

A BETTER PLAN FOR GILLMAN

A Nature, Heritage, Wellness and Living Precinct for the Southern Ridges & Coast

This is a response by residents of Telok Blangah, Depot Road, Preston Road and Pasir Panjang East to the announcement by HDB over the proposed re-development of Gillman Barracks that would remove much of Gillman Forest.

We agree that the country needs more public housing. However, we respectfully disagree with the framing of a binary choice between “more housing” and “keeping the forest”. As residents, we believe that both goals can be achieved, if MND/URA/HDB/NParks is able to accept hiving off part of the proposed housing units to another site within the larger neighbourhood.

We entreat MND/URA/HDB/NParks to consider working with residents to come up with **A Better Plan**, wherein a win-win outcome can be achieved for multiple stakeholders. The objective would be a build of equivalent number of housing units + Active Living facilities for both current and future residents + forest and ecology preservation + commercial revitalization of Gillman Barracks.

The crux of our proposal for **A Better Plan** is to hive off part of the residential build into one side of Alexandra Park. This would increase the land area for such build from 340,000 square metres, as originally proposed by HDB, to a total of 538,000 square metres. A comparison of these land plots is shown in **Annex A**.

By doing so, Gillman Forest and Gillman Barracks can be saved for a separate rejuvenation project that will meet three important objectives: (a) to serve community wellness and Active SG needs, (b) protect an intrinsically precious mature forest for generations to come; and (c) create a forest-side hub of activity that will attract both local and international visitors in line with Singapore’s tourism goals.

In pursuit of a collaboration between MND/URA/HDB/NParks and residents to design **A Better Plan**, we humbly submit below the cornerstone components of a potential development plan that would likely gain easy acceptance by residents. Our placeholder name for this alternative development is **Gillman Corner**.

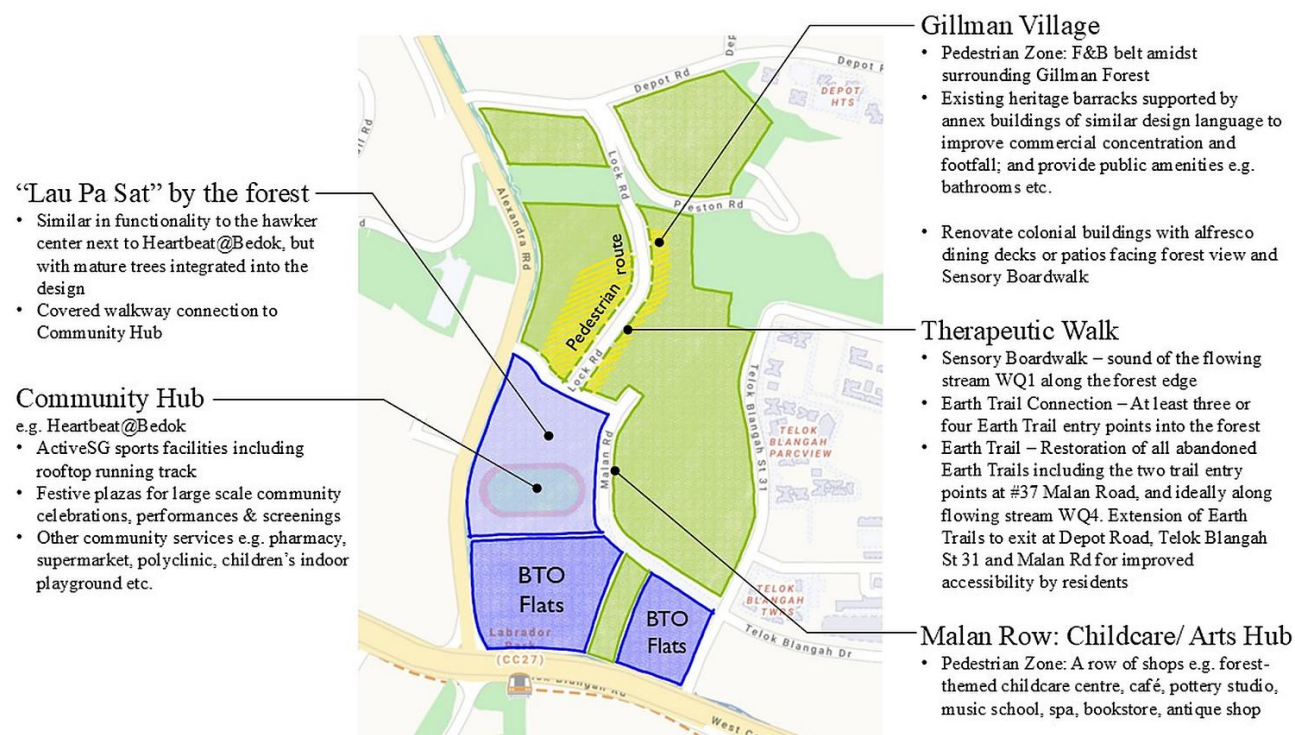
Gillman Corner

We envision a vibrant mixed-use residential/commercial neighbourhood next to Labrador Station featuring:

- (a) 12 blocks of BTO
- (b) Community Hub with Sports Campus
- (c) “Lau Pa Sat by the forest”
- (d) “Gillman Village” F&B pedestrian zone
- (e) Sensory boardwalk along the main forest stream
- (f) “Malan Row” e.g. forest childcare centre, pottery studio, art supply shop, spa, bookstore etc
- (g) Music pavilion as central core connecting Gillman Village and Malan Row
- (h) Therapeutic forest/earth trails with multiple access points to main roads
- (i) Forest track and playground in reforested area next to BTOs

A zone diagram of this neighbourhood is shown overleaf.

Gillman Corner Zone Map



Artistic sketches of the different zones /areas are attached in **Annex B**.

By working together, we believe that this plan can help to achieve desired outcomes via a more nuanced approach that balances sustainability, community and housing needs.

