29 July 2015

Smart Homes for a Smart Nation

Singapore is rapidly advancing towards its vision of becoming the first smart nation in the world, a country powered by technology to improve the lives of its citizens and businesses. As technology becomes more integrated into nearly every aspect of our lives, it is only natural for our buildings to become smarter as well. Of these buildings, one type stands out from the rest: our homes.

On 29 July 2015, the Singapore Green Building Council (SGBC) organised its annual Green Trends Seminar, a signature event in the council’s stable of regular activities. This year, SGBC partnered with the Housing Development Board (HDB) to deliver a more robust and comprehensive seminar centred on smart homes. More than a hundred industry leaders, consultants and building practitioners turned up for the event which generated much insight and knowledge.
Er. Dr. Johnny Wong, Group Director of HDB’s Building Research Institute, opened the Seminar with a succinct presentation aptly titled “Smarter Towns, Better Living”. Er. Dr. Wong brought participants through the research and development process of HDB’s building features, as well as briefly touched on the Smart HDB Town Framework.

A holistic approach to town planning that encompasses the whole spectrum of liveability, the comprehensive process makes use of technology and advanced modelling techniques to develop more liveable, efficient, sustainable and safe towns for citizens. No longer just concepts or blueprints, smart homes are now being made reality in the Punggol Northshore build-to-order HDB estates, with many more slated to house Singaporeans in the coming years.

SGBC member companies have much to offer when it comes to building greener, smarter housing communities. Ms Ann Teo, Founder and Managing Director of green wall supplier Coen Design International, shared on their emphasis to include greenery in urban environments. By ensuring that the conditions and requirements are right,
plants used for green walls can be made to grow properly, naturally and beautifully.

Ms Ho Sow Yun, Managing Director of eco-designing firm GreenVineDesign, spoke on the merits of upcycling, the breathing of new life into old materials to create useful and beautiful products. By creatively reusing and upcycling glass waste for example, we can directly help to reduce global waste levels.

To round up the Seminar, Mr Richard Kuppusamy, Senior Architectural Designer from WOHA, took the audience through the entire design process of a new type of self-contained residential development – Kampung Admiralty. A multi-agency integrated effort, the project consists of retail outlets, a hawker centre, a medical centre, a senior activity centre, a childcare centre as well as HDB studio apartments all housed in the same compound. Designed to invoke the kampung-like feel of the olden days, Kampung Admiralty blends multiple aspects of the citizenry into a single building, envisioned to encourage greater use of public facilities to foster social cohesion.
At the end of the official seminar programme, the participants went for an extensive tour of HDB’s Centre of Building Research, where they got an extended explanation of Er. Dr. Johnny Wong's presentation on HDB Smart Towns and planning. From the design process to the usage of smart technology, participants got an insightful, fruitful look at some of the methods and measures employed by the HDB to build smarter and more liveable homes for the people.