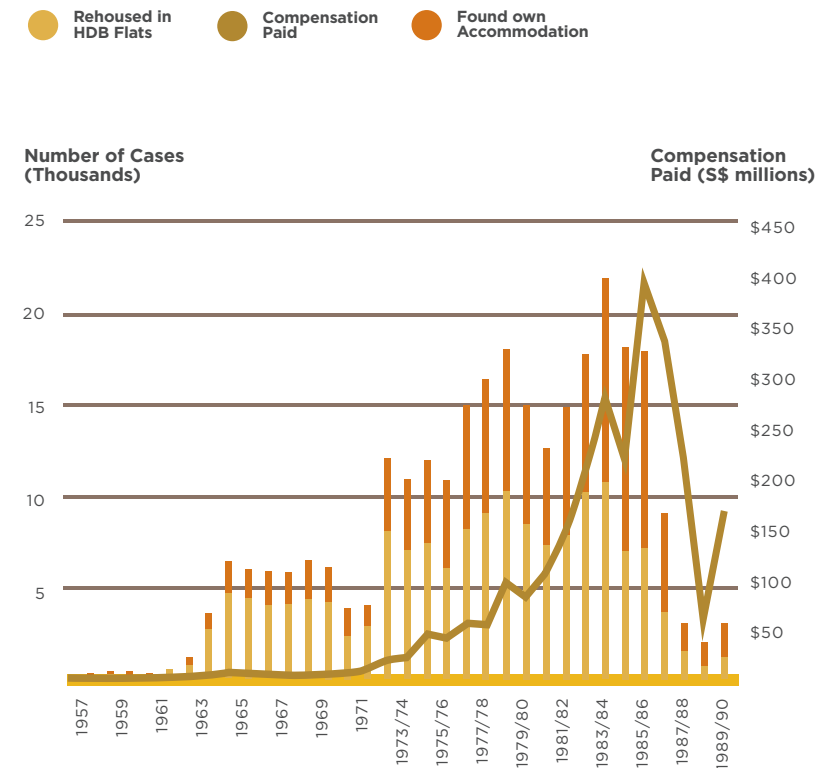
the rent rose to S\$270 per month in the fourth and subsequent years. However, business owners in industrial premises were not allowed to opt for HDB shops, even if they wanted to switch trades. This was because the number of HDB shop spaces was planned in advance based on the number of dwelling units in a housing estate. The HDB had to maintain the allocation guidelines to avoid having too many shops in one area, which could result in poor business for the shopkeepers.<sup>64</sup>

As the space available to accommodate resettled businesses was limited or unsuitable for particular trades, cash grants were offered from 1971 onwards in lieu of replacement business premises. The cash grant scheme was intended to expedite clearance by incentivising affected business owners to seek their own alternative business premises. The cash grant was initially set at eight-years' rent, but because rents were relatively low then, the quantum offered was correspondingly small and the scheme was not popular. Most business owners still preferred being allocated alternative premises on a five-year rising rental rate scheme.

The government was not only remaking the Central Area; it also had ambitious plans to develop its industrial infrastructure to ramp up economic development. To diversify the trade-dependent economy, the government focused on export-oriented industrialisation led by multinational corporations. Alongside the HDB, the Economic Development Board (EDB) was established in 1961 to spearhead economic development in Singapore.

### Exhibit 3

#### Clearance Cases Handled by the HDB and the Compensation Paid by Year



Source: Housing & Development Board, Annual Reports, various years.

#### Note:

Figures between 1957 and 1959 refer to cases handled by the SIT. For subsequent years, the figures refer to cases handled by the HDB. See Appendix 1 for detailed figures. Figures on clearance cases handled respectively by the URA and the JTC are not available.

The detailed figures on the number of cases for "Moved to rural Resettlement Areas" between 1957 to 1980/81 are also shown in Appendix 1.



Exhibit 4  
Resettlement  
Benefits

Year	Compensation for Squatter House with Concrete Floor (per sq. ft.)	Disturbance and Transport Allowance	Cash Grant	HDB Rental Rebate for Residential Occupants (per month for 3 years)
1955	S\$1	S\$100	-	
1964	S\$2.50	S\$50 to S\$100	S\$1,000 per acre of farmland	
1971	S\$2.50 (for farmers who opted for land allocation)	S\$100 to S\$200	-	
	S\$4.50 (for farmers who did not opt for land allocation)	S\$100 to S\$200	S\$7,800	
1975	S\$4.50 (for farmers who opted for land allocation)	S\$100 to S\$200	-	
	S\$7.50 (for farmers who did not opt for land allocation)	S\$100 to S\$200	S\$11,800	
1979	S\$7.50	S\$100 to S\$200	S\$15,000	
1981 (Mar)	S\$7.50	S\$260	S\$19,500	
1981 (Dec)	S\$11.25*	S\$260	S\$19,500	
1985	S\$14.63*	S\$3,000 (family); S\$750 (single-person)	S\$26,000	
1955	S\$1	-	-	-
1964	S\$2.50	S\$300 to S\$350	-	-
1971	S\$2.50	S\$500 to S\$600	-	S\$15
1975	S\$4.50	S\$500 to S\$600	-	S\$15
1979	S\$7.50	S\$500 to S\$600	S\$594	S\$16.50
1981 (Mar)	S\$7.50	S\$1,000	S\$772.20	S\$21.45
1981 (Dec)	S\$11.25*	S\$2,000	S\$1,200	S\$33.33
1985	S\$14.63*	S\$3,000 (family); S\$750 (single-person)	S\$1,200	S\$33.33
<b>Central Area Shophouse</b>				
1971			Equivalent to eight-years' rent	
1974			S\$15,000	
1975			S\$30,000	
1979			S\$30,000 / S\$40,000^	
1981 (Mar)			S\$39,000 / S\$52,000^	
1981 (Dec)			S\$58,500 / S\$78,000^	
1985			S\$76,000 / S\$101,500^ / S\$38,000 (for premises outside Central Area)	
1987			S\$26,000 (for temporary premises)	

Sources: Burlock, S.G. *Report of the Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party*. Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1956; Wong, Aline K. and Stephen H.K. Yeh. *Housing a Nation—25 Years of Public Housing in Singapore*. Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1985; Housing & Development Board, Annual Reports, various years.

Notes:

\* Compensation rates for squatter houses for December 1981 and 1985 computed by the author based on applicable policy statements.

^ For premises exceeding 200 m<sup>2</sup>.



# CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT —THE ROLE OF THE JTC

A 65 km<sup>2</sup> area in Jurong, then a large rural area in the west of Singapore, was designated for the development of a large industrial estate. The government acquired large tracts of land in Jurong, which at the time comprised swampland, low hills, shrubs and secondary jungles, rubber plantations, farmland, fruit orchards, *kampungs* and cemeteries. The land was needed for new industries, port facilities, utilities, transport networks, housing and social amenities. The development of industrial infrastructure was initially led by the EDB, while land clearance and resettlement were carried out by the HDB.

In 1968, the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) was formed as a separate statutory board to take charge of industrial land and estate development and management. By 1975, the JTC had set up its own resettlement unit to concentrate on clearing land for industrial use, especially for the Jurong Industrial Estate. Resettlement officers of the HDB's Resettlement Department who handled industrial cases were transferred to the JTC. Outside the Jurong area, the HDB remained the principal agency responsible for clearance and resettlement, except in cases where the JTC's expertise was needed to provide special industrial facilities.



Aerial view of the Jurong Industrial Estate under development in the 1960s.

Image from the David Ng Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

To ensure consistency in resettlement benefits and compensation between the two agencies, the JTC adhered to the resettlement policies of the MND, including offering rental concessions to expedite clearance. For the resettlement of thousands of farmers in Jurong, the JTC developed and managed some 700 acres (2.83 km<sup>2</sup>) of land at two Resettlement Areas in Lim Chu Kang to provide alternative farming land. Residential apartment blocks in locations such as Kampong Java, Teban, Pandan, Boon Lay and Taman Jurong were also built for residential squatters displaced from Jurong. With a S\$15 million grant provided by

# CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT —THE ROLE OF THE JTC

*Continued...*

the British government in 1971 to cushion the economic impact of the withdrawal of its military forces, the JTC also constructed additional smaller industrial estates at Pandan Loop, Yew Tee and other areas for businesses affected by urban renewal.<sup>65</sup>

The JTC also took charge of industrial resettlement cases where special facilities were needed. For instance, shipyards at Kallang River Basin, which were a major source of water pollution, were scheduled to be relocated as part of the clean-up of the Singapore and Kallang Rivers initiated in 1977. However, the operators of these shipyards were reluctant to move. Former JTC director, Ng Kok Ching, recalled that he had to conduct more than 60 meetings to persuade, cajole and incentivise them to eventually move to Pandan.<sup>66</sup> This included the URA's planning incentive to allow a few of the large shipyards to be rezoned for residential use.

## RESETTLEMENT POLICIES IN THE MID-1970S TO 1980S

As the government's development plans picked up steam in the mid-1970s to 1980s, the pace of clearance surged. From about 6,000 cases of clearance in the late 1960s, the number almost doubled to between 10,000 and 12,000 in the mid-1970s. It reached a high of almost 22,000 cases in 1984–85 before falling to just above 2,100 cases by the end of the decade. Resettlement policies and compensation rates were adjusted to keep up.

### Ceasing Allocation of Farming Land; Supporting Transition to Other Trades

Further changes in the resettlement policies for farmers reflected the government's views on the declining importance of the domestic agricultural sector vis-à-vis more pressing development needs and an increasing reliance on food imports. Towards the end of the 1970s, land allocation finally ceased to be an option for farmers under the revised 1979 resettlement policies. To offset the adverse impact on farmers, the cash grant in lieu of a flat was increased to S\$15,000. By then, the quantum of the cash grant was no longer linked to the selling price of a three-room HDB flat, which was rising. The practice of trading a cash grant for a free flat also ceased.

The cash grant and compensation for improvements for farmers were progressively raised in the early 1980s when inflation was high. In March 1981, the cash grant for farmers was increased to S\$19,500, while the compensation rates for improvements were increased by 50% in December 1981. With the rapid development of Singapore, some relocated farmers found themselves forced to move again. From 1980 onwards, farmers affected by clearance for the second time were given an additional quantum of 30% to 100% of the compensation rate at the time, pro-rated to the tenure period of the first relocation.<sup>67</sup>

Farmers were given more assistance under the 1985 policy revision when the cash grant was increased to S\$26,000. Eligible farmers who wished to make the transition to other trades could also apply for priority allocation of HDB shops, industrial workshops, hawker stalls and kiosks. The HDB provided a five-year rental concession in lieu of payment of the cash grant, to a cap of S\$38,000. Many farmers took advantage of the scheme and found new means of livelihood.



### **Making Homeownership More Attractive; Introduction of Cash Grants for Displaced Families**

For residential occupants, the resettlement policies changed in line with the government's efforts to make homeownership more attractive to the public. Specifically, the down payment for flats was lowered to S\$100 in 1971 for resettlement cases, instead of 20% of the selling price (which amounted to S\$1,560 for a three-room flat, for instance) required of the usual HDB flat applicants. As the selling price of flats rose over time, the down payment was adjusted to S\$200 in September 1979.

The fact that the HDB operated at a scale large enough to resettle entire communities at a time in its new towns helped to preserve community ties and mitigate the adverse social impacts of resettlement. The HDB set aside a proportion of flats in its housing estates for priority allocation to resettlement cases. It also provided affected occupants with three choices of flats in different locations, allowing most to get their preferred locations. Where new housing estates were built in advance of clearance programmes, squatter communities could be resettled en bloc. One such example was the Soon Hock Village off Upper Thomson Road, which was cleared for the development of Bishan New Town in the early 1980s. The villagers were resettled in two specific neighbourhoods in the nearby Ang Mo Kio New Town.<sup>68</sup>

The rehousing policies were also fine-tuned over the years to be more pro-family. For example, the rehousing rules were relaxed in 1985 to allow more to qualify for the purchase or rental of HDB flats. A large nuclear family with at least six family members including two adult children who were being resettled was allowed to buy two adjoining units of HDB flats in the suburban or new town areas. Single persons who got married after the resettlement eligibility cut-off date were similarly given priority to purchase an HDB flat if they opted for joint allocation with their parents.

The compensation rates for improvements to the land, which applied to both farmers and residential occupants, were reviewed periodically to account for rising costs over the years. For instance, the compensation rate for residential squatter houses with concrete floors and drains was raised from S\$2.50 per sq. ft. in 1964 to S\$4.50 and S\$7.50 in 1975 and 1979, respectively. The disturbance and transport allowance for residential occupants was also raised over the years. The last revision was made in 1985 with a uniform disturbance

and transport allowance of S\$3,000 per family, and S\$750 per single-person household for both farmers and residential occupants. The rental rebates on HDB flats for resettled households—first introduced in 1971—were also revised periodically to match rising rental rates over the years. Between 1971 and 1981, the HDB progressively raised the monthly rental rebates from S\$15 to S\$33.33. The rebates were substantial, given that the monthly rental rates for HDB flats in the 1970s were S\$30, S\$60 and S\$90 for one-, two- and three-room flats, respectively.

In addition to compensation for improvements, a cash grant of S\$594 per family was introduced in 1979 for families who did not opt for HDB flats to assist them in finding their own replacement accommodation. Prior to this, they were only compensated for improvements based on a fixed scale. To match inflation, the cash grant quantum was increased to S\$772.20 in March 1981 and then almost doubled to S\$1,200 in December that year.

### **Enhancing Cash Grants for Businesses in the Central Area**

The cash grant scheme introduced in 1971 to encourage affected Central Area business owners to find their own alternative business premises was initially unpopular as the quantum offered was low. To expedite clearance of business premises in the Central Area, the cash grant quantum was raised to S\$15,000 in 1974 and further increased to S\$30,000 in 1975 for a sole occupier of a shophouse. For multi-tenanted premises, the chief tenant would receive S\$15,000 and each sub-tenant would receive S\$10,000, up to a maximum of S\$35,000 per shophouse.

The enhanced cash grant proved to be far more popular. For instance, in the financial year 1975/76, 46% of shops and 30% of industrial premises in the Central Area opted for the cash grant.<sup>69</sup> Former Head of the Resettlement Department, Lim Hoon Yong, observed that many businesses operating in rent-controlled properties had survived because of the low rents. Many had no way of continuing their businesses after clearance, so they took the cash grants and retired from business altogether.<sup>70</sup> To further encourage business owners with larger premises to relocate, the cash grant for sole occupiers of premises exceeding 200 m<sup>2</sup> was increased to S\$40,000 in 1979. For such premises which were multi-tenanted, the chief tenant received S\$20,000 while sub-tenants received S\$10,000 each.



The cash grant quantum was progressively raised throughout the 1980s. In 1981, the cash grant for a sole-occupier in premises up to 200 m<sup>2</sup> was raised in March and December by 30% and 50%, respectively, to S\$39,000 and S\$58,500. For premises larger than 200 m<sup>2</sup>, this amount was S\$52,000 and S\$78,000, respectively. By 1985, the cash grant was increased to S\$76,000 and S\$101,500 for a sole-occupier of premises up to and exceeding 200 m<sup>2</sup>, respectively.

