

Curatorial Overview

OH! Golden Mile 2027 - Volunteer Training - 31 Oct/1 Nov

WHY GOLDEN MILE?

1. Golden Mile was one of Singapore's **first urban renewal projects**, envisioned by the state as a "**facelift**" for the city.

2. Now labelled "**a vertical slum**", an "**eyesore**" against the backdrop of Singapore's evolving urban landscape. We want to discover **why, and how**? Is it really so disgraceful?

3. Golden Mile Tower, one of the last remnants of the stretch, occupies an **in-between moment:** shaped by the past, situated in the present and looking towards an uncertain future. We reflect on what progress means and what we choose to carry forward.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT (ALAN)

While today we think of Golden Mile Tower and Complex as separate buildings, the two buildings are part of the Golden Mile Scheme announced in 1967 as part of our urban development in newly independent Singapore.

Golden Mile Complex was famously called "vertical slum" and "national disgrace" in Parliament. In 2021, it was gazetted for conservation and subsequently sold for redevelopment in 2022. While this was celebrated as a triumph for built heritage, it misses two key elements that will be examined in our art walk: firstly, Golden Mile represents a unique historical moment; secondly, it is not merely its architectural importance, but its collective meaning as "Little Thailand."

Golden Mile (referring to both the Tower and Complex built in 1973) emerged in a time of post-war utopian and social architecture, and ambitious local architects also wanted to participate in the project of nation-building. We chart out post-war ideas such as megastructures, metabolist and brutalist architecture that were expressed in both Golden Mile buildings. Golden Mile Complex was built by DP Architects, of which two of the three founders were also involved in the short-lived SPUR (Singapore Planning and Urban Research Group) that ran into trouble with the government. In this time when civil society and media freedom were increasingly restricted, many of the earlier more utopian conversations about urban life were transformed — in place of radically new ways of life in vertical cities, our urban discourse shifted to infrastructure and amenities like elevators, escalators, air conditioning and even car parks.

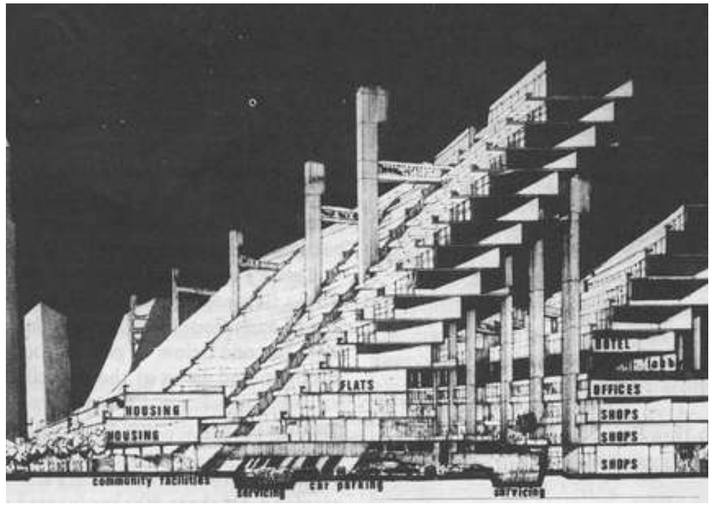
In such an environment where buildings have to constantly perform to this metric of newest amenities, it is no wonder that older buildings like Golden Mile would be continually seen as outdated and disgraceful. Paradoxically, and ironically, Golden Mile also provides a crucial outlet for the alternative and marginal communities. In mainstream Singapore — most visibly recognised in the sameness of our new malls — older strata malls with low rents and regulations provide crucial social and service infrastructure. In Golden Mile, its history as a bus station for Thai construction workers in the 1990s led to an organic cluster of Thai shops and services, thus earning its moniker as Little Thailand.

We want to celebrate this utopian and plural space in both its past and present.

CORE IDEAS

1 Utopian Moment

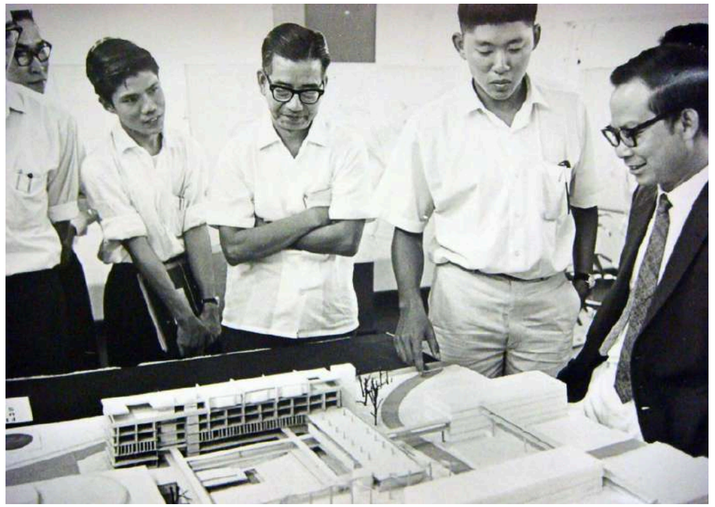
Golden Mile emerged in a time of post-war utopian/social architecture, amidst the optimism of nation-building.



Guiding Question
What kind of future did we imagine for Singapore?

2 Competing Visions of a City

Golden Mile was emblematic of broader tensions between state and civic actors over Singapore's urban development.



Guiding Question
Who gets to decide our city's future?

3 A Haven for the Margins

Golden Mile is now an important alternative space.



Guiding Question
Who is left behind in our pursuit of progress?

CONTENT PAGE

1 Utopian Moment

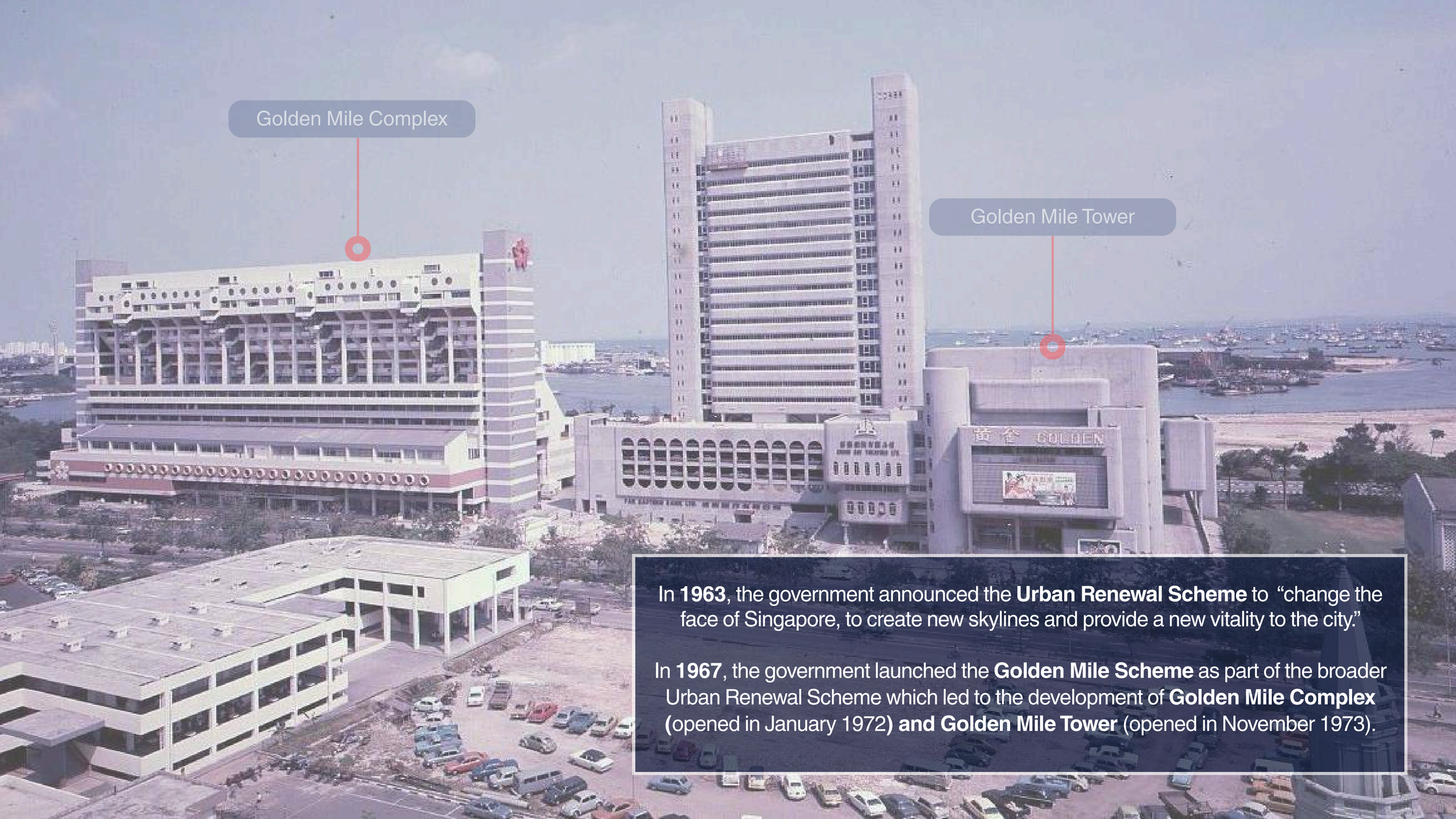
A. Post-War Architectural Movements
B. Singapore - A Modern Metropolis

2 Competing Visions of a City

A. Singapore Planning and Urban Research Group
B. State clampdown on alternative expression

3 A Haven for the Margins

A. What led to Golden Mile’s decline?
B. Becoming “Little Thailand”
C. Golden Mile Today



In **1963**, the government announced the **Urban Renewal Scheme** to "change the face of Singapore, to create new skylines and provide a new vitality to the city."

In **1967**, the government launched the **Golden Mile Scheme** as part of the broader Urban Renewal Scheme which led to the development of **Golden Mile Complex (**opened in January 1972**) and Golden Mile Tower** (opened in November 1973).

1 UTOPIAN MOMENT



A. Post-War Architectural Movements

Utopian Conversations about Urban Life



B. Singapore - A Modern Metropolis

SG’s Urban Renewal & Discourse



1A. POST-WAR ARCHITECTURAL MOVEMENTS

ARCHITECTURE AS SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

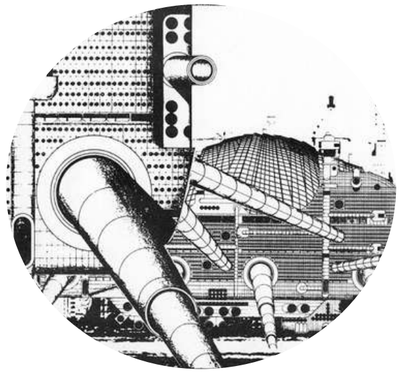
- Post-war society faced rapid population growth and housing shortages, which drove the need for **large-scale construction.**
- Beyond meeting practical needs, post-war reconstruction presented an opportuniy to **actively reshape society through architecture**. Rather than merely responding to existing needs, architects thought of buildings and urban design as tools to **transform how people lived, worked and interacted.**



1953
Brutalism
(UK)



1960
Metabolism
(Japan)



1961
Archigram
(UK)

BRUTALISM (1953, UK)

Key Features:

- **Bold, massive forms:** Emphasise mass, scale and physical presence of the building.
- Challenged ornamented architectural traditions, such as Art Deco and Gothic Revival.
    - **Material honesty:** Expose raw materials and unfinished surfaces rather than concealing them behind decorative finishes.
    - **Structural expression:** Buildings reveal their construction, materials and structural elements



Trellick Tower,
Erno Goldfinger, 1972



Palace of Westminster
Charles Barry, 1870

BRUTALISM (1953, UK)

Key Features:

- **Bold, massive forms:** Emphasise mass, scale and physical presence of the building.
- Challenged ornamented architectural traditions, such as Art Deco and Gothic Revival.
    - **Material honesty:** Expose raw materials and unfinished surfaces rather than concealing them behind decorative finishes.
    - **Structural expression:** Buildings reveal their construction, materials and structural elements

Philosophy:

Architecture should carry civic and social significance, beyond visual aesthetics.





