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Community open space the focal point of Tampines' \$332m upgrade

THE centrepiece of Tampines' \$332 million upgrading plan will be a new 'community open space' right next to the Tampines MRT station.

But while that space will cater to all residents, the key group to benefit from the five-year makeover plan will be the elderly.

Costing \$500,000, the community space will be completed in two years and 'become a focal point for organised activities for all Tampines residents', said Tampines GRC MP Ong Kian Min.

Currently an open field, the vacant site - about the size of two football fields - is to be covered with cement, and have raised platforms, landscaping and benches added.

Still, that half a million pales when compared to the bulk of the \$332 million that will be spent making the housing estate more comfortable for elderly residents.

Mr Ong, who is also chairman of the Tampines Town Council, made the announcements yesterday while updating elderly residents on the facilities being built for them.

His fellow Tampines GRC MPs - National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan, Mr Yatiman Yusof, Ms Irene Ng and Mr Sin Boon Ann - attended the event together with about 300 senior citizens.

According to Mr Ong, some \$227 million had been spent in the past five years on new facilities and upgrading in Tampines.

Under the new plan, about \$200 million will be spent on the Lift Upgrading Programme, which adds lift access to every storey of a block.

Mr Mah noted that this was to make life more convenient for older residents.

Another \$8 million will be spent on building more covered linkways between blocks, and 'more ramps with hand rails to provide ease of movement for our senior citizens', said Mr Ong.

He also noted that recreational amenities such as lounges in the void decks, '3G' (three-generation) fitness corners and pebbled footpaths had been popular with the elderly.

Three-generation fitness corners, designed with exercise equipment suitable for young and old alike to encourage greater family bonding, were introduced in HDB estates about four years ago.

Mr Ong said that the town council plans to add at least one such fitness corner - and a pebbled footpath - for each residents' committee zone in Tampines within the next five years.

Madam Ho Ming Choo, 70, said the new facilities will mean more options for her when she takes her five-year-old grandson out for walks in the evenings.

But more important for her are the new lifts stopping on every floor of her block.

The elderly resident, who now has to climb one flight of stairs to get to her flat, said in Teochew: 'The sooner they do it the better.'

'Another few more years and I don't think I can still climb the stairs.'

DARYL LOO

ELECTION CONTEST? RESIDENTS THE ULTIMATE WINNERS

'We always look forward to having some form of contest here, so that we are able to present our plans to the residents and to explain to them what we have done over the last five years, and what we hope to do for them over the next five years, whenever the election is called. It is a contest of ideas, and a contest of plans and programmes, and we'll let the residents choose. And the ultimate winners will be the residents. So yes, I hope there will be some form of a contest.'

MR MAH BOW TAN, on whether he expects Tampines GRC to be contested in the next general election