### Ending Direct Allocation of HDB Shops for Displaced Shopkeepers

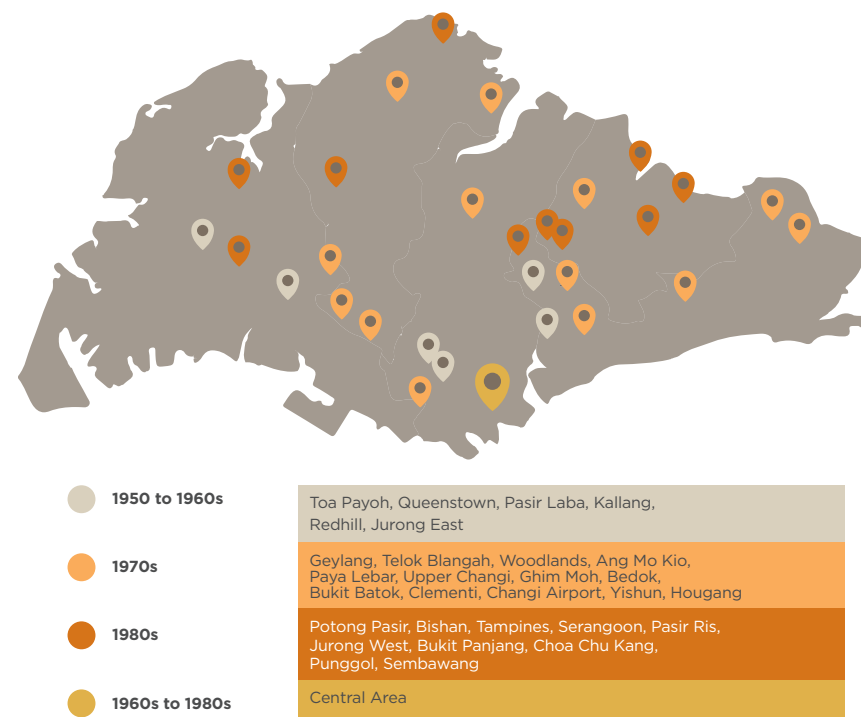
In 1987, there was another major policy revision affecting resettled shopkeepers. Shopkeepers affected by clearance were no longer entitled to direct allocation of HDB shops but had to tender for them instead. This new policy was triggered by the HDB's decision to build proportionately fewer shops in its new housing estates, so as to improve the commercial viability of the shops by raising the ratio of residents to shops.<sup>71</sup> The HDB had also observed that the majority of resettlement cases involved sundry shops, and if these were all given priority allocation in new estates, there would have been a poor mix of shops. However, the HDB offered resettled shopkeepers a preferential margin when tendering for HDB shops: resettled sole occupiers could still rent HDB shops within 18 months after receiving their cash grants, even if their bids were up to 10% lower than the highest bid in the tender. For resettled co-tenants, their bids could be up to 5% lower.

To further accelerate the clearance of businesses from the Central Area, the cash grant scheme was also extended in 1987 to affected shopkeepers cleared from temporary premises, who had not been previously entitled to any monetary compensation. They were offered a cash grant of S\$26,000 per premises.

### CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT TAPERING OFF BY LATE 1980S

By the late 1980s, the bulk of clearance programmes to facilitate development in Singapore had been completed, most of which were carried out by the HDB. In the three decades between 1960 and 1991, the HDB handled over 280,000 clearance cases and over S\$2.55 billion was paid out in compensation. More than half its cases were relocated

### Exhibit 5 Major Resettlement Projects



Source: Housing & Development Board, Annual Reports, various years.

to various HDB accommodation such as flats, shops, hawker stalls and industrial facilities, while some 124,000 cases found their own replacement accommodation. By the time the government ceased the provision of replacement agricultural land in 1979, the HDB had resettled almost 3,000 cases into rural Resettlement Areas.

By then, Singapore had been thoroughly transformed—the city centre had become a modernised business and finance centre lined with new high-rise commercial towers, while self-sufficient HDB new towns had spread across the island. As the number of clearance cases dwindled, the need for resettlement of farmers, families and businesses also eased. Nevertheless, clearance and resettlement continued to play an occasional role in later decades, such as the relocation of small factories in Woodlands for the development of a wafer fabrication park in the 1990s.

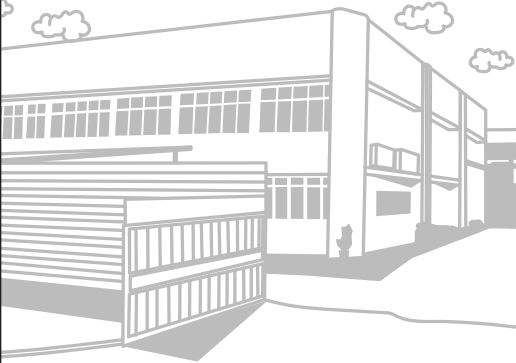
# RELOCATION OF SMALL FACTORIES IN WOODLANDS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A WAFER FABRICATION PARK

In 1995, 560 tenants at Woodlands Industrial Park D were affected by the government's decision to redevelop the area into a wafer fabrication park to support the development of a new growth sector for Singapore. Such a large site would have typically required a few years for the existing businesses to be cleared and resettled. In this case, however, the timeline was much shorter—the site had to be cleared within 18 months so that the prospective investor who was pumping in billions could catch the next upswing in the semiconductor industry cycle.

Requiring the small factories which had invested in fitting out their premises to move out on such short notice was extremely challenging. So the JTC designed a special resettlement package to incentivise the businesses to relocate. This included a special relocation package with an ex-gratia payment of S\$52,000 for each tenanted workshop, and assistance in securing alternative premises and rental concessions. This ex-gratia payment was significantly higher than the prescribed compensation of S\$38,000, which had been last revised in 1985 for businesses being cleared from rent-controlled premises

outside of the Central Area. At the same time, the JTC's factory building programme at the nearby Woodlands Loop and Woodlands Link was accelerated so that they could accommodate the affected tenants.<sup>72</sup>

To reassure the affected businesses that they would be able to continue their operations in the new premises, the JTC offered them longer lease terms of 15 or 20 years, instead of the usual 3-year tenancy. The businesses were also given rental concessions in the form of yearly rents charged by the JTC based on 6% of the development cost of the new premises, which was lower than the prevailing market rate rent. They also received financial assistance and even help to draw up renovation plans. In some cases, the JTC helped the businesses to upgrade their operations in the relocated premises.<sup>73</sup> Once the alternative premises were allocated, the JTC would charge rent for both the old and new premises so that these businesses would not unduly delay their relocation. This "carrot and stick" approach proved to be effective and the site was promptly cleared within 18 months, paving the way for a new wafer fabrication park.



While resettlement policies and benefits were periodically reviewed and updated to ensure that clearance was timely and the hardship on those affected minimised, the clearance and resettlement process was far from smooth. Those affected by clearance were often reluctant to move out or devised ways to take advantage of resettlement benefits, especially in the early years when resettlement was an unfamiliar process. The next chapter discusses the implementation of resettlement processes and its challenges.

## CHAPTER 3

# PROCESSES ENABLING RESETTLEMENT



“They [residents] were told [by extremists] that life in the *kampung* [was] much better. You can rear chickens, you can plant fruit trees, vegetables.... But later...when they found it was better to live in this kind of accommodation, they began to accept [resettlement].”

Othman Wok

While resettlement policies were enhanced to be more effective and accommodate changing circumstances over time, how resettlement was implemented on the ground was equally important in ensuring that it was carried out successfully. This was because the implementation of clearance and resettlement often met with difficulties and resistance from those being displaced, especially in earlier years. Hence the resettlement processes had to strike a balance between making the resettlement process more palatable to those affected and meeting the government's development timelines.

## ORGANISING THE CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Under the colonial government, several different organisations were involved in the clearance of crown land required for development. Land clearance was initiated as and when needed by the Land Office, which conducted the required legal actions and supervised the resettlement. The Land Development Unit of the Government Survey Office was responsible for surveying and designing rural areas suitable for resettlement, while the Land Office's Resettlement Engineering Section undertook the construction of basic infrastructure such as roads and

drains in rural Resettlement Areas. A separate agency, the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT), took charge of clearing slums for its General Improvement Plan for urban areas and resettled slum dwellers in specially built tenement buildings and SIT flats. At the recommendation of the 1955 Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party, the responsibilities for clearance and resettlement were consolidated under the SIT to reduce confusion. The Land Clearance and Resettlement Department was set up within the SIT in 1957.

By 1960, the Housing & Development Board (HDB) was established by the new government of the People's Action Party (PAP). Unlike the SIT's limited remit and resources for housing development, the HDB had a clear and strong mandate from the government to develop public housing for the masses. Land clearance, resettlement and public housing development were closely linked. The HDB required sizeable land for its mass public housing projects, which in turn required large-scale clearance. At the same time, the HDB could provide a full range of resettlement facilities for those displaced, such as affordable housing and commercial and industrial facilities. By placing land clearance, resettlement and public housing building under one authority, the three related processes could be planned in unison and the government could avoid the problem of dislocating the displaced without the ability to rehouse them.<sup>74</sup>

The HDB formed its Resettlement Department in 1960 to take over the SIT's clearance and resettlement unit. The early days of the HDB's Resettlement Department were difficult. Former Head of the Resettlement Department, Lim Hoon Yong, recalled that the department was depleted when he joined it in the early 1960s. Many of the senior personnel of the SIT had resigned when the HDB was formed, leaving just one surveyor assistant and a number of resettlement inspectors under the supervision of a senior resettlement inspector, who himself was retiring.<sup>75</sup> However, Lim managed to persuade the senior inspector to extend his employment and subsequently rebuilt the expertise in the Resettlement Department. The Resettlement Department comprised four sections—surveying and planning, engineering, land clearance, and resettlement and administration.

The HDB also set up a Resettlement Advisory Committee in April 1960 to assist on matters relating to resettlement. The Resettlement Advisory Committee was chaired by an HDB board member, with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the HDB, the Commissioner of Lands and an assemblyman<sup>76</sup> as members.

The scope of the Resettlement Department's work was not limited to public housing. It also served as the government's central authority for the clearance and resettlement of occupants from state land required for development by various government departments such as the Land Office and Public Works Department, and statutory boards such as the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). By 1975, the JTC set up its own resettlement team to clear land for industrial development, while the URA also set up a resettlement team in 1979 to expedite the clearance of the Central Area. These operations supplemented the bulk of resettlement works carried out by the HDB's Resettlement Department.

### Challenges in Carrying Out Clearance and Resettlement

The HDB was keenly aware of the difficulties associated with clearance and resettlement. Resettlement meant uprooting the occupants from familiar surroundings and communities and affecting their way of life. Unsurprisingly, resettlement was viewed with some suspicion and hostility by the public, especially in the early years when it was still an unfamiliar process. Those being resettled worried about their livelihood and whether they would be worse off. Despite the government's efforts to provide compensation and alternative housing, some occupants were suspicious of the government's motives and it was often difficult to persuade them to move.<sup>77</sup>

Alan Choe, former Head of the Urban Renewal Department (URD) in the HDB and later the first General Manager of the URA, who was involved in the development of the early HDB new towns, described the difficulties when Toa Payoh had to be cleared in the early 1960s for the development of an HDB new town:

*...[resettlement] was a big problem...even in the case of Toa Payoh, we are moving into an area where Toa Payoh had farms. Can you imagine a family that is doing farming for many, many years, living off the ground, suddenly you go in and you tell them, "Look I want to take over your land, I want to do public housing and in return I am going to pay you compensation...And to*

*re-house you, I give you a high-rise apartment."...There are two things that affect them. Firstly their lifestyle, they are so used to living off the ground...go[ing] out and get[ting] everything they want. You move them to a high-rise flat, suddenly they can't move about like that because there are neighbours all over. Secondly their livelihood...So there was strong resistance.<sup>78</sup>*

There were occasional episodes of resistance from the occupants, such as throwing human excreta at resettlements officers<sup>79</sup> or trying to obstruct the demolition of their dwellings by standing guard with axes.<sup>80</sup> Lim Hoon Yong recalled an incident in the early 1960s where squatters threw sand into the engines of a bulldozer which had been sent to clear the Ang Mo Kio area.<sup>81</sup> Former Deputy CEO of the HDB, Yao Chee Liew, who was then a young civil engineer also recalled being chased by gangs of squatters with *parangs* [machetes].<sup>82</sup>

Under such circumstances, not only was it important for resettlement policies to minimise the hardship on those being displaced, but it was also crucial for the government to be seen as handling resettlement transparently and equitably. This was recognised early by Lim Kim San, founding Chairman of the HDB and subsequently Minister for National Development. He said:

*Resettlement is going to be a major problem from our experience, because people don't like to be evicted from their houses. And we will have to do a lot of resettlement because of the large housing programme. And the only way we can build on that scale is to move people from one area and have a high density sort of construction on that area that was vacated by squatters from single-storeyed buildings. So it's going to be [a] problem and to be fair, we must have a Resettlement Committee, where payments for property acquired could be drawn up and where any difficulties can be settled rather than by a single person. To see that there's fair play around, we have a resettlement officer.<sup>83</sup>*

## EARLY CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT IN TOA PAYOH

One of the earliest clearance and resettlement initiatives undertaken by the newly formed HDB was for the development of Toa Payoh New Town. The plan for the new town was first unveiled in early 1961 by Howe Yoon Chong, then CEO of the HDB. It was the second satellite town to be built in Singapore, and the first to be conceived and built solely by the HDB. At the time, the area comprised some 243 hectares of land, including low-lying areas along Braddell Road cultivated by vegetable farmers, and was occupied by about 3,000 squatter families. However, the HDB soon ran into difficulties when its efforts to clear the existing *kampungs* were stonewalled by the villagers in October 1961. A grassroots leader during the period, Quah Wee Ho, recalled the situation then:

*During the first phase of kampung clearance, there were about 60 families to be moved. When the bulldozers got there, there were more than a hundred [elderly villagers], women and children huddled together blocking the bulldozers, not letting them move [in to clear the squatter houses].<sup>84</sup>*

The HDB had initially offered the villagers three options—cash compensation, resettlement to farming areas, or rehousing in other HDB developments. However, many of them were keen to stay on in Toa Payoh, while some demanded more compensation and others rejected the offer of alternative farmland in Lim Chu Kang or Sembawang. Then Chairman of the HDB, Lim Kim San, and HDB chief architect, Teh Cheang Wan, visited the area to assess the ground sentiment and help break the deadlock.<sup>85</sup> To accommodate the villagers who wanted to remain in Toa Payoh, the HDB built temporary houses nearby at Kim Keat Road, where they could stay put until the new HDB flats in Toa Payoh allocated to them were ready. For those who agreed to relocate, the HDB provided them with 192 single-storey three-room terrace houses at Kim Keat Road and prefabricated houses at Thomson Road, which was another nearby location, for immediate occupation. The houses were given free to the villagers who were charged a monthly land rent of only S\$5.

However, the clearance and resettlement operations in Toa Payoh continued to be hindered by resistance from the villagers, with the Country People's Association and Rural Residents Association—associations formed by rural residents—exerting influence in delaying clearance. Lim Kim San attributed the delay to “organised resistance



Squatter huts and stalls at Toa Payoh before clearance for development.

Images courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.



## EARLY CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT IN TOA PAYOH

Continued...

mounted by the anti-nationalist, pro-Communist groups, who instigated the peaceful squatters in Toa Payoh to resist clearance work".<sup>86</sup> It was only after the government de-registered the two associations in 1963 that their influence waned and many of the villagers subsequently accepted the HDB's resettlement terms. Construction of the first 1,425 HDB units at Toa Payoh began at the end of 1964. By June 1966, the first tenants moved in.<sup>87</sup>



A tractor moving into Toa Payoh for clearance works (1963).

Image courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

## PROCESSES FOR CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT ADOPTED BY THE HDB

The systems and processes of clearance and resettlement put in place by the HDB involved several steps ranging from field surveys, census taking, assessment of resettlement benefits and vacation of the clearance site. The Resettlement Department's resettlement officers interfaced directly with those being resettled to explain the government's resettlement policy and compensation package, which included priority allocation of alternative accommodation and ex-gratia compensation for improvements. The department also had its own surveying and engineering teams to carry out topographical and engineering surveys, and undertake the design and supervision of the development of rural Resettlement Areas, including the construction of roads and culverts, ground levelling work, and laying of water mains.



A surveyor team taking measurements along an unpaved *kampung* road in a Toa Payoh village (1963).

Image courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

## Field Survey

To plan for the resettlement facilities needed, it was necessary to assess the quantum and types of resettlement facilities required before embarking on the actual clearance operation. First, a field survey of the clearance site was carried out to compile information and assess the requirements for resettlement facilities for advance planning. The survey covered the composition of users, degree and types of encumbrances, and the quantum and types of alternative resettlement facilities required. The survey would also cover special aspects of the site, such as whether there was any concentration of special industries that would require an atypical clearance schedule or resettlement facilities. With the information collected, a suitable clearance strategy would be devised.

## Resettlement Eligibility Cut-off Date

Only bona fide occupants and businesses physically occupying a clearance site on or before the cut-off date for resettlement eligibility would be entitled to resettlement benefits. Compensation would also only be given for improvements or structures on the land that were erected before the cut-off date.

