

MEDIA RELEASE

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**DISCOVER THE EVOLUTION OF SINGAPORE'S AWARD-WINNING
RESIDENTIAL TOWN WITH THE NEW TAMPINES HERITAGE TRAIL**

From swamps and kampongs to a thriving town

Singapore, 6 September 2017 – Forget the iconic Tampines Mall or Tampines One. If you were to make your way to Tampines 40 years ago, you would have to do so through a dusty winding road that passes through kampongs and farms. Back then, Tampines Road was the main access to the *ulu* district that was mostly used by coconut plantation workers, sand miners and travelling hawkers, who catered to far-flung village clusters there.

2 The newly launched *Tampines Heritage Trail* is the National Heritage Board's (NHB) 17th heritage trail. Trail-goers can discover and revisit the iconic sites and stories of Tampines – a once rural district that has undergone a transformation into an award-winning¹ town. The trail features 18 heritage sites, five of which feature heritage markers, and is part of NHB's ongoing efforts to document, celebrate and promote the distinct histories and social memories of different areas in which Singaporeans live, work and play.

First Green Spaces Thematic Trail

3 In addition to the staple heritage trail offerings of heritage markers, a trail booklet, and a trail map in four languages (English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil), NHB has created three thematic short routes that span an average of 6km each for trail-goers to explore the unique history and cultural heritage of Tampines. They are:

- “Tampines Town Trail” (90 minutes; bus and walk) – This route explores some of the town planning innovations of Tampines, and sites of everyday heritage that are part and parcel of life in the neighbourhood.
- “Religious Institutions Trail” (90 minutes; bus and walk) – This route features the various houses of faith that reflect the diversity of the Tampines community, and explores their unique architecture and practices.

¹ In 1991, the Building and Social Housing Foundation and UN-Habitat presented the Housing & Development Board (HDB) with the World Habitat Award for its entry on Tampines Town. The award commended HDB on successfully creating in Tampines “an innovative and successful human settlement project which could be replicated elsewhere in the world”.

- “Green Spaces Trail” (60 minutes; on bicycle) – This route takes visitors on a cycling trail to discover sites of heritage that are also scenic locales, such as places where former kampongs were once located, and a former landfill turned wetland.

4 Mr Alvin Tan, Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Community) of NHB, said: “NHB is constantly exploring innovative ways to enrich the public’s experience with each new heritage trail. For instance, the Green Spaces Trail is NHB’s first cycling trail which takes cyclists to heritage and nature sites within Tampines. This was curated for Tampines because of its well-integrated green spaces and because cycling is a way of life for many of its residents. Through such thematic trails, we hope to encourage the public to explore and experience different aspects of Tampines’ heritage according to their own interests.”

A Town of Many Firsts

5 Apart from its impressive transformation to an exemplary model of public housing, making it the only town in Singapore to be conferred the World Habitat Award, Tampines is a notable town of other firsts. The Tampines Central Park, which houses the well-loved watermelon and mangosteen playgrounds, is an example of the Housing Development Board’s (HDB) introduction of integrated green spaces as part of its town planning innovations in the 1980s. Pioneered in Tampines, this concept was the precursor to the park connectors that are found all across Singapore today. Tampines is also Singapore’s first regional centre – a “minicity” containing offices, homes and recreational facilities, following a 1991 concept plan to decentralise commercial activity from the downtown business area.

Spotlighting the Community and its Stories

6 The *Tampines Heritage Trail* also aims to celebrate and share lesser-known stories from the community. From first-generation hawkers of the Tampines Round Market & Food Centre who first set up stall there in 1983, to residents who have been living there since its kampong days, the stories of 25 members of the community have been incorporated into the trail’s booklet. This includes nine contributions selected from an Open Call #OurTampinesMemories held on NHB’s Facebook since March 2017, to encourage community participation and sharing.

7 “As with all our heritage trails, we hope that the *Tampines Heritage Trail* will raise Singaporeans’ awareness of the town’s rich heritage and increase their appreciation of the interesting landmarks found in Tampines. In doing so, we hope that the trail will foster a greater

sense of belonging amongst residents, and instil a sense of pride in Singaporeans as they learn more about Tampines' progress and its achievements," added Mr Alvin Tan, Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Community) of NHB.

8 The *Tampines Heritage Trail* follows the launch of Our Tampines Gallery, a new community heritage gallery at Tampines Regional Library. Together, they serve to provide residents and other Singaporeans with in-depth insights into the history and heritage of Tampines town, and with personal stories as told by its residents, both old and new.