Robin Hood Gardens, London (1966-2017) Alison and Peter Smithson - A social housing estate of two residential blocks arranged around a central open space.

Shared spaces and elevated walkways (“streets in the air”) were designed to foster community life by encouraging encounters between neighbours.

METABOLISM (1960, JAPAN)

A group of young Japanese architects, designers and critics put together a manifesto to be presented at the World Design Conference, proposing future cities and utopian ideas.

Philosophy:

Architecture as an **evolving system**: Buildings should accommodate change over time rather than remain static, to **grow and adapt** in response to changing social needs and urban conditions.



Kikutake Kiyonori, *Marine City* 1963

A visionary proposal for a city at sea, exploring how Japan could overcome land scarcity through ocean-based urban development. Its design envisioned a city that could expand over time to accommodate urban growth.

METABOLISM (1960, JAPAN)

Key Features:

- **Megastructures**: Fumihiko Maki writes in Investigations in Collective Form (1964), *“The megastructure is a large frame in which all the functions of a city or parts of a city are housed.”*
- **Modular and replaceable components:** Buildings could combine a permanent core with modular units that could be added, adapted or replaced over time, allowing the structure to evolve without rebuilding it entirely.

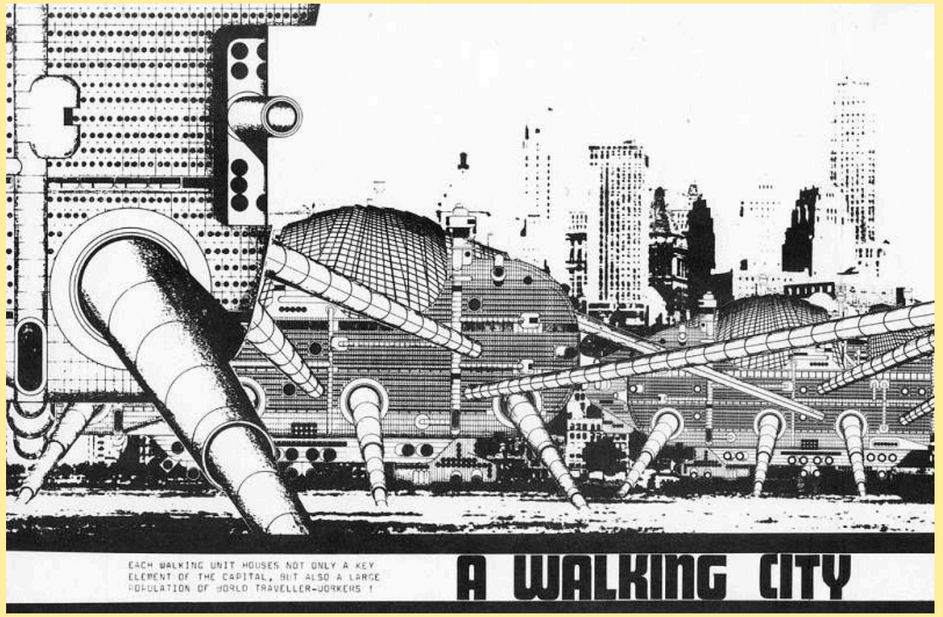




Kisho Kurokawa, Nakagin Capsule Tower, Tokyo Japan, 1972

ARCHIGRAM (1961, UK)

Philosophy: Architecture should not be fixed or permanent, but mobile, drawing inspiration from technology and science fiction.



The Walking City, Ron Herron, 1964

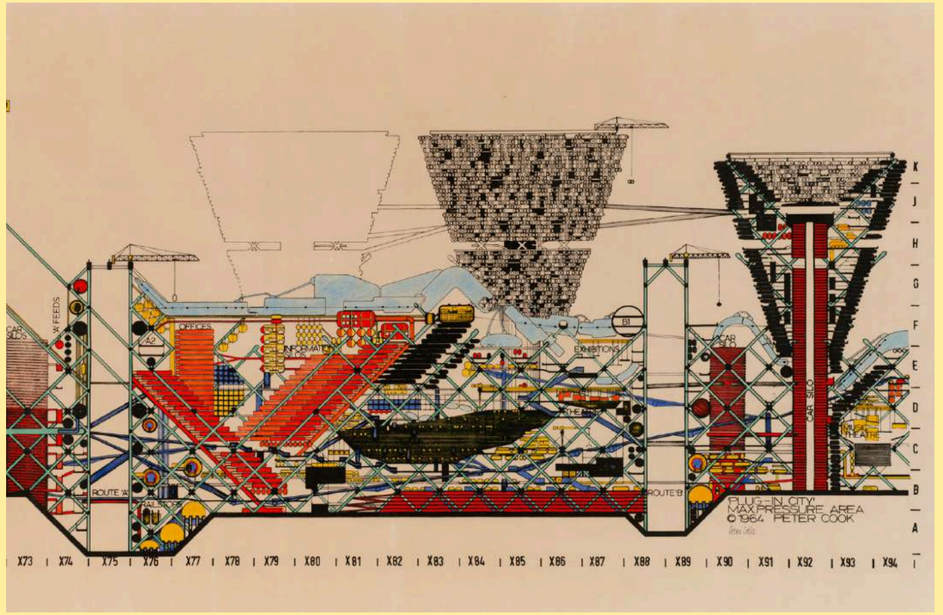
A vision of mobile, self-contained cities that could travel across land and sea, moving to different environments and drawing on local resources to sustain themselves.

ARCHIGRAM (1961, UK)

Philosophy: Architecture should not be fixed or permanent, but mobile, drawing inspiration from technology and science fiction.

Key Terms:

- **Plug-in structures:** Modular units that can be added, replaced or upgraded within larger frameworks
- **Mobility**: Buildings and cities designed to move across different terrains, can be relocated



Plug-In City, Peter Cook, 1964

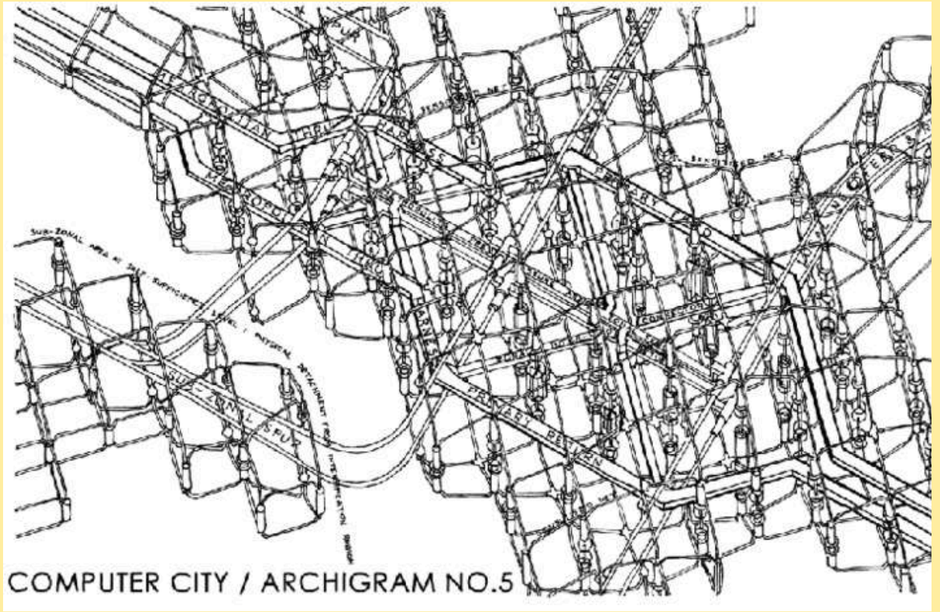
A futuristic city built around a large structural framework, where homes and other units could be plugged in, replaced or upgraded as people's needs changed.

ARCHIGRAM (1961, UK)

Philosophy: Architecture should not be fixed or permanent, but mobile, drawing inspiration from technology and science fiction.

Key Terms:

- **Plug-in structures:** Modular units that can be added, replaced or upgraded within larger frameworks
- **Mobility**: Buildings and cities designed to move across different terrains, can be relocated
- **Technological integration**: Machines, systems and infrastructure could transform everyday life



Computer City, Dennis Crompton, 1964

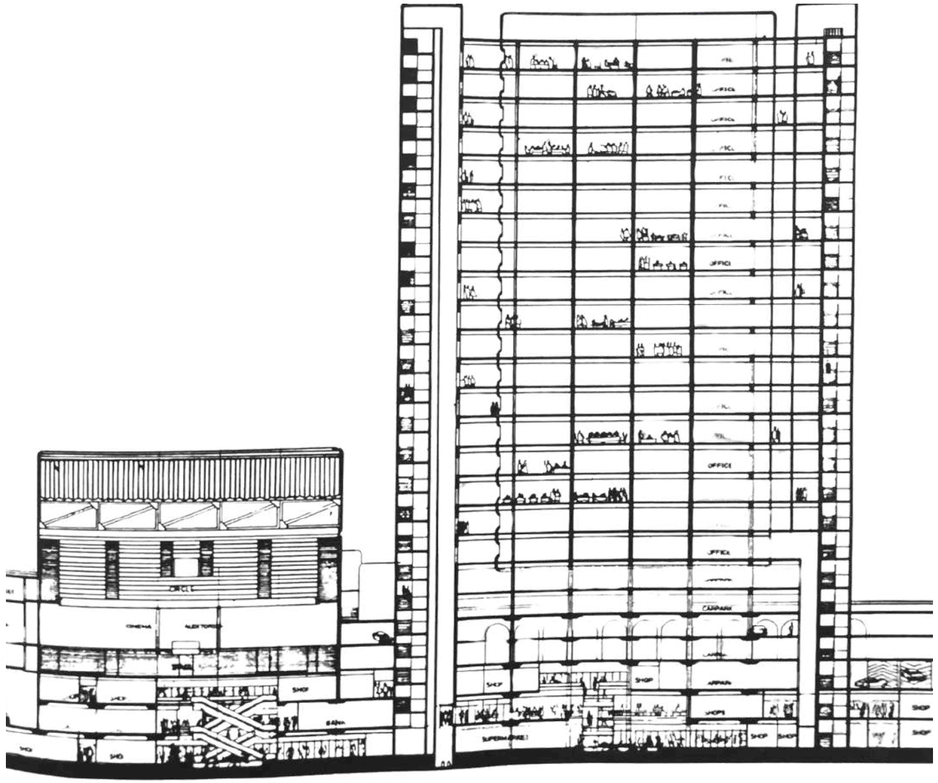
A speculative vision of a city that uses computer technology and information networks to monitor urban activities, process them and respond to changing needs.