For state land, the first date of the census of a resettlement area was taken as the cut-off date. For occupants on privately owned land acquired through compulsory acquisition by the government, the date of publication of the government gazette notification of the acquisition was taken as the cut-off date. This ruling on the cut-off date was set in 1973 to prevent people from unscrupulously shifting to private land gazetted for acquisition in order to gain priority allocation for HDB flats, which had a very long waiting period at the time.

Those who were ineligible for resettlement benefits were relatively small in number, and included (1) those who moved into clearance sites after the cut-off dates, (2) those occupying land acquired with vacant possession (where the private landowners who were awarded higher compensation for acquisition were responsible for clearing all occupants on site), (3) those who owned private residential property elsewhere, and (4) non-citizens.

## Census Taking and Assessment of Resettlement Benefits

The resettlement officers would serve notice of the resettlement clearance to all occupants within a designated clearance site, informing them of the approximate timeframe by which they had to vacate the site. This was followed by census taking to record all occupants on the site. For the determination of resettlement benefits, the occupants were classified into different categories, such as farmers, residential families or single persons, and whether they were operating shops, offices, industries, religious institutions, etc. The occupation status of each occupant was also recorded, such as whether the person was a house owner, tenant, sub-tenant, or whether the person was an absentee property owner. It was important to establish that those seeking resettlement benefits as farmers were bona fide and held valid farming licences issued by the Primary Production Department (PPD), as farmers were accorded special benefits, including alternative farming plots in the early days. There were cases where occupants holding a farming licence for agricultural land being cleared were instead earning rent from subletting the land to others, rather than doing any actual farming themselves.<sup>88</sup> They, of course, were not eligible for resettlement benefits as farmers.

For residential cases, the census would record the particulars of the head of a household and all its members, including their occupations and places of work or schooling. It would also note whether they were a family nucleus or single persons. Addresses stated on identity cards were accepted as evidence of a person's bona fide physical occupation on a clearance site. To be considered for resettlement benefits, the address of the occupants had to tally with the records of the National Registration Office. Many residential cases in the city-fringe and rural areas owned various assets and improvements, such as their houses, baths and lavatories, livestock sties and pens, wells, fruit trees and vegetable beds. For the computation of resettlement compensation, resettlement officers prepared a structure report with a sketch of the house layout and its dimensions, and recorded the built-up floor area, compound fencing and gates, including all outhouses, open sheds, chicken houses, pigsties, pig-run enclosures and fencing, wells, water ponds, prawn ponds, fruit trees, plants, crops and carpet turfing.



For commercial or industrial cases, the census would record the name of a business entity, its nature of business and the floor area it occupied. The business owners had to show documentary evidence, such as a Business Registration Certificate or any correspondence or bills with a government agency bearing the address, as proof that they had been operating at the site before the resettlement eligibility cut-off date. Structural reports with site measurements were also prepared together with photographic evidence, to determine the quantum of compensation.



Resettlement officers inspecting the interior of a business's premises at Toh Tuck Road (1985).

Image from the Housing & Development Board Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

Resettlement cases that were considered borderline had to produce other documentary evidence such as correspondence from a government department showing their addresses as at the clearance site before the cut-off date. Cases could also be put up for consideration to the Resettlement Appeals Committee chaired by the Senior Parliamentary Secretary for National Development. For clearly ineligible cases such as those involving non-citizens, the occupants had to move out without compensation and find their own accommodation.

The census survey had to be completed quickly to prevent outsiders from taking advantage by moving in to claim resettlement benefits or gain priority in public housing allocation. In some cases, resettlement officers also took photographs of the improvements at the time of census taking and verified all compensation claims against records held by various government departments, such as the Land Office (for leasing and tenancy matters), the Building Control Division (for building plan approvals) and the PPD (for valid farming licences and the extent of active farming at the site).

After taking the measurements of the house and improvements, an itemised assessment notice with details of the compensation was prepared in accordance with the prevailing resettlement policy and served onto the settlers. Resettlement compensation was also audited by the HDB's internal auditors and payment was made up front to make it easier for the settlers to arrange for early relocation. Former Head of the Resettlement Department, Lim Hoon Yong, recounted how he had argued against the Finance Department's initial approach of releasing compensation funds to occupants being resettled only after they had vacated the site. While the Finance Department had valid concerns that the settlers would continue to stay put even after receiving compensation, such an approach could have caused them to have difficulty in moving out even if they intended to do so, as their finances were limited. Eventually, the process was changed to have compensation paid upfront only after Lim offered to take on the responsibility to time the paying of compensation just before the sites were physically vacated.<sup>89</sup>



# THE TRICKY TASK OF VALUING FRUIT TREES

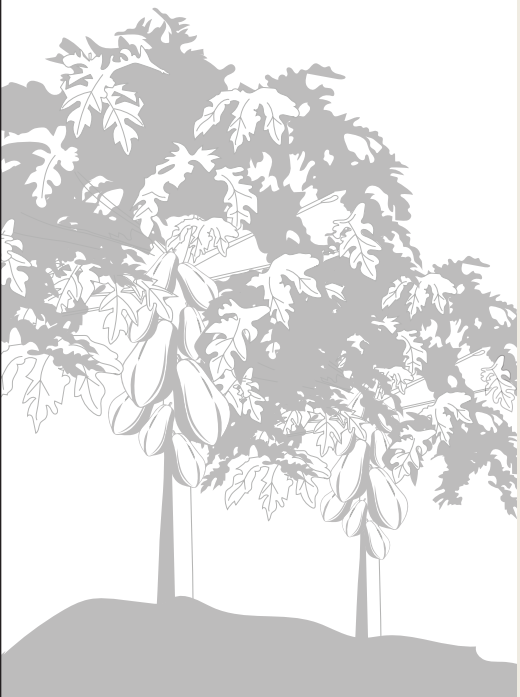
One group of the items that farmers and residential squatters were paid compensation for as improvements to the land were the fruit trees that they had planted. Prior to 1979, fruit trees were grouped into three categories—major, minor and miscellaneous—with different compensation rates applied and assessed according to the degree of maturity, such as fruiting, non-fruiting or young trees. However, this process gave rise to complaints and disputes from farmers and squatters.

In 1979, the compensation policy was fine-tuned to introduce more categories—five, instead of three—and more objective assessments of the stage of maturity based on the height of the tree. For instance, trees of 0.3 to 1 m were grouped as “small” trees, “medium” trees had a height of 1 to 3 m, and trees reaching a height of above 3 m were “big” trees. The revision reduced disputes raised by the occupants being cleared.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, the resettlement officers also wised up to some of the tricks deployed by farmers and squatters to gain more compensation, such as planting new trees overnight. Former Head of the Resettlement Department, Lim Hoon Yong, recalled:

*In those days...they said fruiting tree, medium tree, young tree... How to identify fruiting tree? You must see the fruits, right? And fruits are seasonal! Then there is a lot of argument...This is unnecessary, very time consuming. I said, no. Fruiting tree mean[s] [mature] tree...[Mature] tree is [of] a certain height, it [grows] to a certain height...You know the squatter, in order to get more compensation, they go and... buy those young trees very cheap, one dollar, two dollars and all. And say, “Oh, I got a number of young trees.” So initially well we take it...But after that, we noticed that [it was] quite widespread...[these] young [trees]. So I told my [resettlement officer], “Eh, very simple, if they are new planting, you just pull it out...If you can pull it out, it is young tree. If you can’t pull it out, means they were planted there for some time, you know?” That solved the problem. So you got to be on the site and be very practical... For that one, we consulted the Primary Production Department.<sup>91</sup>*

The Resettlement Department also consulted the PPD, which was responsible for improving the productivity of farming and fishing in Singapore. Dr Ngiam Tong Tau, who was Director of the PPD in the 1970s and 1980s, was involved in coming up with an “ergonomic practice” to set the parameters and practices for the healthy planting of trees, such as a certain spacing between trees that corresponded with the trees’ mature height. This served as a check against those trying to take advantage of the compensation process. Dr Ngiam explained that even if ten trees had been planted, those that did not conform to the planting parameters were not counted, and the farmers “knew the game was up”.<sup>92</sup>

Ceilings on the compensation for fruit trees were re-introduced in 1982 to prevent excessive and unwarranted claims by farmers and squatters. The ceiling ranged from S\$5,000 to S\$30,000 per hectare depending on the mix of trees.<sup>93</sup> In 1988, even stricter compensation rules were imposed with the compensation for fruit trees based on the net planting area of each farmer, regardless of the actual number of trees. The monetary ceiling per hectare was set at S\$19,500 to S\$39,000 per hectare depending on the sizes of the fruit trees.<sup>94</sup>



### Vacation of the Site

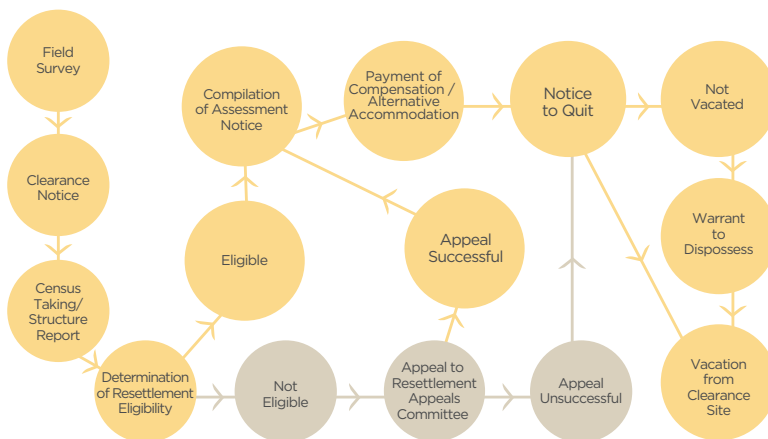
Upon the payment of compensation or allocation of replacement accommodation, the occupants were given notice to vacate the clearance site. Their farming licences that had been given earlier were terminated and all occupants were served with a one-month Notice to Quit as prescribed by the law.

Legal action could be taken under the State Lands Encroachment Act against occupants who delayed or refused to vacate the site after the expiry of the notice. The resettlement officer had to apply for a Warrant to Dispossess from the Magistrate Court to evict the occupants from the clearance site. In practice, however, occupants facing difficulties in relocating were given extensions of time where possible, and the Warrant to Dispossess was rarely exercised.

According to former HDB Senior Land Administration Manager, Yeo Eng Chuan, such clearances were typically carried out “diplomatically”. First, the main door or another part of the building was taken down, while a bulldozer demolished the surrounding vacant structures. This exerted some sense of urgency on the occupants to move out. If this did not work, the last resort was to execute the Warrant to Dispossess and evict the occupants, which had to be approved by the Chairman of the HDB.<sup>95</sup> In this case, the operation would be carried out by the police to ensure that the removal of the occupants from the site would be incident-free.

### Exhibit 6

#### Clearance and Resettlement Processes



### MANAGING RESISTANCE TO CLEARANCE AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

Given the public's suspicions about resettlement in the early years, it was crucial for resettlement officers who were at the frontline of the clearance and resettlement process to establish good relationships with the affected occupants and take the initiative to understand their problems. For example, former HDB Principal Land Administration Officer, Goh Choon Ngwen, pointed out that the ability to connect with the occupants, including speaking their languages or dialects, was crucial.<sup>96</sup>

The 1960s were also turbulent times for the fledgling nation-state of Singapore. Two of the worst episodes of communal unrest in Singapore broke out in July and September of 1964, which left 36 dead and 560 injured.<sup>97</sup> Even though these events were not related to the clearance and resettlement of residents, the unhappiness of those affected by clearance and resettlement could easily boil over into similar political or racial discord. The political impact of resettlement on the PAP government was acknowledged by Othman Wok, who served as Minister for Social Affairs from 1963 to 1977 and was a permanent member of the Presidential Council of Minority Rights.<sup>98</sup> He said:

*At first, [resettlement] did [affect the PAP's attempt to reach out to the Malay community]. But later, when they begin to understand... what we have in store for them, that is, better houses for them, better amenities for them, then they begin to understand that it was not an encroachment....At the beginning they were asked not to [support resettlement] by the extremists. They were told [by extremists] that life in the kampung [was] much better. You can rear chickens, you can plant fruit trees, vegetables. And life won't be so difficult for you. But if you lived in flats, you have nothing, you have no land.... But later, as I said, when they found it was better to live in this kind of accommodation, they began to accept [resettlement].<sup>99</sup>*

The government had to tread carefully in carrying out clearance and resettlement, especially in certain areas. In some cases, then Prime Minister (PM) Lee Kuan Yew would visit the area to personally explain the need for clearance and reassure the residents that they were not being singled out or discriminated against by the government. Kampong Glam, which was a Malay-dominated area north of the Singapore River, was one such example in the early days of the urban renewal programme in the Central Area. Alan Choe, who headed the HDB's URD in the 1960s, recalled this episode:

*When we were doing [urban renewal in] the parts of the north [of the Central Area] ...[some parties] were agitating [the occupants] saying that they have been discriminated [against],...and PM [Lee Kuan Yew] one day, called all the [government] people concerned to go to his place in Oxley Road...Then PM came out, "Who's the person in charge of urban renewal?" I looked around, nobody else, so I walked up...So he asked a few things, fortunately, he must have accepted the explanation and I said, "Look, we're trying to do this in a manner no different from others and what we're going to give them in return."...Then next, we mounted in a convoy...We went through Kampong Glam area to try to convince the people that this is not discrimination, this is essential...Chinatown we do it, Indian area we do it. Everywhere else is doing the same.<sup>100</sup>*



Then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's motorcade passing through a crowded street during his constituency tours of Kampong Glam, Rochor and Crawford (1963).

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

The Ministry of National Development and the HDB also enlisted the help of influential and well-respected members of the community, such as grassroots leaders or *penhulu* [village heads] to explain the benefits and process of resettlement. Similarly, the Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs)—established in 1965 with volunteers from all walks of life to serve the social welfare of a district, as well as disseminate information and relay public feedback on government policies—and Members of Parliament (MPs) whose constituents were affected by clearance, were crucial partners and helped to mediate when disputes arose. Soh Teow Seng, who was Deputy Director of the People's Association<sup>101</sup> in the late 1960s and 1970s, and later Chairman of the Bukit Merah CCC, recalled how MPs and the CCCs mediated between the HDB and affected occupants:

*...in one case which we called Henderson Hill, there was a group of squatters. And the Housing Board had taken a very long time to try and resettle them but was not successful. So the matter came to the CCC and the MP. And we had a meeting with the Housing Board to determine the problem, the cause of the delay. And then we convene[d] a meeting of all the squatters living in that particular area. We talked to them and asked them to put up their proposals, their grievances, whatever complaints they may have and we explain[ed] to those people that if what they ask[ed] for [was] reasonable, then we would back them up and see to it that they [got] their claims made. But if what they asked [for was] unreasonable, then we would not support them. We would advise them to accept what the Housing Board offered. So in a way we came to some compromise and then we went back to the Housing Board, the MP and the CCC and explain[ed] to the Housing Board the situation. And so the Housing Board accepted and in the end, everything was settled I think within the period of three weeks...I think there were about 20 to 30 families.<sup>102</sup>*



## RESOLVING THE BACKLOG OF RESETTLEMENT CASES

As the government started stepping up land acquisition activities to support development in the early 1970s, the number of clearance and resettlement cases surged and the resettlement operations were sometimes unable to catch up. Resettlement processes for many of the acquired sites were delayed, sometimes for several years. At the same time, there were insufficient replacement housing in the form of flats, as the HDB was only starting to ramp up its building programme. In the meantime, other households shifted into the acquired sites but were not entitled to resettlement benefits as they had moved in after the resettlement eligibility cut-off dates, which was based on the dates of the government gazette notifications. This created much unhappiness among the occupants and delayed the clearance of sites.

The backlog of people waiting to be rehoused into flats was eventually resolved as the HDB's building programme picked up steam towards the late 1970s. During this period, the average waiting period for HDB flat applicants in new towns was reduced to two years. The supply of both rental flats and flats for sale in a range of configurations to appeal to different housing needs also helped to speed up the relocation process.

