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SPEECH BY DR RICHARD HU, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND MINISTER FOR FINANCE, AT THE SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF  
ARCHITECTS (SIA) ANNUAL DINNER AT THE PADANG BALLROOM,  
WESTIN STAMFORD ON FRIDAY, 5 MARCH 1993 AT 7.00 PM

The last few years in Singapore have been good ones for the architecture profession. Not only were there many new projects from the private sector; the public sector too "privatised" quite a number of its projects, providing a wider base for architects in the private sector. Even SIA was commissioned to prepare several Development Guide Plans (DGPs). This year, SIA will again be commissioned to prepare one of two DGPs to be farmed out to the private sector.

Last year, the Housing and Development Board (HDB) also awarded two design-and-build contracts to the private sector on an experimental basis. It received good response from all quarters. Besides giving Singaporeans more choice in public housing, such projects will give our local professionals the opportunities to gain a wide range of experience and enhance their professionalism. Ministry of National Development (MND) has therefore decided that HDB will continue to let out about 10 per cent of its annual building programme in design-and-build contracts yearly.

MND also supports SIA's call to give architects more room to exercise their architectural creativity. In 1989, the planning system was simplified and Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) started to use Gross Floor Area (GFA) as one of the main mechanisms of planning control. With this approach, we leave it to the developers to make their own decisions on how much neutral areas they want in their buildings. If the provision of spaces like internal atria, balconies and public lobbies help to enhance the value and quality of developments, architects must persuade their clients to accept such designs, just as they would in recommending better quality finishes.

Nevertheless, the major challenge for architects is to

provide design solutions which satisfy not only the needs of their clients but also those of the end-users. I am aware that many of you feel that it is not easy to design, within the prevailing regulatory framework, buildings which are not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing.

I assure you that both URA and Building Control Division (BCD), our planning and building regulatory bodies, are mindful of the difficulties faced by architects. They continually review their guidelines and rules, seeking ways to provide more flexibility to the profession. They hold regular dialogues with the professionals in the related fields, and obtain valuable feedback. As a result of such feedback and discussions, URA recently conducted a comprehensive review of its development control guidelines for residential developments.

Tonight I am pleased to announce the introduction of two new initiatives, in housing forms and the sale of residential land.

#### **Low Density Housing**

I will touch on the changes in housing forms first. Henceforth, for low density housing, there will be two new housing forms. URA has termed these two new forms, "cluster housing" and "strata bungalows". I am aware that these two names are unusual, but, like their unusual names, they allow for some interesting housing forms.

Let me explain. In "cluster housing", developers will be able to build houses in non-standard forms instead of the uniform streetblocks we are now familiar with. The housing units can be linked in clusters allowing different permutations and layouts. Shared common facilities such as those found in condominiums can be included in such developments. Strata titles can be given to the units and used to define the extent of private and communal areas.

As for "strata bungalows", these will essentially be bungalows in condominium settings. Developers can build a number

of bungalows within large compounds, providing shared common recreational facilities such as tennis courts and swimming pools and integrated open spaces. "Strata bungalows" will also use strata titles to define private and communal areas.

With these two new forms, developers will be able to offer Singaporeans a wider variety of housing types to choose from. It will also give architects more room to exercise their design creativity.

### **Medium and High Density Housing**

URA has also reviewed the spacing and setback standards for medium and high density residential developments. Developers can now use less stringent building spacing and setback standards to build medium and high density housing. By allowing buildings to be closer together and more building coverage of a site, there will be more flexibility in layout design. Open spaces can also be better integrated to provide better communal facilities.

### **Sale Sites at Kew Drive and Woodlands**

Next, the changes in the method of selling residential land. We will sell some land in small plots. Land for bungalows will be sold in individual plots; those meant for semi-detached houses in pairs; and plots ear-marked for terrace houses in streetblocks. This will allow individuals and small developers to participate in the public tender.

Under the scheme, Government will plan the layout of the housing estate and provide the necessary infrastructure such as roads, sewage and other services. The successful tenderers just need to build their houses on the plots they buy.

We will try this method of sale in two residential sites at Kew Drive and Woodlands. The pilot sales in Woodlands, managed by HDB, will be offered later this month. URA will start selling sites at Kew Drive sometime in June this year.

The new scheme will foster the development of more varied

designs in the two housing estates. Each individual developer and architect will bring his own idea to the development. Upon completion, each estate will evolve its unique character.

To meet Singaporeans' aspirations in owning landed properties, URA and HDB have, in the last two years, released sites at Sixth Avenue, Gentle Road, Serangoon and Pasir Ris for such developments. This year (1993), other than Kew Drive and Woodlands, sites at University Road, Holland Grove Drive, Cashew Road, Hougang Avenue 2 and Jurong West Avenue 5 will also be tendered out for landed property development. Together with the earlier sale sites, these will generate a total of 1,560 dwelling units. For 1994 and 1995, sites will be released for the development of another 2,300 units of landed properties located at various locations.

In fact, every year, about 30-40 per cent of the dwelling units generated on State land sold to private developers will be landed properties. This amounts to some 1,000 units of landed properties a year.

### Conclusion

Over the next few days, URA and HDB will release details of the new initiatives. The new guidelines come into immediate effect, but we still welcome any feedback you may have on both these schemes.

I am sure that these new initiatives will give all architects new opportunities and challenge their creativity. In the process, you will no doubt garner valuable experience and new skills, both of which will enable our architects to capitalise on the new opportunities that are opening up in the regional markets.

The SIA plays an important role in upgrading our local architects' professionalism. It must take the lead to help our architects make the necessary adjustments to meet the new expectations and requirements arising from changes both in Singapore and outside.

As members of SIA, you hold the key to the profession's future growth. I am confident that many of you will make great inroads in these new markets. On our part, I assure you that the Government will continue to facilitate the profession's growth in whatever way possible.

I wish all of you here a pleasant evening, and SIA, another good year.

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