9 To encourage the active and hands-on participation of youths in our heritage, NHB is working with St Hilda's Secondary School (located in the area) to adopt the *Tampines Heritage Trail* for three years and incorporate the trail's content into the school's curriculum. This project involves the training of about 30 students as trail guides for their peers, as well as training for teachers on the development of trails to make them more meaningful for their students. The secondary school will be 22nd school which has signed on to NHB's signature *Heritage Trail Adoption Scheme*.

10 For more information, please refer to:

- **Annex A:** *Tampines Heritage Trail* – List of the 18 heritage sites, and information on heritage markers
- **Annex B:** *Tampines Heritage Trail* – Three thematic routes
- **Annex C:** Five interesting facts about Tampines
- **Annex D:** Full list of NHB's 17 heritage trails
- **Annex E:** Information on NHB's *Heritage Trail Adoption Scheme*
- **Annex F:** Information on Our Tampines Gallery

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. 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 for more information.

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List of Heritage Sites on the Tampines Heritage Trail

1. Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity*
2. Former Golden Palace Holiday Resort
3. Former Keris Film Studio
4. Former Tampines Bike Park
5. Lorong Halus Wetland*
6. Masjid Darul Ghufuran
7. Our Tampines Gallery
8. Our Tampines Hub
9. Pasir Ris Park's Mangrove Preserve
10. Sungei Api Api
11. Sungei Tampines
12. Tampines Central Park*
13. Tampines Chinese Temple*
14. Tampines Eco Green
15. Tampines Road
16. Tampines Round Market & Food Centre*
17. Temple cluster at Tampines Link
18. World Habitat Award Commemorative Sculpture

* *Heritage sites with markers*

INFORMATION ON HERITAGE MARKERS ON TAMPINES HERITAGE TRAIL

Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity

Officially opened on 30 October 1990, the Church of the Holy Trinity serves the Roman Catholic residents of Tampines and its surrounding areas in the east. For nearly two decades until the opening of the Church of Divine Mercy in Pasir Ris in 2009, Holy Trinity was at the heart of religious life for the largest Catholic parish in Singapore, estimated at more than 14,000 congregants in 2009.

Conceptualised by its first parish priest Father Paul Tay, the plans for the church underwent changes in order to meet various building regulations. These changes included a reduction of the church's height from more than 60m to 22m as well as the inclusion of a canteen and a columbarium.

The church building takes the form of a fish, which represents Jesus Christ in Christian iconology and was used as a symbol by early Christians to identify their religious brethren. The interior of the church features Italian architectural designs, including stained glass panels imported from Milan, Italy.

When it was opened, Holy Trinity was known for its unusual interior design, which included a waterfall, rocks and shrubbery representing the biblical Garden of Gethsemane and Garden of Eden as well as a stream of water that flowed along the aisles. Most of these features were, however, removed in later years to accommodate a larger congregation.

Lorong Halus Wetland

Before Lorong Halus Wetland was built in 2011, this area was known for its sewage disposal centre and landfill facilities. In 1941, the Municipal Commission completed the Serangoon Sludge Disposal Works as part of a sewerage scheme that served the northern and eastern areas of Singapore.

Located on swampy ground along Sungei Blukar, the Sludge Works functioned in tandem with the Sewage Disposal Works at Kim Chuan Road. Sludge, or solid waste left after treatment of sewage, was sold as fertiliser or used to reclaim swampland in the area. The facility also handled night soil (human excrement collected in buckets) and was the last such disposal station when the system ended in 1987.

In the 1950s, part of the former swampland around the Sludge Works was used as a refuse dump. Within two decades, the landfill expanded to 234ha, and the refuse mounds reached as high as 10 storeys. The proximity of the landfill also led to an informal market of scrap dealers setting up shop along Tampines Road in the 1980s and buying scrap metal from lorry drivers carting industrial waste to Lorong Halus.

When construction of the Serangoon Reservoir started in the 2000s, the Public Utilities Board decided to convert a portion of the former landfill into a wetland that would help treat potential contaminants in groundwater. Today, the Lorong Halus Wetland serves as a bio-remediation system for the Serangoon Reservoir and a haven for biodiversity.

Tampines Central Park

Opened in the 1980s, green spaces such as Tampines Central Park were one of the town planning innovations introduced by the Housing & Development Board (HDB). The design of Tampines Town integrated green spaces throughout the residential estates and mitigated the pressures of high-density living while offering a variety of recreational and social uses.

Among the distinguishing features of this park are the fruit-themed playgrounds in the shapes of mangosteens and watermelon slices. Designed by HDB architect Ms Lee-Loy Kwee Wah, they were inspired by the fruit farms of rural Tampines before the town was developed. These playgrounds are part of the second generation of HDB-designed playgrounds that appeared in the 1980s.