To smoothen the clearance process, the government also decided in 1979 that those who had moved into acquired sites after the cut-off date, and had continuously resided at the site for more than three years at the time of the resettlement census taking, would be entitled to resettlement benefits. As part of the government's pro-family policy, single persons living in an acquired site on or before the cut-off date and who were subsequently married at the time of the resettlement census taking, would also be entitled to the resettlement benefits for a family nucleus. By then, resettlement had become more widely accepted as those affected saw tangible benefits, especially in the form of better living conditions.

## CHAPTER 4

# ROLE OF RESETTLEMENT IN THE URBAN RENEWAL OF THE CENTRAL AREA

“[The move from Chinatown to Outram Park] was a very successful relocation. The people lived together, they knew their neighbours and shopkeepers, and we kept them intact and did not disrupt their livelihood.”

Alan Choe

When Singapore attained self-government in 1959 and later became an independent city-state in 1965, the immediate priorities were to clear large tracts of encumbered state land in the rural and suburban areas such as Queenstown, Toa Payoh and Jurong for public housing, industrial developments, environmental improvements and infrastructural facilities. Resettlement strategies and policies were formulated to clear farmers, residential families, businesses and cottage industries. Business establishments outside the city area were more isolated, less capital intensive and relied less on location. For these cases, providing alternative shops in Housing & Development Board (HDB) town centres or paying cash grants would be sufficient to implement the clearance programme.

The resettlement clearance of the Central Area followed soon after the clearance of the rural and suburban areas. Unlike other areas, however, the Central Area was densely packed with a large number of shops, trades, factories and warehouses that had to be cleared and resettled for urban renewal. Hence, the clearance of the Central Area took on a different set of priorities and posed a special set of problems from the clearance of residents and business occupants outside of it.

With the founding of Singapore in 1819, a port and commercial centre—later renamed Raffles Place—was initially established around the mouth of the Singapore River in the south. The area became a thriving and prosperous hub for entrepôt trade and commerce, drawing businesses, industries and residents to congregate on both banks of the river. By the late 1940s, some three-quarters of the population were living within the city area, more commonly known then as Singapore Town.

At the time, the urban landscape was dominated by dilapidated pre-war buildings that were only a few storeys high, many of which were built in the 19th century. Many of the buildings, which included rent-controlled shophouses, were considered urban slums. They also housed businesses and industries that depended on their central locations and proximity to densely occupied residential areas within the city centre for their economic survival. In turn, many residing in the city centre were employed by such businesses, or made a living by operating shops or hawking. However, the fact that the property owners could not recover possession of the rent-controlled properties for more intensive redevelopment meant that valuable land in the city was being underutilised.

With the first five-year public housing programme (1960–64) underway to address the acute housing shortage, the newly formed government of the People's Action Party—with the support of the United Nations Development Programme—could now turn its attention to the task of urban renewal.<sup>103</sup> The government saw urban renewal as the means to improve living conditions in Singapore as well as to modernise and intensify the use of land in the city, starting with the downtown core of 1,700 acres (6.88 km<sup>2</sup>) which government planners referred to as the Central Area. More importantly, the Central Area needed modern developments in the form of high-rise offices, hotels and shopping complexes to support the diversification of the economy away from entrepôt trade. Unencumbered land parcels of substantial sizes were needed to be made available to private developers to undertake such development. The task of clearing underutilised buildings such as low-rise, dilapidated and overcrowded shophouses in subdivided lots, and amalgamating the fragmented lots to form sizeable land parcels for redevelopment by the private sector into new offices, hotels and shopping complexes, became critical.

For the urban renewal of the Central Area, the government was, however, faced with the daunting task of resettling more people and businesses than it had ever done before. About 320,000 people were living, working and running their businesses in some 5,400 shop premises in the Central Area.<sup>104</sup> Given the large number of people affected, the government was mindful that, as far as possible, clearance and resettlement of the Central Area had to be carried out in a way that would preserve the existing business community and minimise the impact on the viability and operational efficiency of the affected businesses. This warranted a special approach to the clearance of urban slums in the Central Area, as compared to that of other areas. The successful and expeditious clearance of the Central Area also required the special attention and focus of a dedicated agency.





Location of the Central Area (left); Central Area map (right) showing areas bounded by red lines as designated for redevelopment. By the 1970s, the Central Area had been expanded to include the Orchard Road area and the reclaimed areas of Marina Centre and Marina South.

Images courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.



Aerial view of Precinct North 1 in the Central Area before urban renewal. Many of the buildings were only two storeys high.

Image courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.

## EARLY RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS IN THE CENTRAL AREA

To carry out urban renewal successfully, resettlement facilities, especially replacement housing at the city fringes, had to be provided, and the HDB served as the “prime mover” in this initiative.<sup>105</sup> Shopkeepers displaced from Central Area shophouses were initially offered HDB shop premises in the Central Area or in HDB new towns on a concessionary rental scheme. In line with the special focus on urban renewal, the HDB set up a special unit—the Urban Renewal Unit—in 1964 to take charge of slum clearance and comprehensive redevelopment of the Central Area. The work of the unit grew to such an extent that by 1966, the unit became a full-fledged department—the Urban Renewal Department (URD).

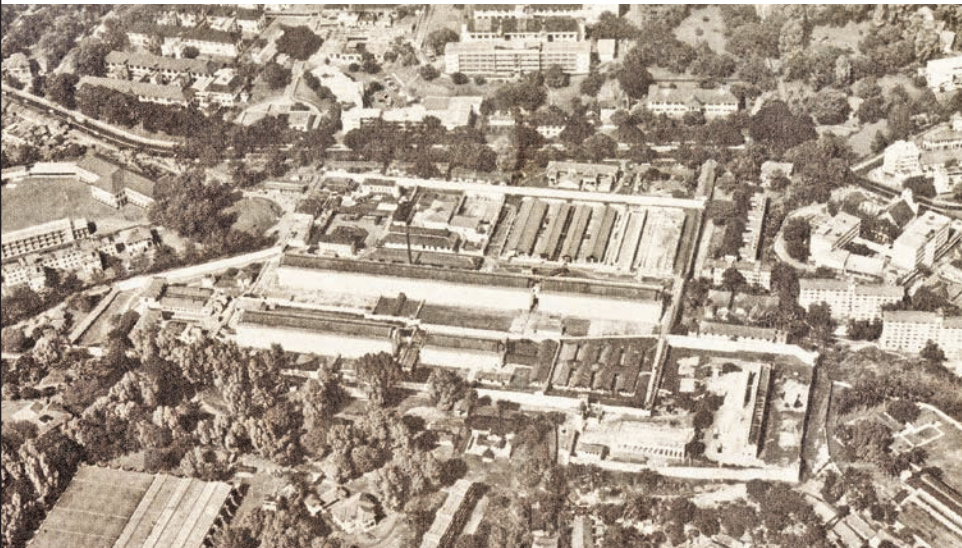
### First Integrated Resettlement Centre—Outram Park

Within the Central Area, Chinatown was prioritised for clearance as it was the most rundown and congested area with very poor living conditions. However, it also posed one of the biggest resettlement challenges for the government.<sup>106</sup> As one of the oldest precincts in the Central Area, Chinatown was heavily encumbered with businesses and residents in insanitary and overcrowded buildings. The precinct was dominated by shophouses that accommodated a mix of living quarters, offices, stores and factories. It was also a close-knit community where shop owners literally lived with their wares and formed close relationships with their clientele who were residents in the vicinity. For instance, many shops in Chinatown operated on personal trust. Shopkeepers sold goods on credit to residents who made payment at the end of the month or when they received their salaries. Hence, one important aspect of clearance and resettlement of Chinatown, just like other parts of the Central Area, was to try to preserve the fabric of the community after the businesses there had moved to a new location. However, there were no available vacant sites large enough near Chinatown for replacement housing and commercial units to accommodate the resettled occupants.

At the time, the Outram Prison, which was originally built in 1847, sat at the foot of Pearl's Hill along Outram Road near Chinatown. Under the urban renewal programme, this area was known as Precinct South 1. The prison complex was identified as a suitable nearby site large enough for sufficient new housing and commercial units to be constructed on it for residents and businesses to be relocated en masse from Chinatown. The HDB thus proposed that the prison complex be moved to an expanded Changi Prison to free up land in the Central Area for redevelopment. The colonial-era Outram Prison was thus demolished in 1963.



The HDB built its first integrated resettlement centre in the Central Area at the vacated prison site—the Outram Park Complex—featuring a mix of commercial and residential uses. Completed in 1970, it comprised two storeys of 464 shop units linked throughout the site through a series of internal courtyards. This configuration provided maximum frontages for the shop units, which was important for shop owners. Eight blocks of 1,240 public housing flats stood above the shopping complex.<sup>107</sup> The new development attracted much interest from the businesses being displaced from Chinatown, and many of the former Chinatown shopkeepers and their regular customers, i.e., residents in their neighbourhood, relocated together to the new residential-cum-shopping complex.



Before redevelopment, the Outram Prison (middle of photograph) was within Precinct South 1.

Image courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, later described the opportunity to redevelop the city centre, including the former Outram Prison, as “a chance of a lifetime”.<sup>108</sup> The Outram Park Complex was considered a successfully integrated resettlement centre where existing community ties were kept intact in the resettlement process. On the success of the Outram Park resettlement site, Alan Choe, who was then the Head of the URD, commented:

*I am very proud of the design we did under UR [urban renewal] because we built shops, flats to relocate people in Chinatown. We created a design whereby there are many courtyards, with many frontages to the shops, because everybody wanted a shopfront. We were very proud that we did a design breakthrough that helped to resettle people. We were mindful of the people, there was a community of businesses and residents patronising shops on personal trust....So we moved the community from Chinatown to Outram Park and that was a very successful relocation. The people lived together, they knew their neighbours and shopkeepers, and we kept them intact and did not disrupt their livelihood. It was the most successful resettlement programme, because we had the Outram Prison [site] for the relocation.<sup>109</sup>*



The Outram Park redevelopment in the 1970s comprised HDB shops and flats (left); Outram Park Complex, a two-storey shopping complex with internal landscaped courtyards (right).

Image (left) courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority; image (right) courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.

In the initial years, however, the provision of resettlement facilities within the Central Area depended on the availability of nearby sites. While Outram Park Complex helped to accelerate clearance in Chinatown and jumpstart urban renewal, the sheer size of the resettlement sites needed meant that it would be difficult to replicate this model elsewhere in the Central Area.

## Resettling Law Firms in a Specialised Centre—Colombo Court

While there were no more sites the size of Outram Park Complex available for the building of resettlement facilities, other smaller sites within the Central Area were available from time to time. One of these was a vacant land parcel at North Bridge Road. It served the resettlement needs of a clearance site near the Supreme Court and City Hall (now the National Art Gallery) along St Andrew's Road, which comprised shophouses housing numerous law firms that the government knew it had to provide premises for when it cleared the area. The government, therefore, sold the North Bridge Road land parcel in 1970 to a wholly-owned subsidiary—Development and Construction Co Pte Ltd—of the HDB to be developed into a new office and shopping complex to accommodate the affected law firms.



For several years, Colombo Court was the de facto “legal centre” housing many law firms relocated from shophouses in the vicinity.

Image courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

The project at North Bridge Road, named Colombo Court, was completed in 1972. It comprised three shopping floors, six office floors, a restaurant and four basement car parks. For several years, it stood as Singapore's unofficial “legal centre”.<sup>10</sup> Colombo Court also accommodated retailers affected by clearance in the vicinity in the 1970s and it became a popular shopping centre in the High Street shopping area. The building was eventually acquired and demolished in 1999 for the construction of the new Supreme Court Building.

## COORDINATING CLEARANCE, RESETTLEMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT UNDER THE URA

By the mid-1970s, the urban renewal programme took on added urgency in supporting Singapore's economic development, particularly its development into a financial centre and tourism destination. This development was also in line with the first Concept Plan formulated in 1971 to guide Singapore's future physical development. In 1974, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) was incorporated as a new statutory board to replace the URD as the lead agency to plan and implement the comprehensive redevelopment of the Central Area. The aim was to transform the city centre that was crowded with urban slums into a modern metropolis befitting a newly independent nation. To do so, the URA also served as the single agency to plan, clear, resettle, construct and allocate resettlement facilities in the Central Area, taking over much of the resettlement work that had been done by the HDB.

However, the challenges of earlier years remained. The densely populated Central Area was occupied by warrens of low-rise shophouses where shopkeepers, tradesmen and professionals operated their businesses. Commercial activities were typically located on the first storey of the shophouse, while the family of the business owner resided either in the rear of the first storey, or the second storey. The Central Area was also a major shopping and commercial hub with particular trades congregating in the various areas, such as furniture shops along Upper Cross Street and Victoria Street, goldsmith shops along South Bridge Road, and textile trades along High Street, North Bridge Road and Arab Street. Having been established in the Central Area for decades, many business owners resisted relocation. At the same time, the Central Area was home to a large section of the population. The ownership of land also tended to be fragmented, making it difficult for the URA to put together larger sites for comprehensive redevelopment.

The URA's strategy for urban renewal was to have close coordination between clearance works, the redevelopment plans and the Sales of Sites programme through which state land was offered for sale to the private sector for development. Alan Choe, who was the first general manager of the URA, highlighted the roles of compulsory acquisition—the Land Acquisition Act was passed in 1966 to enable the government to acquire land compulsorily for public purposes—and resettlement in enabling urban renewal:



*When we started URA, it was very difficult to assemble plots of land [and] clear squatters to do big projects. It was through urban renewal with the powers to do compulsory acquisition and resettle [a] large number of people that we were able to create big pieces of [unencumbered] land [for new development]. That enabled Singapore to break through and build large complexes. With slum clearance, urban renewal [efforts] became the key trend setters in design.<sup>111</sup>*

The clearance and resettlement programme in the Central Area adhered to the government's prevailing resettlement policies. Business continuity was a key consideration for the resettlement of businesses in the city area. Many affected business owners requested alternative premises to be built in the immediate vicinity of the clearance sites. Former URA Senior Planner, Tan Teck Min, who was involved in the planning of the Central Area, explained that the URA's approach was to "minimise disruptive intervention" by building replacement housing and business premises within and at the fringes of the inner city area.<sup>112</sup> The URA had observed that urban renewal in the other cities was often detrimental to the existing businesses being displaced, as they were relocated outside the city centre far from their original locations.<sup>113</sup> To alleviate the hardship for affected businesses in Singapore's Central Area, the URA built on the HDB's earlier resettlement strategy of providing temporary shopping centres within the Central Area (see Chapter 2). It constructed temporary and permanent resettlement centres close to the clearance sites to cater to their resettlement needs, so that affected business operators could continue to run their businesses near their original locations.

### Transit Resettlement Centres

In 1976, the URA started to experiment with a two-stage resettlement process for businesses involving both transit and permanent resettlement centres. As a permanent resettlement centre took longer to be built than a transit one, businesses were initially resettled into a temporary resettlement centre in the vicinity for a few years, while the permanent resettlement centre was being constructed. Transit resettlement centres were simple structures of two to three storeys that could be put up rapidly at low cost.

Such transit resettlement centres were located in commercially viable areas, often within the same locality as the clearance sites. This was especially important for small businesses that depended on serving clientele in particular areas; transplanting them elsewhere would likely put them out of business. By reducing the hardship on resettlement cases, it also cut the time needed for the relocation process, and a large area of encumbered shophouses could be cleared more quickly for redevelopment.

At the second stage, the businesses would shift into the permanent resettlement centre upon its completion. By enabling businesses dependent on specific localities to continue in the vicinity in the interim, the two-stage process allowed for a smoother transition by reducing the inconvenience and disruption caused to the businesses.

The first experiment with this two-stage process was carried out in the clearance of a key shopping district bounded by North Bridge Road, High Street, Hill Street and Coleman Street in 1977. The area also included shophouses along Hock Lam Street and Chin Nam Street, which hosted many popular street hawkers and eateries. To provide transit premises for the affected shops and eateries, the three-storey Capitol Shopping Centre was built along North Bridge Road on land that had been previously used for a car park. It was just a stone's throw away from the area being cleared. Completed in 1976, shop units in Capitol Shopping Centre were reserved for resettlement cases and the shopping centre proved to be popular with the resettled retailers. Street hawkers relocated to the rear of the first storey also acted as a crowd puller, helping to draw shoppers into the shopping centre. Upon the completion of the permanent Funan Centre on the original clearance site, businesses and hawkers housed in Capitol Shopping Centre shifted to Funan Centre in 1985. Capitol Shopping Centre later reverted to being a car park.





