

Dawson estate bags inclusive design prize

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Designing with everyone in mind

The Building and Construction Authority's annual Universal Design Mark awards recognise projects with inclusive, user-friendly design, whether it is a case of making it easy for wheelchair users to get around, or creating a community atmosphere. Here are some winning features from Platinum winner SkyVille@Dawson and Gold Plus winner Bedok Mall and Bedok Residences.



Community corners
Multiple "sky villages" in each block provide areas for SkyVille@Dawson residents to relax, creating a sense of community within that cluster of homes.



No steps
For ease of entry, the flats at SkyVille@Dawson have a gentle ramp at the door instead of a step.



Ramps
Instead of being a separate afterthought, ramps are integrated into the design.



Facilities at friendly heights
Bedok Mall's interactive touchscreen directory is at a comfortable height for children and wheelchair users.



Accessible jacuzzi
The pool deck at Bedok Residences has raised jacuzzis which allow wheelchair users to manoeuvre themselves easily out of the chair and into the pool.

PHOTOS: JAMIE KOH
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

From ramps incorporated into main routes around the estate to large light switches that are easy to reach within flats, Housing Board project SkyVille@Dawson has many user-friendly features.

These have helped the estate in Dawson Road, Queenstown, become the first public housing project to clinch the Building and Construction Authority's (BCA) highest award for inclusive design. SkyVille@Dawson is one of three Platinum winners of the BCA Universal Design Mark this year and among 25 winners in all – ranging from homes to malls to parks – announced by the BCA yesterday.

"Universal design is about addressing the needs of as many people as possible, including those with disabilities and the elderly," said Mr Teo Orh Hai, the BCA's acting group director for building plan and management.

That includes ramps and corridors wide enough for wheelchairs, as well as facilities catering to people of all ages, such as playgrounds that incorporate fitness stations for older adults.

But universal design also extends to subtler touches, such as large, clear signs to help people find their way around, and adequate seating.

At Bedok Mall and Bedok Residences – a Gold Plus winner – plenty of seating is available throughout the integrated mall and private apartments, giving shoppers and residents places to rest. The development is one of four projects by developer CapitaLand that received Universal Design Mark awards this year.

Another is CapitaGreen, the first stand-alone office development to achieve a Platinum award.

“Universal design is not only about hard physical features, but it’s also about taking users into account,” said Mr Tan Jwu Yih, director of the BCA’s universal design department and one of the assessors for the awards.

Citing SkyVille@Dawson’s use of sky gardens to create community spaces in each block, he said: “The designer has understood how users can enjoy and use the space.”

The third Platinum winner is the refurbished Enabling Village, a community space with retail, lifestyle and training services for people with disabilities. Its features include an interactive directory that can be adjusted in height to suit wheelchair users, for instance. The awards will be presented at the BCA Awards ceremony on May 26 at Resorts World Sentosa.

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