SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW,

AT THE 13TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF SIM SAN LOKE

HUP ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, AT KEONG SAIK ROAD,

ON SATURDAY, 11 DECEMBER 1976

New high-rises have sprouted around Keong Saik Road. We are rebuilding the old city. In spite of these new buildings, the population in the central area has been decreasing. Most of them are office blocks, with banks and shipping in the podium floors. In the last 17 years, many young people have moved out to set up their own homes in the new towns. So we have had to reduce 14 central area constituencies into eight.

The reason why few residential high-rises have been built is the higher land prices. In the last 10 years, only about 16,000 units have been built by HDB and about 1,700 units by the private sector under URA sales, and another 500 units on private land.

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Unless this trend is reversed, in another 10 years, the present eight constituencies may be reduced to two. This should not happen, for if it does, we will have a city which is used only from 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. At night, there will be no life in the city.

To prevent this, some tough decisions have to be made. First, that land which is presently used for residential purposes should remain zoned as residential. There can be a few exceptions. Second, that all green spaces for recreation will be kept green, like Pearl's Hill, Fort Canning Central Park, Hong Lim Park. Around them we shall build residential high-rises with offices and shopping on the podium blocks. However, we must lower the price of flats in the city centre so that they cost not much more than in the new towns. At present, it costs $11,800 for a 3-room flat in Toa Payoh and $17,500 for Tanjong Pagar Plaza. We are considering the building of more HDB 4 and 5-room flats, and HUDC flats at prices not much more than those outside the city. HDB and HUDC may have to deliberately subsidise the land price in order to do this.

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Amenities for sports like table tennis, squash, netball, badminton and basketball, will be built in or near the high-rises. Swimming pools and gardens, though on a small scale, will be part of the central city housing. Car parking, at present $60 per month for covered parking in the city, may be

reduced for residents to be more like the $15 per month charged for uncovered parking in the new towns.

There is considerable discussion and planning on how to keep the population in the central city area. We should have a city centre most of whose parks, shops and restaurants will be used beyond office hours. There will have to be a balance between expensive middle income and low income housing. For instance, on the Marina land being reclaimed in front of Telok Ayer Basin, most will have to be high quality residences to match the high quality buildings already along Shenton Way and Collyer Quay.

But without the lower middle income and low cost housing for the lower paid workers, there will not be the social relationships that naturally exist in the new towns with their mix of HUDC, 5-room point blocks, 4 rooms, 3 rooms, and so on.

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Five senior Ministers have remained to look after their city constituencies now expanded -- Goh Keng Swee, Toh Chin Chye, Rajaratnam, Ong Pang Boon and myself. We do not intend to let the population drift away from the city centre because of the high price of land. It would be wasteful to have such a city. We must retain that unique feature of the Singapore that we

have known for so long, a city bustling with life from the crack of dawn to past midnight, one which throbs with life and vitality.

So we shall have more areas like Tanjong Pagar Plaza, with a swimming pool (Yan Kit) nearby, a garden and green space (like Duxton Plain Parkway) and a community centre (Tanjong Pagar). Perhaps we have learnt how to improve on this.

After 4½ years of resettlement, demolition, rebuilding, Tanjong Pagar Plaza has about the same number of families, but all better housed in healthier surroundings. Those who reside in them will have all the amenities of a Queenstown, but with the advantage of being able to walk to school or walk to office, if they like to, or use their car if they have parking space in the office, or a wife to drive the car away, for they are already inside the ALS.

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