Street hawkers and eateries at Hock Lam Street (top) were cleared and resettled temporarily in Capitol Shopping Centre (bottom), a transit resettlement centre along North Bridge Road.

Image (top) from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore; image (bottom) courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

The URA completed another transit resettlement centre adjacent to Hong Lim Park along South Bridge Road in March 1977. The two-storey Hong Lim Shopping Centre took in shops affected by clearance in the vicinity, such as those at Cross Street, Upper Cross Street and South Bridge Road. Most of them were trading companies with retail outlets. They subsequently relocated to permanent resettlement facilities at Hong Lim Complex in 1981. Hong Lim Shopping Centre was later demolished and the site became part of Hong Lim Park.



Hong Lim Shopping Centre (left) was a temporary resettlement centre along South Bridge Road completed in 1977 to rehouse those affected by road and redevelopment proposals in the vicinity. They were later relocated to permanent resettlement facilities at Hong Lim Complex (right) in 1981.

Image (left) courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority; image (right) courtesy of the Housing & Development Board.



# REHABILITATING ACQUIRED SHOPHOUSES FOR RESETTLEMENT

In addition to building transit resettlement centres, the URA also used acquired shophouses in the Central Area to house resettlement cases after the properties had been rehabilitated. As the restoration work could be done quickly within months, such rehabilitated shophouses contributed to the provision of quick resettlement facilities. The rehabilitation works also contributed to the cityscape by preserving the cultural, historical and aesthetic qualities of the acquired shophouses.

In 1977, the URA rehabilitated two clusters of acquired shophouses in the Central Area to provide resettlement facilities quickly. The first was a row of 14 units of three-storey shophouses in Murray Street in Tanjong Pagar to provide retail and eating outlets on the first storey as well as space for offices and associations on the upper storeys. The second cluster was in Cuppage Road along the main shopping and tourist belt of Orchard Road, where a row of 17 units of two-storey shophouses were restored to their original Malacca style. Collectively known as Cuppage Terrace, the shophouses were used for the resettlement of trades that complemented the style and scale of the architecture, such as antique shops, fashion outlets or specialised trades that were originally located along Orchard Road. Both rows of shophouses continue to be used today for commercial purposes, although they no longer house resettlement tenants.



The Murray Street rehabilitation block (left) was renovated to provide resettlement facilities for shops, eating outlets, offices and associations. The Cuppage Road rehabilitation block (right) was for the relocation of retail shops along Orchard Road.

Images courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

## Permanent Resettlement Centres

In the longer term, commercial resettlement cases in the Central Area were rehoused in permanent resettlement centres built by the URA in the immediate vicinity of the clearance sites. The quality of such permanent resettlement centres was comparable to that of the private shopping complexes in terms of design and finishes to ensure they could compete effectively with such shopping complexes. They were also fitted with central air-conditioning, escalators and lifts to meet increasingly sophisticated demands of both shoppers and business owners. Some of the resettlement centres, such as Beauty World Centre and Orchard Point, were also mixed-use developments that incorporated residential units.<sup>114</sup>

The construction of permanent resettlement centres by the URA was a critical step in the urban renewal process. By providing adequate facilities readily available to relocate affected businesses, encumbered land could be released for redevelopment as well as infrastructure and environment improvements. The government could thus expand the pipeline of developable land readily available for sale to the private sector.<sup>115</sup> Valuable land in high demand in the Central Area was freed up for redevelopment to meet new demands and support economic growth.

## Co-allocation of Resettlement Facilities

Permanent resettlement centres accommodated multiple uses under one roof. Not only did the co-allocation of shops, offices, markets, hawker centres and car parks within the same building boost a centre's commercial viability, it also helped to expedite the clearance of areas with multiple trades. For instance, Cuppage Centre was built in 1978 at Orchard Road as a nine-storey permanent resettlement centre that featured the co-location of several uses. It had two floors of market stalls to accommodate stalls displaced from the former Orchard Road Market, one floor of cooked food hawker stalls consisting of street hawkers relocated from the nearby Koek Road area, as well as four floors of office space and two floors of car parks.

At the same time, unsightly and insanitary street hawker stalls were moved into permanent facilities in the form of clean and hygienic cooked food centres. Many of the resettlement centres such as Cuppage Centre, Funan Centre, Hill Street Centre, Blanco Court, Golden Shoe Car Park and Beauty World Centre incorporated such food centres as an amenity for customers in the new centres.

## A Review of the Success of Resettlement Centres

As the momentum of urban renewal gathered pace, the URA built a total of 11 permanent resettlement centres over a span of 10 years from 1977 to 1987. At one point, five new resettlement centres were under construction at the same time: Blanco Court, Hill Street Centre, Beauty World Centre, Orchard Point and Funan Centre. At the same time, two other resettlement centres were being planned at South Bridge Road and Albert Street. These were subsequently completed as South Bridge Centre and Albert Complex, respectively. Without such resettlement centres, the process of clearing sites encumbered with small businesses would likely have taken far longer, delaying critical new development in the Central Area. At the same time, this approach allowed affected businesses that wanted to continue operating in the same vicinity to do so.

However, despite the URA's efforts to inject building quality into its resettlement centres, many such centres were considered less commercially successful than commercial complexes developed by the private sector. One reason was that the resettlement centres often had only two to three floors of shop units with small floor plates and layouts that were unattractive to shoppers. For instance, Orchard Point was designed to cater to an array of retail businesses relocated from shophouses along Orchard Road, but the layout of its shopping podium placed many retail units along secondary corridors with no direct atrium frontage. Unlike private sector developments that targeted a wide range of retailers and business owners, the resettlement centres catered solely to the types and scale of the businesses being cleared in the vicinity. Many of the resettled businesses were modest retail trades used to operating in small spaces in shophouses or that shared one ground floor space with other businesses. They neither required nor could afford larger spaces in the resettlement centres.

Moreover, many resettled businesses clung to their traditional ways of operating and were often unable to adapt their businesses to compete with modern tenants in private commercial complexes. They did not introduce new product offerings or more enticing shopfronts suited to modern shopping centres. In some cases, the resettled shops in resettlement centres offered largely similar services and products with little variety. For example, some resettled tenants in Funan Centre continued to sell wooden clogs that were no longer in demand. Blanco Court was dominated by provision and grocery shops that were previously located in a wet market at the junction of Rochor Road and North Bridge Road. Jalan Sultan Centre comprised many textile shops, previously operating in the North Bridge Road,



Arab Street and Beach Road areas, that sold similar products, The URA also initially reserved the leasing of premises in resettlement centres for the resettlement cases, which limited the range of product offerings. It was only in later years—when demand from resettlement cases declined as more opted instead for cash grants as compensation, or when leases were terminated—that vacant units were let out to non-resettlement or public tenants.

These factors meant that resettlement centres failed to sustain a shopping ambience vibrant enough to attract more customers. Eventually, many of the resettled businesses folded. The URA later rented out the vacated spaces in the resettlement centres to public tenants who provided better retail offerings and more attractive shopfronts. However, many resettlement centres that featured such a mix of resettled and public tenants continued to suffer from a poor public image.

While the construction of resettlement facilities was one component in the overall clearance strategy, another component was compensation in the form of cash grants in lieu of replacement premises to incentivise affected business owners to find their own alternative premises (see Chapter 2). The cash grant scheme introduced in 1971 was initially unpopular as the quantum was considered too low by the business owners. To accelerate the clearance process, the government periodically raised the cash grant quantum for businesses and multi-tenanted shops.

The clearance works in the Central Area was a turning point for many small business owners, especially marginal businesses that had survived because of low rents in rent-controlled premises. With higher compensation, more business owners, including many marginal businesses, opted for cash grants instead of taking up government-built resettlement facilities. In fact, many marginal businesses decided to cease operating altogether. For instance, in 1974, only 21% out of a total of 430 commercial establishments being cleared in the Central Area accepted the cash grants.<sup>116</sup> A higher proportion—38% of 206 affected commercial establishments—accepted the cash grant in 1979, after the 1975 increase in the cash grant quantum.<sup>117</sup>

## Exhibit 7

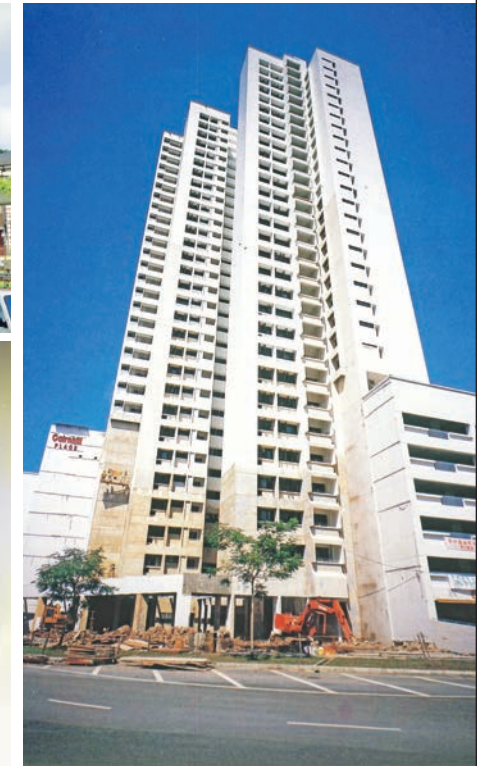
### Permanent Resettlement Centres Developed by the URA from 1977 to 1987

<b>Jalan Sultan Centre</b> 1977 Northern precincts in the Central Area. A 25-storey permanent resettlement centre that comprised 22 floors of offices and a three-floor shopping podium with car parks.	<b>Beauty World Centre</b> 1983 (retail podium) 1984 (residential tower) Vendors at Beauty World Park. A five-storey shopping centre to accommodate most of the vendors in the nearby Beauty World Park who were affected by a fire, and a 20-storey residential tower comprising 80 dwelling units for the middle-income group.	<b>South Bridge Centre</b> 1984 Shops and offices in the vicinity of South Bridge Road, which had a concentration of goldsmiths and jewellery shops. A 13-storey building that comprised two floors of shops for a jewellery mart and a centre for office supplies and equipment, three floors of car parks and eight floors of offices.
<b>Cuppage Centre</b> 1978 Orchard Road Market, street hawkers in Keok Road/Keok Lane area, businesses in the Orchard Road area. A nine-storey development project with the first two floors for market stalls (for relocation of tenants from the former Orchard Road Market), the third floor for cooked food hawker stalls (for relocation of street hawkers from the nearby Keok Road/Keok Lane area), two floors of car parks above, and four floors of offices. It also provided resettlement facilities for other clearance cases in the Orchard Road area.	<b>Hill Street Centre</b> 1984 142 street hawkers. A six-storey building that comprised two floors for a food centre, three floors of car parks and one floor of office space. It was linked to Funan Centre via an overhead pedestrian bridge across Hill Street.	<b>Albert Complex</b> 1985 Businesses at Victoria Street, Rochor Road, Bencoolen Street, Albert Street and Waterloo Street. The complex comprised a three-storey shopping podium and a 13-storey office tower with two basement car parks.
<b>Blanco Court</b> 1980 Businesses in the vicinity affected by road schemes for the Bukit Timah one-way pair of roads linking to Marina Centre. A 14-storey building that comprised a five-storey podium (with two floors of shops and a hawker centre, and three floors of car parks) and a nine-storey office block.	<b>Funan Centre</b> 1984 Resettlement cases temporarily housed at Capitol Shopping Centre (transit resettlement centre). A seven-storey building with six floors of shops, a top floor for eating houses and two basement car parks.	<b>Cairnhill Place</b> 1986 (car park podium) 1987 (residential tower) Retail and food outlets along Orchard Road and provision of parking facilities. The development comprised an eight-storey car park station for 912 lots to relieve the shortage of car parking facilities in the vicinity and a 32-storey residential tower block for 146 dwelling units. The first storey also incorporated retail units for food and beverage and a mini-mart, and a mosque that could accommodate some 800 worshippers.
<b>Orchard Point</b> 1983 (retail podium) 1984 (residential tower) Businesses in the Orchard Road area. A five-storey podium that comprised four floors of shops and one floor of offices (for relocation of businesses along Orchard Road), and a four-storey residential tower that comprised 60 dwelling units for the middle-income group.	<b>Golden Shoe Car Park</b> 1984 Street hawkers A 10-storey car park station that included retail and restaurant units on the first storey and 80 cooked food stalls on the second and third storeys. It had 1,050 car park lots to cater to the parking demand in the Central Business District.	

■ Resettlement Centre ■ Year of Completion ■ Clearance Sites ■ Resettlement Facilities

Source: Urban Redevelopment Authority, Annual Reports, various years.



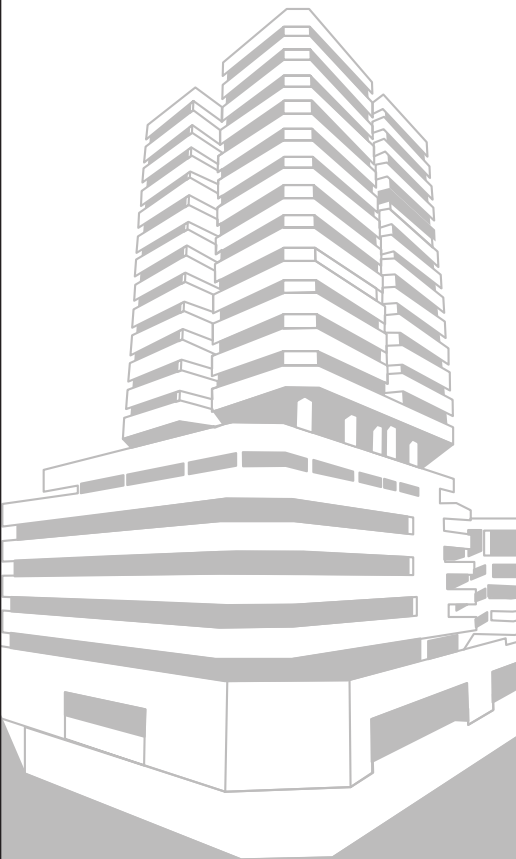


Permanent resettlement centres: Jalan Sultan Resettlement Centre, Funan Centre, South Bridge Centre and Cuppage Centre (this page, clockwise from top); Hill Street Centre, Cairnhill Place, Blanco Court and Albert Complex (facing page, clockwise from top).

Image of Hill Street Centre from the Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore. All other images, courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.



# SELF-HELP RESETTLEMENT— FOOK HAI BUILDING

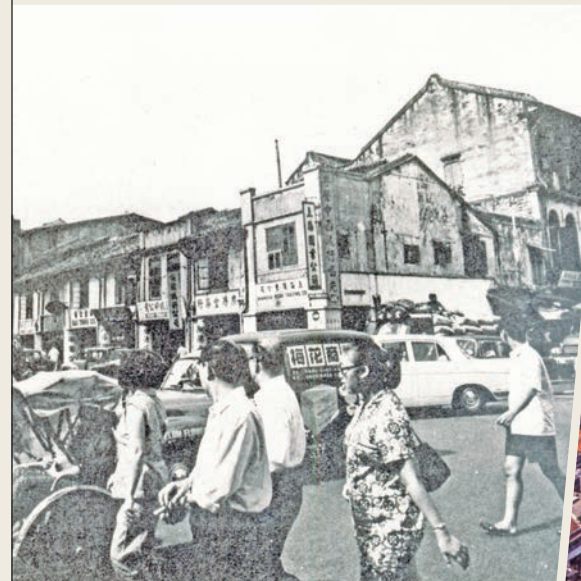


There was a special case where business owners affected by clearance took the initiative to collectively negotiate and implement their own resettlement plans with the government's support. This involved some 200 businesses in Chinatown that had been required to move out of the ageing government-acquired shophouses that they had occupied for decades. While all were offered the choice of cash compensation or alternative premises, many expressed a strong wish to remain in the area where they had established strong community ties.

