

Singapore's Front Garden

Nature | Culture | The City

A workshop was held at the Singapore Institute of Architects (24–26 Mar) to study the proposed gardens at Marina Bay.

Everyone who participated was inspired by the bold decision to create Singapore's Central Park in the heart of the city.

Architects, Landscape Designers, Nature lovers and park users came together to generate and contribute ideas and perceptions from their love of Nature and the City.

The process was, for all participants, invigorating and enlightening. Through the meeting of minds and spirit, many new ideas came about. It was an experience in creating collective intelligence.

The workshop aims to stimulate wider interest and deeper appreciation of this important national project. A publication documenting this workshop will be produced soon.

Front Garden

We see this project as Singapore's 'front garden' – a place of national pride, which talks about who we are in the region and the wider world. It is a place for all walks of life. A site for family gatherings, cultural events and enjoyment; a place to welcome and interact with our neighbours and the outside world. Three strong themes, **nature, culture and the city**, are expressed here on our '**front garden**'.

Nature

Our Tropical City is best portrayed by the presence of thriving vegetation and even fauna. These have emerged on this reclaimed land, testifying to the tenacity and vigour of our natural heritage. These give Singapore the startling option of having a regenerated tropical forest in the heart of the city that we contrast to dramatic advantage. We propose:

1. Retaining some of the ecologically rich areas, while opening them to public exploration and enjoyment through nature trails, jogging paths, lookout posts, etc.
2. Capitalising on dramatic 'view corridors' and video / photo opportunities showing the dramatic contrasts of dense tropical vegetation, wild birds and small animals against the modern city skyline.
3. Developing eco-corridors and 'flyways' (e.g. along Kallang River park connectors) to enrich the park's bio-diversity by linking to East Coast Park and the Central Water Catchment Area.
4. Showcase green technologies in a highly energy-efficient, 'zero emissions' park design (e.g. renewable energy like solar panels and bio-mass digesters to produce gas lights for the park).

Culture

Given our shared culture, climate and ecology, these gardens are an opportunity to embrace and connect to the cultural richness of our regional neighbours and showcase their natural and cultural richness in ASEAN solidarity.

1. Build a Southeast Asian ethnographical museum within the park, to be complemented by the botanical display of regional flora in the gardens. The “temperate” conservatory can also focus on a permanent collection of tropical highland plants, apart from other temporary displays from further away.
2. Asian culture is intimately connected with plants and trees, which serve many useful and symbolic functions. The arrangement and display of these can be used to tell a story about our regional Asian cultural heritage, e.g. rice terraces, groves of banyan trees, etc. through these, we reconnect educationally and experientially our new generations to their roots in a life close to the land.

The City

This Garden and Park must be a park that welcomes locals and visitors from all strata of society. The people, life and energy of the city must infuse the park, making it a vital civic space for all.

1. Create a fun-filled children’s play garden, with ‘dry’ water fountains, pools and slides, as well as mazes and other areas for fun and games.
2. Encourage families to plant trees in a family forest to commemorate their families.
3. Build a venue for wedding ceremonies and dinners, giving people the option of using the venue to signify their love of each other, family and **nation** on their wedding day.
4. Re-establish the Satay Club at Marina Bay, with a prime waterside location for Singaporeans to enjoy affordable food in a spectacular outdoor setting.
5. Create a large civic lawn for free expression and spontaneous and multi-purpose activities, to encourage people to use the park for football games, picnics and other activities. Ball room dancing!