

MEDIA RELEASE

BCA CHAMPIONS INCLUSIVE LIVING ENVIRONMENTS IN SINGAPORE

- The BCA will focus on improving the accessibility of Singapore's Central Business District for more inclusive workplaces

- The BCA Universal Design Mark certification scheme will be extended to Parks and Public Spaces

Singapore, 5 November 2014 – The Building and Construction Authority (the “BCA”) has introduced new initiatives that will guide Singapore a step closer to realising an inclusive living environment. Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Senior Minister of State for National Development and Trade and Industry, who officially opened the inaugural Singapore Universal Design Week (the “Week”) today, shared that the new initiatives will benefit people with different needs and abilities, as well as the elderly and families.

2. Focusing on Universal Design in the built environment, the BCA's new key initiatives are:
 - a. improving the barrier-free accessibility of Singapore's Central Business District (“CBD” or the “District”);
 - b. extending the BCA Universal Design Mark certification scheme to Parks and Public Spaces; and
 - c. training 400 professionals in Universal Design for the built environment by 2015.

3. Explaining the rationale for the new initiatives, BCA Chief Executive Officer Dr. John Keung said: “Universal Design can improve our living environments for ourselves as well as for future generations. Designing for inclusiveness will ensure that everyone can enjoy living, working, learning and playing in a user-friendly environment that takes into consideration their needs and abilities. This is why the BCA has stepped up as the lead public agency in Singapore to promote Universal Design and facilitate tripartite partnerships among public, people and private sectors working towards inclusive buildings and public spaces.”

Inclusive workplaces: Improving the accessibility of the Central Business District

4. Going forward, the BCA will focus on the CBD to encourage more owners of existing commercial buildings to tap on the Accessibility Fund and make their premises accessible. This is in line with the Government's push for more inclusive workplaces for older Singaporeans and persons with disabilities.

5. As assessed under the BCA's Accessibility Rating System (**Annex A**), it is found that out of 150 buildings in the CBD, about 70 of them – built before 1990 – lack barrier-free accessibility features for people on wheelchair or with mobility impairments. The BCA will work with owners of buildings there to improve barrier-free accessibility in the CBD.

6. Besides providing funding support to incentivise owners to make their existing building barrier-free, the BCA is also studying the feasibility of additional regulations to quicken the pace of improvements in implementing accessibility features for existing buildings.

Universal Design Mark for Parks and Public Spaces (Annex B)

7. From the current focus on buildings, the BCA will also extend its Universal Design Mark certification to parks and public spaces. With Universal Design criteria developed jointly by the BCA and the National Parks Board, the BCA Universal Design Mark for Parks and Public Spaces will raise the level of inclusiveness in the design of our landscape spaces in Singapore. This customised framework has the flexibility to be applied to a great range of landscape settings, from nature reserves to neighbourhood parks. With the new criteria, we aim to encourage more inclusive landscape designs that enable everyone, including those with different mobility needs, to enjoy our parks and public spaces with their loved ones and friends. This is another key step in creating an inclusive built environment.

Universal Design Assessor certification

8. With the extension of Universal Design beyond new and existing buildings, there will be a rising demand for knowledge and expertise in Universal Design, particularly among architects and building professionals. They will play an important role in

promoting friendly and inclusive designs for future projects and developments, and for retrofitting of existing developments to meet the needs for barrier-free accessibility.

9. In anticipation of the demand for such expertise, the BCA Academy started the first run of its Certification Course for Universal Design Assessor in July 2012. Through the Course, local experts in Universal Design and professionals in the area of special needs will share the importance of Universal Design with participants. Attendees will also gain a deeper appreciation of the benefits of inclusive designs through direct contact with varied user groups through an increased awareness of how their designs can impact different user profiles.

10. The course has proven to be popular among professionals with 295 of them certified as Universal Design Assessors in seven runs. The BCA will train another 100 professionals by 2015 to meet the anticipated demand.