SUMMARY

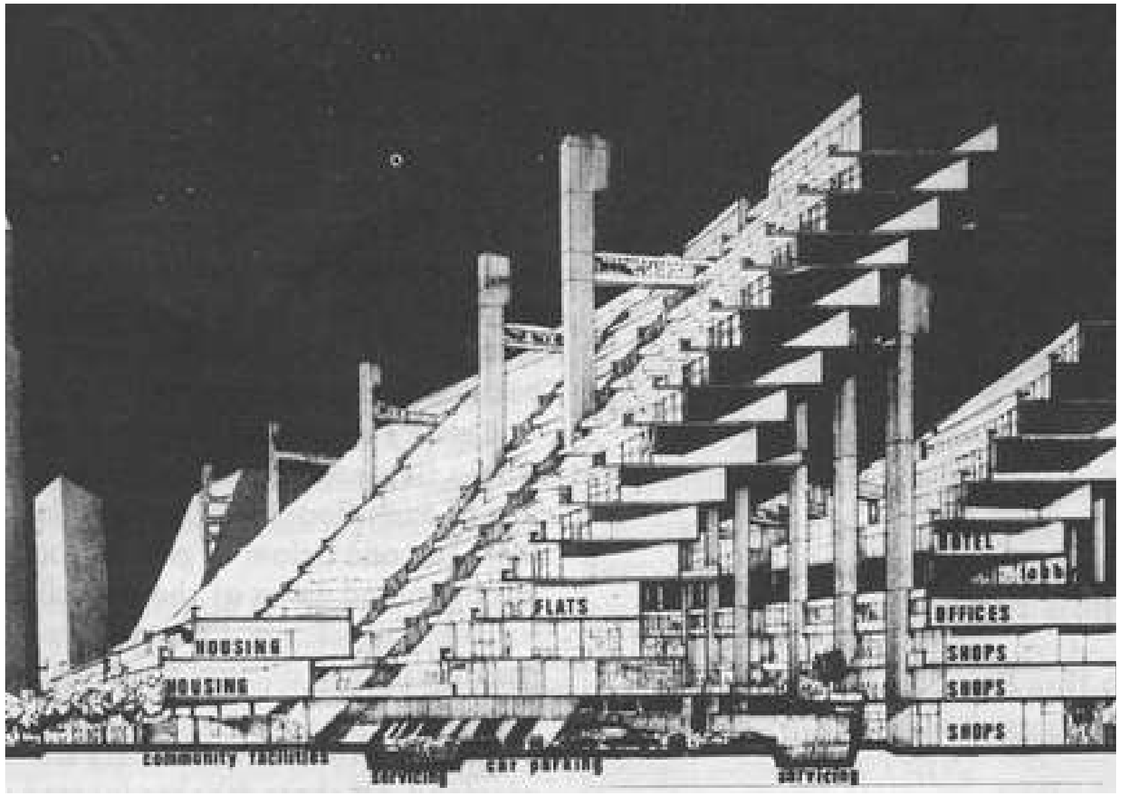
Movement	Philosophy	Key Features
Brutalism	Architecture should have civic and social function, beyond visual aesthetics.	• Bold, massive forms • Material honesty • Structural Expression
Metabolism	Architecture that evolves alongside urban growth.	• Megastructures • Modular and replaceable components
Archigram	Architecture that is mobile, and technological to respond to changing needs.	• Plug-in structures • Mobility • Technological Integration and Connectivity

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF GOLDEN MILE TOWER & COMPLEX

MEGASTRUCTURE - A mixed-use vertical city where people could live, work and play in one building.



Golden Mile Tower



Golden Mile Complex

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF GOLDEN MILE TOWER & COMPLEX

MODULAR - Designing a structure using repeated units or components that can be stacked and assembled, with the potential for individual units to be adapted or replaced independently.



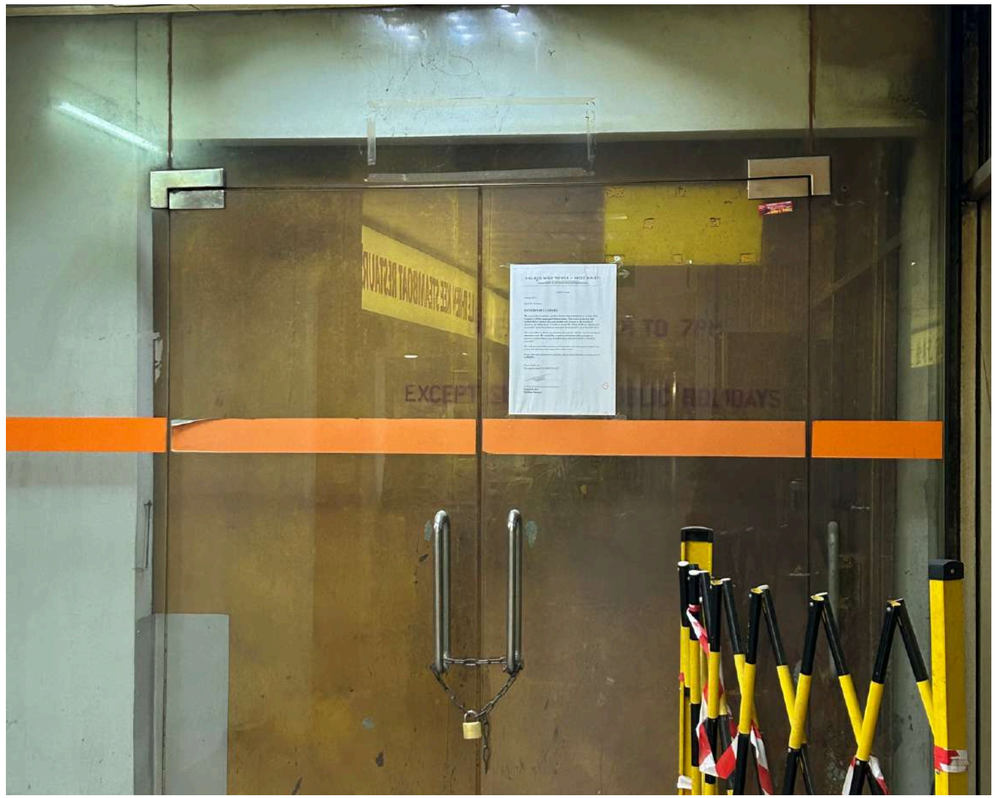
Golden Mile Tower



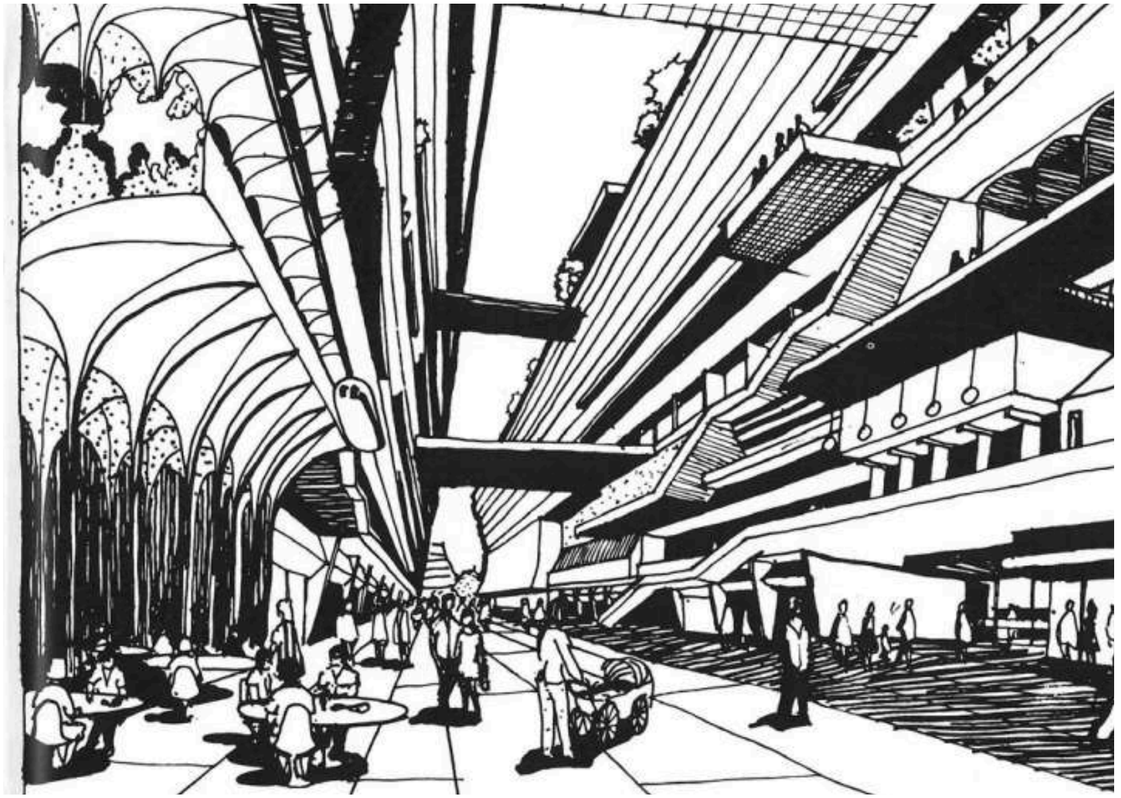
Golden Mile Complex

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF GOLDEN MILE TOWER & COMPLEX

INTERCONNECTEDNESS - Linking spaces and buildings through shared infrastructure, such as internal transport systems, walkways and tunnels, to enable seamless movement between them.



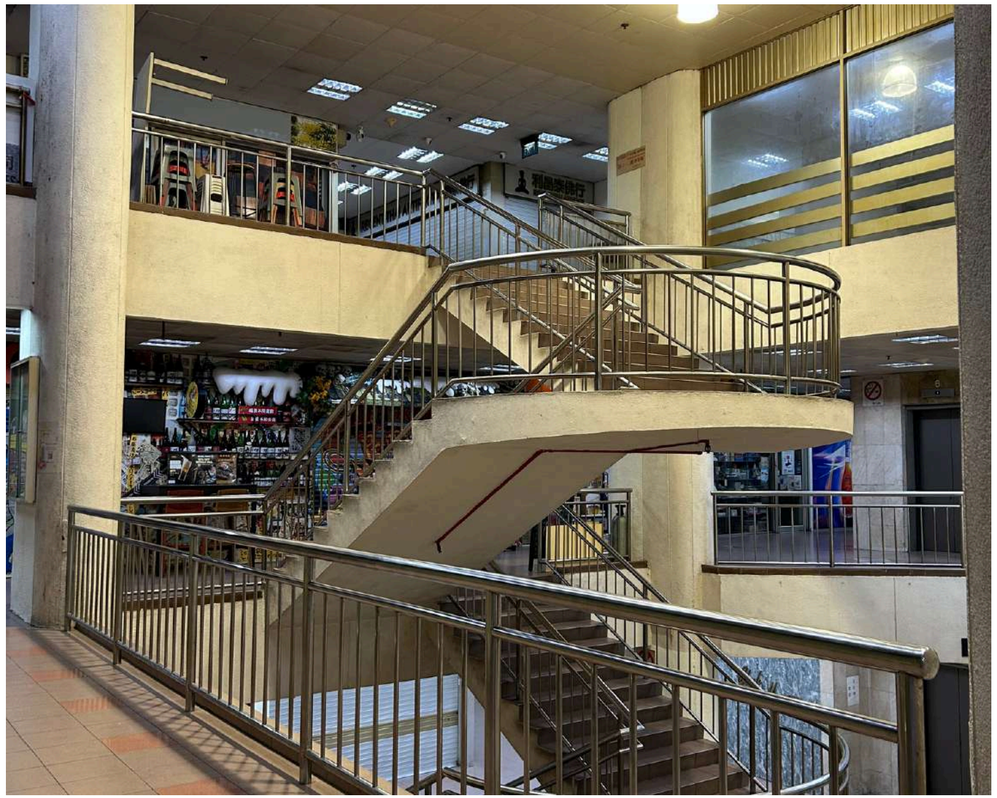
Golden Mile Tower



Golden Mile Complex

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF GOLDEN MILE TOWER & COMPLEX

INTERNAL LOGIC EXPOSED - Making a building's underlying structure, circulation and functional systems visible



Golden Mile Tower



Golden Mile Complex

1B. SINGAPORE - A MODERN METROPOLIS

In 1965, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew declared:
"Over 100 years ago, this was a mud-flat, swamp. Today, this is a modern city.
***Ten years from now, this will be a metropolis**."*

