



[Media Release] NHB Launches First Heritage Activation Node In Katong-Joo Chiat

Description

The character of a neighbourhood is defined by its spaces, the activities that take place in such spaces, and the people who live, work and play in each neighbourhood. The National Heritage Board (NHB)'s new Heritage Activation Node (HAN) initiative highlights these three aspects. It empowers the community to celebrate and champion the heritage of their neighbourhoods.

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Heritage Activation Node (Courtesy of National Heritage Board)

The inaugural HAN (HAN @ Katong-Joo Chiat) will be launched in the Katong-Joo Chiat precinct is renowned for its multicultural heritage, colourful shophouses, and heritage restaurants and eateries. HAN @ Katong-Joo Chiat marks the first in a series of HANs which will be introduced in various neighbourhoods from this year, each unique and tailored to the needs and characters of these neighbourhoods.

NHB's HAN initiative will enable the community to celebrate and champion their neighbourhoods' heritage in a sustained manner through partnerships with community groups. These include heritage interest group Katong Culture and other community groups such as the Eurasian Association and Haig Road Hawkers and Merchants Association for HAN @ Katong-Joo Chiat. The long-term commitment, strong community ownership anchor partnerships, and a greater focus on capability development make the initiative unique among NHB's other ongoing work with the community.

Unique Offerings for Each HAN Neighbourhood

Each HAN will showcase a neighbourhood's unique heritage and enliven them through three complementary strands: Heritage Spaces, encompassing heritage and cultural infrastructure; Heritage Programming, including guided trails, workshops, exhibitions, etc.; and Heritage Champions, comprising volunteers who will be involved in various projects and programmes. The nodes will leverage existing heritage assets and complement them with brand-new heritage offerings to provide a regular stream of heritage events and activities for all to enjoy. Moreover, each HAN will be unique, with offerings that differ according to the place history and heritage of individual neighbourhoods, and the contributions from community partners.

To commemorate the inaugural HAN @ Katong-Joo Chiat, a launch festival will be held on 20 and 21 April. The festival will feature an exciting line-up of over 25 programmes co-organised with more than 20 partners, including a new mural at Joo Chiat Community Club, a community heritage art creation activity, a Tok Panjang experience, cultural performances, workshops, guided heritage trails, an interactive HiddenSG @ Katong-Joo Chiat game with attractive prizes, and more. Beyond the launch festival, various offerings focused on Katong-Joo Chiat's heritage will be available regularly.

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Tok Panjang Illustration



Katong-Joo Chiat Launch Festival: Tok Panjang

A public Call for Collaboration will also be jointly issued by NHB and Katong Culture on <https://go.gov.sg/nhb-han> on 20 April 2024, and interested community groups and individuals may submit their ideas and proposals for consideration via the forms on the

website.

Mr Alvin Tan, Deputy Chief Executive (Policy & Community), NHB said: “Through NHB’s Heritage Activation Nodes, we hope to seed more heritage touchpoints in more neighbourhoods and to enliven these neighbourhoods through infrastructural interventions and regular programming. We also hope to create a growing network of community partners island-wide and to encourage greater community ownership through our heritage champions and our public call for collaborations.”

Empowering the Community as part of Our SG Heritage Plan 2.0

NHB’s HAN initiative is a key part of its ongoing efforts under Our SG Heritage Plan 2.0 to empower the community to be involved in the exploration and celebration of our Heritage and to provide more opportunities for the collaborative creation of heritage-related content and projects.



The Intan – Tiles Colouring

Mr Gavin Chan, founder of Katong Culture and NHB’s primary community partner for HAN @ Katong-Joo Chiat, said: “Formed to promote the living culture of the Katong-Joo Chiat neighbourhood, Katong Culture’s work is significantly enhanced by the support of NHB. Being a volunteer-led interest group with limited expertise, our partnership with NHB has allowed us to tap into the knowledge of subject matter experts and broader networks to sustain involvement in our programmes and cultivate deeper connections with residents and stakeholders. This collaborative support has empowered us to expand our efforts in celebrating Katong’s heritage in the long term.”

Under this initiative, NHB will also train and build the capabilities of Heritage Champions – a group of community volunteers from not just the neighbourhoods where the HANs are based, but also across Singapore – to equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills for their volunteering journey and enable them to develop and manage heritage offerings regularly. Following an open call for volunteers in October 2023, NHB has received interest from a diverse range of over 250 individuals to volunteer for and be involved in the HAN initiative.

Heritage Champion and Katong Joo-Chiat resident Ms Tan Li Ming said: “Having lived in the area since birth, I have always loved sharing my neighbourhood’s heritage and hidden gems with my friends and family. The launch of the first HAN in Katong-Joo Chiat thrilled me and I promptly signed up as a volunteer. The invaluable volunteer training prepared me to guide one of the trail programmes and connect with passionate volunteers, fostering camaraderie and community spirit among those invested in the Katong-Joo Chiat neighbourhood.”

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Community Tales_ A Walking Tour of Katong-Joo Chiat

Fun facts about Katong-Joo Chiat

Katong-Joo Chiat has a long history, with its picturesque beachfront pre-land reclamation attracting settlers as early as the 1870s. Plantation owners built seaside residences, and the wealthy, such as those from the Straits Chinese or Eurasian communities developed mansions and hotels for weekend getaways.

As a landowner and philanthropist Chew Joo Chiat owned several parcels of land in the Joo Chiat and Katong districts, he is commemorated through various streets such as Joo Chiat Place, Joo Chiat Terrace, Joo Chiat Lane, and the whole district are named after him.

The Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple, one of Singapore's oldest Hindu temples, calls Katong-Joo Chiat's home and is situated on Ceylon Road, belying the area's connection to the early settlement of

Ceylonese, or Sri Lankan Tamils. Its origins date back to the 1850s when a stone statue of the Elephant God, Vinayagar, was discovered near a pond which had a senpaga tree on its bank.

The area is home to architectural icons such as Katong Shopping Centre, built in 1973 and the first fully air-conditioned mall in Singapore, and The Red House (also formerly known as Katong Bakery and Confectionery Co.). Established in 1925, the bakery was known for its cakes and as a match-making place for Katongers in the early decades who could proceed to catch a movie at the landmark Roxy Cinema just opposite that was later acquired by the Shaw Brothers.



Across Chin Mee Chin Confectionery at East Coast Road

Over 800 buildings in the area have been conserved by the Urban Redevelopment Authority, many of which are the colourful shophouses that Katong-Joo Chiat is known for. The most well-known stretch is the pre-war, photo-worthy Koon Seng Road, named after merchant Cheong Koon Seng, a Justice of Peace and Municipal Commissioner, who was also one of the first cohorts of Anglo-Chinese School students.

About the Heritage Activation Node @ Katong-Joo Chiat Launch Festival

Immerse yourself in a vibrant celebration of culture and community at the Heritage Activation Node @ Katong-Joo Chiat (*HAN @ Katong-Joo Chiat*) Launch Festival from 20 to 21 April 2024!

This festival is a joyful tribute to the diverse communities that call this neighbourhood home. Explore the rich history and heritage of the neighbourhood through community heritage art creations, cultural performances, workshops, exploratory trails, exhibitions, murals, installations, photo spots, festival food, games, and fun! Don't miss the splendid Tok Panjang (Peranakan dinner) and *joget* the night away!

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Joget Pahang_ Chitty Melaka Performance

With over 25 exciting programmes co-organised with more than 20 partners across nine locations, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Come together with friends, family, and neighbours as we revel in the spirit of heritage and community at Katong-Joo Chiat!



Date Created
15/04/2024
Author
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