Find your friendly buildings smartphone application (Annex C)

11. To bring Universal Design closer to Singaporeans, the BCA's online search application for user-friendly buildings in Singapore has now been extended to a smartphone application. Using the findings of the BCA's Accessibility Rating System and with the benefit of smartphone technology, users can conveniently access information about the accessibility and user-friendliness of more than 2,800 buildings in Singapore.

12. The "Friendly Building Search" application includes an augmented reality feature, which projects the most accessible route between two locations. The application is an extension of the BCA's Online Friendly Building Search (www.friendlybuildings.sg), which was developed in 2014 and rates buildings on five levels of accessibility.

Singapore Universal Design Week

13. As part of our outreach programme to raise awareness of Universal Design, the BCA organised the inaugural Singapore Universal Design Week to highlight the growing importance of barrier-free accessibility and Universal Design for buildings and public spaces in Singapore. The Singapore Universal Design Week promotes the importance

of Universal Design in creating inclusive living environment to enable people – regardless of age or physical ability – to live, work and play without barriers.

14. From 5 to 9 November, the Week is a five-day event with a Conference, Exhibitions, Workshop and other activities held at the Singapore's Marina Bay area. The Conference and Products Showcase, titled 'Universal Design in Architecture and Urban Spaces', is the anchor event of the Week and features notable speakers including renowned architect Mr. Daniel Libeskind.

15. At the Week, the BCA, Handicaps Welfare Association ("HWA") and the Singapore Institute of Architects ("SIA") will also be signing a memorandum of understanding ("MOU") – the first tripartite co-operation in the area of Universal Design social enterprise to push for greater employability for persons with disabilities.

16. Under the MOU, SIA will promote the modelling and drafting services of the HWA 3D Building Information Modelling ("BIM") Studio to their members and encourage them to engage the Studio for drafting and modelling works. BIM is recognised worldwide as an enabling technology to integrate the construction value chain and improve productivity in the industry. The BCA will provide training and give the latest updates on BIM technology to the HWA to help keep the BIM training up-to-date with the latest development in the field.

17. Dr. Keung added: "The MOU is a key milestone in the BCA's strategy to tap on tripartite partnerships – people, private and public – for Universal Design in Singapore. Through this Universal Design social enterprise, persons with disabilities can build new capability and gain meaningful employment by joining the HWA-SIA-BCA joint training programme on BIM, which is a powerful and productive tool that is transforming Singapore's built environment sector. The SIA members can tap on BIM capability of graduates of the joint BIM training programme to help meet the need for BIM personnel in the industry. For the BCA, this is another avenue to accelerate the industry's adoption of Universal Design and BIM that will contribute to a future-ready and inclusive built environment for Singapore."

About the Building and Construction Authority

The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) of Singapore champions the development of an excellent built environment for Singapore. BCA's mission is to shape a safe, high quality, sustainable and friendly built environment, as these are four key elements where BCA has a significant influence. In doing so, it aims to differentiate Singapore's built environment from those of other cities and contribute to a better quality of life for everyone in Singapore. Hence, its vision is to have "a future-ready built environment for Singapore". Together with its education arm, the BCA Academy of the Built Environment, BCA works closely with its industry partners to develop skills and expertise that help shape a future-ready built environment for Singapore. For more information, visit www.bca.gov.sg.

Accessibility Rating System

Introduction: The BCA has been conducting an accessibility audit of all existing buildings – built before 1990 – in Singapore since 2008.

Objective: The audit determines the accessibility status of existing buildings that are frequently visited by Singaporeans and allow the BCA to study the need for additional measures, including regulations, to improve accessibility in Singapore.

Methodology: Using site audits/surveys, buildings are rated according to their level of friendliness, from levels one to four. The Accessibility Rating System provides useful details such as the types of accessible features and their locations in a building, thus encouraging greater mobility and a more active lifestyle among people of all ages and physical abilities.