Planning outcome	Better Plan proposition
Housing	Deliver meaningful new public housing near Labrador MRT
Nature	Maximise retention of functioning forest and strengthen ecological connectivity
Heritage	Adaptively reuse Gillman's heritage buildings and landscape
Health	Create an intergenerational wellness/Active Health destination
Economy	Generate sustainable commercial activity and employment
Tourism	Make Gillman a gateway into a larger Southern Ridges–Coast visitor experience
Connectivity	Connect MRT, Southern Ridges, Labrador, GSW and Sentosa

The following sections provide more details of the suggested zones/features of Gillman Corner. These are based on resident input to convey a broad sense of what can be achieved, in the hope that the domain experts at URA/HDB/NParks can participate towards a final building plan.

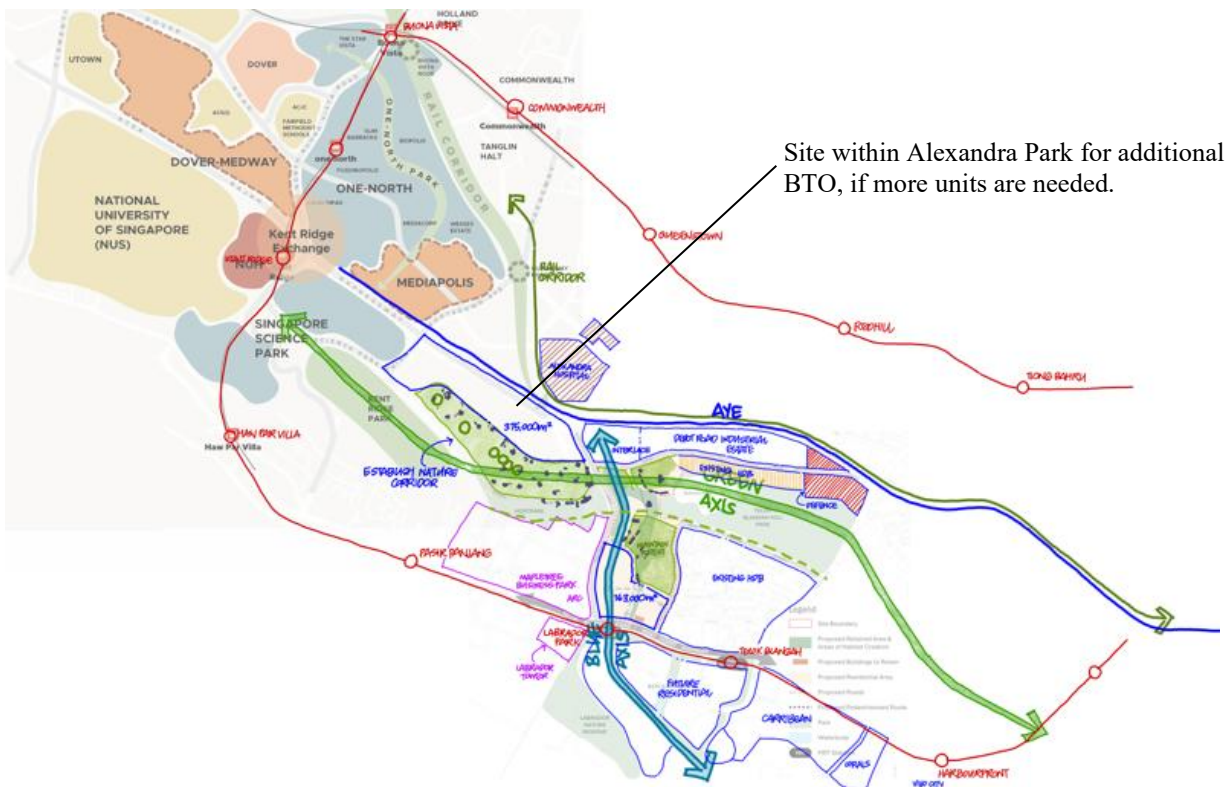
(a) 10-12 blocks of BTO

These would be built at the site of the current 991 Alexandra Road and the adjacent industrial building area at Telok Blangah St 31. As HDB has yet to announce the target yield of public housing units, we are unable to state if 12 blocks of flats can meet that target yield. However, assuming that each block is built to yield 200 units, this proposal would reflect a potential yield of up to 2,400 public housing units. If more is needed, the development could be extended vertically upwards.

When added to the thousands more housing units being planned or currently being built on other sites at Queensway, Warwick Road, Depot Road and Keppel/Berlayer, 12 blocks should be sufficient if the main purpose is to drive capacity utilization of Labrador Station (CC27), without overwhelming the immediate neighbourhood with traffic congestion. This is material because the traffic along Telok Blangah Road, Alexandra Road and Depot Road is already often congested at peak hours and will likely become even more so with the addition of the new households at Gillman and 10,000 more at Keppel/Berlayer.

We ask that HDB provides more details on the need for BTO flats beyond an additional 10-12 blocks. Much has been made of the fact that recent BTO applications were 4x oversubscribed, but there is no granular analysis as to whether the applicants are in fact first-time buyers truly in need, or simply people who treat BTO purely as an investment opportunity. Should there in fact be actuarial or other evidence of an immediate need for more than 10-12 blocks of BTO flats, such evidence should be presented for public assessment and understanding.

In the event that such additional need is well and truly demonstrated, we respectfully submit that the better way to meet that need is NOT to decimate Gillman Forest, which forms a crucial ecological bridge between the Southern Ridges/Kent Ridge Park, Telok Blangah Hill Park and Labrador Park. Instead, the balance of any needed housing units can be built within Alexandra Park, in the area shown below.



This highway-adjacent area would avoid the concentration of mature/heritage trees deeper within Alexandra Park. The trade-off would be the demolition of a relatively small number of colonial buildings. The vast majority of residents would find that trade-off highly acceptable versus the razing of Gillman Forest.

There are a number of other potential brownfield sites that may be utilised instead of Alexandra Park. These are listed in the attached [Annex C](#).

(b) Community Hub with Sports Campus

In line with the ActiveSG/Active Health imperatives that have been launched in recent years, we looked to the example of Bedok Heartbeat as a prime example of how Gillman can serve the needs of multiple generations. The blueprint for such a community hub already exists, and its success already proven in Bedok, so it would be

relatively easy for URA/HDB to implement. It is also highly congruent with existing initiatives to promote active health and active ageing.