UNITED NATIONS' INVOLVEMENT IN SINGAPORE'S URBAN RENEWAL

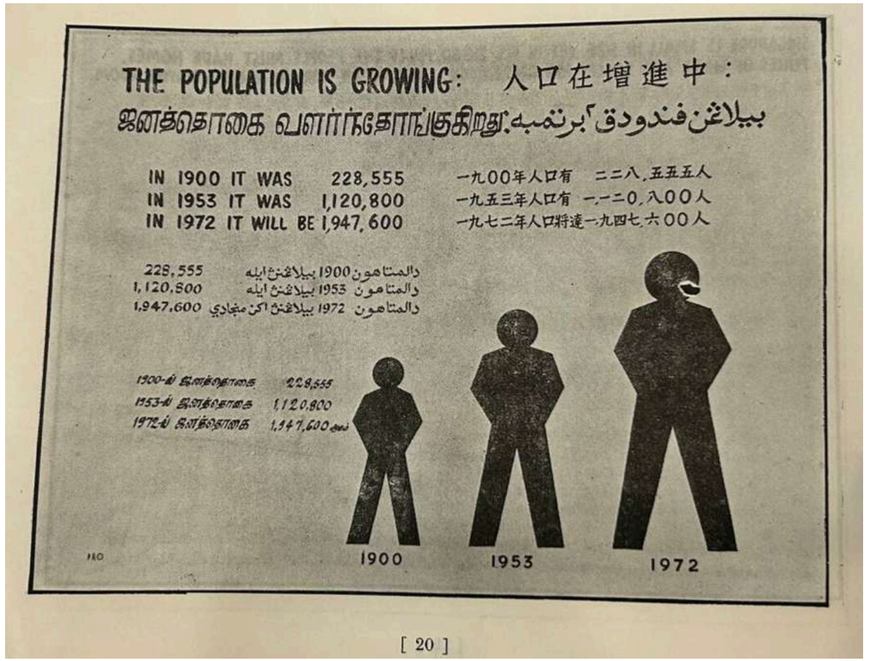
1958
Master Plan

Singapore's 1st Master Plan by the Singapore Improvement Trust, which provided a framework for urban development.

Problems:

- Too restrictive - focused on controlling land use over actively guiding redevelopment
- Underestimated population grwoth





UNITED NATIONS' INVOLVEMENT IN SINGAPORE'S URBAN RENEWAL

1958
Master Plan

Singapore's 1st Master Plan by the Singapore Improvement Trust, which provided a framework for urban development.

Problems:

- Too restrictive - focused on controlling land use over actively guiding redevelopment
- Underestimated population grwoth

1962
United Nations Technical Assistance Programme

Singapore had the urgency to redevelop, but lacked the planning experience and institutional capacity to manage urban renewal at such a large scale.

Erik Lorange arrived under UN to **study and assess** Singapore's readiness for urban renewal.

1963
The KAK Team

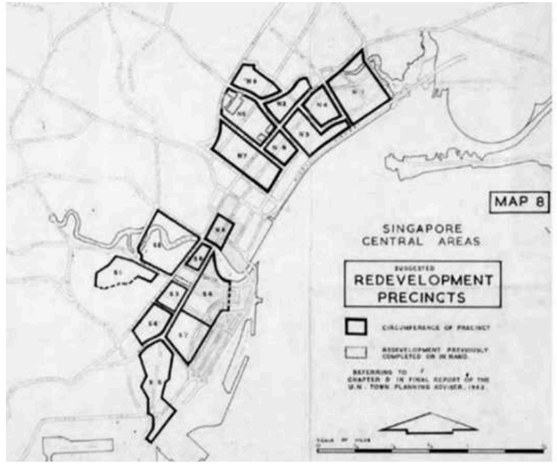
A 2nd UN team comprising Otto Koenigsberger, Charles Abrams and Susumu Kobe built on Lorange's recommendations, and devised action programmes to **move from planning to implementation.**

1963 - RECOMMENDATIONS BY UNITED NATIONS

1

Sytematic Urban Renewal

Divided the Central Area into precincts, and redevelop them in stages



2

Active Government Intervention

Established the Urban Renewal Unit within HDB in 1964, led by Alan Choe to coordinate redevelopment.



3

State x Private Partnerships

Introduced the Sale of Sites Programme in 1967, inviting private developers to redevelop state-owned land.


Golden Mile: Seven sites already taken

SINGAPORE, Wed
Seven of 14 sites which have been taken up for private development under the Singapore Government's urban renewal development scheme will yield a total investment of about $48 million.

MR CHOE

Catalysis

All-time record

4

Conservation, Rehabilitation, Rebuilding

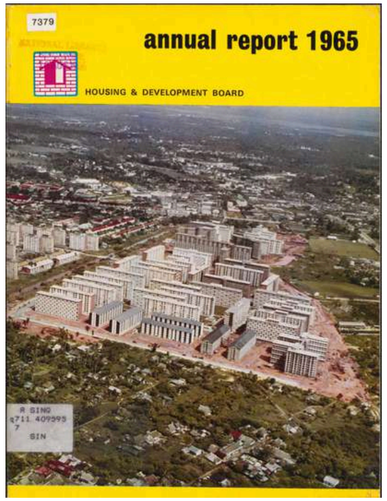
Extensive demolition and large-scale clearance took priority during the early years of urban renewal.



1965 - SINGAPORE'S URBAN RENEWAL SCHEME

1965
Urban Renewal Scheme announced by HDB

Golden Mile was mentioned as a key highlight of the scheme.



Urban Renewal Scheme was announced in 1965, in the HDB Annual Report:

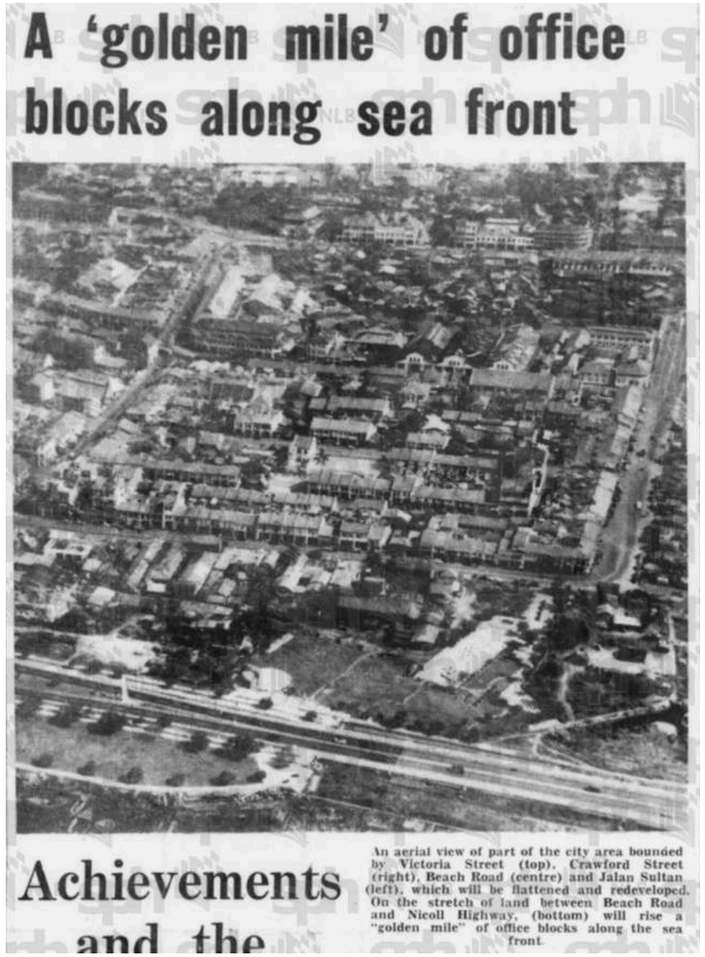
- "Effective implementation of the Urban Renewal Scheme under which $125 million will be spent during the period of the Second 5-Year Programme to **redevelop and rejuvenate the slum-ridden areas in the centre of Singapore City so as to make the most economical use of the land available**."
- Golden Mile was included in the scheme as one of the most impressive plans:
  - **"Golden Mile" of towering flats, office blocks and commercial buildings lining the main sea-front overlooking Singapore harbour."**

1966-67 - SINGAPORE'S URBAN RENEWAL SCHEME EXECUTION

1965
Urban Renewal Scheme announced by HDB

1966
Execution of the Urban Renewal Scheme began

Precinct N1 - Crawford Street, Beach Road, Jalan Sultan, Victoria Street/Kallang Road chosen as one of two pilot areas for Urban Renewal Sheme.


A 'golden mile' of office blocks along sea front

Achievements and the

An aerial view of part of the city area bounded by Victoria Street (top), Crawford Street (right), Beach Road (centre) and Jalan Sultan (left), which will be flattened and redeveloped. On the stretch of land between Beach Road and Nicoll Highway, (bottom) will rise a "golden mile" of office blocks along the sea front.

1966-67 - SINGAPORE'S URBAN RENEWAL SCHEME EXECUTION

1965
Urban Renewal Scheme announced by HDB

1966
Land Acquisition Act

Enabled the government to **acquire privately owned land** for public purposes, helping **consolidate land** for comprehensive redevelopment.

Slum clearance and resettlement: Existing buildings and settlements were cleared, and residents and businesses were relocated.

1966-67 - SINGAPORE'S URBAN RENEWAL SCHEME EXECUTION

1965
Urban Renewal Scheme announced by HDB

1966
Land Acquisition Act

1967
1st Sale of Sites Programme
Golden Mile Scheme

The government offered state-owned land to private developers for redevelopment.

Golden Mile was officially identified among the 14 early government land-sale sites. Developers were given **incentives** for higher uptake:

- **Reduced property tax:** 12% instead of 36% for 20 years.
- **Low down payment**: 20% of the land price upfront.
- **Interest-free instalments:** The remaining 80% could be paid over 10 years without interest.
- **Additional incentives:** Six months of property tax exemption, plus one extra month for every storey constructed, and a waiver of Development Charges.

1972-73 - GOLDEN MILE COMPLEX/TOWER OPEN

1965
Urban Renewal Scheme announced by HDB

1966
Land Acquisition Act

1967
1st Sale of Sites Programme
Golden Mile Scheme

1972 - Golden Mile Complex
1973 - Golden Mile Tower





THE COST OF URBAN RENEWAL

“Urban renewal was aimed at bringing new and vibrant life to the city centre to make it hum with sound and economic activity – amid **an environment of social discipline and orderliness**. It is regrettable but unavoidable that urban renewal has affected families and businesses housed in long rows of two or three-storeyed shophouses in the locality. In the context of our modern day society these buildings, many of which were built more than a hundred years ago, are now a gross economic waste. **Our people must also accept and adjust themselves to the fact that the demolition of outmoded, uneconomic and unsafe buildings to make way for redevelopment is an inevitable part of progress.**”

- E.W. Barker, Minister of Law and National Development, 21 August 1972

The Straits Times Booming - The City with a Heart of Gold, 21 August 1972, Source: NewspaperSG

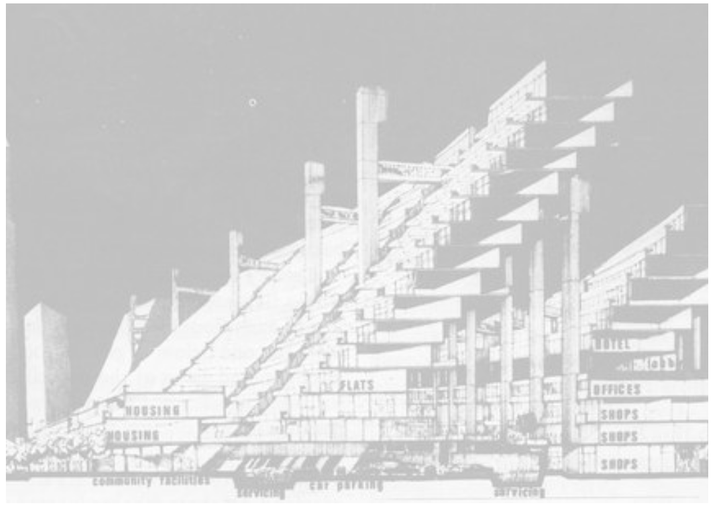
SUMMARY - A UTOPIAN WAY OF BUILDING OUR FUTURE

- **Transforming society:** Envisioning new ways of living through emerging architectural and urban-planning ideas.
- **Modernising the nation**: Using urban renewal to transform the cityscape and create a new national identity.
- **Embracing technologies**: Adopting new technologies to adapt to changing social needs and ways of life.

