

**MEDIA RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

**REFRESHED ANG MO KIO HERITAGE TRAIL UNCOVERS NEW STORIES OF A  
QUINTESSENTIAL HEARTLAND TOWN**



*(L-R) Queen Elizabeth II on her tour of Ang Mo Kio at Block 710, 1989 (Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore), and Singapore's only block of circular flats built by the Housing & Development Board – Block 259, The “Clover Block”, 1981 (Courtesy of Phillip Ho)*

**Singapore, 21 September 2023** – In its early days, Ang Mo Kio was more commonly known as *Kow Tiow Kio* (“nine bridges” in Hokkien), as one would have to cross nine bridges across tributary streams of the Kallang River to get from present-day Lorong Chuan to Upper Thomson Road. The town has since evolved into a quintessential Singaporean heartland with its various neighbourhoods, parks, hearty hawker fare, and vintage dragon playground along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3. Today, the memories and spirit of Ang Mo Kio’s kampong past still permeate the bustling, modern town it has become.

2 The National Heritage Board (NHB)’s refreshed ***Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail*** tells new stories of the town’s history and heritage. Fresh research and community interviews have allowed the refreshed trail to delve deeper into Ang Mo Kio’s transformation from an area of plantations and farming land to a thriving residential and commercial hub; reveal lesser-known facts about its landmarks; and uncover more tales of the men and women who live and work there. First launched in 2011, the *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* is part of NHB’s ongoing efforts to document and promote distinct histories and memories of different areas in which Singaporeans live, work and play; deepening our understanding of the Singapore story.

### **New marked sites and thematic routes**

3 The refreshed *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* covers 40 heritage sites and features 10 heritage markers. These include 13 new sites, as well as two new markers at the Church of Christ the King – the only Catholic church in Ang Mo Kio – and Liuxun Sanhemiao, a joint temple formed by three temples – Sam Ann Fu, Longxuyan Jinshuiguan, and Hong San Chin Huat Temple Association – which originated from the former Lak Xun Village in Yio Chu Kang. The trail also features three newly curated thematic routes exploring different aspects of Ang Mo Kio’s heritage, including *Iconic Landmarks*, *Hidden Heartland Gems*, and *Scenic Fringes*.

4 These new markers join a list of sites that are a part of Ang Mo Kio’s unique story, including the 21-hectare Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West, the largest town garden project by the Housing & Development Board (HDB) at the time of its completion in 1983; Ang Mo Kio Town Council, the first such council in Singapore which was established in 1986; and Block 259, also known as the “Clover Block”, the first and only block of circular HDB flats.

5 Mr Gerald Wee, Director (Education and Community Outreach), NHB, said: “Since the *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* was launched in 2011, we’ve been working closely with the Ang Mo Kio community, and have uncovered interesting new facts and stories about the town’s history and heritage, such as the cache of artworks by Chinese artist Xu Beihong which was hidden in Chong Boon Chinese School in Lelong Pah village, near today’s Serangoon Garden, during the Japanese Occupation. By refreshing the trail, we hope that Singaporeans will gain a deeper appreciation of this quintessential Singaporean heartland, and residents will be imbued with a greater sense of pride and belonging.”

### **The Community Spirit**

6 The refreshed *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* incorporates contributions from former and current residents of Ang Mo Kio to showcase the diverse aspects of the town through the perspectives of people from different walks of life, cultural backgrounds and faiths. From its early days, Ang Mo Kio has been known for its strong spirit of neighbourliness. Karen Albuquerque, a long-time resident of Ang Mo Kio who contributed to the refreshed trail, recalled: “The neighbourly

relations were very strong and close. During festivals, we would visit each other and kept a look out for one another. My mother even left a set of our keys with one of my neighbours!”

### **From rural area to an iconic heartland town**

7 As it evolved from its rural origins, Ang Mo Kio became a town of many firsts. It was one of the first estates built by HDB, and was an ideal testing ground for different architectural styles, building methods, and pilot initiatives. Block 259, also known as the “Clover Block” for its resemblance to the plant when viewed from above, resulted from this and stands as the only block of circular public housing flats in Singapore, and is now an icon in the neighbourhood.