Congruence with existing government initiatives

Gillman Sports Campus	Existing Government Initiative
ActiveSG sport hub	ActiveSG
Active Health Lab	Active Health / Healthier SG
Senior strength & mobility	CALM / Gym Tonic / Active Ageing
Adaptive sports	SportSG Seniors / inclusive sport
Walking, running & forest trails	ActiveSG / Active Health / Sport-in-Precinct
Youth, family & community sport	ActiveSG Academies / Active Parents / Seniors National Games

Gillman residents have expressed the following as desired features of the proposed Community Hub:

- i. ActiveSG sports facilities.
- ii. Festive plaza for large scale community celebrations, performances & screenings.
- iii. Other community services eg. pharmacy, library, classrooms, supermarket, polyclinic, children's indoor playground etc.
- iv. A nature-inspired façade that integrates well with Gillman Forest and which would be consistent with URA's Landscaping for Urban Spaces and High-Rises (LUSH) programme.
- v. Lots of basement parking to accommodate spillover parking needs for the proposed Gillman Village pedestrian zone.

Inasmuch as the rationale for new BTO is to locate family households closer together, the Community Hub will serve these multi-generational households.

One campus, four generations

CHILDREN	YOUNG ADULTS	FAMILIES	OLDER ADULTS
ActiveSG youth programmes	Running	Family fitness	Strength & balance
Forest play	Cycling	Weekend sport	Adaptive sport
Learn-to-play & athletics	Outdoor adventure	Nature walks	Walking & mobility
School programmes	Recreational sport	Parent-child activities	Social sport

(c) “Lau Pa Sat by the forest”

We note the lack of a hawker centre within easy walking distance of the office/industrial buildings at Alexandra Road and Labrador Park. This could be rectified by building a forest-themed hawker centre at the site of the old SAJC (present site of the Academy of Singapore Teachers). This would be frequented not just by office workers, but by both current and new residents as well.

The residents have expressed a desire for:

- i. a green theme that includes outdoor seating under tree and pavilion shade
- ii. good accessibility for seniors
- iii. covered walkway to Community Hub
- iv. a view of the forest
- v. safeguards to avoid birds being injured by any fans

(d) “Gillman Village” F&B pedestrian zone

The proposal is to convert this part of Gillman Barracks into a pet-friendly pedestrian zone, with strategic build/renovation as needed to create a critical mass of F&B enterprise that will attract significant footfall from the new BTO residences as well as foodies from all over Singapore.

Highlights may include:

- i. Extending the pedestrian zone from the big carpark downhill from #22 Lock Road (hereinafter “**the Big Carpark**”) all the way to Malan Road. The existing asphalt Lock Road will be broadened and converted to a walking plaza that connects seamlessly to all existing and new buildings within the zone (“**the Plaza**”). Mature trees will be planted throughout the Plaza to provide a continual canopy between buildings, and picnic/park benches placed liberally within the tree shade.
- ii. Inserting additional 1-2 storey F&B buildings of similar architectural style within the Plaza, with covered walkways connecting all the buildings.
- iii. Sensitively inserting low-rise or basement carparks at the outer edges of the pedestrian zone. For instance, at the site of the Big Carpark, a single-storey carpark could be built, with a cluster of 8-10 F&B structures built on its roof. These new structures would then stand at equal level with #22 Lock Road and form a meaningful cluster, versus the current isolation of #22 up on a slope. Alternatively, if hydrologically feasible, a large basement carpark could be built in/over part of the large ravine between Alexandra Road and the Barracks, with additional low-rise F&B structures above.
- iv. Renovating the existing buildings to be suitable for F&B e.g. internal remodelling to remove small cramped spaces, retrofitting for industrial kitchen needs, addition of windows/doors for light entry.
- v. Adding ground or balcony decking on both sides of both old and new buildings along the forest edge. This would result in decking facing the Plaza for better frontage access, as well as decking facing the forest for views of the forest stream/boardwalk.

In positioning Gillman Village as mainly a F&B pedestrian zone, the additional foot traffic and critical mass could viably support a mix of complementary activities/spaces e.g. wellness studios, arts/craft retail, maker workshops and live performances. Residents are mindful of the likely objection to loud music that has generated previous complaints, but it may still be possible to convert, for example, the top floor of #9 Lock Road (the largest heritage building) into a more soundproof multi-purpose hall with a stage that can be booked for professional/amateur performances and wedding events.

This “F&B + wellness/arts” hub would be consistent with the Singapore Tourism Board’s Tourism 2040 strategy which calls for sustainable tourism growth, and it would be markedly distinctive as an experience of a vibrant forest-side community. It would speak to STB’s 2024 motto where “large experiences come with small footprints”.

(e) Sensory boardwalk along the main forest stream

The EIA report refers to the main stream WQ1 that runs downhill behind the Big Carpark, as well as #6 and #7 Lock Road. Residents report that this stream is unique in Singapore for being able to hear the sound of a small natural waterfall in the midst of an urban city, especially after heavy rainfall. Currently, the view of the stream is obscured by forest vegetation. Being located at the back side of the Big Carpark and the two Lock Road buildings, there is no way to unlock the potential of this natural feature unless some investment is put into building a boardwalk next to or above that stream.

Such a Sensory Boardwalk would be a haven for families seeking a forest respite from the heat, and could be used for multi-generational activities like walking, jogging and birdwatching. Birdwatching and nature photography, in particular, already draw enthusiasts from all parts of Singapore.

At the same time, if ground or balcony decks are added to the Lock Road buildings facing the forest, these dining patios or balconies would have a forest view complemented by the Sensory Boardwalk. This will likely add to the commercial attractiveness of these buildings for F&B vendors.

(f) “Malan Row” e.g. forest childcare centre, pottery studio, art supply shop, spa, bookstore etc.