Another feature of the Tampines Central Park is a sculpture by renowned Singapore artist and Cultural Medallion recipient, Ng Eng Teng (1934-2001). This bronze sculpture is one of the iconic *Mother and Child* works created by Ng, whose artworks were known to explore the human condition.

Today, Tampines Central Park remains a green social space where community, food and music events are hosted, including a notable concert by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in 2002.

Tampines Chinese Temple

The Tampines Chinese Temple (淡滨尼联合宫) was established in 1992 and houses 12 constituent temples, which include temples previously located in the area during the period when Tampines was still undeveloped.

The development of Tampines Town from the late 1970s necessitated the clearance of villages like Kampong Teban as well as the temples within these villages. Some of these village temples used to be housed in attap and wooden structures, and many did not have the resources to rebuild elsewhere. As such, a number of them banded together to form a united temple.

After nearly a decade of negotiations, fundraising, land acquisition and construction, the Tampines Chinese Temple opened its doors in December 1992. The oldest constituent temple here is the Soon Hin Ancient Temple (顺兴古庙) which was formerly located at Jalan Ang Siang Kong and dates from at least 1851. Temples from other parts of Singapore, including Ji Yang Tang (济阳堂) from Havelock Road, also joined this united temple.

One of the interesting features of the Tampines Chinese Temple is a 270m-long dragon made of coloured stone which wraps itself around the temple's perimeter. Within the temple are nine altars enshrining deities of its constituent temples including Hong Xian Da Di (a deity of local origin), Tua Pek Kong, Guan Yin (the Goddess of Mercy), the Lords Zhu, Xing and Li, Qing Shui Zu Shi and Tian Gong (the Jade Emperor).

Tampines Round Market & Food Centre

The Tampines Round Market & Food Centre and its adjacent shophouses are one of the most recognisable landmarks in the area. The market and food centre has served as a social and commercial hub for Tampines residents since its opening in 1983.

In the early 1980s, the Housing & Development Board (HDB) envisioned the phasing out of traditional wet markets in response to changing lifestyles and the growing popularity of supermarkets, and the market here was expected to be one of the last few wet markets to be built. However, wet markets continued to be popular with residents and HDB re-introduced them in the late 2000s.

The market is surrounded by a ring of shophouses occupied by businesses such as clinics, bicycle shops, bakeries and hair salons, comprising a mix of amenities and services commonly found in neighbourhood centres. Today, new offerings and services such as flea markets and wireless hot spots have been introduced to keep up with the times.

A number of the hawkers at the market have been operating for more than three decades, and they have cultivated a loyal clientele. Among the initial group of hawkers were 72 stallholders who moved to Tampines as a group in 1983, after the market and hawker centre at Block 176 in Toa Payoh Lorong 2 was demolished to make way for a Mass Rapid Transit line.

Tampines Heritage Trail – Three Thematic Routes

1) "Tampines Town Trail" (90 minutes; bus and walk)

Conferred the World Habitat Award in 1991, the development of Tampines Town was a significant achievement in Singapore's public housing. This trail explores some of the town planning innovations introduced by the Housing & Development Board (HDB) as well as sites of everyday heritage that are part and parcel of the Tampines community.

(Note: You may want to embark on this trail in the morning as most of the stalls in Tampines Round Market & Food Centre are only open until around 3pm.)



2) "Religious Institutions Trail" (90 minutes; bus and walk)

Tampines is home to many religious institutions that speak of the diversity of its community. Some of the places of worship featured in this trail have been in Tampines for more than a century and reflect the town's rich cultural heritage. This trail allows visitors to discover these houses of faith, and explore the unique architecture and practices that define these institutions.

(Note: Most of these religious institutions are open to the public but be sure to follow any instructions on appropriate behaviour and attire.)



3) "Green Spaces Trail" (60 minutes; on bicycle)

Tampines is home to a number of parks and green spaces, including some of which were former industrial sites. This cycling trail takes you through a few scenic locales including a converted quarry, sites where some of Tampines' former kampongs were once located, as well as Lorong Halus, a former landfill turned wetland.



Five Interesting Facts About Tampines

1

Tampines used to be much bigger in the past! In old maps of Singapore, the boundary of the Tampines district also encompassed today's Pasir Ris. Tampines Road, which was constructed in 1847 for people on horses and on foot, stretched eastwards from the 6th milestone of Serangoon Road (present day Kovan) to Changi Road. This is why older folks who stayed as far as Defu and Hougang also identified themselves as residents of Tampines.

