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GREENEST SHOPHOUSE IN TOWN

The office of architecture firm HKS at Duxton Road is the first to be awarded the Green Mark Gold Plus Certification by BCA

 TAY SUAN CHIANG



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FROM THE OUTSIDE, there is nothing to indicate that the Duxton Road office of HKS Asia Pacific Design Consulting looks any different from a conventional shophouse office. But the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) thinks differently, because it just awarded HKS the Gold Plus status in the Green Mark Award for Office Interior. This is the first time that a shophouse has been awarded this status.

When the global design firm – which opened its office in Singapore two and a half years ago – was looking for a location, they sought an office space that would be unique to Singapore – namely its shophouses.

“A shophouse was the perfect solution for us, offering a building distinctly integrated into Singapore’s historic fabric with a style befitting our company standards, because the shophouse layout is more like a design studio and less like a typical work environment,” says Angela Lee, its principal and regional director for Asia Pacific.

Ms Lee adds: “With only 6,000 shophouses remaining in Singapore – protected by strict conservation regulations – HKS

felt a responsibility to design the greenest shophouse in the country.”

She adds: “HKS’s projects around the world are designed to minimise usage of energy, so our office is no different.”

The office at 51 Duxton Road was formerly a restaurant, and the team worked to retain whatever they could. The original flooring, ceiling and white painted walls were kept. Dining tables were not thrown out, but instead now serve as tables for lunch or meetings in the pantry area, and the restaurant’s bar stools were also kept.

On the second floor, where most of the staff work, a new carpet and furniture were purchased. “The carpet, office furniture and other new items, such as computers and monitors were specially selected because they have green label certifications,” says designer Charlie Chang, who presented the office’s green features to BCA.

The office is split into zones, and each zone comes with its own lighting and air-conditioning systems, which are only switched on when a particular zone is occupied. Naturally, only energy efficient LED lights are used, while the air-conditioner is set at 24 degrees Celsius and not any lower. To improve the quality of air, the company also invested in an ioniser.

Staff have their own reusable cups and help themselves to water from a dispenser, so that no bottled water is needed. They are also regularly sent reminders and even have a handbook to encourage them to always be environmentally conscious.

A two-storey vertical green wall helps to create a cool ambience. Potted indoor plants dot the office, and every staff also has a plant on their desk. The presence of plants helped the office gain extra Green Mark points.

While she is immensely proud that the office is the first shophouse to be awarded the Gold Plus status, Ms Lee says what is more important is that the staff are all happy and comfortable in the office.

“I know we’ve achieved this, because we see more family members, guests and even pets who visit us and enjoy the warm atmosphere of our shophouse,” says Ms Lee.



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- (1) Materials library at HKS.
 (2) A double storey vertical green wall adds to the ambience of HKS.
 (3) The original ceiling is kept and the carpet has green certification.