

board of architects singapore

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To All Supervising Directors/Partners

RANKING OF TOP ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS IN SINGAPORE

The Board has noted that the Singapore Business Review (SBR) had recently published an article which included the ranking of top architectural firms in Singapore. Please see attached article.

The number of registered architects listed in the article had differed substantially from the list of registered architects published by the Board. The Board understands that the SBR had obtained the number of registered architects directly from the respective firms.

The Board would like to remind all Supervising Directors and Partners that they should ensure the accuracy of the data that their firms provide to the public. This is to prevent any misreporting.

This Circular is for compliance by all Supervising Directors and Partners.

Yours sincerely



Ar. NG LYE HOCK, LARRY
REGISTRAR

RANKINGS: ARCHITECTURE



Corals Boulevard Maldives is one of AGA's overseas projects

Architecture firms foray overseas amidst bleak outlook

Rising staff and material costs in SG are sending local architecture firms to Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia.

The construction industry in Singapore has not been promising as of late, with some of the city's largest architectural firms experiencing revenue cuts for the second year running. Slower business resulted in a painful 30-40% slash in Singapore revenue for Swan & Maclaren Architects, while DP Architects drew 30% of its revenue from Singapore over the past year, and the remaining 70% from overseas clients.

With increasing staff costs and expectations, people and talent movements within the architectural landscape either remained stagnant or decreased, but executives maintain that these changes are a result of factors other than the economic situation. For instance, Ong & Ong Group, the firm with the largest decrease in registered architects amongst those interviewed, attribute their 40% decrease in architects to a recent firm restructuring from early 2016 to mid-2017. The second firm with the biggest decrease at 14 architects or 24% from 2016 is RSP Architects, Planners, and Engineers. In total, the 20 largest architectural

Computational design techniques are increasingly changing the way how we work. These techniques include BIM automation and VR/AR technologies.



firms in Singapore experienced an overall 2.22% decrease in the number of architects from the previous year.

Digitalisation is also an important aspect of the industry's growth, according to Angelene Chan, chief executive officer, DP Architects. "Digitalisation is transforming construction projects today. Computational design techniques are increasingly changing the way how we work. These techniques include Building Information Modelling (BIM) automation and VR/AR technologies; as well as real-time building performance feedback, data-driven design and artificial intelligence which are at nascent stages," she said.

Changes in dynamics
Ashvinkumar Kantilal, chief executive officer, Ong & Ong Group, said employment trends remain unchanged in that there are still more foreign applicants than Singaporean or Permanent Resident applicants. According to him, there is also a shortage of staff trained in BIM as well as staff who have an experience of 6-10 years. Other executives

attribute changes in their number of architects to factors such as new registrations for increases and retirement and pursuit of other interests for decreases.

Due to firms exploring opportunities overseas, the number of staff based abroad also increased. Tan Shao Yen, chief executive officer of CPG Consultants Pte Ltd, said that the fall in registered architects in his firm is a common scenario for many other companies of the same size. Tan added that some of the registered architects left to pursue greater passions such as teaching and highlighted that movements do not have a drastic impact on their overall staff numbers.

"The small decrease is a natural employee turnover. We are indeed looking for more design talents as we expect China's Belt and Road initiative will bring ample opportunities to Asia. We are well positioned for countries along the Maritime Silk Road, with offices from Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore going east to the Middle East and London," said Tony Ang, global board director, Aedas.

In the past year, AGA Architects felt the need to explore markets beyond Singapore due to the slow growth of the local architecture industry. Ng Hoe Theong, key executive officer, AGA Architects, said that his firm is currently working on projects in Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, and Maldives. In fact the biggest and most notable project that the firm has clinched this year is the Corals Boulevard, a super high-rise luxury condominium and mixed development site in Male, Maldives.

