



INTERVIEW

IN CONVERSATION WITH  
**CHEE HONG TAT**

# Planning for Tomorrow: Singapore's Blueprint to Stay Liveable, Agile and Pro-Enterprise

**Chee Hong Tat, Singapore's Minister for National Development, shares how Singapore is adapting to emerging opportunities in urban planning and the built environment sector.**



| *Image: Ministry of National Development*



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**In recent years, we have seen how cities are responding to changing live-work-play patterns brought about by new lifestyle aspirations and technological advancements. How is Singapore ensuring that its precincts and districts react to these trends so that the city remains liveable and loveable?**

Singapore has three key strategies. First, we plan our city to be flexible, encouraging mixed-use developments that can meet the needs of our people. As work and lifestyles become more diverse, our planning approach has evolved from strict zoning based on specific uses to building well-connected districts where homes, jobs and leisure are in close proximity. For example, we have brought opportunities closer to where people live by adding a wider mix of activities and uses to our Downtown through an updated Central Business District Incentive Scheme and by developing decentralised regional centres such as the Jurong Lake District. In this way, our people benefit from reduced commuting times, and our city is able to cater to new ways of living and working while remaining connected and accessible.

Second, we design precincts to be people-centric, to support residents of all ages and mobility abilities with everyday amenities, public transport, green spaces, and community facilities, all within easy reach. Beyond physical infrastructure, we also place strong emphasis on designing and activating public spaces that foster identity and reflect local character. For instance, Singapore's Identity Corridors, introduced in 2022, serve as community and active mobility spines that connect heritage sites, local businesses, and community activities within precincts. These efforts help to foster a strong sense of place and belonging, ensuring that even as our city evolves, it continues to feel familiar and meaningful to residents.



Singapore also works with the community to enliven public spaces in neighbourhoods through the Lively Places Fund.  
*Image: Urban Redevelopment Authority and Chee Boon Pin*

Third, we leverage technology and sustainability to future-proof our city while improving quality of life. In line with our Smart Nation and sustainability agendas, we have been deploying digital tools, data and smart systems to enhance urban services, environmental performance, and convenience at the precinct level. For example, we carry out environmental modelling and wind simulations for new districts. The findings from these simulations enable us to better design high, mid, and low-rise zones to create wind corridors that can cool streets and public spaces more effectively.

Together, these strategies reflect our belief that a successful city must go beyond functionality—it must be a place that people feel connected to and are proud to call home.

**The Master Plan 2025 translates the city’s collective vision of shaping a more liveable, inclusive and endearing home into actionable land use strategies. What are some key insights and priorities that emerged from the consultation process and how did they shape the Master Plan?**

Singapore takes a long-term, integrated approach to land use planning, balancing immediate needs with those of future generations. At the highest level, Singapore’s Long-Term Plan sets out a 50-year vision for our development, while the Master Plan, reviewed every five years, translates our vision into detailed plans for the next 10 to 15 years.

## Engagement does not end here and we will continue to work closely with Singaporeans as we implement the Master Plan.

We carry out each Master Plan review with residents, businesses and local communities to ensure our plans are grounded and responsive to the needs of Singaporeans. For example, for the Master Plan 2025, our planning agency, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, engaged close to 220,000 people over two years through workshops, dialogues, focus group discussions and surveys—gathering ideas and feedback on how we can shape a more liveable, inclusive and endearing city for the future. Following these engagements, a Draft Master Plan was exhibited publicly at 15 locations around the city before it was finalised.

The feedback we received has resulted in the Master Plan and its four key themes:

- a. **Shaping a Happy, Healthy City**—Singaporeans continue to prioritise quality housing and liveable environments. To meet these aspirations, we will ensure a strong pipeline of homes that are located near transport nodes, jobs, amenities and recreational spaces to support well-being and social connections.
- b. **Enabling Sustainable Growth**—To remain a key global and regional hub, we are strengthening our air, sea and land gateways while developing new business nodes and rejuvenating existing ones such as the Woodlands Regional Centre and Bishan Town Centre.
- c. **Strengthening Urban Resilience**—With climate change bringing higher temperatures and more intense rainfall, we are bolstering the resilience of our built environment through climate-responsive design, coastal protection and innovative land use solutions, including underground developments.
- d. **Stewarding Nature and Heritage**—Singaporeans value our green spaces and heritage. We will develop more than 25 new parks and over 50 km of park connectors by 2030, while conserving buildings of historical significance. We will continue to carefully balance our growth and development with environmental and heritage considerations.