8 Ang Mo Kio also served as a pioneer for the concept of town councils, a now familiar institution across Singapore. The idea was first raised in 1984 by Lim Boon Heng, then Member of Parliament for Kebun Baru, with the goal of providing residents greater autonomy over how their estates are managed, and to nurture a stronger sense of ownership and identity. Launched in 1986, the Ang Mo Kio Town Council became the first of its kind after a successful pilot programme, leading to the passing of the Town Council Act in 1988.



Block 259, the “Clover Block”, 2023  
*Courtesy of National Heritage Board*



	<p>Office building of Ang Mo Kio East Town Council, 1988</p> <p><i>Courtesy of Ang Mo Kio Town Council</i></p>
	<p>Dragon playground in Ang Mo Kio, 2023</p> <p><i>Courtesy of National Heritage Board</i></p>

### Hiding in plain sight

9 The refreshed trail takes visitors on a journey to explore hidden gems in Ang Mo Kio, revealing new stories and information about the town’s landmarks. One such institution is the Church of Christ the King, the first and only Catholic church in Ang Mo Kio. Officially opened on 26 September 1982, the church houses two significant religious objects: an icon of the Mother of Perpetual Help on its facade, and a statue of Christ the King sculpted in 1956 in Kerala, India on its front balcony.

10 Constructed in 2011, the Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple unites the heritage of three temples from former villages in Ang Mo Kio: Gao Lin Gong, Kim Eang Tong and Leng San Giam. With the redevelopment of Ang Mo Kio in the 1970s, the three temples came together to establish a joint temple to secure the lease for the site it currently stands on. Intricate carvings on the building’s pillars and facade were handcrafted by artisans in China, and a carved wooden stand within the Gao Lin Gong temple was commissioned in 1888 to mark the temple’s founding. It is one of two

joint temples in Ang Mo Kio that houses temples from former kampongs in the area, the other being the aforementioned Liuxun Sanhemiao.



	<p>Original building of Church of Christ the King when it was first opened, 1982.</p> <p><i>Courtesy of Church of Christ the King</i></p>
	<p>Original Joint Temple building at Ang Mo Kio Ave 1, 1983</p> <p><i>Courtesy of Leng San Giam</i></p>

### A closer look at community stories

11 The refreshed *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* unveils lesser-known stories of the town, such as the hidden cache of artworks by Chinese artist Xu Beihong which used to be located in Chong Boon Chinese School in Lelong Pah. Renowned for his ink paintings of horses and birds, Xu had organised an exhibition to raise funds for the Sino-Japanese war when the Japanese invaded Malaya in 1941. To evade surveillance, Xu's associates, active in anti-Japanese efforts, arranged for him to take shelter at Lelong Pah. His collection of art tools and artworks were carefully sealed in ceramic vats and buried near the school. After the occupation, these vats were retrieved and left to air-dry for over two months in the school before being returned to Xu. Trail-goers can expect to dive deeper into stories like these in the *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* companion guide.



12 In more recent decades, a spot well-loved by many is the Kebun Baru Birdsinging Club, which serves as a gathering spot for bird keepers and enthusiasts from all over Singapore. Known as the country’s largest bird singing and display arena, the club was originally established by three zebra dove enthusiasts residing in Ang Mo Kio. In 1987, they applied to erect poles to expand the club’s capacity for more bird enthusiasts to join them. Presently, the venue can accommodate more than 1,000 cages and regularly hosts bird singing competitions. Among the club’s founders is Mr Teng Leng Foo, who also operates a traditional bird cage making business at Block 159, located next to the arena.