A second pedestrian zone is proposed in front of the existing Malan Road colonial buildings, from #37 to #47 Malan Road. In this pedestrian zone, the asphalt road would be converted to walking pavement, and there would be covered walkways to the adjacent Community Hub and the hawker centre.

Residents noted a big gap between #39 Malan Road (The Naked Finn restaurant) and #47 Malan Road (the renovated cluster of shops), occupied by a long, empty walkway. It was suggested that part of this walkway be demolished to insert a low-rise building that would provide a better critical mass of shops to attract footfall from the Community Hub and other area zones.

Some residents lamented the lack of good childcare centres, and noted that there is none with a forest theme nearby, compared with say Skool4kidz Campus at Sengkang Riverside Park. In this regard, #37 Malan Road could be repurposed for such use, as there are two abandoned earth trail entry points on either side of the building that could potentially be developed into usable earth trails. Likewise, #39 could be similarly used. These facilities would serve the new, young families moving into the BTO flats, consistent with Singapore’s need to drive up TFR.

(g) Music pavilion as central core connecting Gillman Village and Malan Row

Singapore currently has a dearth of small-scale outdoor venues for music or other performances. Siting one at this location would fill that gap. If built with proper outdoor sound/acoustic/light design and equipment, this could be booked by professional gigs or amateur musicians/bands seeking to hone their craft. A weekly outdoor open mic night could pull in residents beyond Telok Blangah to patronise the F&B establishments in Gillman Village. Suitably vetted musicians of demonstrable talent could be permitted to book the venue at minimal cost for busking, with a leaderboard of polled popularity that could be considered as part of the vetting exercise.

Concerns about noise can be managed more surgically versus a blanket “no” to music performances. For instance, booking rules of the pavilion could stipulate no loud music after 10pm, or could specify a threshold decibel or range of acceptable genres of music that can be performed in this setting.

(h) Therapeutic forest/earth trails with multiple access points to main roads

Consistent with the ActiveSG/Active Health policy initiatives, the residents’ proposal is for NParks to restore all the abandoned earth trails within Gillman Forest, ideally with stretches along the existing streams. The inspiration for this is the earth trails throughout MacRitchie Reservoir, which has become a haven for family hikes as well as athletic cross-country training.

As Gillman Forest is bordered by Dover Road, Telok Blangah St 31, Malan Road and Alexandra Road, the residents feel that easy access to the earth trails from each of these roads would be ideal. This would also allow residents to take forest short cuts that make it easier to access bus stops and Labrador Station.

The combination of the Sensory Boardwalk and the therapeutic forest trails resonates with URA’s stated goals of creating green spaces for wellness, integrating more therapeutic landscapes, making green spaces more accessible and conducive, and extending the restorative benefits of nature.

(i) Forest track and playground integrated in reforested area next to BTOs

The area currently occupied by the archery school is proposed for reforestation to lock in the ecological corridor with Berlayer/Labrador. Such reforestation would provide the perfect opportunity to provide residents and future generations with Singapore’s first forested sports track, inspired by the Michael Johnson Track at Nike World Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon. With global warming projected to continue, this forested track may become a template for future sports facilities as we battle to keep cool even as we pursue an active lifestyle.

Instead of a conventional soccer field, other popular fitness/lifestyle features can be included, such as a tree-covered taiji deck, outdoor exercise stations and a playground nestled within the reforested trees.

Gillman at the heart of a seamless green destination

Last but not least, residents would like to propose a “Ridge-to-Coast Heritage & Wellness Trail” – a green spine connecting: Kent Ridge Park, Norwegian Seamen’s Church, Reflections at Bukit Chandu, Hort Park, Alexandra Arch, Gillman Forest and Village, Telok Blangah Hill Park, Alkaff Mansion, Henderson Waves, Mount Faber and Faber Peak, future Pulau Brani and Sentosa. In this vision, Gillman becomes a node in a much larger destination rather than a standalone hub of activity.



Next Steps

This proposal represents the considered, aggregate proposal of residents in Telok Blangah, Depot Road and Preston Road, who have lived close to Gillman Forest for years, in some instances decades. As citizens who understand the neighbourhood well, we ask that MND/URA/HDB/NParks or other relevant agencies take the time to fully consider our proposal. As indicated in the table below, our proposal is wholly aligned with URA’s previously announced objectives.

We ask that Gillman Forest be viewed not as just another land parcel, but rather as a City in Nature asset that can give both current and future residents recreation, wellbeing and identity. URA/HDB/SLA/NParks may wish to explore the concept jointly with STB, SportSG and relevant economic agencies, followed by market sounding or an RFI to test commercial viability. To further this end, we remain humbly at your service to provide additional suggestions or feedback as may be needed.

Sincerely,

The residents of the “Save Gillman Forest” campaign and website.

