Telosa

Building a World-Class City:
The Importance of Community Connections

Best practices from around the world

Telosa Community Foundation
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Excerpt

Case Study: Singapore - High-Quality Jobs and Economic Opportunities



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Vision

To become a “Global City.” One people, one nation, one Singapore.
National Motto: Onward, Singapore. It reflects the nation's commitment to progress, development, and continuous improvement. It is often used to inspire and unite Singaporeans in their efforts to build a better future for the country.

Key elements of Singapore's Vision 2030:

1. **Sustainable and Inclusive Economy:** Singapore aims to maintain a vibrant and innovative economy that generates opportunities for its

residents. This includes supporting key industries, promoting entrepreneurship, and fostering innovation.

2. **Quality of Life and Well-Being:** The vision emphasizes the importance of ensuring that Singapore remains a great place to live, work, and play. It includes provisions for high-quality education, accessible healthcare, affordable housing, and a clean environment.
3. **Strong and Cohesive Society:** Singapore's vision includes the goal of building a cohesive and harmonious society where people of all backgrounds live together in peace and harmony. It promotes social inclusion, racial and religious harmony, and active citizenship.
4. **Environmental Sustainability:** Environmental sustainability is a crucial aspect of the vision, with the aim of becoming a sustainable and green city. This includes efforts to reduce carbon emissions, conserve water resources, and protect natural ecosystems.
5. **Smart City:** Singapore envisions itself as a "Smart Nation," leveraging technology and data to enhance the quality of life for its residents and improve the efficiency of government services.
6. **Global Connectivity:** The vision includes Singapore's continued role as a global hub, facilitating trade, investment, and cultural exchange. The city-state seeks to strengthen its global connections and contribute to global challenges.
7. **Resilience and Security:** Singapore places a strong emphasis on resilience and security, ensuring that it is well-prepared to address challenges, both internal and external, and protect the well-being of its residents.

Background

Singapore's history dates back at least eight hundred years.Its contemporary era began in 1819, when Stamford Raffles established Singapore as a trading post of the British Empire. Singapore gained self-governance in 1959 and, in 1963, became part of the new federation of Malaysia and became an independent sovereign country in 1965.

Since its founding in 1965, Singapore has faced many challenges. As a small city-state, they had a small, primitive economy with no natural resources and limited access to fresh water. To build their economy, provide greater opportunity and improve the quality of life for their citizens, they embarked on an ambitious plan to build their domestic industries and create an open, welcoming business environment to attract talent and successful companies from around the region and the world.

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Singapore is considered by many highly respected development experts, such as Paul Colliers and John Micklethwait, as the greatest economic success story of the 20th century. After gaining independence in 1965, it has gone from a colonial backwater of British rule, to one of the top five countries in the world in GDP per capita. Unlike most countries with this rate of pros, it has not accomplished this miraculous feat through hydrocarbons or other natural resources but through hard work, dedication, and inclusive, innovative government policies.

Singapore is the proof that a new model for a city can be successful in creating sustainable, intelligent development by implementing innovative policies in a pragmatic way. As fundamental governing principles, Singapore adopted a few central tenants that have guided its actions from the very beginning:

- Land was to be used to promote economic development and a strong community, not as a tool of speculation.
- A dual mandate focused on long-term, sustainable economic growth and quality of life for all citizens
- A free, welcoming environment for businesses and individuals looking to prosper together
- Open, transparent, corruption-free governance that is accountable to the community for delivering results, not promises and platitudes

The evolution of the market economy in the late 18th and early 19th centuries transformed the categorization of land from a resource to a commodity which has given rise to many problems. Today, successful cities such as Singapore are reimagining that definition.

How a country uses land most efficiently and effectively to promote economic growth and the wellbeing of its citizens is not just an economic or governance question, but of fairness, inclusion and economic mobility. Granted, there are physical dimensions, horizontal, vertical, redevelopment and functionality, but there is another dimension of how we can build a community of people – unified, resilient, energetic, optimistic and happy.