CORE IDEAS

1 Utopian Moment

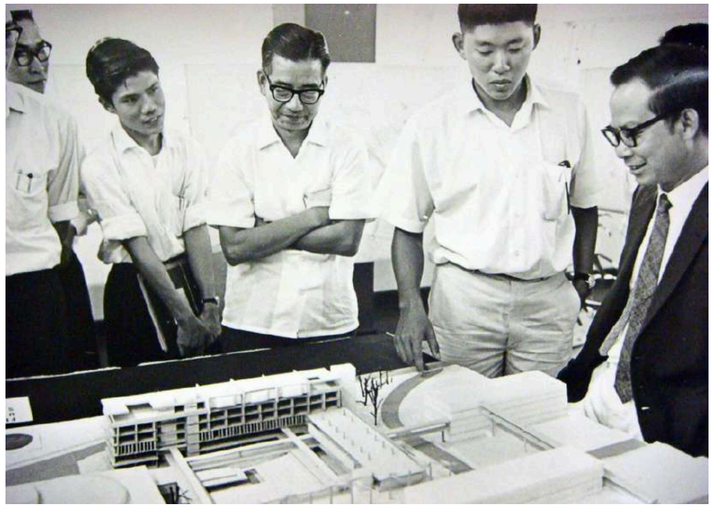
Golden Mile emerged in a time of post-war utopian/social architecture, amidst the optimism of nation-building.



Guiding Question
What kind of future did we imagine for Singapore?

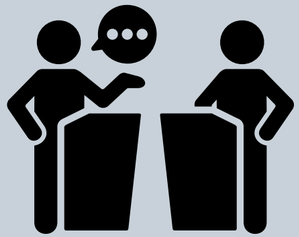
2 Competing Visions of a City

Golden Mile was emblematic of broader tensions between state and civic actors over Singapore's urban development.



Guiding Question
Who gets to decide our city's future?

2 COMPETING VISIONS OF THE CITY



A. Singapore Planning and Urban Research Group (S.P.U.R)

Friction points



B. Other instances of State Crackdowns on Alternative Expression

Larger Political Landscape

2A. SINGAPORE PLANNING & URBAN RESEARCH GROUP (S.P.U.R)

In this period of urban renewal and nation-building, many civic actors — architects, artists, academics — were eager to participate in shaping a vision for Singapore's modern future.

Among them was Singapore Planning and Urban Research (S.P.U.R.).

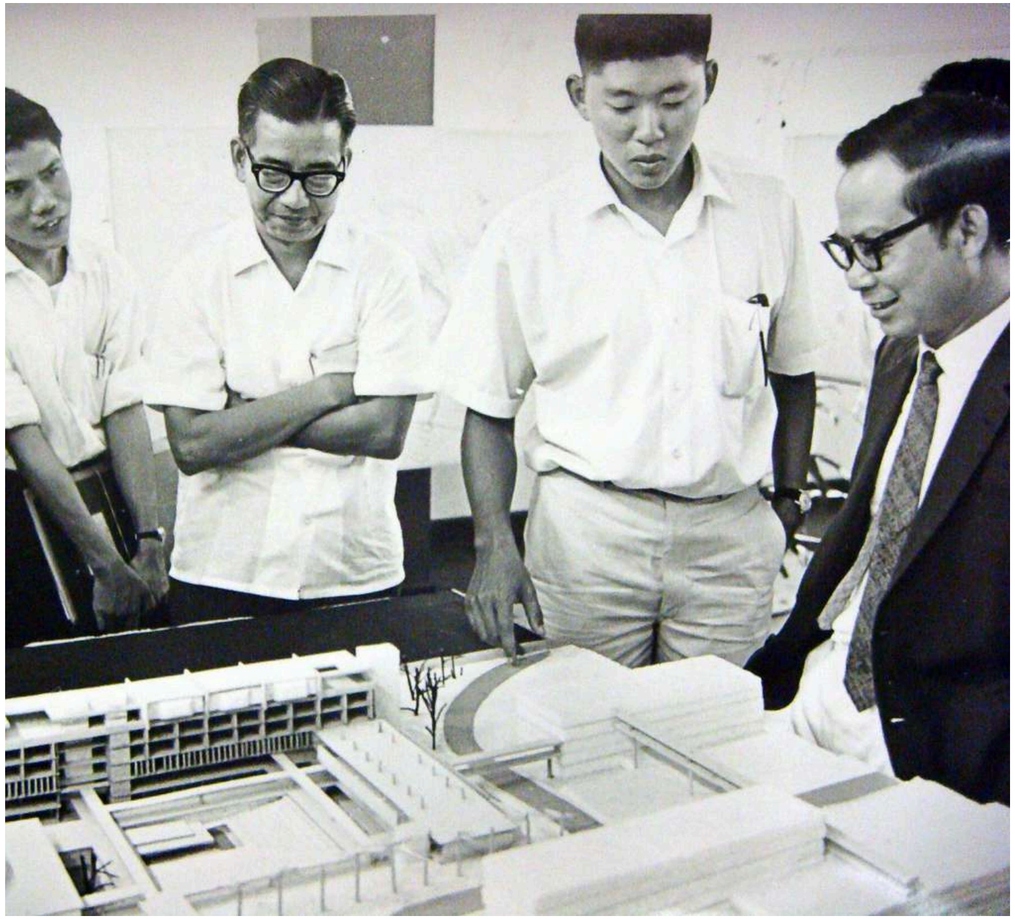
S.P.U.R

2A SPUR

- Singapore Planning and Urban Research (S.P.U.R.) is a **multi-disciplinary think tank** formed to explore the possibilities of Singapore's urban future. They were led by architects William Lim, Tay Kheng Soon and Koh Seow Chuan.

- S.P.U.R. brought together architects, planners, geographers, scientists, writers and poets, **broadening participation in decision-making and shaping Singapore.**

- Over the years, S.P.U.R. proposed **alternative visions for the city**. These ideas brought it into **tension with the state** over how Singapore should develop and modernise.



S.P.U.R - TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1963
SPUR started as a study group

1965
SPUR officially formed

1966
Asia Magazine *The Future of Asian Cities*

1967
- Environment and the Citizen *Symposium*
- Letters to the Press on Collyer Quay's 12-lane coastal superhighway
- SPUR [19]65-[19]67 Publication Released

1968
Environment Exhibition - *Singapore's environment Past, Present and Future*

1969
Their members, William Lim, Tay Kheng Soon, Koh Seow Chuan formed DP Architects, and won the tender for Golden Mile Complex

1970
- Recreation Seminar
- Proposal to legalise Pirate Taxis

1971
- Proposal to shift Paya Lebar airport to Changi
- SPUR [19]68-[19]71 Publication Released

1975
SPUR de-registered

FRICTION POINT - URBAN FORMS FOR POPULATION GROWTH

- Post independent Singapore faced a severe housing shortage, overcrowded living conditions and a rapidly growing population. The government **needed to house more people, improve infrastructure and stimulate economic development, all within limited land.**

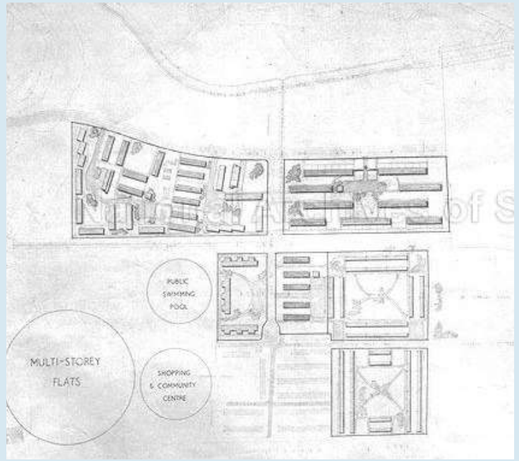
- In **land-scarce** Singapore, **how do we accommodate growth and organise the modern city?**

FRICTION POINT - URBAN FORMS FOR POPULATION GROWTH

In 1966, S.P.U.R. published *The Future of Asian Cities* in Asia Magazine, **challenging** the 1958 Master Plan's model of horizontal urban expansion and proposing an alternative vision of **vertical cities, integrated living and megastructures.**

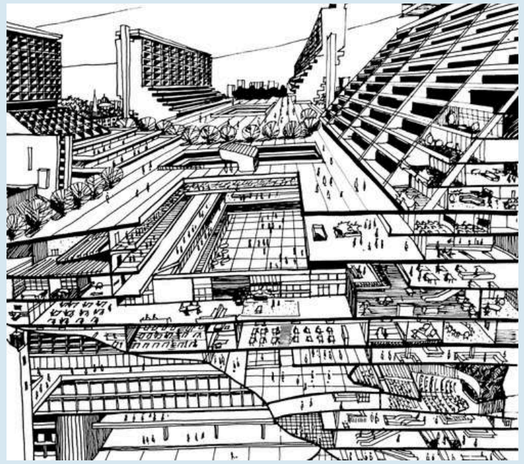
*"Imagine a city where we have **dwellings that stretch upwards towards the sky, and beneath them people humming with activity in the business houses, governmental offices, educational centres, theatres, open spaces and recreational centres**. Imagine a city where the various centres of activity are linked up by **an efficient rapid transport system**, where traffic hazards are eliminated by the well conceived siting of pedestrian precincts and traffic ways and where there are no peak hour traffic jams and car parking problems. Imagine a city where people make their living by day where people live by night. **Centres of entertainment and culture in the heart of the city that light up in the evening when the tempo of our business houses subside**. **Schools right beneath where you live**, where problems of transport and safety for your children are eliminated. **Open spaces** that serve as resting places for the weary shopper in the day, **playgrounds** for the children in the afternoon, and **open grounds** for the aged or the weary worker in the evenings. **Spaces where people can sit and enjoy** the sessions of storytelling, hear the occasional performance of our local band, or watch the gaiety of their local dancers. Imagine **clean parks** and roads free from scores of hawkers and street vendors, and open drains unlittered, This is our Asian City of Tomorrow."*

FRICTION POINT - URBAN FORMS FOR POPULATION GROWTH



STATE

- **Decentralise via satellite towns** to relieve urban crowding
- **Functions separated across zones:** residential, commercial, industrial in designated zones for systematic planning
- **Bulldozing & slum clearance** to replace old with new



S.P.U.R.

- **Vertical density** to accommodate more people within a smaller land footprint.
- **Social Integration:** combine housing, shops and communal facilities in mixed-use megastructures
- **Minimise demolition** to retain existing urban communities where possible

FRICTION POINT - URBAN FORMS FOR POPULATION GROWTH

As a multidisciplinary think tank, S.P.U.R. welcomed a diversity of opinions. One of its leading members, Mr Koh Seow Chuan, advocated for vertical cities that brought work, living and leisure together, for a **different** reason and goal: **“greater efficiency and productivity.”**



FRICTION POINT - DECISION-MAKING FOR URBAN FUTURE

"There exists a great gap between the general public and the government which need to be bridged, if we are to shape a city which we can all be proud of. A healthy exchange of ideas, views, and opinions must take place. The government and the general public must be equally involved and committed to the development and improvement of our total environment, for only then can we achieve in building a Singapore for the common good of all our people."

