

Mr Ho Yong Min, an urban design and heritage educator who runs The Urbanist Singapore Instagram and TikTok accounts, said that the plans for Merchant Road reflect a growing recognition of prioritising walking and the needs of pedestrians in urban planning.

He suggested incorporating structures to provide shade, artworks, signage, rest areas and water refill stations into the route to make it more user-friendly.

Pointing to the Southern Ridges – a network of green spaces that links four parks in Singapore's south and has created new paths in areas that were previously inaccessible – Mr Ho said the “hill to hill” link between Fort Canning and Pearl's Hill has the potential to become a popular pathway, as it “invites residents to explore the city in fresh ways”.

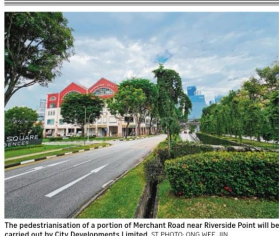
He added that URA's plans show it is moving towards prioritising people over vehicles in urban design, and added that “this approach fosters more meaningful daily experiences, thereby enriching the social memories of our community”.

Mr Ho said prioritising pedestrian access encourages exploration, social interaction and community engagement.

“If done well, it strikes a good balance between addressing contemporary liveability needs and enhancing access to heritage sites that were previously less reachable,” he said.



SINGAPORE



The pedestrianisation of a portion of Merchant Road near Riverside Point will be carried by City Developments Limited. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Part of Merchant Road to be converted for pedestrian use

It will create a walking route between Fort Canning Park and Pearl's Hill City Park

Ng Keng Gene
Correspondent

A portion of Merchant Road near Riverside Point and Magazine Road will soon be converted for pedestrian use to create a continuous walking route between Fort Canning Park and Pearl's Hill City Park.

The pedestrianisation will be carried out by property firm City Developments Limited (CDL) as part of its ongoing redevelopment of the former Central Mall and Central Square.

Both these developments were demolished earlier in 2024. The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) has given CDL the go-ahead to build Union Square at the site – a mixed-use development with offices, shops and homes that will sit between Merchant and Havelock roads.

Union Square, which will also have two conservation buildings and a new three-storey hotel block, is set to be completed in 2029.

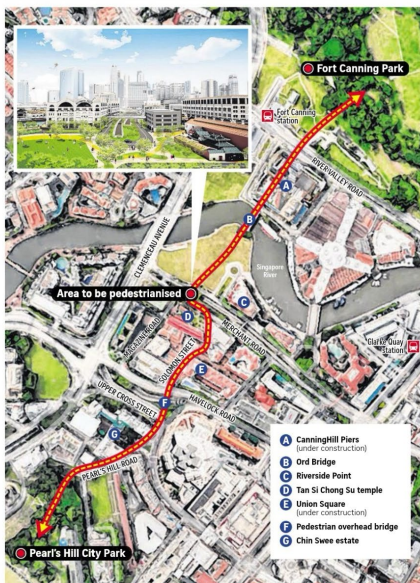
A URA spokesperson said the partial pedestrianisation of Merchant Road is one of the key features of Union Square that will benefit the public.

Plans for the pedestrianisation works were raised as a possibility by the agency as early as 2009, when URA unveiled its Draft Master Plan, and they were confirmed in a recent exhibition of the agency's upcoming Recreation Master Plan.

The URA Master Plan is a statutory document that guides Singapore's development for the next 40 to 85 years, with the next updated edition due to be exhibited in 2025.

From one hill to another

A portion of Merchant Road will soon be pedestrianised, as part of plans to allow people to walk directly from Fort Canning Park to Pearl's Hill City Park. In future, pedestrians will be able to walk through upcoming developments such as Canning Hill Piers and Union Square to get to the vicinity of the two parks.



SOURCE: URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, GOOGLE MAPS, STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

about 735,500 sq ft, which is about 67 per cent greater than the floor area of the developments it will replace.

The new development will include plazas and public spaces, as well as the partial pedestrianisation of Solomon Street to improve connectivity between Fort Canning and Pearl's Hill, the spokesperson added.

Pearl's Hill is the site of a new housing estate – with some 6,000 new homes, including public flats – that will be built over the next decade.

In the future, pedestrians will be able to walk for about 10m to get from one hill to the other.

This route will go through Canning Hill Piers – an upcoming mixed-use development on the site of the former Ling Court that is slated to be completed in 2025 – across the conserved Ord Bridge, and through Union Square and the Chin Swee public housing estate.

Other improvements CDL will carry out include refurbishing the existing pedestrian overhead bridge in Upper Cross Street and adding sheltered walkways linking Union Square to neighbouring sites.

Heritage markers will also be installed in the development, the spokesperson for CDL said.

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