Scoring against URA objectives

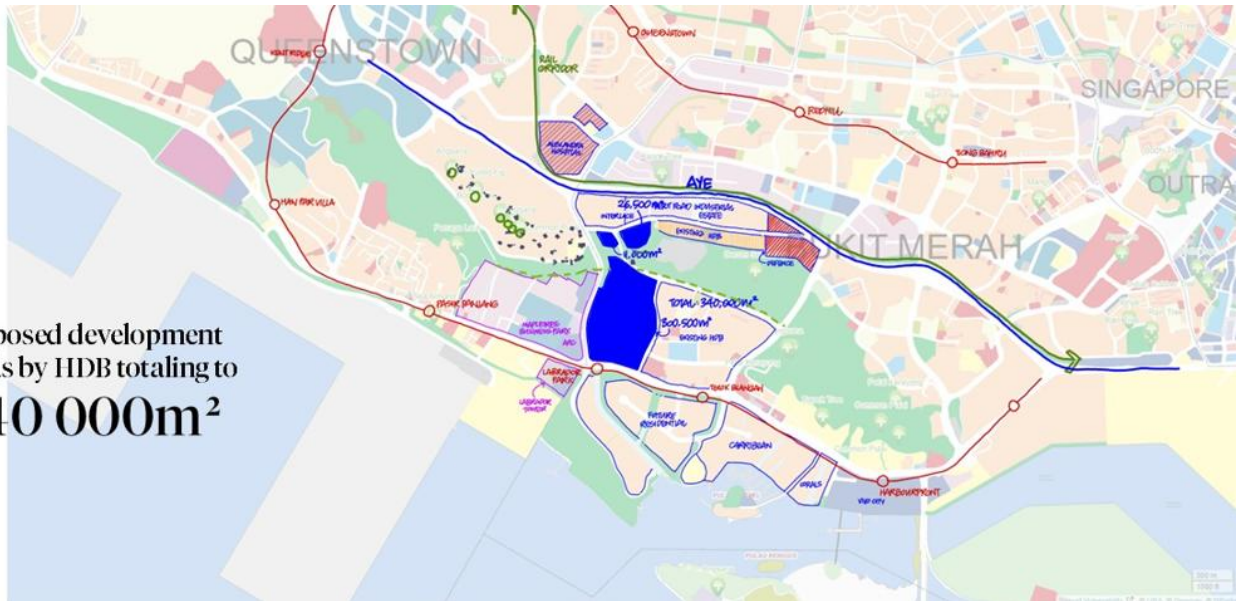
URA OBJECTIVE	SCORE
Healthy city	5 / 5
Ageing-in-place	5 / 5
Active lifestyles	5 / 5
Inclusive neighbourhood	5 / 5
Intergenerational use	5 / 5
Southern Ridges & Coast connectivity	5 / 5
Government program alignment	5 / 5

ANNEX A

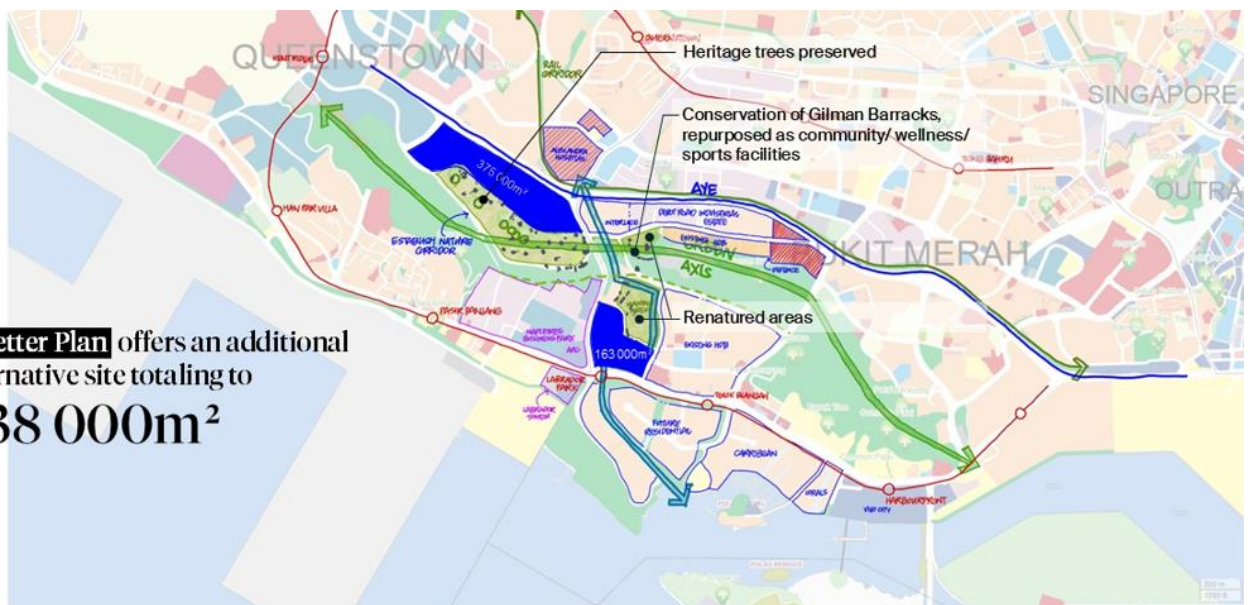
Maps Showing

Original redevelopment site vs Split sites under A Better Plan

Proposed development areas by HDB totaling to **340 000m²**



A Better Plan offers an additional alternative site totaling to **538 000m²**



ANNEX B

Artist Sketches of Different Zones in Gillman Corner

Lean into the forest...