2

Big cats used to roam the forested areas in Tampines and Changi, and there was even a notice that warned "Beware of Tigers" on Tampines Road. This continued even up to the 1930s. However, in the 1970s, a panther was spotted by villagers in the area as a result of wildlife smuggling. Hunting it down was no easy task; it took more than 100 police officers, farmers and game hunters 24 days to catch it!

3

In 1967, Golden Palace Holiday Resort, an 11-acre large leisure resort consisting of a nightclub, restaurants, snack bar, motel and a man-made lake was built in the Tampines of the past (before district boundaries of Tampines were changed). The resort has since closed in 1971, with the only remnant being the fishing pond located within Pasir Ris Town Park.

4

During the nationwide boom in development in the 1960s, landowners in Tampines converted the land into sand quarries to meet the rising demand. Much of this sand was used for the East Coast Reclamation Scheme and in the construction of places across Singapore such as Toa Payoh Town, Changi Airport and the present-day Swissotel The Stamford.

5

Back in the days before the introduction of modern sewage system, human waste (referred to as night soil) was collected by labourers and then transported to tanks at various sewage stations. Lorong Halus was the last of these night soil disposal stations, which was officially discontinued in January 1987 with a ceremony to mark its end.

Heritage Trails Developed by the National Heritage Board

1. Bukit Timah Heritage Trail
2. Yishun-Sembawang Heritage Trail
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

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

NHB's Heritage Trail Adoption Scheme

The National Heritage Board (NHB) launched the Heritage Trail Adoption Scheme (HTAS) in 2013 to encourage schools to adopt an existing or upcoming NHB heritage trail for a period of three years. NHB provides trail guiding training for participating schools to train up to 30 selected students as student guides on the adopted trail. The HTAS has been running for four years and continues to be well-received by schools across various levels, including primary, secondary, as well as tertiary institutions.

The scheme has since been enhanced to allow schools to adopt their very own school-developed heritage trails, and to train school teachers in a "Train-the-Trainer" programme. NHB hopes that the new enhancements will provide a platform for teachers to train students as trail guides and ensure the sustainability of HTAS during the three year adoption period. Equipping teachers with the trail guide training skills will increase their confidence in sustaining and implementing the programme, therefore leading to a greater sense of pride and ownership, as well as a more effective integration of the adopted trail into the school's curriculum.

Our Tampines Gallery

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| Size of Gallery: | 150 square metres |
| Location: | Tampines Regional Library 1 Tampines Walk, #02-01, Our Tampines Hub, Singapore 528523 (Opened on 5 August 2017) |
| Opening Hours: | 10am to 9pm (Daily, except on Public Holidays) |
| Admission: | Free |
| General enquiries: | Email nhb_heritagetrails@nhb.gov.sg |
| Guided tour: | Free guided tours are conducted by volunteer gallery guides and are available every Wednesday and Saturday at 3pm. Registration is required. (Please register through NLB's GoLibrary web portal) |

Our Tampines Gallery is a community heritage gallery located within Tampines Regional Library. Developed by the National Heritage Board (NHB) in partnership with the National Library Board (NLB) and the Tampines community, including students from Temasek Polytechnic (TP), the gallery traces the evolution of Tampines from its rural beginnings in the early 1800s, to the bustling town it is today. Aside from exhibitions depicting the story of Tampines, the gallery will also offer a range of programmes for visitors to learn more about the town's history and heritage.

The dynamic space is also designed for active community participation and contribution. Whether through community-curated exhibitions or community-driven programmes, the people of Tampines, and Singaporeans in general, are welcome to contribute their stories and memories of living, working and playing in Tampines. An online *#TampinesMemories Open Call* launched on NHB's Facebook earlier this year saw the submission of heart-warming stories, some of which are featured in the gallery. Volunteer gallery ambassadors and guides will also be recruited from the community, such as TP students, to lead guided tours of the gallery.

In addition, NHB and NLB are working closely on integrated programmes within the gallery and library. Programmes include monthly storytelling sessions conducted by NLB librarians on children books themed on Singapore's heritage and culture; travelling exhibitions on Singapore's multi-cultural heritage; and introduction of object handling kits centred on Singapore's heritage targeted at families with young children.

Mr Alvin Tan, Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Community) of the National Heritage Board, said: "*Our Tampines Gallery* is the first dedicated heritage gallery co-located within a library and we adopted a collaborative approach when developing the gallery in order to make heritage more accessible to both residents and library visitors, and more participatory by encouraging residents and visitors to contribute to the gallery's content and to volunteer as gallery guides."