Those who wanted to continue staying in the area formed a working committee and successfully negotiated with the government to purchase a land parcel at South Bridge Road/Upper Hokkien Street on a 99-year lease. The group formed a public company to finance and develop the project as a co-operative in accordance with the plans and development guidelines approved by the URD.<sup>118</sup> By 1976, the site had been redeveloped into Fook Hai Building, a modern complex with shop and office units as well as residential apartments, as replacement housing for the business owners. The development, which still stands today, remains the only site sold by the government to a self-help resettlement group taking part in urban renewal. It was sold at a market value determined by the Chief Valuer. While direct allocation was not the norm, there were special considerations at that time. The affected business owners were willing

to vacate the acquired sites and undertake the development of resettlement facilities themselves. There were also sufficient land sales tender bids with similar sale conditions to provide evidence for the valuation.

By allocating the land directly to the affected business owners, the government was able to expedite the clearance of a much wider area bounded by South Bridge Road, Upper Cross Street, New Bridge Road and Upper Hokkien Street. This area was subsequently developed into Hong Lim Complex, a commercial and residential complex that yielded additional resettlement facilities to support clearance in the Central Area. Another parcel of land in the cleared area was sold to the private sector for redevelopment into Chinatown Point. The direct allocation of land for affected occupants to build their own resettlement facilities thus contributed to the government's objective of urban renewal of the city.



This clearance site in Chinatown was a mix of rundown buildings (left); the site was redeveloped into the 20-storey Fook Hai Building (right) by a development company set up by businesses affected by the clearance.

Images courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.



## Providing New Facilities to Resettle Industries and Warehouses

Besides shops and offices, there were also factories and warehouses occupying the inner-city parts of the Central Area. Such uses were incompatible with the government's urban renewal plans and had to be relocated elsewhere.<sup>119</sup> Many light industries were resettled in workshops built by the HDB at the city fringe in the areas of Geylang Bahru, Bedok and Eunos, while motor workshops from Kramat Lane off Orchard Road were relocated to HDB-built premises in Sin Ming Road.

However, the replacement industrial facilities provided by the HDB were limited. To expedite the clearance, the URA embarked on its own development of terraced factories to rehouse light industries. The URA built the Kallang Avenue Industrial Centre in 1977 for the relocation of light industries affected by the clearance in the Central Area. The centre comprised four blocks of two-storey terraced factories (78 units), which were sold to resettlement cases on 30-year leases. This gave the affected businesses security of tenure so that they could plan ahead for their business operations.<sup>120</sup>



Kallang Avenue Industrial Centre featured four blocks of two-storey terrace factories for the resettlement of light industries being cleared from the Central Area.

Image courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

To cater for warehouse operations that were affected by clearance in the Central Area, the URA constructed two blocks of single-storey warehouses at Clementi Road/West Coast Road within a short span of 11 months in 1980. There were ten warehouse units, each with a mezzanine level to provide additional room for either office or storage space. In addition, existing warehouses at Clementi were refurbished to meet the storage needs of those affected by clearance. In 1984, the URA constructed another warehousing complex, the nine-storey Kallang Bahru Complex, at the fringe of the Central Area to expedite the clearance of a cluster of large warehouses along the Singapore River.



Single-storey warehouses built by the URA at Clementi (top); refurbished warehouses at Clementi Road (bottom left); and the Kallang Bahru Complex, which was built to expedite the clearance of large warehouses along the Singapore River (bottom right).

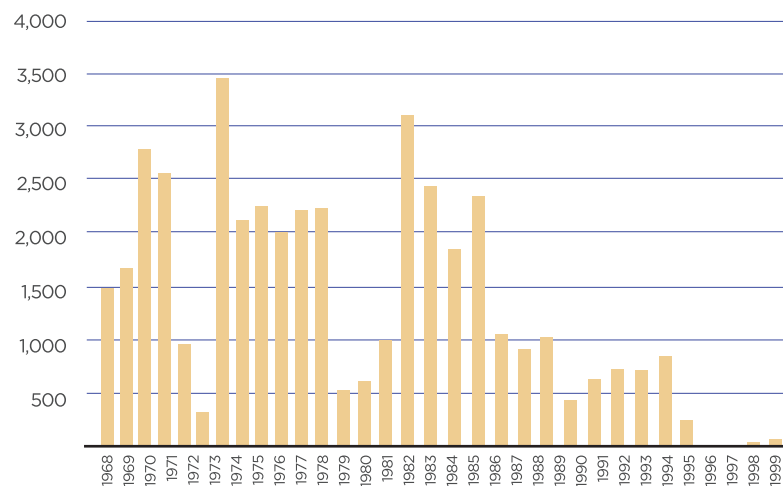
Images courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

## COMPLETING URBAN RENEWAL OF THE CENTRAL AREA

Over a period of 32 years from 1968 to 2000, the activities to support urban renewal in the Central Area involved more than 42,000 clearance cases in total. The number exceeded 3,000 cases in some years, such as in 1973 (3,455 cases) and 1982 (3,100 cases).<sup>121</sup> By the early 1990s, most of the clearance work for urban renewal had been completed. Correspondingly, the number of clearance cases dwindled.

### Exhibit 8

#### Number of Annual Clearance Cases in the Central Area, 1968 to 1999



Source: Urban Redevelopment Authority, Annual Reports, various years.

Note: See Appendix 2 for the detailed figures.

By 1989, the URA closed a significant chapter in its history after fulfilling its mission as the Central Area development agency. Prior to this, the unique aspects of the Central Area—its densely packed pre-war buildings housing a multitude of shops and trades—warranted a different resettlement approach to minimise the hardship and disruption to existing businesses. The URA centralised the planning, clearance, resettlement and redevelopment

activities in the Central Area. In order to expedite urban renewal, it also took on the task of planning, constructing and allocating commercial resettlement facilities for affected businesses where needed. The URA adopted new approaches such as implementing a two-step resettlement process with transit and permanent resettlement centres to allow affected businesses to continue operating in the vicinity of their original premises. By 1987, it had built a total of 11 permanent resettlement centres that accommodated multiple uses under one roof. The URA also refurbished historic shophouses



By the 1980s, modern high-rise commercial towers were part of the new landscape of a revitalised Central Business District.

Image courtesy of the Urban Redevelopment Authority.



to provide quick resettlement premises, and in one case, allocated land directly (by its predecessor the URD) to a group of resettled businesses to build their own premises. For factories and warehouses that had to be moved out of the Central Area, the URA built replacement industrial and warehousing facilities in other areas to rehouse them.

As a result of the systematic and well-coordinated process of clearance and resettlement, urban slums had been cleared from the Central Area and fragmented parcels of land were assembled for rejuvenation and redevelopment. Rundown areas could be redeveloped, while public infrastructure and facilities could be upgraded, and traffic congestion reduced. This greatly improved the living, business and working environment in the Central Area. At the same time, resettled businesses were able to operate close to their existing customers with minimum disruption, in either transit or permanent resettlement centres in the same locality as their original premises.

The URA was reconstituted as the national land use planning and conservation authority in 1989. It set up a wholly-owned subsidiary, PIDEMCO Holdings Pte Ltd (an acronym for Property Investment, Development and Estate Management Company), to take over the ownership and management of its resettlement centres and commercial properties. This allowed the URA to concentrate on its planning and regulatory role. By then, resettlement had served its role in the transformation of downtown Singapore.

## CHAPTER 5

# CLEARANCE AND RESETTLEMENT FOR THE COMMON GOOD



“It was tough for the households who had to be resettled, lives were disrupted, thousands, maybe tens of thousands had to change their livelihoods. But if the Government had not done this, we could not have housed our population and we could not have transformed Singapore...”<sup>122</sup>

Lee Hsien Loong

By the 1980s, the results of development enabled by the clearance of encumbered state land and resettlement of the occupants on them were plain to see. Squatter settlements or *kampung*s that enveloped the city-fringe and rural areas, and large tracts of rural land that had been occupied by small farms, were cleared. At the same time, the city centre was cleared of overcrowded decrepit slums, pollutive backyard industries and itinerant street hawkers. The majority of the population were housed in HDB flats in new towns. The Jurong Industrial Estate and other industrial areas sprouted up around the island as part of the growing economy. The city centre was reinvigorated into a modern Central Business District. The country also made great strides in expanding public infrastructure such as road networks, the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system and the airport, as well as implementing environmental improvements, including the rejuvenation of the Singapore and Kallang Rivers. Within one generation, Singapore had transformed from slums and squatters into a modern metropolis.

Prior to the 1960s, the British colonial government had made limited headway in clearing land for its post-war housing and infrastructure development plans. The need for clearance and resettlement to support development became a matter of survival for Singapore when it attained

self-government and then independence in 1965. Without a hinterland, the small city-state with few natural resources and a deepening housing and unemployment crisis had to survive on its own. In both the domestic and external arenas, confidence in Singapore's prospects was low. Any signs of stalled development, especially in housing and the economy, could easily push the fledgling nation into a devastating tailspin. Singapore's first Prime Minister (PM), Lee Kuan Yew, saw the stark reality that “nobody owes my countrymen a living. But we intend to bail ourselves out”.<sup>123</sup> Singapore would have to make its own future.

The People's Action Party government had only a few short years following independence to muster the available resources, including land, to turn the tide for Singapore. It was thus imperative for the government to succeed in clearing encumbered land for development and resettling those affected, so that land could be freed up quickly for higher-value development. For PM Lee, the situation then was a matter of life and death:

*On our island of 224 square miles were two million people. We inherited what was the capital of the British Empire in Southeast Asia, but dismembered from the hinterland which was the empire. The question was how to make a living? How to survive? This was not a theoretical problem in the economics of development. It was a matter of life and death for two million people...Fortunately, an answer was possible...A hardworking people, willing and not slow to learn new tasks, given a sense of common purpose, clear direction, and leadership, these were the ingredients that turned adversity to advantage.*<sup>124</sup>

The bleak situation helped to focus minds and garner vital political will within the government to carry out much-needed clearance and resettlement despite the difficulties. Land clearance had to be carried out on a far larger scale and in less time than what the colonial government had attempted. Unlike the colonial government, however, the new political leadership and the civil service were imbued with a strong sense of mission to make sure that the government succeeded. Cabinet ministers and Members of Parliament regularly visited clearance sites to explain the government's plans and gain public acceptance for clearance and resettlement. The Housing & Development Board (HDB), and later the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Jurong Town Corporation, served as dedicated agencies taking on the responsibility of managing the entire process of clearance and resettlement. The agencies and their resettlement officers at the frontline facilitated the process and overcame difficulties on the ground.

Clearance and resettlement were carried out with a firm hand guided by clear and fair policies and processes, and undergirded by legislation and enforcement. At the same time, the government tempered the approach with due consideration for the impact on those affected. Many of those being displaced feared the loss of their homes, communities and livelihoods. To ameliorate the loss of their original sites, adequate financial compensation was provided, such as compensation for improvements and cash grants for farmers, rental rebates for residential occupants, and rental concessions and cash grants for businesses. A multi-agency committee kept the government's resettlement policies and benefits up to date.

The government also adopted various strategies to minimise the disruptions to lives and businesses. To meet different resettlement needs, the government constructed and offered a wide range of resettlement facilities, often in nearby locations, ahead of the actual clearance. These included high-rise HDB flats and shop premises, market and hawker centre stalls, factory units and warehousing facilities. To allow businesses in the Central Area to continue operating despite clearance, the government adopted a two-stage process involving transit and permanent resettlement centres. The preservation of community ties was also prioritised, and in some cases like Outram Park Complex, entire communities were relocated en bloc.

The development initiatives such as public housing and industrial estates that accompanied clearance and resettlement, in turn, demonstrated benefits that were shared broadly within society, making clearance and resettlement more palatable. For those living in squatters and slums, being rehoused in HDB flats marked an improvement in their living conditions, though it required adjustments to their lifestyles. Over the years, the public's perception of the resettlement programme changed, so much so that some started clamouring for early resettlement.<sup>125</sup> Resettlement also played a role in forging a new shared national identity for a fledgling nation. In urban and rural parts of Singapore, people historically settled in areas delineated by ethnicity, resulting in racial enclaves. As resettled families were allocated HDB flats based on availability while public applicants balloted for theirs, resettlement in HDB new towns helped to hasten the mixing of people of various ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>126</sup> This facilitated the process of integration.

By most measures, the scale of clearance and resettlement over three decades in Singapore was immense. Between 1960 and 1991, when the population almost doubled from 1.6 million to 3.1 million, the HDB, which managed the majority of clearances, had handled over 280,000 cases. Today, the 26 HDB new towns and estates around Singapore offer affordable high-quality housing. Businesses thrive in well-planned and efficiently run industrial estates and business parks, while the city centre serves as the hub to work, live and play in. Resettlement continues to play a role in Singapore's progress. One example is the HDB's Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme (SERS), where residents from older flats in selected sites are resettled to newer ones nearby, so that the SERS sites can be redeveloped. The success of large-scale clearance and resettlement paved the way for Singapore's physical and economic transformation.

## POST-SCRIPT

Land is one of Singapore's most precious resources. Looking back, it was certainly with great foresight that our pioneering leaders recognised that Singapore had to adopt clear and pragmatic land policies in order to allow Singapore to develop. And it was with this vision, coupled with the strong political will to succeed, that Singapore's political leaders in the 1960s and 1970s initiated much-needed land administration programmes to free up encumbered land for development. Those were not easy days, and neither were the land policies popular. But Singapore's success today is a testament to the validation of those land policies. Today, Singapore is a vibrant and liveable city of 5.6 million. It has made the leap from Third World to First, and is often quoted as an example for many other countries to follow. Much of Singapore's success today was enabled by acquisition, clearance and resettlement programmes initiated five decades ago.

It is unlikely in present times that Singapore will see such mass acquisition and clearance of encumbered land. Indeed, the emphasis on acquisition and clearance of land today has also shifted. In recent times, much of the land acquisition of both public and private properties have been undertaken for public infrastructure development, such as road projects or new MRT lines. But as Singapore progresses beyond 50 years of independence, we are also seeing the expiry of leasehold lands, and the government is also gradually recovering possession of some of these lands. While the scale and impact on the masses are vastly different from what took place in the early years of Singapore's independence, the focus on helping those affected, and minimising their hardships, remain unchanged. Take for example the lease expiry in December 2020 of a cluster of

terraced houses in Geylang Lorong 3. The Singapore Land Authority, working closely with sister agencies such as the Housing & Development Board (HDB), is actively assisting owner-occupiers to relocate into suitable HDB homes when the time to vacate their properties arises.

There will be new and unique challenges in land administration in years to come, as Singapore progresses further in maturity and development. Policies and strategies to manage and redevelop scarce land in Singapore for the future are likely to be different from the past. The government continues to actively consider all issues, and the impact on home and business owners, while balancing the need to continually revitalise and redevelop Singapore for its people in a liveable and sustainable way. The lessons learnt from decades of experience with acquisition, clearance and resettlement, including managing the social and societal impacts of resettlement, will help to guide future approaches. With many other cities elsewhere confronting similar challenges of resettling communities for redevelopment, Singapore can, and will, share its experience. We will also learn from others. What the Centre for Liveable Cities' Urban Systems Study on this topic has done is to capture the essence of Singapore's experience, and to ensure that such experiences are passed down to future generations of policymakers as well as practitioners. I am grateful for the Centre's leadership on this.

**Tan Boon Khai**  
Chief Executive  
Singapore Land Authority



# GOVERNANCE TOOLS AND TIMELINE

- Legislation
- Executive Policies and Initiatives
  - Farmers
  - Residential Occupants
  - Businesses
- Key Institutions
- Major Resettlement Projects

## 1918

- ▶ The Housing Commission was set up to review the housing situation in the Central Area.

## 1927

- ▶ The Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) was set up to improve the infrastructure of the town and other areas of Singapore.
- ▶ The Land Office and the SIT handled the clearance of crown land and the resettlement of the occupants on them.

## 1927

### Farmers:

- ▶ Resettled to rural Resettlement Areas.

### Residential Occupants:

- ▶ Resettled to rural Resettlement Areas, or tenements/SIT flats.

## 1936

- ▶ The SIT started to build low-cost housing.