	<p>A painting by Xu Beihong titled “A Pair of Horses”, 1940</p> <p><i>From the Xian Xue Zhuang Collection in memory of Dr Tan Tze Chor</i></p>
	<p>Birdsinging poles at the Kebun Baru Birdsinging Club, 2023</p> <p><i>Courtesy of National Heritage Board</i></p>

## Rediscover Ang Mo Kio through three thematic routes

13 As part of the refresh, three newly curated thematic routes will take trail-goers on different journeys featuring (1) iconic landmarks and sites of the new town, (2) hidden heartland narratives, artefacts and installations, and (3) the picturesque outskirts of Ang Mo Kio. These self-guided routes, which trail-goers can embark on in their own time and according to their interests, are:

**1. Iconic Landmarks** (1.5 hours with public transport, 5.5 km)

This route showcases the iconic buildings and sites of Ang Mo Kio new town – the seventh housing town built by HDB – which range from distinctive blocks to landscaped parks.

**2. Hidden Heartland Gems** (1 hour and 45 minutes with public transport, 7.5 km)

This route explores often overlooked gems in Ang Mo Kio, and relates interesting facts about them and lesser-known community stories.

**3. Scenic Fringes** (2.5 hours with public transport, 12 km)

This scenic route explores the outskirts of Ang Mo Kio, revealing another side of the new town and its surroundings.

14 The *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail's* companion guide and map (the map will be available in four official languages) can be downloaded from NHB's heritage portal, [Roots.gov.sg](https://roots.gov.sg). Printed copies of the guide and map in English will also be available in limited quantities at various locations including the Asian Civilisations Museum, Cheng San-Seletar Community Club, Teck Ghee Community Club, Kebun Baru Community Club, Yio Chu Kang Community Club, and NHB headquarters at Stamford Court. A video of highlights of the *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* can also be viewed at <https://go.gov.sg/angmokiaheritagetrail>.

15 For more information, please refer to:

- [Annex A](#): List of heritage sites in the *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* and information on heritage markers;

- [Annex B](#): Ang Mo Kio's transformation
- [Annex C](#): Five lesser-known facts about Ang Mo Kio
- [Annex D](#): List of heritage trails developed by NHB

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### **About the National Heritage Board**

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993, and turns 30 this year. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit [www.nhb.gov.sg](http://www.nhb.gov.sg) for more information

**ANG MO KIO HERITAGE TRAIL SITES AND MARKERS**

- 1. Ang Mo Kio Town Centre**
- 2. Masjid Al-Muttaqin**
- 3. Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West**
4. Kebun Baru Birdsinging Club\*
- 5. Block 259, The “Clover Block”**
6. Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park\*
- 7. Ang Mo Kio Town Council**
8. Ang Mo Kio Dragon Playground\*
9. Chu Sheng Temple
10. Swee Kow Kuan Temple
- 11. Former Cheng San (Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East)**
- 12. Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple**
- 13. Church of Christ the King#**
14. Lower Peirce Reservoir
15. Sembawang Hills Estate\*
- 16. Teachers’ Housing Estate**
- 17. Liuxun Sanhemiao#**
18. Seletar Hills Estate\*
19. Serangoon Garden\*
20. Mayflower Gardens\*
21. Former locales and kampongs: Know Tiow Kio, Chwee Arm Lor, Cheok Sua, Lao Pah, Sing Pah, Cheng Sua Lai, Lelong Pah, Lak Xun Village
22. Schools from the kampong days: Chong Boon Chinese School, Fook Hing Chinese School, Shin Ming Public School, Chong Lip School, Jing Shan Primary School
24. Block 710, The “VIP Block”Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital
25. Ang Mo Kio Swimming Complex
26. Schools of Ang Mo Kio new town: CHIJ St. Nicholas Girls’ School, Ang Mo Kio Primary and Secondary Schools, Nanyang Polytechnic, Anderson Junior College, Da Qiao Primary School, Presbyterian High School, Teck Ghee Primary School
27. Ang Mo Kio Methodist Church

28. Merlion Statues of Ang Mo Kio\*
29. Bethesda Hall
30. Chek Sian Tng
31. Potong Pasir Joint Temple
32. St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral
33. First Evangelical Reformed Church
34. Sembawang Baptist Church
35. Church of St Vincent de Paul
36. Ban Nee Chen Nursery\*
37. Plum Village Restaurant\*
38. Gim Tim Restaurant\*
39. Tungsan Food Industries\*
40. Sam Mui Kuang Pottery\*

Total: 40 sites

Heritage sites featured on trail markers are in **BOLD** (note that multiple sites can be featured on the same marker as some of these sites are located in close proximity to one another). Sites 20 to 40 are featured in the *Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail* companion guide but are not part of the thematic trail routes.