- S.P.U.R Letters to the Press, S.P.U.R [19]65-[19]67



THE STRAITS TIMES SAT

Straits Times **LETTERS** SATURDAY FORUM

Public projects: A chance to see and comment

WE WROTE recently in your columns calling for opportunities for public participation in civic

at large and in particu-

which guided the making

City planning requires

ing the 14 urban renewal sites?

As to the Housing Board's suggestion that our group should confine our interest to activities such as how to improve

- The government proposed a **12-lane highway connecting Collyer Quay to Bedok to improve east-west connectivity.**
- S.P.U.R opposed it, aruging that the highway would bisect the city and undermine the urban environment.
- This opened up **a larger conversation on public participation in decision-making for how our city should look like.**

FRICTION POINT - DECISION-MAKING FOR URBAN FUTURE

In response to this, Chew Loy Khoon, HDB Assistant Secretary, writes back:

“What can be done is to employ the latest traffic engineering techniques of construction and management to try and prevent overcrowding and congestion on the roads. This is a **highly specialised field of engineering and cannot be left to amateurs... All these detailed studies can only be done by specially trained personnel.”**

"The Housing Board is anxious to encourage and sustain interest and enthusiasm, but would suggest that for the time being at least the writer and his group should **confine their interest to activities such as how to improve the visual appearance** of some of our streets and roads.... how to improve our roadsides and open spaces with trees and shrubs in order to **beautify** Singapore."

FRICTION POINT - DECISION-MAKING FOR URBAN FUTURE

STATE

Planning should be led by experts and specialists

S.P.U.R.

Democratise the decision-making process by allowing the public participation

FRICTION POINT - PRIORITIES OF A MODERN CITY



“Pirate activities are not consistent with the Republic's aim of building a law abiding disciplined, tightly knit and organised society for Singapore. For those who must persist in their 'pirate' operations they will have to face the full consequences of the law.”

Mr Yong Nyuk Lin, Minister of Communications

S.P.U.R advocated legalising informal taxis as a complement to public transport, **recognising their role in making urban mobility more accessible and affordable to the lower and middle income commuters** who cannot afford private cars.

FRICTION POINT - PRIORITIES OF A MODERN CITY



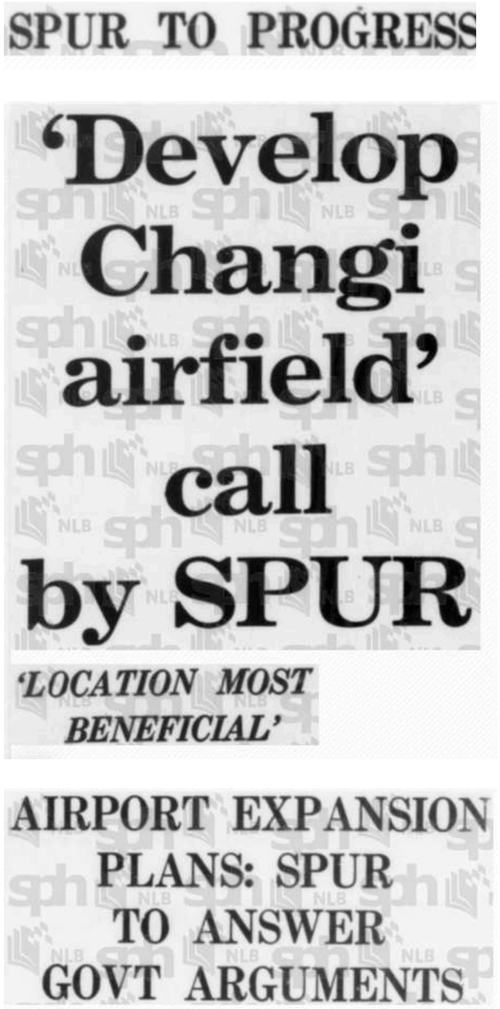
STATE

A modern city should prioritise its image, for it to be pristine and modern.

S.P.U.R.

Social welfare, inclusivity and liveability

FRICTION POINT - ON THE COSTS OF DEVELOPMENT



SPUR TO PROGRESS

'Develop Changi airfield' call by SPUR

'LOCATION MOST BENEFICIAL'

AIRPORT EXPANSION PLANS: SPUR TO ANSWER GOVT ARGUMENTS

- S.P.U.R advocated **relocating airport operations from Paya Lebar to Changi**, to reduce aircraft noise over residential areas and **improve liveability.**

- Mr Ngiam Tong Dow, Permanent Secretary for the Minister of Communications responds by saying that relocating the airport was considered **too costly.** Aircraft noise was seen as **an unavoidable consequence of aviation in land-scarce Singapore**, and the government believed that having it as a health concern was "stretching the point too far".

- SPUR publicised its findings on noise pollution and its impact on surrounding neighbourhoods, prompting public concern. After the government buried this issue for a few years, it became S.P.U.R's **first successful project.**

FRICTION POINT - ON THE COSTS OF DEVELOPMENT

STATE
Economic cost > Social cost

S.P.U.R.
Social cost > Economic cost

S.P.U.R - CLOSURE IN 1975

"During its first year the members met and discussed related planning problems in the Republic. Members were assigned to seek information concerning specific aspects of the problems. The spokesman said: "Unfortunately, during the subsequent two years some of the **activities of the group were unfavourably received by the bureaucracy and this led to the resignation of all the government technocrats followed by other members**."

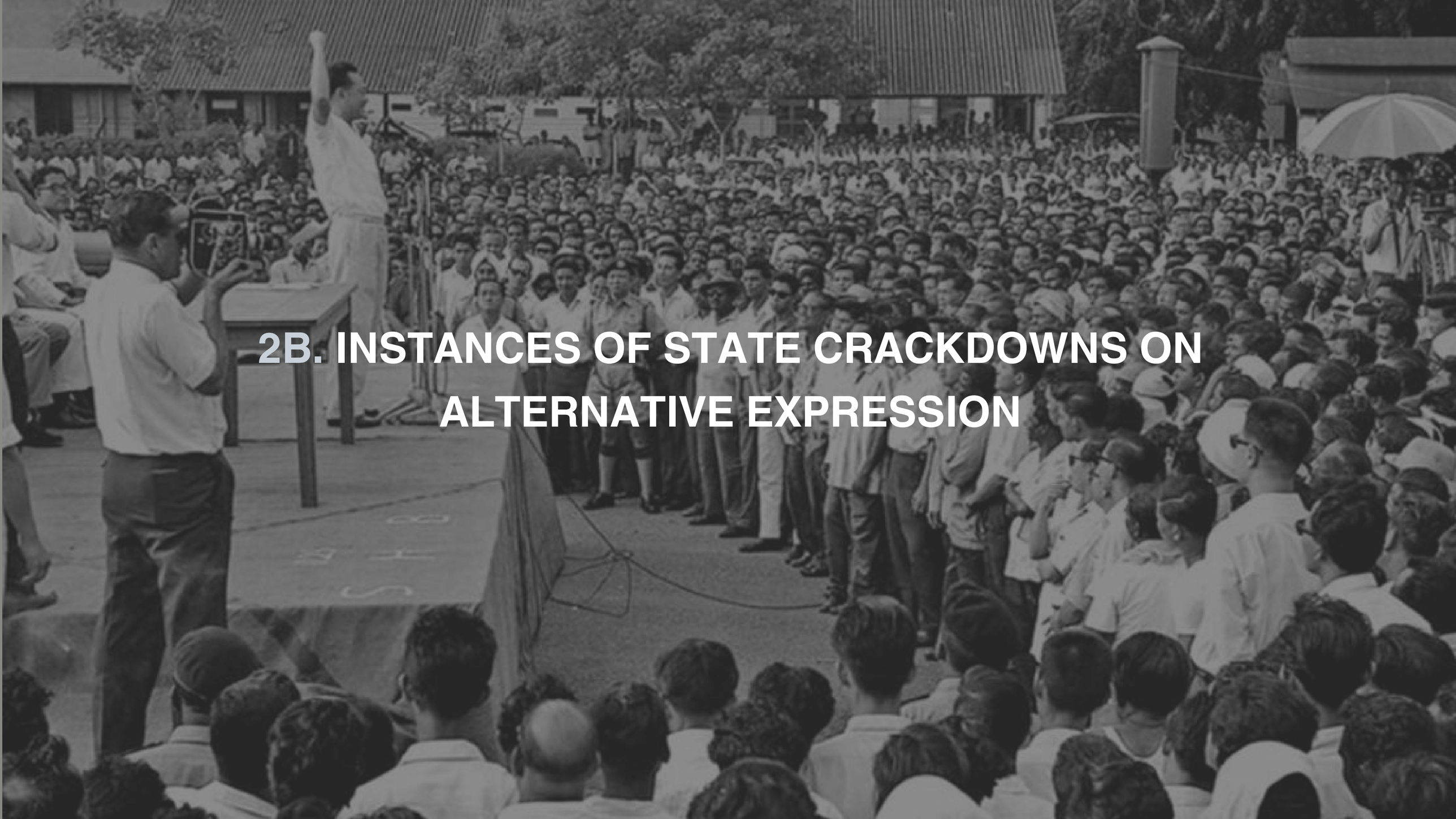
Source: NewspaperSG

“When [Rudolphe de Koninck] was doing research in Singapore, he was told - point blank - that **if you are a member of SPUR, you will not get any research data.** I was so mad, I wrote a long letter to PM, Lee Kuan Yew at that time, to say that this is totally unacceptable. And these people resigned. So we lost our intellectual community.”

- Tay Kheng Soon, Co-founder of S.P.U.R, October 1998 Interview conducted by Philip Bay

SUMMARY

Aspects	S.P.U.R	STATE
URBAN FORMS FOR POPULATION GROWTH	• Vertical density • Social Integration (Mixed-use buildings) • Minimise demolition	• Decentralise via satellite towns • Functions separated across zones • Bulldozing & slum clearance
DECISION MAKING FOR URBAN FUTURE	Democratise the decision-making process by allowing the public participation	Planning should be led by experts and specialists
PRIORITIES OF A MODERN CITY	Social welfare, inclusivity and liveability	Image of a Modern City
COSTS OF DEVELOPMENT	Social cost > Economic cost	Economic cost > Social cost



2B. INSTANCES OF STATE CRACKDOWNS ON ALTERNATIVE EXPRESSION

INSTANCES OF STATE CRACKDOWNS ON ALTERNATIVE EXPRESSION



1963
Operation Coldstore

>120 left-wing activists detained without trial under Internal Security Act over suspected communist subversion



1971
Independent Press Closures

Nanyang Siang Pau, Eastern Sun, Singapore Herald accused of political interference and shut down, tightening state control over the press



1974
Newspaper and Printing Presses Act (NPPA)

Printing and newspaper licences required government approval & renewal. Government could ban controversial publications, and enforce strict moral standards.



1981
Anson By-Election

Ended People's Action Party's parliamentary monopoly when Workers' party J.B. Jeyaretnam became Singapore's first opposition MP.

SUMMARY - THE SINGAPORE THAT COULD HAVE BEEN

- **State vs civic actors:** Tensions between state-led modernisation and alternative visions for Singapore's urban future.