## 1947

- ▶ The Housing Committee was set up to study the housing shortage and recommended a housing building programme.

## 1947

- ▶ The Control of Rent Ordinance pegged rental rates to 1939 levels to protect tenants in view of severe housing shortage after the Second World War.

## 1955

- ▶ The Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party was appointed.

## 1955

- ▶ Clearance and resettlement started for the development of the Queenstown estate.

## 1955

### Farmers:

- ▶ Allocation of agricultural land ranging from two to three acres, a free basic house, and compensation for improvements\* (e.g. squatter house with a concrete floor at S\$1 per sq. ft.).

### Residential Occupants:

- ▶ Free basic house in a semi-urban settlement area, no compensation for improvements; or
- ▶ Compensation for improvements\* (e.g. squatter house with a concrete floor at S\$1 per sq. ft.) and to find own accommodation; or
- ▶ Registration for SIT accommodation, no compensation for improvements.

### Businesses:

- ▶ Business premises were generally unaffected by clearance before 1964.

## 1957

- ▶ The Land Clearance and Resettlement Department was set up under the SIT.

## 1958

- ▶ 1958 Master Plan.

## Before 1950

Note: \*Henceforth, compensation for improvements refers to compensation for squatter houses with a concrete floor.

## 1950s

## 1960

- The Housing & Development Board (HDB) was established; its Resettlement Department took over the SIT's clearance and resettlement functions and became responsible for all public sector clearance projects.

## 1961

- Clearance and resettlement started for the development of Toa Payoh and Jurong Industrial Estate.

## 1963

### Farmers:

- Allocation of agricultural land not exceeding two acres and a free basic house.

## 1964

- The Urban Renewal Unit was set up within the HDB to carry out clearance and comprehensive redevelopment of the Central Area.

## 1964

- Commenced clearance of Precincts North 1 and South 1 for urban renewal.

## 1964

### Farmers:

- Allocation of agricultural land not exceeding two acres, no basic house.
- Those who gave up farming could opt for a Replacement Grant of S\$1,000 per acre, or an HDB shop with three years' rental concession.
- Introduction of Replacement Rates where compensation for improvements increased from S\$1 to S\$2.50 per sq. ft.
- Introduced a disturbance and transport allowance of S\$50 to S\$100.

### Residential Occupants:

- Allocation of a rental HDB flat.
- Introduction of Replacement Rates where compensation for improvements increased from S\$1 to S\$2.50 per sq. ft.
- Introduced a disturbance and transport allowance of S\$300 to S\$350.

### Businesses:

- For Central Area shophouses, priority allocation and rental concessions for HDB shops on a three-year rising rental rate scheme.
- Allocation of shop units in temporary shopping centres in the Central Area, or rural shopping centres outside of the Central Area.

## 1966

- The Urban Renewal Unit was restructured into the Urban Renewal Department (URD).

## 1966

- The Land Acquisition Act was passed, which allowed the government to acquire land for redevelopment.

## 1966

- Clearance and resettlement started at Pasir Laba for the development of a military training institute.
- Clearance commenced at Redhill and Macpherson, as well as for the Kallang Basin reclamation project.

## 1968

- Formation of the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC).

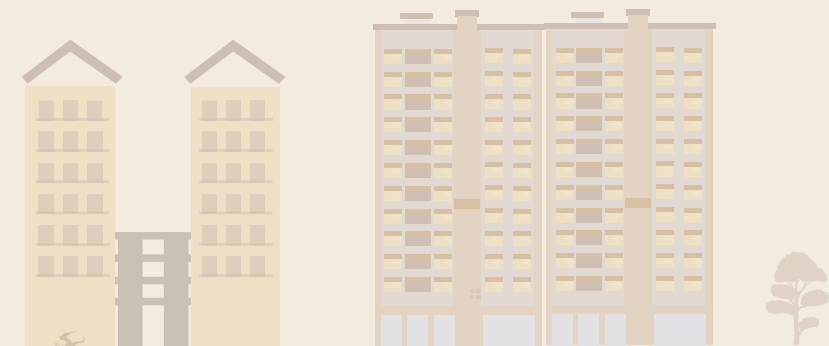
## 1968

- Clearance commenced at Bedok, as well as for the Upper Changi coastal reclamation project.

## 1969

- Clearance commenced at Kampung Tiong Bahru.

1960s



## 1970

- ▶ Outram Park Complex was completed to rehouse residents and businesses cleared from Chinatown.
- ▶ Clearance commenced at Orchard Road/Clemenceau Avenue/Penang Lane, Sago Lane/Banda Street, and Geylang Serai.

## 1971

### Farmers:

- ▶ A three-room HDB flat free, or a cash grant of S\$7,800 (no allocation of agricultural land); or allocated agriculture land not exceeding two acres.
- ▶ For those who gave up farming, compensation for improvements increased from S\$2.50 to S\$4.50 per sq. ft.
- ▶ Introduced a disturbance and transport allowance of S\$100 to S\$200.

### Residential Occupants:

- ▶ For purchase of an HDB flat, the down payment was reduced to S\$100.
- ▶ For rental flats, a rental rebate of S\$15 per month for three years was introduced.
- ▶ Introduced a disturbance and transport allowance of S\$500 to S\$600.

### Businesses:

- ▶ For Central Area shophouses, a cash grant of eight years' rental in lieu of replacement premises; or replacement premises on a five-year rising rental rate scheme.

## 1972

- ▶ Relocation of street hawkers into permanent hawker centres.
- ▶ Clearance commenced at Kampong Henderson, Telok Blangah, Ang Mo Kio and for Upper Changi/East Coast reclamation.

## 1974

- ▶ The URD became the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA).

## 1974

- ▶ Clearance commenced at the following areas: Paya Lebar Road/Jalan Eunos/Airport Road, Changi Village, Ghim Moh and Woodlands.

## 1974

### Businesses:

- ▶ The cash grant was raised to S\$15,000 for Central Area shophouses.

## 1975

- ▶ The JTC handled clearance and resettlement for industrial development.

## 1975

- ▶ Clearance and relocation of pig farms for the development of Pandan and Kranji Reservoirs.
- ▶ Clearance commenced at the following areas: Bedok, Bukit Batok and Clementi, and Tanjong Pagar Plaza and Rochor Centre sites.

## 1975

### Farmers:

- ▶ A three-room HDB flat free, or a cash grant of S\$11,800 (no allocation of agricultural land); or allocation of agriculture land not exceeding two acres.
- ▶ Compensation for improvements increased from S\$4.50 to S\$7.50 per sq. ft. (for those who gave up farming) and from S\$2.50 to S\$4.50 per sq. ft. (for those who opted for agricultural land allocation).

### Residential Occupants:

- ▶ Compensation for improvements increased from S\$2.50 to S\$4.50 per sq. ft. for those with building control approval (and S\$3.40 per sq. ft. for those without building control approval).

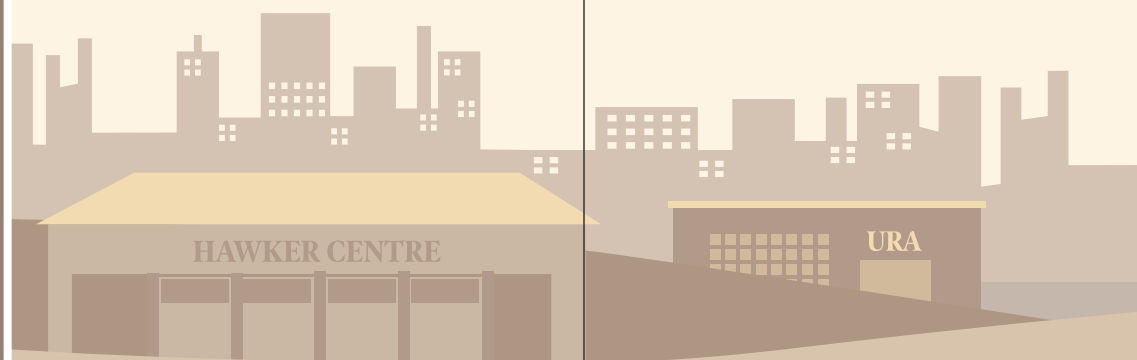
### Businesses:

- ▶ The cash grant was raised to S\$30,000 for Central Area shophouses.
- ▶ Collective relocation of similar trades to enhance their viability, where possible.

## 1976

- ▶ The URA built its first transit resettlement centre (Capitol Shopping Centre) in the Central Area.
- ▶ Clearance commenced at the following areas for the construction of new public housing: Bras Basah, Crawford and Hong Lim.
- ▶ Clearance commenced at the following areas: site for the new Changi Airport and for Yishun.

1970s





## 1977

- Launch of the 10-year programme to clean up Singapore and Kallang Rivers; it included clearance and resettlement of thousands of households, businesses and farms.
- The URA built its first permanent resettlement centre (Jalan Sultan Centre).
- Clearance commenced at the following areas: Geylang East and River Valley Road/Tan Tye Place.

## 1979

- The URA formed a resettlement team to expedite clearance in the Central Area.

## 1979

- Clearance commenced at Hougang.

## 1979

### Farmers:

- Government ceased the allocation of agricultural land completely.
- Cash grant of S\$15,000; no allocation of free HDB flat.
- Compensation for improvements was set at S\$7.50 per sq. ft for all farmers.

### Residential Occupants:

- For purchase of an HDB flat, the down payment was adjusted to S\$200 in September 1979 due to the higher selling price of HDB flats.
- For a rental flat, the rental rebate was set at S\$16.50 per month for three years.

## 1979 (continued...)

### Residential Occupants:

- A cash grant of S\$594 to families finding their own accommodation.
- Introduction of a disturbance and transport allowance of S\$500 to S\$600.
- Compensation for improvements increased from S\$4.50 to S\$7.50 per sq. ft. for those with building control approval. For those without building control approval, compensation was S\$4 per sq. ft.

### Businesses:

- The cash grant was raised to S\$40,000 for spaces exceeding 200 m<sup>2</sup> for Central Area shophouses.

## 1980

- 1980 Master Plan gazetted.

## 1980

- Clearance commenced at Potong Pasir.

## 1980

### Farmers:

- Compensation increased by 30% to 100% above the existing rate for farmers affected by resettlement for the second time, depending on the period of tenure of the first relocation.

## 1981

- Clearance commenced at Bishan, Bukit Batok and Tampines.

1970s

1980s

## 1981 (March)

### Farmers:

- ▶ The cash grant was raised to S\$19,500.
- ▶ A disturbance and transport allowance of S\$260.
- ▶ Compensation for improvements remained at the 1979 rate.

### Residential Occupants:

- ▶ For a rental flat, the rental rebate was set at S\$21.45 per month for 3 years.
- ▶ A cash grant of S\$772.20 to families finding their own accommodation.
- ▶ The disturbance and transport allowance was raised to S\$1,000.
- ▶ Compensation for improvements remained at the 1979 rate.
- ▶ For purchase of an HDB flat, the down payment remained at S\$200.

### Businesses:

- ▶ The cash grant was raised to S\$39,000 (S\$52,000 for spaces exceeding 200m<sup>2</sup>) for Central Area shophouses.
- ▶ For businesses operating in temporary structures, only alternative accommodation with rental concessions was provided.

## 1981 (December)

### Farmers:

- ▶ The compensation for improvements increased by 50% over the March 1981 rate.

### Residential Occupants:

- ▶ For a rental flat, the rental rebate was set at S\$33.33 per month for 3 years, up to S\$1,200 per family.
- ▶ A cash grant of S\$1,200 to families finding their own accommodation.
- ▶ The disturbance and transport allowance was raised to S\$2,000.
- ▶ The compensation for improvements increased by 50% over the March 1981 rate.

### Businesses:

- ▶ The cash grant was raised to S\$58,500 (S\$78,000 for spaces exceeding 200 m<sup>2</sup>) for Central Area shophouses.

## 1982

### Farmers:

- ▶ Ceilings on resettlement compensation for fruit trees were re-introduced in December 1982.

### Residential Occupants:

- ▶ Ceilings on resettlement compensation for fruit trees were re-introduced in December 1982.

## 1984

### Residential Occupants:

- ▶ Accelerated resettlement programme to clear remaining squatter areas.

## 1984

- ▶ Clearance commenced at Zhenghua, Serangoon, Pasir Ris and Jurong West.

## 1985

- ▶ Clearance started at Choa Chu Kang and Punggol.

1980s

## 1985

### Farmers:

- Compensation for improvements increased by 30%.
- A cash grant of S\$26,000; or priority allocation of HDB shops or workshops with a five-year rental concession, capped at S\$38,000.
- The disturbance and transport allowance was raised to S\$3,000 per family and S\$750 for a single-person household.

### Residential Occupants:

- Compensation for houses and other improvements increased by 30%.
- The disturbance and transport allowance was raised to S\$3,000 per family and S\$750 for a single-person household.
- Relaxation of rehousing rules.

### Businesses:

- The cash grant was raised to S\$76,000 (S\$101,500 for spaces exceeding 200 m<sup>2</sup>) for Central Area shophouses.
- A cash grant of S\$38,000 for shophouses outside the Central Area.

## 1987

- The URA built its last permanent resettlement centre (Cairnhill Place).
- Clearance commenced at Bukit Panjang and Sembawang.

## 1987

### Businesses:

- Cessation of direct allocation of HDB shops; only cash grant offered. Instead, affected shopkeepers were given a preferential tender margin for HDB shops.
- A cash grant of S\$26,000 extended to shops in temporary premises.

## 1988

### Farmers:

- Stricter compensation rules to prevent inflated claims; compensation for fruit trees based on a net planting area with a monetary ceiling per hectare.

### Residential Occupants:

- Stricter compensation rules to prevent inflated claims; compensation for fruit trees based on a net planting area with a monetary ceiling per hectare.

## 1995

- Relocation of factories in Woodlands for the development of a wafer fabrication park.