#New marked sites for the refresh

\* New sites for the refresh (not marked)

## ANG MO KIO'S TRANSFORMATION

### A typical fish breeding pond in Singapore, 1960s.



*Primary Production Department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*

Fish farming was common in the valleys of Ang Mo Kio in the pre-war decades. During World War II, Ang Mo Kio's fishponds stopped operating as villages no longer had resources to sustain them. Fish farming was revived after the war and continued well into the 1960s. Farmers would often trade water hyacinth grown in their ponds for fish fry as they did not earn much capital, and it typically took seven to eight months to rear fish for harvest.

### Pig farming at Ang Mo Kio Village, located along Thomson Road, 1962.

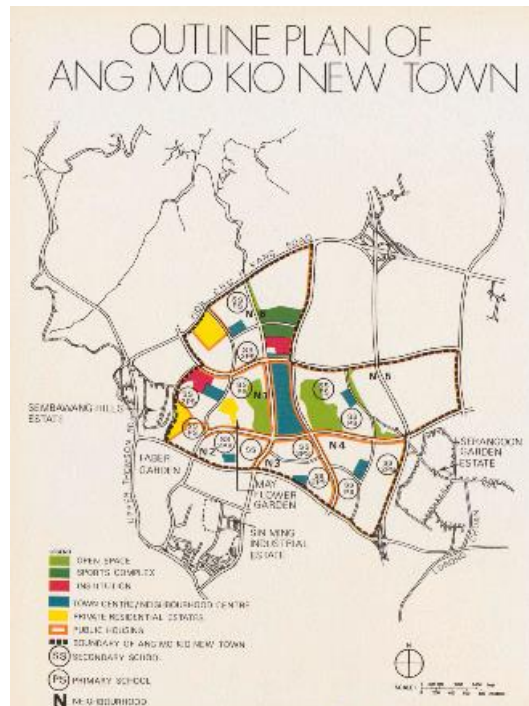


*Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*

In the 1960s, pig farming in Singapore picked up after the government ramped up efforts to boost farm production. Many farmers in Ang Mo Kio began turning to pig farming and the existing fish ponds were mainly used to grow water hyacinth as feed for pigs. Some fish farms

were also transformed into recreational fishing spots.

### Outline plan of Ang Mo Kio New Town in 1973



*Courtesy of Housing and Development Board Annual Report 1973-1974*

In 1973, the Housing & Development Board (HDB) announced that Ang Mo Kio would be developed into a self-sufficient new town with office developments, supermarkets, and shops. The government began to resettle the villages in Ang Mo Kio in stages, and residents were relocated to housing estates in Ang Mo Kio and surrounding towns.

### The newly completed Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, 1977



*Singapore Press Holdings, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

In 1976, 9,200 flats had been completed and the site for the town centre had been cleared. By

the end of the 1970s, Ang Mo Kio new town was almost fully built.

### **Ang Mo Kio Town Centre with Block 710, the “VIP Block”, in the background, 1981**



*Courtesy of Housing & Development Board*

When it was completed in the late 1970s, Ang Mo Kio Town Centre was one of the largest town centres in Singapore. In the late 1980s and 1990s, visiting dignitaries to Singapore were often given a tour of Ang Mo Kio as a showcase of Singapore’s public housing achievements. Block 710 at the town centre, known then as the “VIP Block”, offered dignitaries such as the late Queen Elizabeth II and former Chinese Premier Li Peng panoramic views of Ang Mo Kio New Town.

### **Ang Mo Kio Swimming Complex with its iconic tetrahedral skylights, 2023**





*Courtesy of National Heritage Board*

As housing shortages eased, HDB started to explore ways to make each town distinctive by retaining part of the original topography and vegetation, and commissioning iconic buildings. The \$4.7 million Ang Mo Kio swimming complex with distinctive tetrahedral skylights was



opened in 1982, and later won the Singapore Institute of Architects 1986 Architectural Design Award for its roof design.