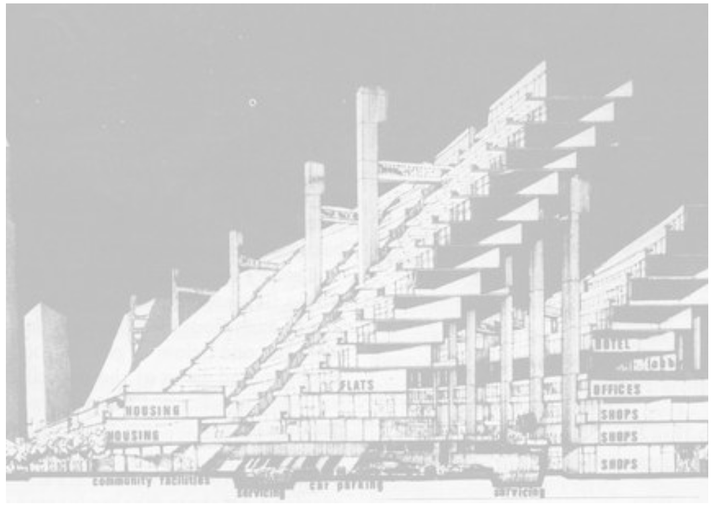
- **Consolidation of state control:** The government increasingly centralised its influence over urban planning and public discourse, limiting the space for alternative visions.

- **Golden Mile as a reflection:** Embodied broader tensions over who had the power to shape Singapore's urban future and whose vision of progress would prevail.

CORE IDEAS

1 Utopian Moment

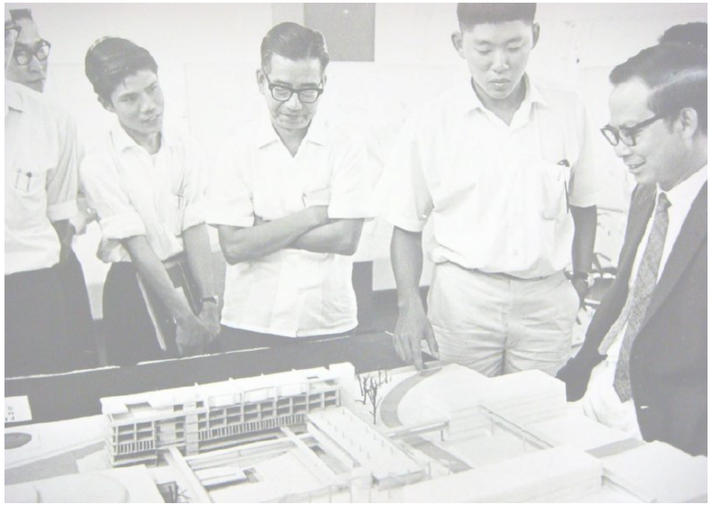
Golden Mile emerged in a time of post-war utopian/social architecture, amidst the optimism of nation-building.



Guiding Question
What kind of future did we imagine for Singapore?

2 Competing Visions of a City

Golden Mile was emblematic of broader tensions between state and civic actors over Singapore's urban development.



Guiding Question
Who gets to decide our city's future?

3 A Haven for the Margins

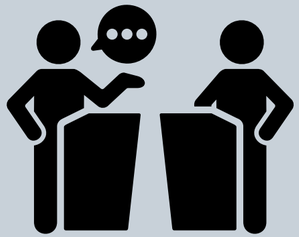
Golden Mile is now an important alternative space.



Guiding Question
Who is left behind in our pursuit of progress?

3

A Haven for the Margins



A. **Why Golden Mile Declined?**

How government policies shaped Singapore's commercial buildings



B. **Becoming "Little Thailand"**

The growth of Golden Mile's Thai Community



C. **Golden Mile's Fate**

En-bloc Sales, Redevelopment and Conservation



3A. WHAT LED TO GOLDEN MILE'S DECLINE?

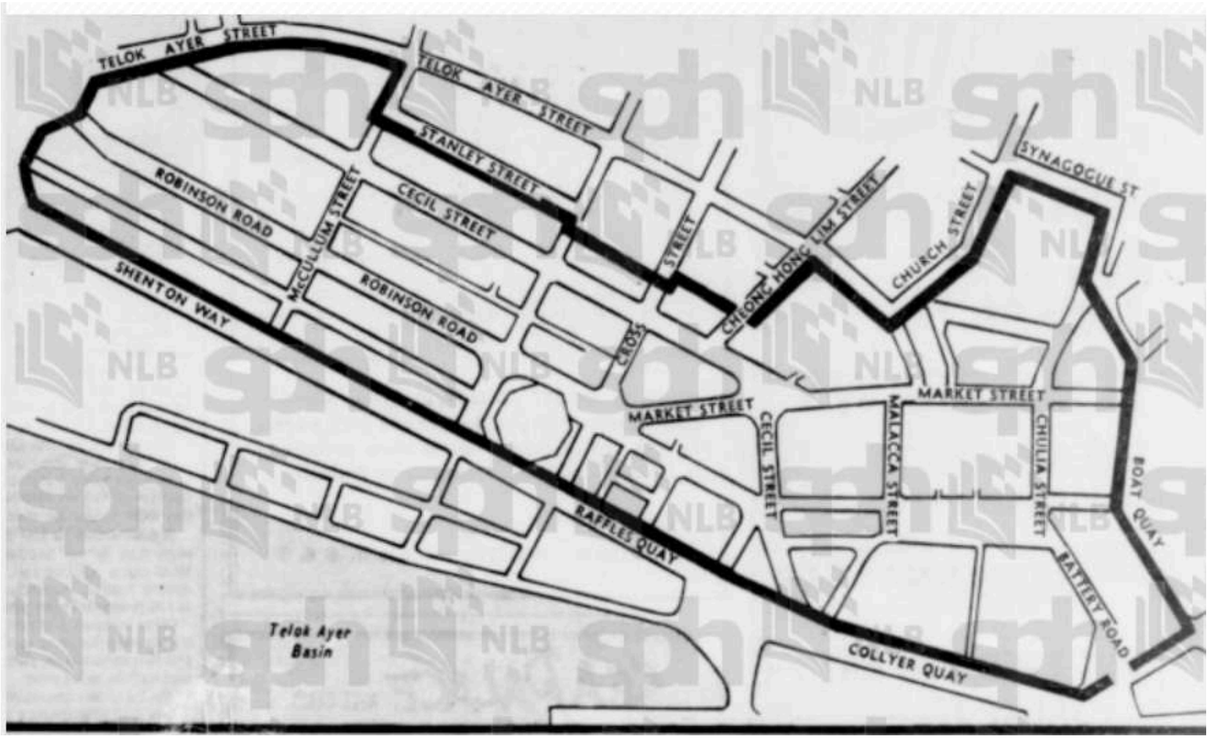
GOLDEN SHOE DEVELOPMENT

1967
Golden Shoe Scheme

Government launched a second Sale of Sites programme, targeting the Golden Shoe area for redevelopment into a financial district. It was grounded by its focus on establishing itself as an international financial centre.

Area bounded by Telok Ayer Street, Raffles Place and Battery Road, Boat Quay, Shenton Way.

But selling state-owned land did not resolve the problem of older properties elsewhere in Golden Shoe that were privately owned.



GOLDEN SHOE DEVELOPMENT

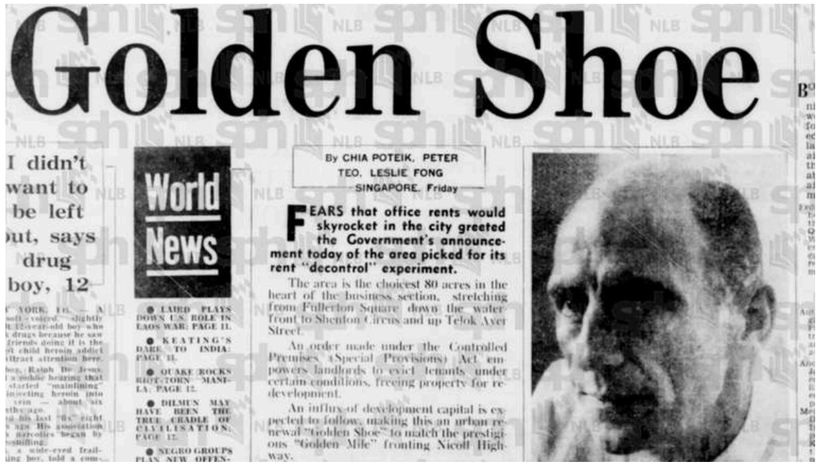
1967
Golden Shoe Scheme

1969-1970
Rent Decontrol

Rent control was previously introduced in 1947, to alleviate the post-war housing crisis. It capped rents and protected tenants from sudden rent increases and eviction.

However, it made it difficult for landlords to reclaim occupied properties, even if they wanted to demolish older buildings and redevelop land.

To accelerate Golden Shoe's transformation into a financial hub, the government lifted rent controls in the district. **Landlords could recover premises for redevelopment, incentivising them to replace older buildings with newer properties that could generate higher rental incomes.**



Golden Shoe

I didn't want to be left out, says drug boy, 12

World News

By CHIA POTEIK, PETER
TEO, LESLIE FONG
SINGAPORE, Friday

FEARS that office rents would skyrocket in the city greeted the Government's announcement today of the area picked for its rent "decontrol" experiment.

The area is the choicest 80 acres in the heart of the business section, stretching from Fullerton Square down the water front to Shenton Circus and up Telok Ayer Street.

An order made under the Controlled Premises (Special Provisions) Act empowers landlords to evict tenants under certain conditions, freeing property for redevelopment.

An influx of development capital is expected to follow, making this an urban renewal "Golden Shoe" to match the prestigious "Golden Mile" fronting Nicoll Highway.

POLICY CHANGES SHAPING OUR MALL LANDSCAPE

1973

Building and Common Property Act Implemented

Mandated “tidy” and “clean” appearance of buildings

1999

MAS - Guidelines for Property Funds

Established regulations for upcoming S-REIT market

2002

S-REIT Launch - CapitaLand Mall Trust

Inclusion in **CPF Scheme**

Singaporeans could utilise funds from CPF to purchase shares in approved property funds

2003

Asset Enhancements Initiatives popularised

A key growth strategy that proposed mall upgrades/ renovations to attract shoppers and tenants.

2006

Nominated MP Ivan Png - Golden Mile is a “Vertical Slum”, “eyesore”, and “national disgrace”

STRATA MALLS NO LONGER ALLOWED IN CITY CENTRE

2022 - Restrictions on the Strata Subdivision of Commercial Properties

"To **encourage the upkeep and quality of developments**, **strata subdivision** of the commercial component into individual units within developments located at prominent areas and routes in the Central Area (CA) **will not be allowed.**

In general, strata subdivided developments, due to their fragmented ownership, tend to face challenges in maintenance and upkeep. For example, they may have **difficulties in obtaining consensus to regularly maintain and/or upgrade the building, which can result in deteriorating physical condition, and in curating a good tenant mix**."

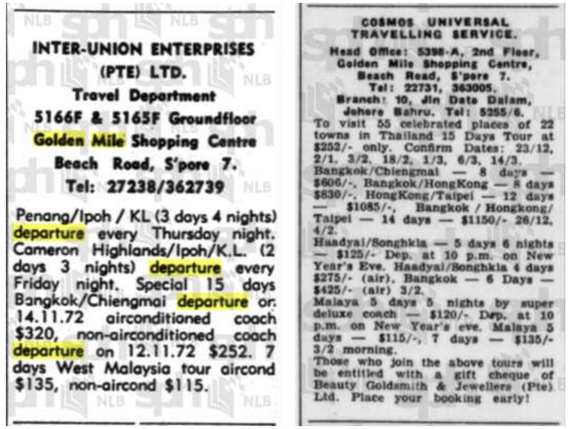
- Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2022



3B. BECOMING LITTLE THAILAND

BECOMING LITTLE THAILAND

In the 1970-80s, Golden Mile's Thai community grew, with **cross-border bus services money-lenders and the opening of Singapore's first Thai Supermarket** marking key milestones in its growth.



