



Location: Singapore Botanic Gardens, Symphony Lake

Chairman's Statement

Remaking Singapore. Remaking NParks.

Last year, our leaders responded to global economic uncertainties by calling for all sectors to remake Singapore. The focus of remaking Singapore goes beyond economics. It is also about reinforcing the hopes and aspirations of people in our society so as to make Singapore a place Singaporeans want to live in. Essentially, it is about rooting Singaporeans to Singapore.

As the lead agency in enhancing the quality of life in Singapore, NParks' strategic response to these global challenges is to examine how the organisation can enhance the Garden City's attractiveness and competitive edge. To better align NParks' role with the remaking of Singapore, we embarked on an exercise to remake NParks.

Financial Year 2002 (FY 2002) was significant as it marked the completion of an organisational review aimed at evaluating how NParks can contribute to making Singapore a better place to live in. This exercise has allowed us to re-examine

our strengths and core competencies as well as consolidate and reorganise our resources and capabilities.

As a strategic focus, NParks will look to further create value for Singapore's economy through providing sustainable quality green infrastructure and enriching lifestyle opportunities so as to secure Singapore's competitive edge as a premier Garden City. We will also leverage on the renowned Garden City brand to develop business internationally.

BEYOND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE TO GREEN RECREATION

For a start, a dedicated Recreation Management arm was set up to provide recreational programmes, with our parks and greenery providing the ambience and venues for shared experiences and bonding with the larger community. It is our belief that shared experiences at our parks contribute to the well-being of the nation, and help to root Singaporeans to Singapore.

UPGRADING THE HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY

To ensure that Singapore does not lose its edge as a world-class Garden City, NParks will seek to develop the horticultural industry as a means to sustain the Garden City.

As a measure of our commitment to upgrade the horticultural industry, which is expected to grow by 10% in the next few years, NParks has put in place plans to train 2,500 workers in the next three years through the National Skills Recognition System (NSRS). The NSRS is a national training framework aimed at establishing work performance standards, identifying job competencies and certifying skills acquired in key industries. Together with Standards, Productivity & Innovation Board, Singapore (SPRING Singapore) and the industry, NParks established the Landscaping/Horticultural Industry Skills Standards Committee (ISSC) to lead this initiative. As the NSRS Approved Training Centre (ATC) and Approved

Assessment Centre (AAC), NParks will provide training and certification programmes to upgrade skills in the horticultural/landscaping industry.

IMPROVING NETWORK OF PARKS

In the area of park development, NParks continued to improve upon our hierarchy of more than 300 parks by redeveloping older parks as well as building new ones to cater to the diverse leisure and recreational needs of Singaporeans. FY 2002 saw the completion of MacRitchie Nature Trails which are a favourite with nature enthusiasts. Totalling some 20 km, the trails take visitors through the forest reserves and undulating terrain to the edge of MacRitchie Reservoir, providing an opportunity for visitors to hike through various habitats that were previously not accessible.

The year also saw the completion of the Ginger Garden and Cool House at the Singapore Botanic Gardens. The Ginger Garden features a rich and carefully

documented collection of over 250 species of ginger and ginger relatives while the Cool House is a unique showcase of the cloud forest habitat and plants of equatorial mountains. Recognising the important role the Singapore Botanic Gardens plays as a key botanical institution and outdoor sanctuary for many, plans are in the pipeline to expand the Gardens' research capabilities and extend its boundaries. The new extension will be home to a Herb & Spice Garden, Healing Garden, Children's Garden and resource centres for horticultural, botanical and related activities. First to come on stream will be a 2 ha Children's Garden designed to germinate a love for plants and gardens, develop imagination, curiosity and create a sense of wonder of the miracle that is our natural world.

NParks will continue to develop parks which serve as important venues for our community to bond and reach out to one another. Together with Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), the Parks

and Waterbodies Plan was drawn up last year to enhance our green spaces, to increase accessibility to parks as well as to open up previously unexplored areas.

ENHANCING ROADSIDE GREENERY

During the year, NParks continued to build upon our luxuriant greenery where the green matrix formed by the hierarchy of parks together with our roadside trees enhances our quality of life, nourishes our spirit and helps to create a sense of home. Recognising that streetscape greenery is the backbone of our Garden City's distinctive character, NParks has developed the Streetscape Greenery Master Plan which sets out planning and design guidelines that will maximise the landscaping of streets for variety and character. The Master Plan zones Singapore into different streetscape themes. For example, roads traversing rainforests will adopt landscape planting that complements the forested surroundings while greenery along different roads in different zones will take

on a different appearance by incorporating natural and cultural icons in the environments that strike a chord in the collective memory of our community.

PROMOTING SKYRISE GREENERY

Meanwhile, NParks' efforts to promote skyrise greenery at a national level continues to progress steadily. Aimed at providing green space above and beyond the ground, the skyrise greenery initiative will allow Singaporeans to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of greenery not just in parks but also in their homes and workplaces. To this end, NParks has been working with the Centre For Total Building Performance, National University of Singapore on a collaborative research on Rooftop Gardens in Singapore which has confirmed the thermal benefits of skyrise greening in the tropical climate. NParks is also working with other agencies to spearhead pilot and demonstration projects as well as to conduct further research on rooftop and façade greening.

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EXPORTING EXPERTISE

One of our most exciting initiatives this year is the setting up of a consultancy to provide expertise in higher value-added greenery master planning, park management as well as other landscaping and horticultural skills. For a start, NParks will market its consultancy services in China and India. Plans are also in the pipeline to form strategic partnerships with other agencies and companies to maximise business opportunities and collaborate on town planning and other projects in the region.

PARTNERING THE COMMUNITY

Significant progress was also made in our efforts to inculcate a love and appreciation for nature through our outreach programmes and activities. The popular Adopt-A-Park Scheme, which has been growing from strength to strength since its launch, is now 139-member strong with schools, community groups, corporations and uniformed organisations coming together to care for the parks they have adopted.

Likewise, the newly launched Park Watch Scheme is gaining popular support with some 400 volunteers coming forward to offer their services in four parks. The Scheme aims to encourage community involvement through volunteerism in the management of public parks. Volunteers also play a key role in introducing interesting programmes and activities which help to encourage participation amongst the various segments of the community.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we continue to traverse a period of global economic uncertainty, we have to forge ahead to nurture a culture of innovation that will encourage our staff to embrace change as a source of opportunity and excitement. Our people are the cornerstone of our future. They play a vital role in the successful implementation of our programmes and initiatives. NParks remains committed to developing the career paths of our staff and will continue to provide them with opportunities for continual training.

The year ahead will see NParks continuing our efforts in helping to enhance Singapore's reputation for providing a congenial environment that attracts the world's best, as well as build and anchor a cohesive society via shared experiences and a collective vision.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to our staff for their sterling efforts and commitment. To our volunteers, community and corporate partners, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for your generous contributions and tireless efforts. We look forward to your continued support.



Professor Leo Tan
Chairman
National Parks Board
August 2003