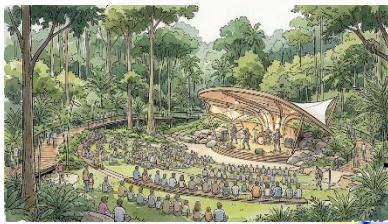
Pedestrian Plaza



Forest-themed Lau Pa Sat



Music Pavilion



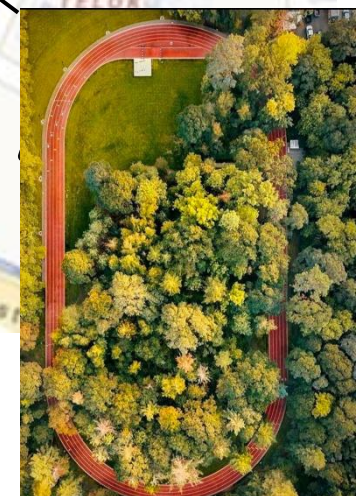
Community Hub



Sensory Boardwalk



Pedestrian Plaza



Forest Track, Playground, Exercise Station, Taiji deck

Gillman Village



Gillman Village



Photos from Coastal Settlement at Changi

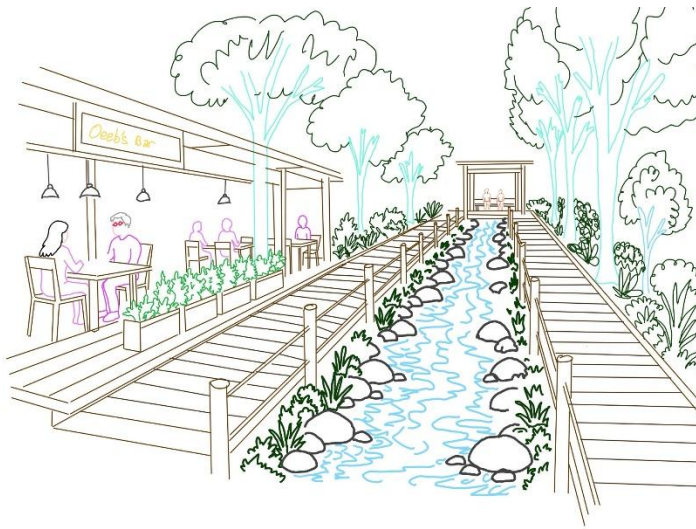
Gillman Village



Sensory Boardwalk



Similar to PS Café at Dempsey



Or Coastal Settlement at Changi



Forest-themed Lau Pa Sat

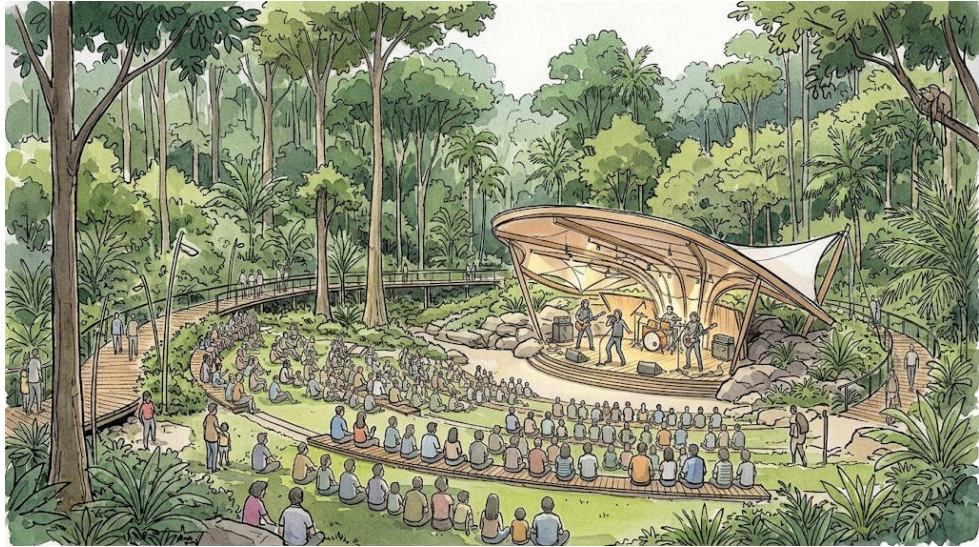


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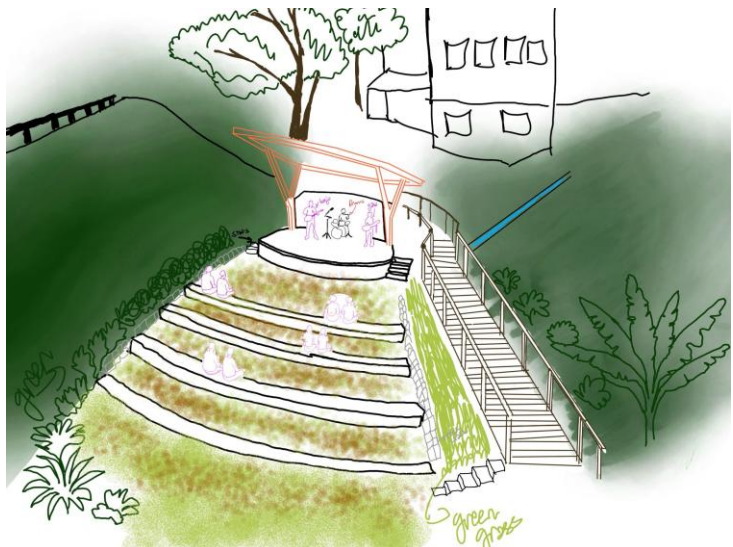


Inspired by Wheeler's Estate in Seletar and King's Street in Bristol, centered on possibility of preserving any mature trees at Academy of Singapore Teachers (old SAJC)

Music Pavilion



This could be a partially-sunk pavilion at the site of the existing ravine between SAJC and Malan Road. The audience seats could be sheltered under a similar tented roof designed to reflect sound away from residential areas.