HAWKER CENTRE

WAFFER FAB PARK

1980s

1990s



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Saw Swee-Hock, *The Population of Singapore*, 3rd edition (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2012), 29.
- <sup>2</sup> National Library Board, "Singapore Improvement Trust", [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_2016-03-14\\_142655.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_2016-03-14_142655.html)
- <sup>3</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1960* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1961), 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Colony of Singapore, *Report of The Housing Committee, 1947* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1948), 16.
- <sup>5</sup> "Better Houses Would Reduce Local Death Rate", *Malaya Tribune*, 24 June 1938.
- <sup>6</sup> The colonial government enacted the Control of Rent Ordinance in 1947. It restricted a landlord's right to increase rents, which were pegged to 1939 levels, or remove a tenant from a rent-controlled property. This was to protect tenants from being evicted by the landlords in view of severe housing shortage after the war. The Control of Rent Act was finally repealed in Singapore in 2001 as the housing shortage was fully resolved with more than 80% of the population living in public housing.
- <sup>7</sup> The elected City Council (or Municipal Commission before 1951) was the administrative council for the urban areas of Singapore and was responsible for the provision of water, electricity, gas, roads, bridges and street lighting. It was dissolved in 1959 when Singapore became self-governing.
- <sup>8</sup> National Library Board, "Land Clearance and Resettlement Party is Formed: 28 August 1955", <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/02a39a09-3316-441d-99e8-b21cf163dabb>
- <sup>9</sup> Aline K. Wong and Stephen H.K. Yeh, *Housing a Nation—25 Years of Public Housing in Singapore* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1985), 306.
- <sup>10</sup> Joy Fang, "Mr Lee Saw to the Greening of Singapore", *My Paper*, 5 November 2012.
- <sup>11</sup> The term "crown land" was used during the period when Singapore was a British Crown Colony, while the term "state land" was used when Singapore became an internally self-governing, and later fully independent state.
- <sup>12</sup> Wong and Yeh, *Housing a Nation*, 307.
- <sup>13</sup> Lim Hoon Yong, "Interview by CLC", Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, 10 March 2014, transcript, accession number CLC/020/2014/003.
- <sup>14</sup> Sun Sheng Han, "Global City Making In Singapore: A Real Estate Perspective", *Progress in Planning* 64 (2005): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2005.01.001>
- <sup>15</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 2016/2017—Key Statistics* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 2017), 3, <http://www10.hdb.gov.sg/ebook/AR2017/key-statistics.html>
- <sup>16</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1960* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1961), 5.
- <sup>17</sup> Lim, CLC interview.
- <sup>18</sup> A "resettlement area" was a rural area created to relocate farmers so that they could continue with farming activities.
- <sup>19</sup> Parliament of Singapore, "Resettlement of Pig Farmers from Kranji to Punggol (Steps to Expedite)", Singapore Parliamentary Reports Vol. 37, Col. 14, 27 May 1977, [https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=013\\_19770527\\_S0006\\_T0033](https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=013_19770527_S0006_T0033)
- <sup>20</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1974/75* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1975), 138.
- <sup>21</sup> Some of the larger pig farm operators later moved into other businesses such as grocery and supermarkets. For example, Cheng Siong started a chain of Sheng Siong supermarkets while Tan Chye Huat opened Prime supermarkets.
- <sup>22</sup> Lim Kim San, "Oral History Interview with Lim Kim San", Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 29 March 1985, transcript, accession number 000526, disc number 11.
- <sup>23</sup> "Change After Change After Change", *The Straits Times*, 21 April 1985, 2.
- <sup>24</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1984/85* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1985); *Annual Report 1985/86* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1986); *Annual Report 1986/87* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1987); *Annual Report 1987/88* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1988), 78.
- <sup>25</sup> Parliament of Singapore, "Hawker Licences for Resettled Farmers", Singapore Parliamentary Reports Vol. 39, Col. 511, 11 December 1979, [https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=006\\_19791211\\_S0005\\_T0020](https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=006_19791211_S0005_T0020)
- <sup>26</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1972* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1972), 83.
- <sup>27</sup> The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority took over the management of the centre in January 2018.
- <sup>28</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1980/81* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1981), 25.
- <sup>29</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1983/84* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1984), 61.
- <sup>30</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, "Speech at the Opening of the Upper Pierce Reservoir", 27 February 1977.
- <sup>31</sup> Goh Choon Ngwen, "Interview by CLC", Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, 24 July 2017, transcript, accession number CLC/041/2017/001.
- <sup>32</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1987/88* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1988), s79.
- <sup>33</sup> Ngiam Tong Hai, "Target: No More Squatters by 1990", *The Straits Times*, 20 October 1984.
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- <sup>35</sup> Yeo Eng Chuan, "Interview by CLC", Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, 24 July 2017, transcript, accession number CLC/041/2017/001.
- <sup>36</sup> S.G. Burlock, *Report of the Land Clearance and Resettlement Working Party* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1956), 3.
- <sup>37</sup> As defined by the SIT, the term "squatters" applied to families who lived in buildings of temporary construction, mainly of timber walls and nipah palm roofs erected on land owned by some other person, and with no greater security than a monthly tenancy from the owner.
- <sup>38</sup> Singapore Improvement Trust, *Annual Report 1957* (Singapore: Singapore Improvement Trust, 1957), 6.
- <sup>39</sup> Singapore Improvement Trust, *Annual Report 1955* (Singapore: Singapore Improvement Trust, 1955), 27.
- <sup>40</sup> Singapore Improvement Trust, *Annual Report 1954* (Singapore: Singapore Improvement Trust, 1954), 15.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 13.
- <sup>42</sup> The Working Party comprised S.G. Burlock (Acting Chairman of the Rural Board) as its chairman and five members, namely J.M. Fraser (Manager of the SIT), Hon Sui Sen (Deputy Commissioner of Lands), R.I. Watson (City Architect representing the City Council), K.A. Brundle (Assistant Director of Public Works) and Mak Pak See (Chairman of the Singapore Attap Dwellers Association).
- <sup>43</sup> Burlock, *Report of the Land Clearance*, 4.
- <sup>44</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1969* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1969), 106.
- <sup>45</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1961* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1961), 18.
- <sup>46</sup> Housing & Development Board, *First Decade in Public Housing, 1960–69* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1970), 10.
- <sup>47</sup> "Homes for 60,000 People", *The Straits Times*, 8 December 1960, 4.
- <sup>48</sup> Wong and Yeh, *Housing a Nation*, 3.
- <sup>49</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1963* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1963), 22.

- <sup>50</sup> Then Minister for National Development E.W. Barker explained that the practice of providing two acres of farmland to each resettled farmer was the best that the government could do to distribute limited farmland equally amongst the dispossessed farmers. Moreover, the majority of farmers practised mixed farming, and very few farms occupied more than five acres. Parliament of Singapore, "Resettlement Policy in Choa Chu Kang (Fragmentation of Farm Lands)", Singapore Parliamentary Reports Vol. 25, Col. 538, 12 December 1966, [https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=013\\_19661212\\_S0006\\_T0017](https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=013_19661212_S0006_T0017)
- <sup>51</sup> Wong and Yeh, *Housing a Nation*, 309–10.
- <sup>52</sup> The three-room improved HDB flat was a type of flat built by the HDB in the 1960s and 1970s, with a built-up area of 60 m<sup>2</sup>, with separate bath and toilet cubicles. Earlier flats had the bathroom and the toilet in the same cubicle.
- <sup>53</sup> Out of a total of 2,642 farmers cleared between 1971 to 1978, 71% opted for a free flat, 20% were allocated with farmland and 9% found their own accommodation with the help of cash grants. Wong and Yeh, *Housing a Nation*, 312.
- <sup>54</sup> A family nucleus was defined by the HDB as a family comprising at least two persons, of which the applicant had to be a Singapore citizen, e.g. husband and wife, parent and child, two adult siblings, etc.
- <sup>55</sup> Lim Kim San, Oral History Interview.
- <sup>56</sup> Parliament of Singapore, "Resettlement of Small Businessmen (Alternative Premises)", Singapore Parliamentary Reports Vol. 42, Cols. 739–740, 14 March 1983, [https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=008\\_19830314\\_S0006\\_T0013](https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=008_19830314_S0006_T0013)
- <sup>57</sup> Alan Choe, "The Early Years of Nation-Building: Reflections on Singapore's Urban History", in *50 Years of Urban Planning in Singapore*, ed. Chye Kiang Heng (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2016), 13.
- <sup>58</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1968* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1968), 87.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., 89.
- <sup>60</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1966* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1966), 72.
- <sup>61</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1983/84*, 7.
- <sup>62</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1977/78* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1978), 51.
- <sup>63</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1970* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1970), 112.
- <sup>64</sup> Parliament of Singapore, "Budget, Ministry of National Development", Singapore Parliamentary Reports Vol. 49 Cols. 568–587, 19 March 1987, [https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=015\\_19870319\\_S0002\\_T0003](https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=015_19870319_S0002_T0003)
- <sup>65</sup> Jurong Town Corporation, *Annual Report 1979/80* (Singapore: Jurong Town Corporation, 1980), 8.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>67</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1980/81*, 56.
- <sup>68</sup> Aline K. Wong and Stephen H.K. Yeh, "Resettling Soon Hock Village—A Longitudinal Study", in *Housing A Nation—25 Years of Public Housing in Singapore* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1985).
- <sup>69</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1975/76* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1976), 57.
- <sup>70</sup> Lim, CLC interview.
- <sup>71</sup> Parliament of Singapore, "Sale of Shops and Changes to Resettlement Policy Affecting Resettled Shopkeepers", Singapore Parliamentary Reports Vol. 49, Col. 1358, 28 July 1987, [https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=022\\_19870728\\_S0004\\_T0016](https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=022_19870728_S0004_T0016)
- <sup>72</sup> Jurong Town Corporation, *Annual Report 1995/96* (Singapore: Jurong Town Corporation, 1996), 19.
- <sup>73</sup> Jurong Town Corporation, *Annual Report 1996/97* (Singapore: Jurong Town Corporation, 1997), 34.
- <sup>74</sup> Wong and Yeh, *Housing a Nation*, 307.
- <sup>75</sup> Lim, CLC interview.

- <sup>76</sup> Between 1955 and 1965, Singapore had partial self-government and a majority-elected Legislative Assembly, members of which were known as "assemblymen".
- <sup>77</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1965* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1965), 84.
- <sup>78</sup> Alan Choe, "Oral History Interview with Choe, Alan Fook Cheong", Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 1 August 1997, transcript, accession number 001891, reel number 7.
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- <sup>80</sup> Goh, CLC interview.
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- <sup>82</sup> Warren Fernandez, *Our Homes: Fifty Years of Housing a Nation* (Singapore: Straits Times Press, 2011), 59.
- <sup>83</sup> Lim Kim San, Oral History Interview.
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- <sup>85</sup> Alvin Chua, *Toa Payoh Heritage Trail* (Singapore: National Heritage Board, 2014), 20.
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- <sup>88</sup> For examples, see Parliament of Singapore, "Resettlement of Farmers Occupying State Lands", Singapore Parliamentary Reports Vol. 25, Cols. 566–567, 12 December 1966, [https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=024\\_19661212\\_S0005\\_T0009](https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=024_19661212_S0005_T0009)
- <sup>89</sup> Lim, CLC interview.
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- <sup>92</sup> Ngiam Tong Tau, "Oral History Interview with Dr Ngiam Tong Tau", Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 13 February 2007, transcript, accession number 003117, disc number 3.
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- <sup>94</sup> *Housing & Development Board, Annual Report 1988/89* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1989), 68–9.
- <sup>95</sup> Yeo, CLC interview.
- <sup>96</sup> Goh, CLC interview.
- <sup>97</sup> National Library Board, "Communal Riots of 1964", [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_45\\_2005-01-06.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_45_2005-01-06.html)
- <sup>98</sup> The council's main function is to examine all legislation in Singapore to ensure they do not discriminate against any racial or religious community.
- <sup>99</sup> Othman Wok, "Oral History Interview with Othman Wok", Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 7 May 1987, transcript, accession number 000774, reel number 4.
- <sup>100</sup> Alan Choe, "CLC Collection", Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 31 July 2013, transcript, accession number E000570.
- <sup>101</sup> The People's Association is a statutory board overseeing grassroots organisations and activities.
- <sup>102</sup> Soh Teow Seng, "Oral History Interview with Soh Teow Seng", Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, 8 August 1984, accession number 000454, reel number 7.
- <sup>103</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1963*, 2.
- <sup>104</sup> Housing & Development Board, *Annual Report 1967* (Singapore: Housing & Development Board, 1967), 73; Singapore Planning Department, *Master Plan First Review: Report of Survey* (Singapore: Planning Department, Ministry of National Development, 1965), 15.
- <sup>105</sup> Alan Choe, "Interview by CLC", Centre for Liveable Cities, Ministry of National Development, 31 July 2013, transcript, accession number CLC/015/2013/003.
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- <sup>113</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>114</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Annual Report 1980/81* (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority, 1981), 5.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>116</sup> Wong and Yeh, *Housing a Nation*, 313.
- <sup>117</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Annual Report 1978/79* (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority, 1979), 40.
- <sup>118</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Chronicle of Sale Sites* (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority, 1983), 65.
- <sup>119</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, *Annual Report 1974/75* (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority, 1975), 33.
- <sup>120</sup> Industrial premises at the Kallang Avenue Industrial Centre were sold on a 30-year lease instead of the usual short-term tenancy on rental, as industrial resettlement cases needed to invest in new machinery upon relocation and required security of tenure for continuous operation.
- <sup>121</sup> Compiled by the author from URA Annual Reports from 1968 to 2000.
- <sup>122</sup> Lee Hsien Loong, "National Day Rally 2015", Prime Minister's Office, 23 August 2015, <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/national-day-rally-2015>
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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

Clearance Cases Handled by the SIT and the HDB from 1957 to 1990

Year	Moved to rural Resettlement Areas	Rehoused in HDB accommodation*	Found own accommodation*	Cases cleared	Compensation paid (S\$)
Clearance Cases handled by the SIT					
1957	67	3	70	140	109,000
1958	146	50	107	303	317,000
1959	131	132	160	423	472,000
<b>Sub-total (1957-59)</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>898,000</b>
Clearance Cases handled by the HDB					
1960	132	45	207	384	330,000
1961	57	77	160	294	273,000
1962	198	342	277	817	883,000
1963	307	589	285	1,181	1,700,000
1964	150	2,584	909	3,643	3,200,000
1965	182	4,570	1,758	6,510	5,500,000
1966	266	4,158	1,594	6,018	5,100,000
1967	90	4,002	1,892	5,984	4,100,000
1968	123	4,063	1,677	5,863	3,100,000
1969	416	3,924	2,179	6,519	4,800,000
1970	277	3,922	1,926	6,125	4,100,000
1971	145	2,263	1,474	3,882	5,500,000
1972	235	2,668	1,157	4,060	9,200,000
1973/74	91	8,008	3,968	12,067	18,500,000
1974/75	16	7,062	3,902	10,980	20,800,000
1975/76	17	7,447	4,547	12,011	43,900,000

Year	Moved to rural Resettlement Areas	Rehoused in HDB accommodation*	Found own accommodation*	Cases cleared	Compensation paid (S\$)
1976/77	70	6,052	4,893	11,015	40,700,000
1977/78	84	8,137	6,797	15,018	54,200,000
1978/79	51	9,050	7,342	16,443	52,800,000
1979/80	48	10,300	7,704	18,052	94,900,000
1980/81	6	8,495	6,532	15,033	79,600,000
1981/82	-	7,357	5,308	12,665	102,700,000
1982/83	-	8,107	6,748	14,855	144,200,000
1983/84	-	10,216	7,652	17,868	200,770,000
1984/85	-	10,808	11,150	21,958	278,730,000
1985/86	-	7,080	11,117	18,197	214,040,000
1986/87	-	7,197	10,836	18,003	392,500,000
1987/88	-	3,689	5,430	9,119	333,700,000
1988/89	-	1,495	1,565	3,060	215,800,000
1989/90	-	744	1,363	2,107	56,400,000
1990/91	-	1,260	1,891	3,151	165,800,000
<b>Sub-total (1960-90)</b>	<b>2,961</b>	<b>155,711</b>	<b>124,240</b>	<b>282,912</b>	<b>2,557,826,000</b>
<b>Total (1957-90)</b>	<b>3,305</b>	<b>155,896</b>	<b>124,577</b>	<b>283,778</b>	<b>2,558,724,000</b>

Source: Housing & Development Board, Annual Reports, various years.

Notes:

\* Accommodation refers to residential, industrial and commercial accommodation.

\* From 1973 onwards, the HDB revised its reporting year from January-December to April-March.

## APPENDIX 2

Clearance Cases in the Central Area from 1968 to 1999

Year	Number of Clearance Cases	Year	Number of Clearance Cases
1968	1,663	1984	1,844
1969	2,778	1985	2,343
1970	2,545	1986	1,483
1971	941	1987	1,044
1972	313	1988	901*
1973	3,455	1989	1,027
1974	2,119	1990	422
1975	2,254	1991	626
1976	2,012	1992	721
1977	2,220*	1993	691
1978	2,230*	1994	846
1979	507	1995	247
1980	608	1996	6
1981	997	1997	1
1982	3,100	1998	31
1983	2,445	1999	65
Total		42,485	

Source: Urban Redevelopment Authority, Annual Reports, various years.

Notes: Figures show total clearance cases in the Central Area handled by the URA and the HDB.

\* Figure estimated by the author.





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# RESETTLING COMMUNITIES: CREATING SPACE FOR NATION-BUILDING

When Singapore attained self-government in 1959 and subsequently independence in 1965, it was dotted with squatter settlements, backyard industries, street hawkers and rural farms. Overrun with congested slums, the city centre was in desperate need of renewal.

Over the next three decades, large-scale clearance and resettlement initiatives were carried out. The process was not without its challenges. While clearance and resettlement were carried out with a firm hand guided by clear and fair policies and processes, it was also tempered with due consideration for the impact on those displaced. The government provided resettlement benefits tailored for farmers, residential occupants and businesses, and offered a wide range of resettlement facilities. These resettlement policies and benefits were revised periodically to be kept up to date.

Successful clearance and resettlement enabled Singapore's physical and economic transformation, paving the way for the development of HDB new towns, industrial estates, infrastructure projects, and a rejuvenated city centre.

*"The conditions surrounding clearance and resettlement in Singapore in the early years were no easier than in many other countries, but the government demonstrated foresight and determination to stay the course."*

Alan Choe, Former General Manager, Urban Redevelopment Authority