Importantly, engagement does not end here and we will continue to work closely with Singaporeans as we implement these plans.

### **Aspirations such as homeownership remain a top priority in Singapore. What are Singapore's key housing strategies to ensure that the city can continue to provide quality homes in vibrant towns for current and future generations of Singaporeans?**

The homeownership rate in Singapore is more than 90%, one of the highest in the world. It remains a cornerstone of Singapore's social compact. Our approach focuses on ensuring homes are accessible, affordable and liveable.

First, we maintain a strong pipeline of both public and private housing. For example, in 2025, we launched about 20,000 public housing flats for sale, and committed to building at least 55,000 flats between 2025 and 2027, with the capacity to increase our supply as needed.

Second, besides accessibility, we make sure our public housing flats remain affordable to meet the homeownership aspirations of Singaporeans. Through significant market discounts and housing grants, nine in 10 first-time buyers have been able to service their Housing & Development Board housing loans using their Central Provident Fund savings (the Central Provident Fund is our national social security savings scheme), with little to no cash outlay.

Third, we are placing greater emphasis on the quality of our living spaces, and on sustainability, when planning for new towns. For example, one of our new estates, Tengah, is designed as a lush evergreen town with car-lite infrastructure, and common spaces spread across the town to encourage community bonding through sports, fitness and play.

And as our towns and public housing flats age, we will continue to keep them vibrant and liveable through a suite of upgrading programmes such as the Home Improvement Programme and Neighbourhood Renewal Programme, which provide infrastructural improvements both within and outside the flat.



Tengah is designed as a lush evergreen town with car-lite infrastructure, and common spaces spread across the town.  
*Image: Housing & Development Board*

## Given Singapore's ageing population, how is the government refining its housing policies to meet evolving needs?

As Singapore's population ages, we are adapting our housing policies to support seniors with different needs and preferences.

For those who wish to right-size, there are public housing flats with shorter leases that better match seniors' needs. We also provide the Silver Housing Bonus, a cash bonus for eligible seniors who right-size their public housing flat to supplement their retirement savings. For those who prefer more integrated living arrangements, we offer Community Care Apartments that combine senior-friendly housing with on-site care services and shared amenities.

Our seniors have also expressed a preference to age in place, in familiar neighbourhoods and within their existing communities. We are therefore establishing Age Well Neighbourhoods, where we bring together healthcare, community care and social support within the community. At the same time, we enhance the built environment with more senior-friendly features to make daily living safer and more convenient.



The first Community Care Apartments project, Harmony Village @ Bukit Batok, was completed in 2024.  
Image: Housing & Development Board

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In addition, we support seniors in making their homes safer through subsidised improvements, such as the installation of hand rails, anti-slip tiles and ramps, under the Enhancement for Active Seniors programme which is offered to both public and private residential properties.

Seniors can also unlock the value of their public housing flats through the Lease Buyback Scheme, where they sell part of their remaining lease back to the government to receive a stream of income in their retirement years.

Taken together, these efforts ensure that seniors are supported at every stage of ageing, with housing options that remain accessible, flexible and responsive to their needs.

### **As Singapore continues to transform its urban landscape, what considerations and guiding principles will help the city remain adaptable to future challenges?**

