

---

March 28, 2006

A 30m-tall 'eagle's nest' in Marina Bay?

Tree-like structure aims to draw birds: It's among local group's ideas for new parks

By Daryl Loo

A 30M-TALL 'eagle's nest' perched at the tip of Marina Bay could be the highest point of the proposed Gardens by the Bay - and a talking-point for nature lovers worldwide.

The wooden structure, to be built to look like a tall tree, would attract wild birds to roost upon it.

Ideas for gardens by the bay

The gardens will have other unique attractions too if the 'eagle's nest' group has its way.

The group of 30 local architects, landscape designers, planners and nature lovers, meeting at a workshop, also suggested:

A conservatory built to resemble a natural hill,

A garden where newlyweds can plant their own trees, and

A row of fresh- and sea-water fountains along the new Marina Barrage.

National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan, on hearing about the workshop, said he welcomed the initiative, and asked the National Parks Board (NParks) to take note of the ideas.

Veteran architect Tay Kheng Soon, a leading figure in the group, said: 'We were inspired by the idea of these parks in the city and wanted to make sure Singaporeans' voices are heard.'

NParks has plans for three gardens: a 54ha garden at Marina South behind the upcoming integrated resort, a 30ha water-themed park in Marina East, and a 10ha park lining the waterfront in Marina Centre. They are expected to be ready by 2010.

So far, some 170 companies from 24 countries have expressed interest in the international competition to design the gardens, and 70 entries have been submitted to NParks.

The workshop group - which is not taking part in the competition - has built a cardboard model based on its ideas.

The model, about the size of a table-tennis table, and concept sketches for the various ideas will be displayed for the next two weeks at the Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA) office at 79B Neil Road, along with a logbook where members of the public can jot down their own suggestions.

The group will hold another discussion, open to the public, at the SIA's office at 7pm on Friday.

At the Marina Centre park, it wants a series of clubhouses - for watersports, gymnasiums, and beach activities.

For the park in Marina East, it wants most of the existing forest preserved - to keep the wildlife there. Dr Ho Hua Chew, chairman of the Nature Society's conservation committee and a workshop participant, said 74 species of birds have been recorded in the area.

For the centrepiece 54ha Marina South park, which NParks has envisioned as a flower-themed garden, the group wants a conservatory within a man-made hill instead of one encased in glass.

It will function as a vantage point from which visitors can view the surroundings, with rare plants exhibited in its interior. A skylight from the peak will provide the needed sunlight.

Landscape designer Richard Tan of Envirospace Consultants said: 'Singapore already has so much sun, so we don't need a typical glasshouse type of conservatory. And having a green hill will actually keep the surroundings cool.'

Architect Wee Chwee Heng wants fountains on the Marina Barrage - cutting across the Marina Bay, with a reservoir on one side and the open sea on the other. Fountains on one side of the barrage will shoot up fresh water and on the other side, seawater.

'It will be something fantastic and memorable for visitors,' he said.

[darylloo@sph.com.sg](mailto:darylloo@sph.com.sg)