Facts and Figures

- The population of Singapore is 5.6 million.
- The size of Singapore is 283.5 square miles (181,400 acres) which is about half the size of Rhode Island but has 6 times the population.
- It is one of the 20 smallest countries in the world.
- It's a city of not just one island, but 64.
- It's one of the world's greenest cities.

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- Singapore ranks highly in key social indicators: education, healthcare, quality of life, personal safety, infrastructure, and housing.
- One of the highest home ownership rates - 89%

Social Capital and Belonging

- One of the most important lessons that can be learned from Singapore is the intentional and strategic approach to fostering social cohesion and community bonds.
- **Cultural Diversity and Harmony**: Singapore's design encourages the coexistence of different cultures and religions, fostering a sense of community among diverse populations
- **Community Engagement**: The design of Singapore's public spaces, community centers, and social programs encourages residents to engage with each other, fostering a strong sense of community.
- **Quality Public Housing**: Singapore's well-designed public housing has created an environment where people from different socioeconomic backgrounds live in close proximity. This diversity contributes to social cohesion and reduces income inequality.
- **Racial Harmony Day:** Singapore celebrates Racial Harmony Day to promote racial and religious harmony among its diverse population. This includes activities such as cultural performances, shared meals, and educational programs to foster understanding and respect among different ethnic and religious groups.
- **National Service (NS)**: Singaporean men are required to complete NS, which fosters a sense of duty and shared experience among citizens. This program helps build camaraderie and social bonds.
- **Community Involvement Projects:** NS includes community involvement projects where servicemen contribute to community service and engage with local residents.

Access to Effective Government and Services

- **Balancing Growth with Livability**: Singapore's balanced approach to economic growth and quality of life can serve as a model for other cities to prioritize both prosperity and the well-being of their residents.
- **Efficient Public Transportation:** The city's efficient public transportation system reduces reliance on cars and congestion, making commuting easier and promoting community engagement
- **Smart Urban Planning**: Singapore employs smart city technologies for efficient waste management, traffic control, and public services. Implementing such systems can improve residents' quality of life and create economic opportunities

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- **Residents' Committees (RCs)**: RCs are grassroots organizations in neighborhoods across Singapore. They organize community events, foster a sense of belonging, and act as intermediaries between residents and government agencies.
- **Community Engagement Programs:** Singapore promotes active community participation through engagement programs, town hall meetings, and feedback channels that allow residents to voice their concerns and ideas.
- **Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS)**: CHAS provides affordable healthcare services to Singaporeans and includes subsidies for low-income individuals, promoting access to healthcare in the community.
- **Senior Activity Centers**: These centers offer a range of activities and support services for seniors to stay active and engaged in their communities.
- **SG Cares**: SG Cares is a national movement that promotes volunteerism and encourages individuals and organizations to contribute to the community through volunteering.

High Quality Jobs and Economic Opportunity

- It is a major aviation, financial, and maritime shipping hub.
- Some of the leading companies include: Singapore Airlines, DBS Bank and Maersk Singapore.
- Mixed-Use Development: Singapore's planning encourages mixed-use neighborhoods, where residential, commercial, and recreational spaces are close together. This promotes convenience, reduces congestion, and supports local businesses.
- Singapore offers many programs to assist residents in preparing for and finding positions to help them maximize their potential. For example, the Career Conversion Programmes (CCP) provides the ability for mid-career citizens to retrain and upgrade their skills in a rapidly changing work environment: https://www.wsg.gov.sg/home/individuals/attachment-placement-programmes/career-conversion-programmes-for-individuals
- Singapore offers job placement services that prepare, place, and support people - the unemployed, underemployed, and those needing new skills - in life-changing careers that would otherwise be unattainable. https://singapore.generation.org/
- **Land Usage and Land Value Return.** Because of the scarcity of land in Singapore, land values are extremely high. To avoid the problem of rising prices limiting development and enriching a few at the expense of the many, the government directly owns close to 90% of the land. It then leases the land to developers through long-term contracts and charges an annual ground rent. These resources are then reinvested back into the community in the form of

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education,housing, health care and world-class parks and recreational areas. This provides clean, comfortable and safe housing for citizens of all income levels and ensures a high quality of life for residents.

