

Additional Info: Public Housing through the Decades

- 1960s Laying the Groundwork – When HDB was formed in 1960 it faced a housing crisis of epic proportions. But by the end of the decade, HDB had successfully housed 35% of the population.

To meet the urgent demand, housing designs were kept simple and functional, comprising slab blocks of 1-, 2- and 3-room flats with basic amenities such as piped water and electricity.

In 1964, the Home Ownership for the People Scheme was introduced to give citizens a greater stake in the country. The scheme was given a boost in 1968 when flat applicants were allowed to use the CPF funds to buy HDB flats.

- 1970s Growing Towns – HDB carved whole new towns to cater for the growing demand for HDB homes.

Public housing estates were planned and designed according to two basic principles:

- (i) optimise scarce land resources to meet long-term housing demand in terms of building high-rise high density public housing
- (ii) provide a total living environment with educational, social and community facilities in self-contained new towns

Toa Payoh was a pioneer new town designed with a town centre, parks, commercial and industrial areas, sports stadium and swimming complex. The same planning concept was applied to the development of Ang Mo Kio, Bedok and Clementi Towns. Towards the end of the 1970s, six more towns were developed, namely Yishun, Hougang, Jurong East and West, Tampines and Bukit Batok.

As the demand for HDB housing grew, HDB saw the opportunity to preserve extended family living with three new schemes – the Joint Balloting Scheme, the Mutual Exchange of Flats Scheme and the Reside with Parents/Married Children Scheme.

- 1980s Rapidly Developing Communities – By the 1980s, about 85% of the population lived in HDB homes and integrated towns had evolved into vibrant hubs of life and activity.

The key emphasis during this time was the provision of a quality living environment.

The precinct concept, evident in towns like Bishan and Pasir Ris, was developed to create a conducive social setting for community interaction and networking. Each HDB neighbourhood was sub-divided into several housing precincts, comprising 400 to 600 dwelling units. To meet recreational needs, facilities were located at the precinct centre and to facilitate community interaction, drop-off porches and precinct pavilions were provided.

The 1st prefabrication contract was awarded to build 15,000 flats in Yishun, Tampines and Hougang. Since then the technology has proven indispensable as it has reduced dependence on manual labour and increased site productivity.

1990s – This decade saw HDB creating quality living environments and building identities for precincts, neighbourhoods and towns. Landmark buildings, landscaping, open spaces and special architectural features were included to achieve a strong visual identity for towns such as Choa Chu Kang, Sembawang and Sengkang.

A key emphasis was the rejuvenation of older estates, to bring them to the standards of newer towns. Under the Estate Renewal Strategy, programmes such as the Main Upgrading, Interim Upgrading and Lift Upgrading were implemented. The Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme was also introduced to allow HDB to acquire older flats for redevelopment.

More choice and variety were provided with premium flats. HDB also encouraged private sector involvement in the development of public housing through the Design and Build Scheme where it engaged private sector consultants and contractors to design and build public housing.

2000 and Beyond – Public housing has entered a new phase, where there are different housing options to cater to the different segments of Singaporeans with different preferences and budgets. At the same time, sustainability is vital in ensuring quality homes of the future.

The Pinnacle@Duxton, HDB's 1st 50-storey development, and Treelodge@Punggol, HDB's 1st eco-precinct, Punggol Waterfront Housing and Dawson projects are landmark developments that combine stylish designs with environmentally-friendly features. New homes coming up under the Design, Build and Sell Scheme (DBSS) where the private developers helm the

entire housing development process – from land-bidding, to designing, to selling the flats - will give flat applicants more variety and choice.

HDB offers majority of new flats through the Build-To-Order system. At the same time, the housing needs of the elderly and the low-income are addressed through building of Studio Apartments and resumption of 2/3 room flats. Housing subsidies and policies keep home ownership within reach of the majority of Singaporeans and allow them to share in the asset appreciation of their HDB homes.

Looking further ahead, the Remaking Our Heartland plans will transform HDB towns and estates with exciting new concepts and ideas. Over the next few years these new ideas will unfold in Punggol, Yishun and Dawson estates. This urban regeneration of HDB towns and estates will constitute an integral part of our vision to promote Singapore as a nation of home owners, and to build a distinctive city, an endearing home for all.