FIVE LESSER-KNOWN FACTS ABOUT ANG MO KIO

 <p>Map showing the Kallang River near the present-day Lorong Chuan area where the first bridge was located, 1924</p> <p><i>The National Archives, United Kingdom, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore</i></p>	<p><b>Settlers in the 19th century referred to Ang Mo Kio as Kow Tiow Kio (“nine bridges” in Hokkien) or Chwee Arm Lor (“water pipe road” in Hokkien).</b></p> <p>Both names referred to the path that ran parallel to the big water pipes laid by the colonial government to carry water from Peirce Reservoir to town. The name “Kow Tiow Kio” came about as there were nine bridges to cross in total in order to get from present-day Lorong Chuan to Upper Thomson Road.</p>
 <p>Block 259 when it was under construction, 1981 <i>Courtesy of Phillip Ho</i></p>	<p><b>The reception to Block 259, the “Clover Block”, was mixed when it was completed in 1981.</b></p> <p>Some members of the public felt that the construction costs, which were around 20-25% more than standard HDB blocks, were too high, while others criticised the impracticality of the circular design, which made furnishing the flats challenging.</p>



New Town and New Crown Cinemas, 1984  
*Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*

**When Ang Mo Kio Town Centre was completed in the 1970s, it was one of the largest town centres in Singapore - meant to serve 245,000 residents.**

The Ang Mo Kio Town Centre housed the Oriental Emporium, which opened in 1979 with an upmarket Chinese restaurant of the same name on the second floor. By the early 1980s, the town centre was home to a slew of cinemas offering a wide choice of films from Hong Kong cinema to Hollywood. These included Broadway Theatre, Ang Mo Kio Cinema, Jubilee, and New Crown and New Town Cinemas.



Aerial view of Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East with Ang Mo Kio Town Centre and Masjid Al-Muttaqin in the background, 1982  
*Courtesy of Housing & Development Board*

**Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East, Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West and Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park retained much of its natural vegetation from the former kampong era.**

Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West was also the largest town garden project by HDB in the 1980s and was designed by a Japanese company, Obayashi Gumi. Today, visitors can check out sculptures of rubber seeds around Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East, which reference the days of the rubber plantations in Ang Mo Kio.



One of the merlion statues in Ang Mo Kio, 2023  
*Courtesy of National Heritage Board*

**The 2.5 metre-tall merlion statues in Ang Mo Kio were erected by the Residents' Committee.**

In 1988, one of the Residents' Committees (RCs) came up with the idea of erecting merlion sculptures in order to make the precinct more distinctive. They commissioned a pair of 2.5 metre-tall merlion statues to be sculpted in China from pink granite, at a cost of \$30,000. The Singapore Tourism Board requested that the merlions be removed in 2002 due to trademark issues, but they subsequently allowed them to remain on the account that they would be well taken care of.



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**List of Heritage Trails by NHB**

1. Bukit Timah Heritage Trail
2. Yishun-Sembawang Heritage Trail *(to be refreshed as the Yishun Heritage Trail at a later date)*
3. Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail
4. Balestier Heritage Trail
5. Jalan Besar Heritage Trail
6. Kampong Glam Heritage Trail
7. World War II Heritage Trail
8. Tiong Bahru Heritage Trail
9. Queenstown Heritage Trail
10. Resilience Trails
11. Toa Payoh Heritage Trail
12. Jurong Heritage Trail
13. Singapore River Walk
14. Jubilee Walk
15. Bedok Heritage Trail
16. Little India Heritage Trail
17. Tampines Heritage Trail
18. Orchard Heritage Trail
19. Pasir Ris Heritage Trail
20. Hougang Heritage Trail
21. Sembawang Heritage Trail
22. Sentosa Heritage Trail
23. Woodlands Heritage Trail

For more information, please visit <https://www.roots.gov.sg/nhb/trails>.