Quality Education and Lifelong Learning

- **Investment in Education and Innovation**: Singapore's commitment to education has helped to foster innovation and drive economic growth. They are consistently among the world leaders in primary and secondary education and attract top students from all over Asia to its world class public universities.
- **Citizenship Education**: Singapore's education system places a strong emphasis on character and citizenship education to instill values such as responsibility, empathy, and social awareness in students.
- In 2005, Singapore adopted a new framework called Teach Less, Learn More. This framework urged teachers to focus on the “quality” of learning and the incorporation of technology into classrooms and not just the “quantity” of learning and exam preparation.

Arts, Culture and Recreation

- **Green Spaces**: Singapore has integrated green spaces throughout the city to improve the environment and offer residents opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and community interaction.
- **National Arts Council (NAC)**: NAC supports various arts and cultural initiatives, including community arts programs and events that bring people together through creative expression.
- **National Gallery Singapore** oversees the world’s leading public collection of modern art from Singapore and Southeast Asia. It comprises over 8,000 works from the 19th and 20th centuries in all media, including painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography and video.

Design and Environmental Stewardship

- **Urban design**: Singapore incorporates several innovative aspects that have contributed to its community-building and economic growth. One of the most notable aspects is its concept of a "**City in a Garden**," which prioritizes green spaces, sustainable infrastructure, and a high quality of life.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure**: Singapore's focus on sustainable infrastructure, such as water management systems and energy-efficient buildings, demonstrates the importance of incorporating eco-friendly technologies that contribute to both community well-being and economic efficiency

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- **Urban Resilience**: Singapore's emphasis on disaster preparedness and environmental sustainability demonstrates the importance of designing for resilience against challenges such as climate change and natural disasters
- **Gardens by the Bay**: This iconic green space in Singapore offers not only a recreational area but also educational programs on environmental conservation and sustainability.
- **Clean and Green Singapore**: The Clean and Green Singapore program encourages community participation in keeping the environment clean and green through initiatives like tree planting and clean-up campaigns.

Success / Failures

- Singapore has been excellent in generating economic growth. It is one of the most outstanding examples of development in the 20th century.
- Singapore has utilized wise land-use policies and Land Value return to not only develop in an efficient and effective way, with extremely limited resources, but also generate revenue to reinvest back into the community.
- They also provide a high quality of life with safe, walkable streets and parks, clean, comfortable, affordable housing and world class education and health care.
- Singapore struggles in a few areas such as inclusion in government decision-making. The ruling political elites maintain a grip on power that is frequently criticized as heavy handed.
- They also struggle with immense income inequality which creates tension. This trend has been fueled by the shift from manufacturing and shipping to financial and other services. Even though they provide high quality services and clean, affordable housing for their citizens with lower incomes, there is a widening chasm between the very wealthy and the rest.

Telosa Best Practices

Telosa has much to learn from Singapore about creating prosperity through an open, welcoming business environment and extensive job training and skills upgrading. They also have outstanding education and health care systems we can learn from. Their use of Land Value Return has yielded tremendous benefits in smart development for all citizens and generated resources to be reinvested. When planning, they frequently look at timeframes far beyond five or ten years and consider the implications of their actions over a 50 or 100 year timeframe. Lastly, they have a very responsive government that has consistently met the needs of people of all backgrounds, ethnicity and incomes and a very successful urban planning approach that has made them one of the most sustainable, green cities in the world.

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Overall, by focusing on sustainability, community engagement, inclusive design, and a holistic approach to economic growth, Singapore is demonstrating a model to create thriving communities with strong economies.

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