Meanwhile, Lim Chai Boon, group director, Swan & Maclaren Architects, said they also prefer to grow their overseas office due to extremely high staff costs in Singapore. As foreign applications pour in, Lim said this is a perfect opportunity for them to assess their current talent pool against the barrage of new applicants. With their overseas growth, Lim said they managed to beat six other firms in Thailand to clinch

RANKINGS: ARCHITECTURE



Mariner's Quarter, DP Architects' project in London

a 750,000sqm mixed development project in Bangkok, a size that is very rare in Thailand.

Infrastructure consulting firm Surbana Jurong also prizes its architects by ensuring that they get experience not only locally, but internationally. CEO **Wong Heang Fine** said that his firm is a technology leader through the regular use of BIM and artificial intelligence in its goal to increase building functionality and efficiency. They are known for 2017 World Architecture Festival-shortlisted projects such as Floating Ponds, which use the vertical farming concept to maximise land use, and National University of Singapore's School of Design and Environment, a net zero-energy building that produces as much if not more energy than it consumes.

"The global market has more focused on cultural works, as well as new and more flexible development products. Large-scale, high-density developments are still on the trend, including multi-storey street retail in lieu of Western street retail, high-rise LOFT accommodation and SOHO towers to cater for new work-live dynamic and mixed-commercial hubs," Ang of Aedas added.

DP Architects has also joined the bandwagon and is currently working on a number of notable overseas projects such as the Mariner's Quarter

in London, Respublika Plaza in Astana, Lusail Commercial Boulevard in Qatar, and Deira Enrichment Project in Dubai.

The local scene

Despite several challenges in Singapore, architectural firms in the city continue to secure local projects and remain hopeful that growth will come around. Ang said that the major challenge in the local industry is the management of limited skilled manpower resources against the need to support the productivity drive. He said that skills in BIM and PPVC are still developing whilst most public sector works have this as a dominant requirement.

"The Built Environment industry in Singapore has been working towards enhancing productivity, resulting in fundamental changes in architectural design and construction processes. Statutory initiatives are also changing the way consultants work with each other and contractors. The importance of Integrated Design and Implementation Delivery cannot be emphasised well enough," CPG Consultants' Tan added.

Ang noted that the local market will be dominated by new residential development as residential sales seemed to have picked up on the premise that the market has bottomed out. There has been huge success in en-bloc sales, with new sites to be added to the market besides furious bidding by local

The infrastructure sector remains healthy due to the large investment here by the public sector notably new MRT stations, Hi-speed Rail Terminus linking to Malaysia and also the new Changi Airport Terminal 5.

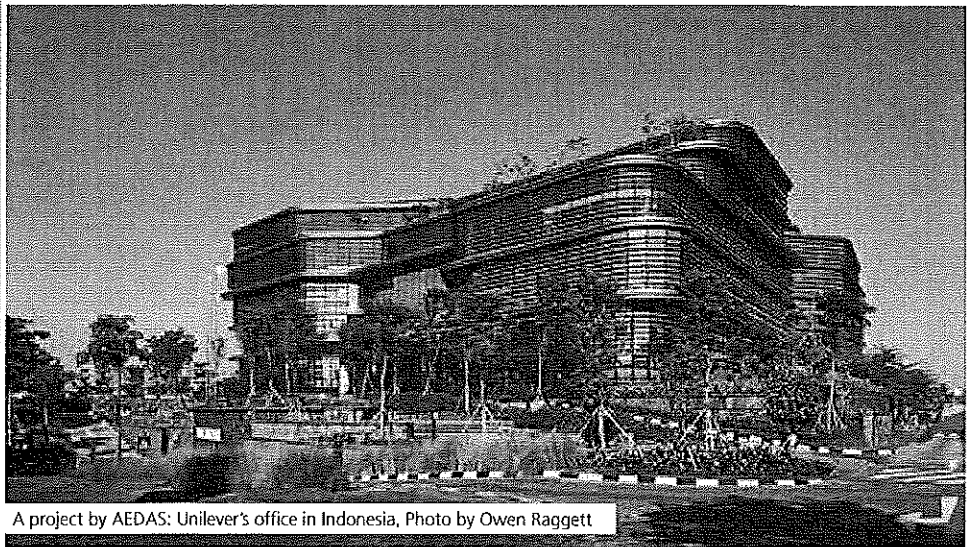


developers for new Government Sale Sites to refresh their landbank.