Types of buildings rated:

- offices/commercial buildings
- institutions
- polyclinics
- hospitals
- libraries
- shopping centres
- markets/food centres
- places of worship
- industrial buildings
- museums
- parks
- MRT/LRT stations
- hotels

The Central Business District: The System found that out of 150 buildings in the CBD, 70 of them are still not accessible. The top three barriers to accessibility for these buildings are:

- a. steps at the entrance to buildings
- b. no accessible toilet
- c. level difference within the 1st storey of the building

Most accessible district in Singapore: Orchard Road

With the BCA's efforts in working with building owners and developers as well as promoting the Accessibility Fund to them, the Orchard Road – the famous shopping and tourist attraction in Singapore – is 88% accessible today, compared to 41% in 2006.

The BCA Universal Design Mark for Parks and Public Spaces

Introduction

The BCA Universal Design Mark is a voluntary certification scheme that promotes Universal Design.

Developed in collaboration with the National Parks Board, the BCA Universal Design Mark for Parks and Public Spaces recognises and certifies park developments and projects that have embraced the philosophy of Universal Design to enable everyone – the young, the old and people with different needs and abilities – to enjoy inclusive living in familiar surroundings with their loved ones. This is so that more Singaporeans can enjoy these recreational, nature and public spaces with their loved ones and friends.

Methodology

This scheme assesses projects at their design stage, facilitating the incorporation of Universal Design at the start of their development. Once completed, the development or project will be awarded a display plaque, indicating one of the four Universal Design Mark ratings: Certified, Gold, Gold^{PLUS} or Platinum. For on-going projects, Universal Design Mark ratings will be determined based on design and indicated as Certified (design), Gold (design) or Gold^{PLUS} (design).

Judging Criteria

- Process
- User-Friendliness
- Design Integration
- Accessibility and Inter-Connectivity
- Safety
- Operations and Maintenance

BCA Universal Design Mark Platinum certification: Gardens by the Bay

With seamless integration throughout the development and connectivity to the city, Gardens by the Bay has successfully set a benchmark for a new generation of garden developments within the larger urban context. Before the Gardens opened, the BCA and The Gardens jointly conducted a user trial to engage its visitors, including persons with disabilities, to solicit valuable feedback on their Universal Design features.

Dedication to Universal Design extends to the Gardens' attractions, facilities and services. They are thoughtfully designed to cater to the diverse needs of users from the different ability and age groups. The uniquely designed accessible elevated walkways at the Supertree Groove, Flower Dome and Cloud Forest allow unobstructed movement for wheelchair users and mothers with prams.

Likewise, the developer and architects have placed pro-family facilities such as wet and dry play areas designed for different age groups, ample seating, dedicated nursing

areas, diaper changing stations, child friendly sanitary fittings and shower area for children at strategic locations. This reinforced the Gardens as an ideal destination for everyone - families with children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Friendly Buildings Search smartphone application

Introduction

An extension of the BCA's Online Friendly Building Search, users can access extensive information about the accessibility of 2,800 local buildings through this smartphone application. It offers useful information at the fingertips of Singaporeans and tourists who may need to know of the accessible facilities in buildings, such as mothers' nursing rooms and wheelchair-friendly toilets, when planning their travel itineraries.

The application is available for download on Apple App Store and Google Play.

Features

Accessibility and Friendly Ratings: Buildings are given five levels of ratings on their accessibility, so that users can find out how accessible and friendly the buildings they visit are.

Accessible and Friendly Features: The application presents the various accessible and user-friendly features and provisions of a building. It lists the number of accessible routes, the number of parking spaces for the disabled, number of accessible toilets, lifts and seating areas, among others. It also gives information about which intended group (e.g., the elderly, hearing impaired and visually impaired) can access the building with ease.

Nearby User-Friendly Buildings Feature: The application allows users to find out other user-friendly buildings that are nearby. They can do so by switching on the "nearby" feature and key-in his "current" location. Information on the available friendly buildings around him will be shown.

Track Along the Accessible Route Feature: The application allows wheelchair users to track the "accessible route" to 600 buildings from the MRT stations within 500m radius. One added value facility is the ability for the users to choose whether he wishes to access the building via "sheltered" route (where available).

Augmented Reality: Users can find out the shortest and most accessible route between two buildings, locations or points. It guides the users on the route they should take as they walk or move between the two locations. This feature is not available on the BCA's Online Friendly Building Search.