Community Hub



Inspired by Bedok Heartbeat



Community Hub



Malan Row



Forest-edge childcare centres near Community Hub



Malan Row

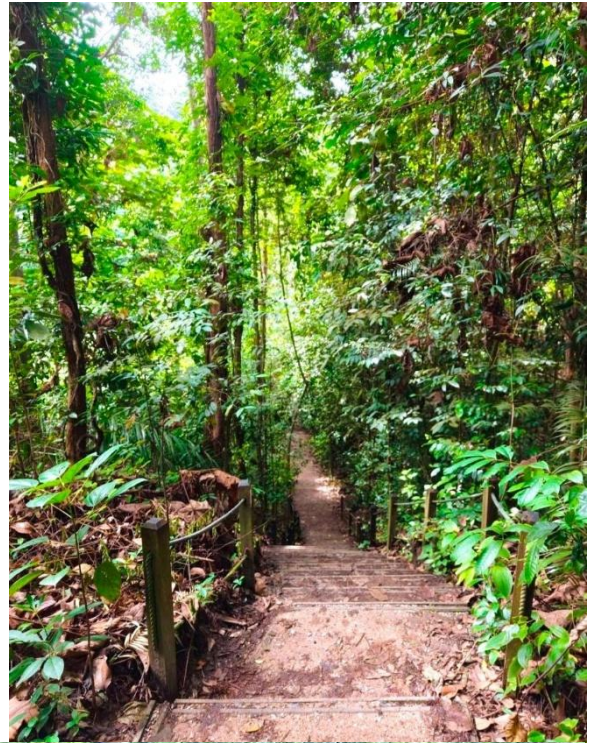


Hub of music, arts or other retail shops, cafes



Restoring Earth Trails Within Gillman Forest

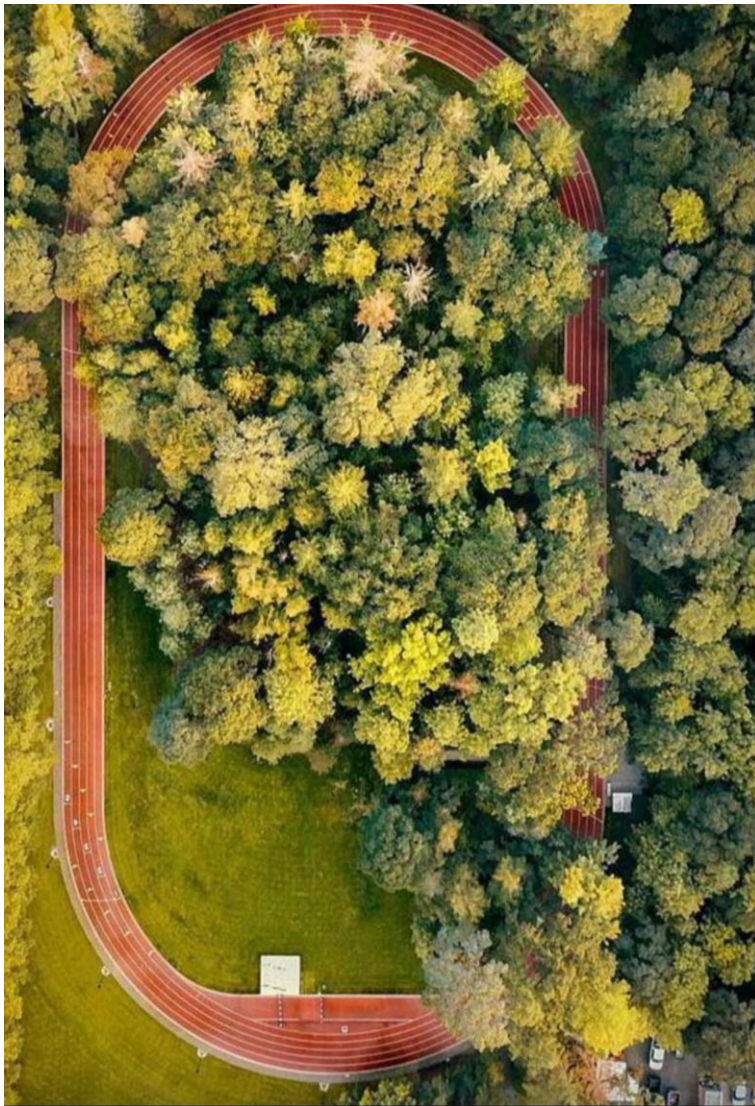
Taking inspiration from existing earth trails at Gillman Forest and Bukit Timah nature reserve



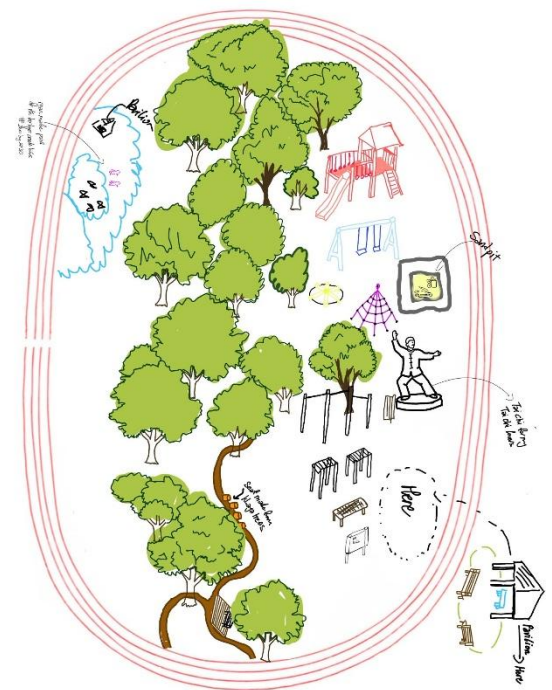
Forest Track and Exercise

A 5-lane forest track is proposed on the approximate site of the archery school at Telok Blangah St 31 (the area proposed for re-forestation), with the southern edge close to the BTO flats.

The open end of the track field area, outside the forest and nearest the BTO flats, could be set up with a tree-shaded taiji deck and outdoor exercise stations, while a playground can be built within the re-forested trees for maximum shade. A pond could be created for wildlife, for the birds, with several pavilions for the elderly to take breaks as they go on walks, such as those often organised by community centres.