"There is also the proliferation of co-working office spaces and co-living lifestyles. The infrastructure sector remains healthy due to the large investment here by the public sector notably new MRT stations, hi-speed Rail Terminus linking to Malaysia and also Changi Airport Terminal 5. The expansion of the Mandai Zoo and re-development of the Tanjong Pagar Port Terminal will be the new significant works in the pipeline," Ang continued.

Ong & Ong's Kantilal said there are several changes that need to be made in the local architectural landscape so that Singapore-based firms can be productive, as costs rise and consultant fees go down. At present, they are involved in notable local projects such as Cuscaden Road Hotel project, Seaside Residences, the recently completed Royal Square, and interiors for the Singapore Post Office.

Meanwhile, Tan said CPG Consultants continues to lend thought expertise towards Singapore's Industry Transformation Map's knowledge building processes. These processes increase productivity through off-site prefabrication, coordination through digital design, and evolving designs towards more complex and high-density developments via integrated design. "We have seen the industry consolidate and grow their BIM expertise in the past year. In this region, there is an increasing demand for pre-fabricated pre-finished construction."



A project by AEDAS: Unilever's office in Indonesia, Photo by Owen Raggett

RANKINGS: ARCHITECTURE

2017	ARCHITECTURE FIRM	2016	2017 NUMBER OF REGISTERED ARCHITECTS	2016 NUMBER OF REGISTERED ARCHITECTS	NAME OF KEY EXECUTIVE OFFICER
1	DP ARCHITECTS	1	84	79	ANGELENE CHAN
2	AEDAS	2	69	71	TONY ANG
3	CPG CONSULTANTS	3	64	69	KHEW SIN KHOON
4	SURBANA JURONG	4	60	59	WONG HEANG FINE
5	RSP ARCHITECTS PLANNERS AND ENGINEERS	5	44	58	LEE KUT CHEUNG
6	SAA ARCHITECTS	8	30	23	YEO SIEW HAIP
7	ONG&ONG GROUP PTE. LTD.	6	29	46	ASHVINKUMAR KANTILAL
8	ADDP ARCHITECTS	7	28	29	-
9	P&T CONSULTANTS	8	20	23	CHOY MENG YEW
10	ARCHITECTS 61	10	14	15	MICHAEL NGU KING TENG
11	AGA ARCHITECTS PTE. LTD.	11	13	12	NG HOE THEONG
11	CIAP ARCHITECTS	14	13	11	THAM TUCK CHEONG
13	DCA ARCHITECTS	18	12	9	KOO TIN CHEW, VINCENT
14	DESIGN LINK ARCHITECTS PTE. LTD.	15	10	10	CAROL TEO
15	AWP	15	9	10	EDWARD WONG
15	WOHA ARCHITECTS PTE. LTD.	11	9	12	WONG MUN SUMM & RICHARD HASELL
17	LAUD ARCHITECTS	19	8	7	JOSEPH LAU
18	ID ARCHITECTS	19	7	7	LOKE LEONG SENG
18	AC CONSORTIUM	19	7	7	GRACE YOUNG AND TAN MEOW HWA
18	DESIGN-ENVIRONMENT GROUP ARCHITECTS LLP DESIGN	-	7	-	-
18	FORMWERKZ ARCHITECTS	25	7	6	-
18	FORUM ARCHITECTS	-	7	-	-
18	JGP ARCHITECTURE	19	7	7	JAMES GOH
18	MKPL ARCHITECTS PTE LTD	11	7	12	SIEW MAN KOK
18	RDC ARCHITECTS	19	7	7	MOHAN SHANMUGAM
18	SWAN & MACLAREN ARCHITECTS	19	7	7	LIM CHAI BOON
		TOTAL	579	596	

DATA PROVIDED BY COMPANIES AND SOURCED FROM BOARD OF ARCHITECTS. SURVEY PERIOD: JULY-AUGUST 2017.