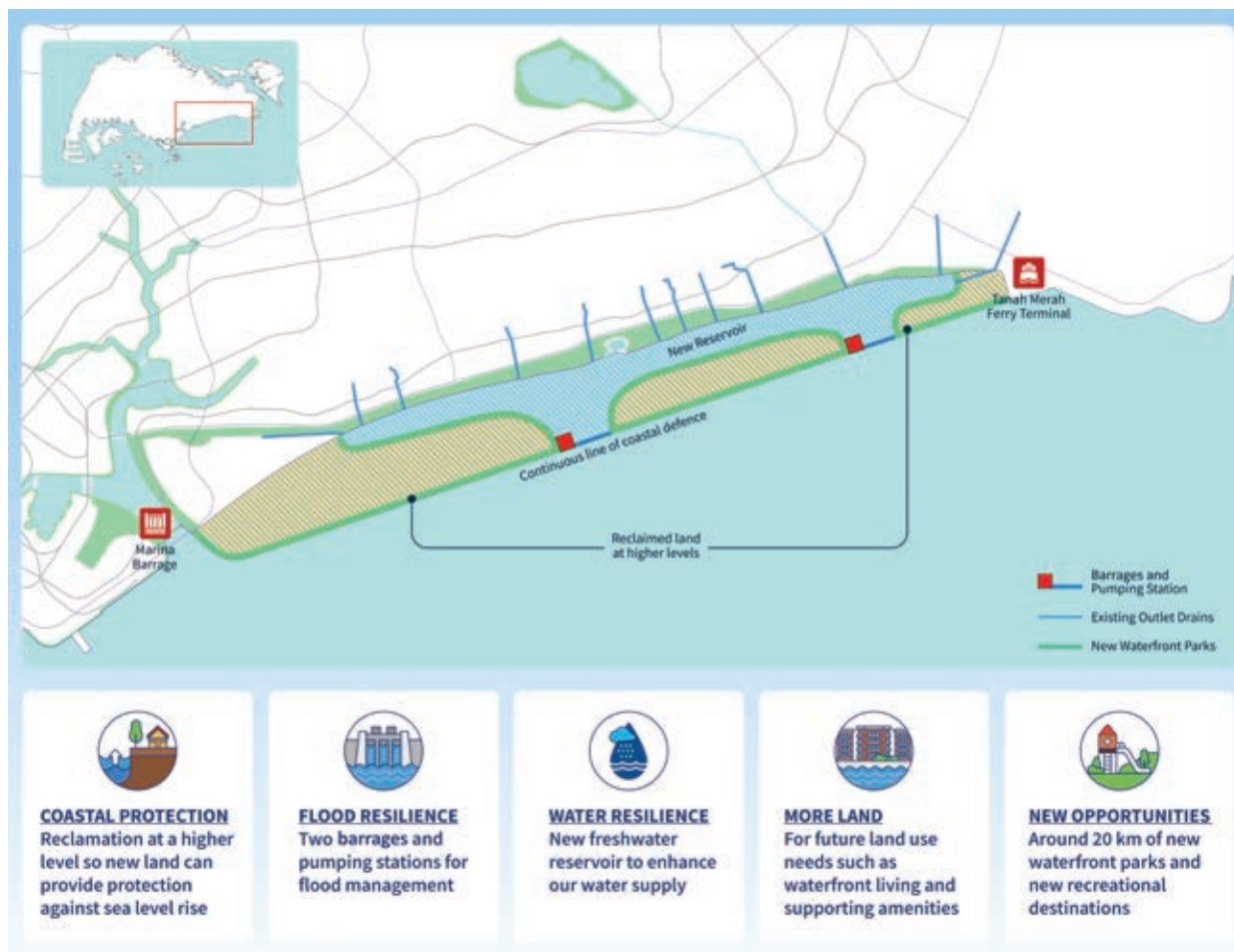
There are several key considerations and guiding principles that shape our approach to ensure our city remains adaptable, resilient and people-centred in the face of future uncertainties.

First, we build flexibility into our long-term plans. Given the rapid pace of technological change, demographic shifts, and climate risks, our urban planning framework must be sufficiently agile to cater to multiple possible futures. This is why we safeguard land for future needs and design developments that can be adapted or repurposed over time. We also build reserves and resilience into our plans. Our Long-Term Plan is a good example of how we set strategic direction for the future, while making room for adjustments as circumstances evolve.

Second, we continue to stay attuned to Singaporeans' changing needs and aspirations. We have an established practice of engaging stakeholders across different sectors, and we have leveraged digital tools to further strengthen these efforts. For instance, the Urban Redevelopment Authority's Dream Lab, deployed as part of the Draft Master Plan 2025 Exhibition, allowed residents to visualise their ideas for Singapore using artificial intelligence. This enhanced how we gathered feedback and developed shared ownership of our plans.

Third, we embed sustainability and climate resilience as core planning imperatives. Climate change presents one of the most significant long-term challenges for cities. To address this, Singapore integrates environmental sustainability into land use planning, building design, and infrastructure development. For example, the Long Island project, announced in 2019, will protect our low-lying eastern coastline from sea level rise. At the same time, it will create additional space for housing, jobs and recreation, and provide a new reservoir to strengthen our water resilience.