INTER-UNION ENTERPRISES (PTE) LTD.
Travel Department
5166F & 5165F Groundfloor
Golden Mile Shopping Centre
Beach Road, S'pore 7.
Tel: 27238/362739

Penang/Ipoh / KL (3 days 4 nights) departure every Thursday night. Cameron Highlands/Ipoh/K.L. (2 days 3 nights) departure every Friday night. Special 15 days Bangkok/Chiengmai departure on 14.11.72 airconditioned coach $320, non-airconditioned coach departure on 12.11.72 $252. 7 days West Malaysia tour aircond $135, non-aircond $115.

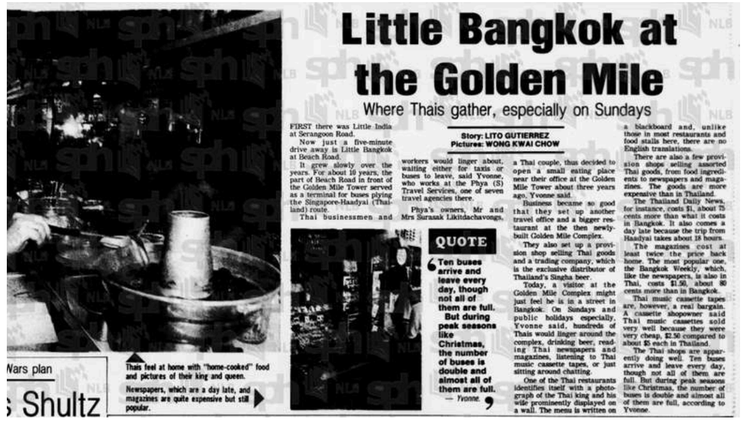
COSMOS UNIVERSAL TRAVELLING SERVICE.
Head Office: 5398-A, 2nd Floor, Golden Mile Shopping Centre, Beach Road, S'pore 7. Tel: 22731, 363005.
Branch: 10, Jln Dato Dalam, Johore Bahru. Tel: 5255/6.

To visit 55 celebrated places of 22 towns in Thailand 15 Days Tour at $252/- only. Confirm Dates: 23/12, 2/1, 3/2, 18/2, 1/3, 6/3, 14/3. Bangkok/Chiengmai — 8 days — $606/-, Bangkok/HongKong — 8 days $830/-, HongKong/Taipei — 12 days — $1085/-, Bangkok / Hongkong/ Taipei — 14 days — $1150/- 26/12, 4/2.
Haadyai/Songhkla — 5 days 6 nights — $125/- Dep. at 10 p.m. on New Year's Eve. Haadyai/Songhkla 4 days $275/- (air), Bangkok — 6 Days — $425/- (air) 3/2.
Malaya 5 days 5 nights by super deluxe coach — $120/- Dep. at 10 p.m. on New Year's eve. Malaya 5 days — $115/-, 7 days — $135/- 3/2 morning.
Those who join the above tours will be entitled with a gift cheque of Beauty Goldsmith & Jewellers (Pte) Ltd. Place your booking early!

Advertisements posted on newspapers, 1972



Thai Supermarket, Golden Mile Complex, 1985



Little Bangkok at the Golden Mile

Where Thais gather, especially on Sundays

Story: LITO GUTIERREZ
Pictures: WONG KWAI CHOW

FIRST there was Little India at Serangoon Road.

Now just a five-minute drive away is Little Bangkok at Beach Road.

It grew slowly over the years. For about 16 years, the part of Beach Road in front of the Golden Mile Tower served as a terminal for buses plying the Singapore-Haadyai (Thailand) route.

Thai businessmen and workers would linger about, waiting either for taxis or buses to leave, said Yvonne, who works at the Phya (S) Travel Services, one of seven travel agencies there.

Phya's owners, Mr and Mrs Surasak Likitdachavongs, a Thai couple, then decided to open a small eating place near their office at the Golden Mile Tower about three years ago, Yvonne said.

Business became so good that they set up another travel office and a bigger restaurant at the then newly-built Golden Mile Complex.

They also set up a provision shop selling Thai goods and a trading company, which is the exclusive distributor of Thailand's Singha beer.

Today, a visitor at the Golden Mile Complex might just feel he is in a street in Bangkok. On Sundays and public holidays especially, Yvonne said, hundreds of Thais would linger around the complex, drinking beer, reading Thai newspapers and magazines, listening to Thai music cassette tapes, or just sitting around chatting.

One of the Thai restaurants identifies itself with a photograph of the Thai king and his wife prominently displayed on a wall. The menu is written on a blackboard and, unlike those in most restaurants and food stalls here, there are no English translations.

There are also a few provision shops selling assorted Thai goods, from food ingredients to newspapers and magazines. The goods are more expensive than in Thailand.

The Thailand Daily News, for instance, costs $1, about 75 cents more than what it costs in Bangkok. It also comes a day late because the trip from Haadyai takes about 18 hours.

The magazines cost at least twice the price back home. The most popular one, the Bangkok Weekly, which, like the newspapers, is also in Thai, costs $1.50, about 90 cents more than in Bangkok.

Thai music cassette tapes are, however, a real bargain. A cassette shopowner said Thai music cassettes sold very well because they were very cheap, $2.50 compared to about $5 each in Thailand.

The Thai shops are apparently doing well. Ten buses arrive and leave every day, though not all of them are full. But during peak seasons like Christmas, the number of buses is double and almost all of them are full, according to Yvonne.

QUOTE

"Ten buses arrive and leave every day, though not all of them are full. But during peak seasons like Christmas, the number of buses is double and almost all of them are full. — Yvonne"

Thais feel at home with "home-cooked" food and pictures of their king and queen.

Newspapers, which are a day late, and magazines are quite expensive but still popular.

Wars plan
Shultz



the thai-dyed

There's a place where Singapore ends and another country begins. Welcome to a land of golden smiles

Reports in newspapers popularising the "Little Thailand" moniker, 1985-2001



Where all things Thai meet

Touch of Thai ... the sign at the taxi stand outside Golden Mile Complex, Singapore's "Little Thailand".

■ONE look at the Thai inscriptions on this sign and one would think this is a taxi stand in Bangkok. But this quaint sign is found just outside Golden Mile Complex in Beach Road, right here in Singapore.

Well-known to many Singaporeans as "Little Thailand" because it is the meeting place of Thai workers here every Sunday, the complex speaks of Thailand — from the series of Thai shop signs with names like *Puan Thai*, which means Thai friend, to a statue of a "four-faced Buddha", a much revered god in Thailand, outside a supermarket on the second storey.

Thai products like cassettes of male artistes Rainbow and Thongchai McIntyre, favourites with the Thai workers who shop here, popular entertainment magazine The Bangkok Weekly, dried fish, bamboo shoots and even Thai instant noodles can be found in the shops.



"My mom said that once one Thai person sees another opening shop here, they feel it's safe, so they all start opening up next to each other"

- Rush, Ex-tenant and resident of Golden Mile Complex



3C. GOLDEN MILE TODAY

GOLDEN MILE COMPLEX TODAY - FROM ENBLOC TO SALE & CONSERVATION



October 2018

$800 million
No bids

March 2019

$800 million
No bids

Redevelopment proposal explored conserving existing building + adding a new block

October 2020

URA proposed conserving Golden Mile Complex and announced planning incentives for prospective buyers:

- Bonus floor area (1/3 more, equivalent to a new tower of around 30 storeys beside existing complex)
- Development charge waivers
- Lease renewal (top-up to fresh 99 years)

October 2021

Officially gazetted by URA as a conserved building

6 May 2022

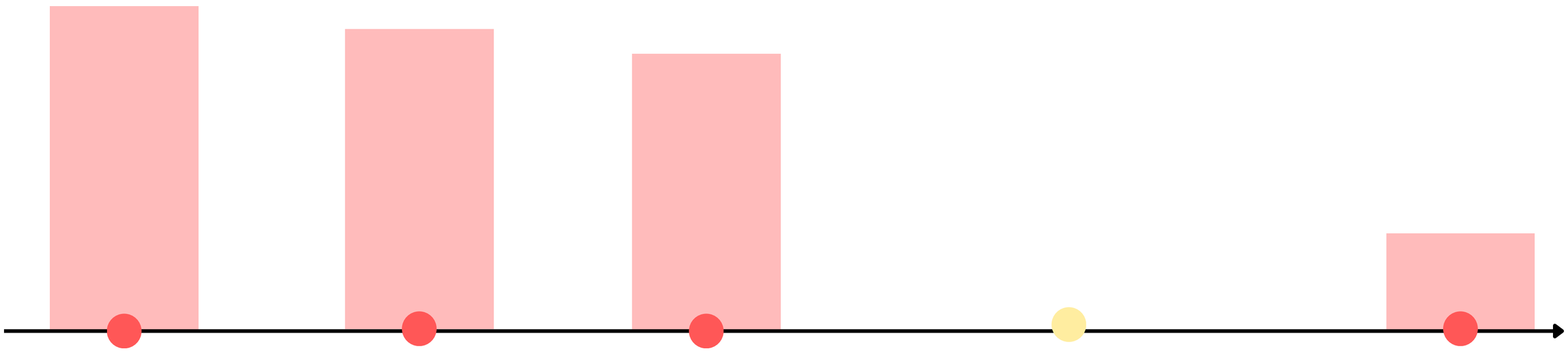
$700 million
En-bloc sale after garnering over 80% owner consent in a record 15 days

GOLDEN MILE COMPLEX TODAY - THE GOLDEN MILE

- **A redeveloped landmark:** The Golden Mile comprises the conserved Golden Mile Complex and Aurea, a new luxury residential tower.
- Golden Mile Complex **adapted for contemporary use** (retail, offices, medical suites, Architecture and Heritage Centre) while preserving key architectural features.
- **Aurea**: A 45-storey residential tower with 188 apartments, developed by a joint venture between Perennial Holdings and Far East Organization.
    - **Luxury positioning**: Aurea's starting price of S$2,750 psf was approximately 32.3% above District 7's six-month median transaction price of S$2,078 psf.



GOLDEN MILE TOWER TODAY - EN-BLOC ATTEMPTS



18 November 2022

$650 million
No bids

7 April 2023

$600 million
No bids

August 2024

$556 million
No bids,
extended to 12 Feb 2025

January 2025

URA incentivises the preservation of the Cinema Block, offering gross floor area (~25% increase) to owners of GMT if they conserve its iconic cinema block

June 2026

Cinema Block on sale for $31 million

SUMMARY

- **Shifting priorities:** Government policies reshaped the commercial landscape, favouring modernisation and increasingly standardised retail environments. Golden Mile gradually fell behind these changing expectations of progress.

- **A haven on the margins:** Paradoxically, Golden Mile became an important social and cultural refuge for communities on the margins of mainstream society, including Singapore's Thai community, whose everyday lives and cultural practices found a home there.

- **An uncertain future:** En-bloc attempts, redevelopment and conservation have raised questions about the fate of Golden Mile Tower. As its neighbour is repositioned for luxury living, will Golden Mile Tower remain relevant?

CONCLUDE

What kind of future did we imagine for Singapore?

Post-war optimism and the belief that architecture could reshape society.

S.P.U.R.'s alternative visions for Singapore's urban future.

Had alternative visions like S.P.U.R.'s been pursued, **we might have had a very different Singapore.**

Who gets to decide our city's future?

The **state increasingly centralised its influence over urban planning and public discourse.**

Golden Mile reflects the wider question of whose vision of progress ultimately shapes the city.

Who is left behind in our pursuit of progress?

Displacement: Urban redevelopment, including projects such as Precinct N1, can displace existing residents and communities.

What does **conservation** mean if we preserve architecture but lose the communities, cultures and everyday practices that gave a place its identity?

RECAP/REFLECTION



Of everything shared, what is one thing of **interest** to you?

What is one thing you'd like to **find out/research more** about?

ADMIN! - POST TRAINING FORM!

LETS TAKE PHOTO YAY

SIGN UP FOR ART CONTENT TRAINING!