



Cause Kit

Still Standing by Kirsten Tan

What do you need to know?

As captured in the film "Still Standing", Pearl Bank Apartments was one of Singapore's most iconic and historically-significant buildings from the post-independence era. Despite 92% of its residents voting for voluntary conservation of the building, it was finally sold in February 2018 and is in the midst of being demolished.

Two other buildings currently at risk of en bloc sale and demolition are People's Park Complex and Golden Mile Complex. To date, no post-independence strata-titled modernist building in Singapore has received official conservation status. Although the Urban Redevelopment Authority issued a one-year moratorium on demolition of Golden Mile Complex which launched its en bloc tender in October 2018, the [moratorium has now expired](#).

Given the historical and architectural significance of these buildings, it is of critical urgency for current land-use policies and regulatory frameworks to be re-evaluated to facilitate the conservation of modernist structures for adaptive reuse, and for private owners and developers to plan for a longer building lifespan incorporating evolving ideas for rehabilitation and regeneration. The public at large must express their attachment to these buildings to persuade the authorities and private developers that retaining historic structures is worth the effort.

Why should you care?

These buildings from the post-independence era are:

- outstanding examples of the earliest phases of the government's successful urban renewal under the government's Sale of Sites Programme during the era of nation-building - People's Park Complex and Golden Mile Complex were the first public-private, mixed-use buildings on this scale in Singapore;
- visionary, innovative architecture which received international praise, based on cutting-edge urban design principles providing liveable solutions for dense urban centres;
- large-scale megastructures that have shaped the visual character of the downtown landscape; and
- designed entirely by Singaporean architects.

They are iconic landmarks recognisable to generations of Singapore, and thus anchors for intergenerational social memories and shared identity.

For resident users of these buildings, they are not merely lifeless structures but each is home to a community. Over decades, a deep relationship between people, businesses and activities, as well as an attachment to the place has organically developed, giving each megastructure an intangible place identity. Once gone, this cannot be easily recreated.

Where is help available?

Singapore Heritage Society (SHS) promotes awareness and advocates for the conservation of worthy structures that have not been gazetted for protection and the application of international best practices in conservation. In particular, SHS advocates for the conservation of modernist built heritage, which receives comparatively less attention in terms of heritage conservation.

In 2018, SHS released its position paper entitled Too Young To Die: Giving New Lease of Life to Singapore's Modernist Icons, building on nearly two decades of advocating for modern architecture including the only comprehensive visual documentation in a 3-part publication, Our Modern Past. SHS collaborated with The Substation to organise an exhibit, Instagram short film competition and series of public programmes based on Too Young To Die; as well as meeting with the Ministry of National Development and Urban Redevelopment Authority, alongside other concerned citizens such as Tan Cheng Siong, the architect of Pearl Bank, and a group of local architects who organised a petition to conserve Golden Mile Complex and People's Park Complex. In October 2019, SHS partnered DocomomoSG to organise a conference featuring renowned international speakers on the topic of rejuvenating modernist buildings, as well as Objectifs and Goethe-Institut Singapore for a photography exhibition.

The Docomomo Singapore Working Group is the local affiliate of an international non-profit organization dedicated to the documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the modern movement. They have pitched detailed proposals for rejuvenating Pearl Bank Apartments to the new owners, Capitaland, as well as MND and URA.

Architectural photographer, Darren Soh, produced a solo exhibition, book and documentary entitled 'Before It All Goes' at Objectifs.

How can you help?

Support SHS in Giving a Future to Our Past.

Be a Donor

SHS is a charity organisation dedicated to the preservation, transmission, and promotion of Singapore's history, heritage and identity through research, education and advocacy since 1987.

As an Institution of a Public Character (IPC), donations to SHS are entitled to a 250% tax deduction. Your contribution will also be eligible for the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth's Cultural Matching Fund, that provides a dollar-for-dollar match for cash donations to arts and heritage charities.

Donate to SHS at giving.sg.

Be an Advocate

Our work is guided by our definition of heritage as 'the living presence of the past'. Singapore's history is a vital part of our identity and growth. Social bonds are strengthened when we understand and cherish the social memories of past and present generations in the spaces we protect.

Help spread awareness of [our advocacy work](#) on various aspects of Singapore's heritage! Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and share local heritage issues to your own networks.

Look out for student internship opportunities [here](#).

Be a Member

SHS is an independent voice for heritage conservation in Singapore. As a member, you get to meet like-minded individuals in the heritage community, play an active role in civic discussions, contribute to our advocacy initiatives, and enjoy exclusive or priority access to events.

Take action by being a [member](#) today!