By staying anchored to these principles, Singapore can continue to evolve with confidence while remaining a city that provides for the needs of both present and future generations.



By reclaiming about 800 hectares of land, the Long Island project will bring about cross-cutting benefits and prepare Singapore for the needs of future generations to come.

Image: Urban Redevelopment Authority

### **Innovation and transformation in the Built Environment (BE) sector are key to enabling a liveable city. How is the government fostering a pro-enterprise environment to prepare this sector for the future?**

As a small island state, Singapore needs a BE sector that is innovative, resilient and future-ready, to address the longer-term challenges that our city will face.

Innovation requires an environment where businesses can experiment and take calculated risks. Hence, we want to ensure that our regulations for Singapore's BE sector are robust enough to safeguard residents and businesses, and preserve systemic resilience, while remaining flexible enough to support experimentation and growth.

As Minister for National Development, I have made this a key priority for my Ministry. We take a pro-enterprise approach to reviewing our policies, rules and processes. This is to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, cut unnecessary red tape and reduce business costs, while improving efficiency and making better use of our scarce resources. While each rule review may seem small on its own, collectively they help foster a more business-friendly environment and strengthen collaboration between the government and industry.



**With feedback from industry, we can focus our efforts more precisely and work together to refine our rules, reduce processing time, and open up more opportunities for innovation and collaboration.**



This is an area where close partnership with industry is essential. Businesses are best placed to identify pain points from their day-to-day experiences. With their feedback, we can focus our efforts more precisely and work together to refine our rules, reduce processing time, and open up more opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

Innovation also does not happen in isolation. Collaboration enables the exchange of ideas, skills and perspectives that deliver better solutions. It is therefore important that we work closely with stakeholders across the value chain to drive system-level change. It is equally essential that businesses evolve from being regulated entities to active partners and co-creators of innovation with the government. The Built Environment Technology Alliance (BETA), led by the Building and Construction Authority of Singapore, is a good example of such collaboration. BETA brings together technology providers, contractors and developers to accelerate the adoption of robotics, automation and digital construction technologies, such as by co-sharing costs, reducing risks and tapping on one another's expertise.

### **What pro-enterprise initiatives has the government put in place to support and grow the Built Environment (BE) sector?**

One of the most significant initiatives for Singapore's BE sector in recent times is CORENET X—the world's first integrated digital platform for building plan submissions. Launched in 2023, CORENET X consolidates over 20 regulatory touchpoints into three key gateways, replacing complex, multi-agency submissions with collaborative processes. This enables upfront stakeholder collaboration, reduces downstream abortive work, and achieves significant time and cost savings. CORENET X also exemplifies how government agencies and industry stakeholders come together to deliver ambitious pro-enterprise outcomes. Since its launch, CORENET X has been used for over 50 projects involving 100 firms, and many of these projects have achieved time savings of up to 20% for regulatory approvals.

Another example of a needle-moving initiative is the use of 360° Capture technology to conduct virtual building inspections as part of the Temporary Occupation Permit and Certificate of Statutory Completion issuance process. The use of this technology has benefited firms by reducing the time they spend coordinating physical inspections, and accelerating regulatory approval timelines, while maintaining safety and quality standards. Early adopters of this technology have enjoyed productivity improvements of up to 60% in the building inspection process.

As we move forward, we are taking further steps to drive the next bound of transformation in the BE sector. I am chairing an Action Team—comprising representatives from government agencies and the industry, including developers, consultants, contractors, facility managers and academics—to improve BE productivity. The Action Team will focus on three key areas:

1. Accelerating enterprise transformation by scaling up the adoption of productive technologies and progressive practices
2. Reviewing Singapore's regulatory approach to reduce regulatory compliance burden, support innovation, as well as to improve procurement and contracting practices
3. Supporting an enabling ecosystem through measures that can reap system-level synergies and address industry-wide challenges

These are challenging issues facing the industry, and we need to relook at how we plan, manage and grow our BE industry. I am confident that with strong support from our industry stakeholders, we will chart a bright future for the BE sector together, and ensure a liveable, agile and pro-enterprise Singapore. 🗨️