Michael Johnson Track at Nike World Headquarters
in Beaverton, Oregon

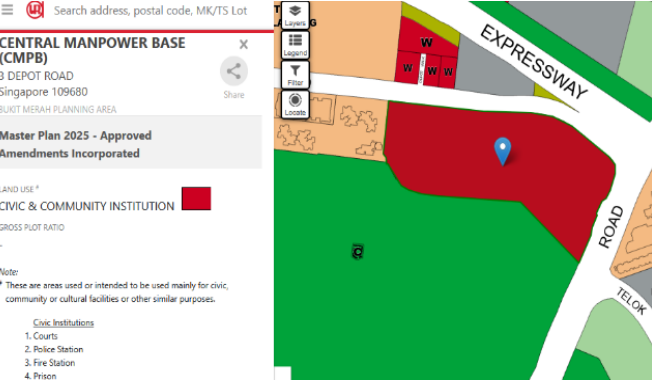


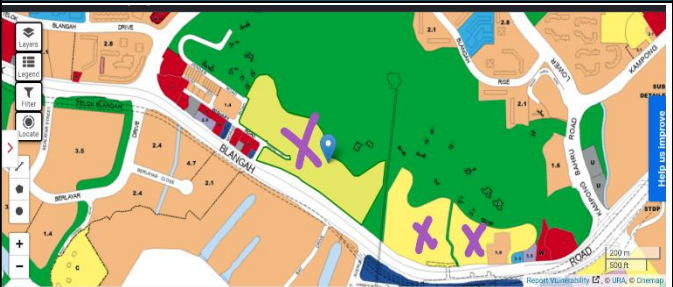
ANNEX C

List Of Alternative Brownfield Sites

No.	Site Name	Description	Current Status / Why It Fits
1	Pasir Panjang Distripark plus adjacent 33.8 hectare Reserve Site	URA stated that a bus depot would be built on this site. BTO flats can be built as part of a vertical complex where the bus depot is housed underground. Even if the bus depot is built at ground level, there is potential to build 3-4 levels of HDB carpark over the bus depot, with shop units and high-rise BTO flats above the carpark levels. This would ensure that all BTO apartments are located above West Coast Highway, with desirable elevated sea views. Co-location of the bus depot would facilitate transportation for BTO residents.	Similar location and fits with URA/HDB's more recent integrated builds for efficient land use.
2	Keppel Terminal & Keppel Distripark (Greater Southern Waterfront, next phase)	Accelerate the next GSW phase rather than opening a new front at Gillman. Keppel MRT (CC30) opened on July 2026 and was built to serve future GSW housing, yet the land it serves is not scheduled for work until around 2030. URA indicated at a public dialogue that work would not begin until around 2030 owing to site preparation. Can that preparation begin now instead? PSA vacates the Keppel and Tanjong Pagar terminals by 2027, and URA has already identified Keppel Distripark and Keppel Terminal as the phase following the Keppel Club site. Bring site preparation forward so it runs alongside the terminal handover rather than starting after it.	Already committed and already phased: first BTO at the Keppel Club site launched Oct 2025, first private GLS plot awarded Nov 2025. Rail capacity is built, paid for and operating. Brownfield port land, no forest, no heritage clusters. Accelerating a committed site is faster than preparing a greenfield one.
3	Alexandra Village Industrial Estate.	Relocate the single-storey car workshops around Bukit Merah Lanes 1 to 3 into a modern, high-rise industrial estate. These car workshops belong to the Alexandra Village Industrial Estate, but modern car service centres in high-rise industrial buildings are viable and have already been built in places like Tanjong Penjuru (Jurong industrial region) . The other light industries in that same estate can also be consolidated into even higher buildings afforded by the current gross plot ratio, freeing up urbanised land for residential use. Status in URA MasterPlan 2025: Car workshop areas zoned for clean and light industry. The open-air carpark is zoned as "transport".	Need to rezone to Residential. In addition, the current gross plot ratio of 2.5 is severely underutilised by the single-storey car workshops. See screenshot from URA website:  Note: There is already a precedent in the Tan Boon Liat Building site changing status from industrial use only to residential use.

No.	Site Name	Description	Current Status / Why It Fits
4	School site - Current Shelton College International, which is the site of the former Blangah Rise Primary School, at Telok Blangah Rise (not the present location at Telok Blangah Heights)	Telok Blangah Rise is one of the oldest estates in the Telok Blangah-Depot-Bt Purmei area.	Current status in URA MasterPlan 2025: Zoned as Education. It has to be conceptualised as adding value to Telok Blangah Rise, perhaps as a SERS/VERS project, or to de-gentrify the estate, or provide housing with amenities such as the BTO at Telok Blangah Beacon. 
5	Eastern half of Tanjong Pagar Terminal, currently zoned as reserve site in GSW. (Accelerate zoning to residential). - Similar to Site 2	Currently, only the western half of Tanjong Pagar Terminal is zoned as Residential. Since the entire terminal is part of the Greater Southern Waterfront, the zoning of the eastern half from Reserve (under URA MasterPlan 2025) to Residential should be accelerated. This would account for a much larger area and more housing units in the nearer term, and not depend on the re-zoning process taking place after another 5-10 years.	See URA screenshot: 

No.	Site Name	Description	Current Status / Why It Fits
6	Former CMPB compound, 3 Depot Road	CMPB relocated to Gombak from 2025 and its Depot Road compound is understood to be vacated. The compound sits within a larger Civic & Community Institution parcel that also contains Defence Technology Towers A and B, MINDEF HR and DSTA, all of which appear operational. URA and MINDEF should confirm the extent of the vacated footprint, whether it can be subdivided from the operational facilities, and whether residential use has been evaluated.	Already-cleared government land within Bukit Merah, near Redhill MRT. Extent unverified. No forest, no heritage clusters. 
7	Latent capacity in Bukit Merah's existing housing footprint via VERS	Much of Bukit Merah's stock was built before the 1990s under a standard density of 200 dwelling units per hectare rather than today's plot ratio system, so it occupies more land per home than current planning would allow. This is a question about long-term capacity rather than a proposal for any particular block. Where redevelopment happens, it should ideally be through VERS, which requires residents to vote for it, rather than compulsory acquisition. HDB should publish how much additional yield the town's own footprint could produce over the Master Plan horizon.	Not a near-term substitute for any single site. The relevant question is whether the long-run capacity of the built town has been counted before greenfield sites are committed.
8	Seah Im Food Centre	Redeveloping the food centre and its adjacent parking lots into a high-density, mixed use HDB.	
9	Outram Hill	Redeveloping this area complemented by SERS for Blocks 1-7 Everton Park to build high-density housing on par with Pinnacle@Duxton.	
10	Delta Circus Fringe Carpark and adjacent government land	Utilize old school compound and heavy vehicle carpark (D0028) for new HDB flats. Paired with SERS relocation plan for older Jalan Bukit Ho Swee households.	

No.	Site Name	Description	Current Status / Why It Fits
11	The short buildings housing small businesses at Wishart Road, Keppel Hill and Seah Im carpark	Currently marked as a Reserve Site with undefined purpose, these sites could be redeveloped for residential use ahead of Gillman Forest/Barracks. This area would have significant interest from the public if developed for BTOs, since it has direct access to Mount Faber, and is close to the MRT and Vivocity. Emphasis on BTO and not condo, as this main road is already lined with luxury condos like Reflections and Caribbean and hotels. It is time to diversify this main road and open the privilege of access to the broader public.	
12	Henderson Industrial Park	Currently office buildings, especially the ones at 213-219 Henderson, these are short buildings that can stand to be redeveloped into taller residential buildings.	