Building with Nature

A foremost expert in developing waterways and coastal areas around the world, Dr Ronald Waterman gave a CLC lecture on the principles of “Building with Nature”. Here, he offers planners and developers key perspectives and strategies that champion the natural environment, while providing for economic growth and other community needs. Read more

Perspectives

In his lecture, Dr Waterman highlighted the potential in developing Singapore’s coastlines, on the mainland and on the islands. We asked participants who attended the talk to share some of their inspirations for uses of the coast. Here’s the editor’s choice for this issue.

“We can use the coast to:
* develop a Palm Jumeirah-style Disney Sea amusement park;
* promote houseboat living by building a Palm Jumeirah-style of docking facilities for the houseboats;
* create a new mode of public transport such as ferry terminals which can cater to Punggol, West Coast and similar coastal residents who can then take ferries to the downtown financial centre for work; we can also extend ferry services islandwide, with multiple ferry terminals located at places of interest;
* develop a new tourism facility such as submarine sightseeing or underwater observatories;
* build a sea water fish farm for commercial, educational and tourism purposes;
* build a Palm Jumeirah-style factory outlet shopping mall.”

Philip Ching Cua
General Manager
MLC Ventures

Bringing you Better Cities

The CLC e-newsletter has reached its 50th issue in February 2015! Reaching this milestone, our team has lined up a series of fresh content for keen watchers of city development. Renamed Better Cities, we will feature more interviews with global experts and CLC advisors. You can also read excerpts from our in-house studies on Singapore, and enjoy features on cities around the world. Tell us what you think of this new issue and what you’d like to see in future issues here.
Pulling in the Private Sector

Copenhagen is consistently ranked as one of the world’s top three most liveable cities. For Tina Saaby Madsen, Chief City Architect of Copenhagen, in addition to having a “life strategy” in getting people to “go outside”, yet another crucial component is in working with the private sector – from commercial developers to investors and private architects.

“There are a lot of different methods for getting into the dialogue with the private sector. In the last four, five years, we’ve been focusing on how we can have an earlier dialogue with different kinds of stakeholders,” she said.

Such dialogue usually takes the form of lectures, discussions and meetings at the city hall to discuss various political issues.

Ms Madsen said, “One of the things that we’re doing is that we go out and be a part of a lot of debates, making a lot of lectures, and having more public discussion about why we have those visions, why the politicians are saying they want a more liveable city, try to talk to them about the economic value of having this focus.”

The city of Copenhagen has found that such early dialogue is “a method of creating a better project from the beginning,” as can be seen from plans for social housing, where highlighting key regulations and discussing their viability have benefited planners as well as private sector social housing providers.

We interviewed Ms Madsen on the key factors in Copenhagen’s urban planning successes. Watch the full interview.

Gearing up for dry periods

The recent hot weather has resulted in parched grass and receding levels at water bodies across Singapore — but there is hope yet for this concrete jungle. Renowned urban planner Dr Herbert Dreiseitl suggests that in built-up Singapore, its buildings could do more to protect the country against the effects of climate change. The Director of Liveable Cities Lab suggests that buildings can include more green features at an earlier stage of the design process.

“One solution is to share spaces, and use mono-functional systems in a multifunctional way,” said Dr Dreiseitl. “This could be an area where you hold, filter and keep the water during a heavy downpour, but use it for another purpose during dry weather”. He gave the examples of Boston and Philadelphia, where some basketball courts and playgrounds have porous pavements to allow water seepage, water is stored beneath the ground surface or channelled to a storage tank. This however requires “engineers, architects and landscape architects to work together as early as possible, preferably as early as the design stage, to encompass all requirements, including water harvesting and reusing of water.” Another way to boost Singapore’s resilience is to introduce layers of green in buildings, instead of having just one green roof, he said.

“The traditional architectural mindset is to get rid of water as quickly as possible. Water was always seen as the enemy,” said Dr Dreiseitl. “This has started to change... Water is no longer the enemy, it is actually our friend.”

Read the full article here.

The Straits Times featured these suggestions as part of an interview with Herbert Dreiseitl at the C.L.C Lecture Series on “Mainstreaming the ABC Waters”, held on 27 February. Stay tuned to the lecture report, videos and transcripts of the lecture in the next issue of Better Cities.
City Planning for People

More cities today are taking a human-centric approach to urban planning. Central to that strategy is making a city pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly, says Jan Gehl and Birgitte Bundesen Svarre. Read their essay in page 52 of Urban Solutions Issue 6 here.

Success Factors for Transformational Cities

Not all cities are created equal. Some have an advantageous, pedestrian-friendly urban fabric retained from history, while others begin from a starting line of more motorist-centric infrastructure and urban sprawl. Some cities leverage on strong civic cultures that support space sharing, while others face strong anti-cycling sentiments. We share an infographic here in Urban Solutions Issue 6, showing the success factors that can propel a city towards being more bicyclist- and pedestrian-friendly.

Seoul Transport Vision 2030

Seoul’s bold new municipal vision seeks to shift the city’s heavy dependence on private cars to a more sustainable, shared, human-oriented paradigm, explains Dr Joonho Ko, Director of the Megacity Research Centre at the Seoul Institute. Read the essay in Urban Solutions Issue 6 here.

Singapore, Sustainable City

Last year, GDF Suez commissioned a video on Singapore, Sustainable City, as part of a series of stories on world cities. We lent our support, where CLC Executive Director Khoo Teng Chye gave an interview, alongside experts, corporations and NGOs. Watch the video here.