

Reinventing Singapore The Marina Bay Project

Singapore is recognized as one of the best managed cities of the world but only ranks fourth in city marketing. In the drive to re-brand, Marina Bay is the showcase project.

Singapore celebrated 42 years of independence in August with a spectacular National Day Parade, held for the first time on a floating stadium in Marina Bay. The location is significant: Marina Bay is Singapore's answer to increasing competition from cities for the global pool of financial and human capital, and differentiating Singapore from other major cities.

After growing at a rate of 7.7% annually during the 1990s, and rebounding from a slump in the early 2000s, Singapore is once again experiencing consistent economic growth rates of 5-to-7%. However, the city-state is conscious that it must reinvent itself and the Singapore brand in order to continue attracting investments and talent to remain relevant in the competitive global reality:

- the Asian “tigers” of Hong Kong and South Korea,
- the Asian “giants” China and India,

- the new competitors such as Dubai that have set their sights on beating Singapore.

Singapore is one of the best managed cities in the world. For example, in the 2006 City Governance Survey conducted by Jones Lang LaSalle assessing 33 cities, Singapore came

investments, promoting trade and industry, and improving productivity and the business environment. Urban planning was important – considered to be an instrument for economic development, and the island of Singapore was methodically endowed with some of the best infrastructure and facilities in the

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out top for city management. However, in the same survey, Singapore only came in fourth in the area of city marketing, behind New York, Shanghai and Barcelona.

Since the 1960s, through public agencies such as the Economic Development Board (EDB), IE Singapore (formerly Trade Development Board) and SPRING, Singapore has been very successful in attracting economic

world: airport, metro, highways, etc. The efforts of the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) during the same period also have been successful in promoting the country as a tourism destination.

The transformation that the city-state has embarked upon to market itself better is a holistic one: that Singapore is a great city to live, work and visit. STB now stresses the “uniqueness” of Singapore, while the other



agencies work closely together and with different government ministries to reduce bureaucratic barriers to living and working in Singapore.

“greenfield” site). The vision for Marina Bay, conceived and refined over a decade, is for it to become a waterfront city in a garden – a place for work and

infrastructure such as the underground “common services tunnel”. At the same time, it is about the in-between spaces and the activities that take place. This brings us back to the floating stadium and activities such as the National Day Parade and F1 Powerboat racing. The inaugural 2008 Formula 1 Singapore Grand Prix will take place in the streets around Marina Bay.

The importance of place...

reinvention of the urban landscape

A key element in Singapore’s strategy to re-brand itself is the reinvention of its urban landscape. The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is leading this charge to go from *quality of life* to *quality of place* issues. As competition between cities intensifies, the importance of place (urban design, quality, civic identity) becomes ever more crucial.

play for 40,000 residents. So far, the project has attracted over €2 billion in investment.

This strategic development is a “total lifestyle product” and is centred on the “*Three E’s*”: *explore, exchange and entertain*. On one hand, the physical

Marina Bay will be developed in phases over a 10-15 year period. It will house world-class facilities such as the Business and Financial Centre (BFC), an Integrated Resort (with a Casino), a new Botanic Gardens and the

Strategic development is centred on “explore, exchange and entertain” (the Three E’s!)

The redevelopment of Marina Bay is the showcase project for Singapore’s new brand. It is an artificial bay near Singapore’s Central Business District that was created when land was reclaimed in the late 1980s (a

buildings are important, and Marina Bay aspires to be the iconic symbol for Singapore with the most innovative facilities and

Marina Barrage, which turns Marina Bay into a reservoir. It will also include prime residential buildings and office buildings. ■