

SOCIAL SERVICE INSTITUTE (SSI)

The Social Service Institute (SSI) is a training institute and career centre for the social service sector in Singapore. It is located over four floors at Central Plaza, with a total floor area of 2,600 square metres. There are two main areas, namely the training facility, which provides training and career guidance for the public and the staff office, which provides backend support.

In response to SSI's ethos of providing a holistic learning environment, the design strives to achieve borderless and collaborative learning, reaching out and community sharing through spatial planning that is sensitive to the environment and users' requirements.

The strategic location of the new institute at Tiong Bahru—the heart of the city centre—

meant that it is easily accessible by its target groups. As the users come from a myriad of backgrounds, the need to ensure that the design caters to this diverse community is ever more important. The design team went through a vigorous process in defining the various heights and dimensions of furniture that can be equally comfortable when used by a person on wheelchair. Similarly, in the selection of colours and materials, the same sensitivity was applied to ensure a positive experience.

MATERIALS

The materials were all locally sourced. As the timeline to deliver the project was tight, it was deemed wise to procure materials from local suppliers due to shorter lead time and the ease of project coordination.

CONSTRAINTS

The given floor plan is a typical rectilinear office floor plate with a large central core. The average length from the core to the façade is about 10 metres. With such a narrow width, the designers faced the challenge of using the floor plate to plan for large event spaces like an auditorium. In addition, the programme is distributed over four floors, the ninth storey and 18th to 20th storeys. Continuity is broken. Connectivity and relationship of the programme must be considered horizontally and vertically at the same time.

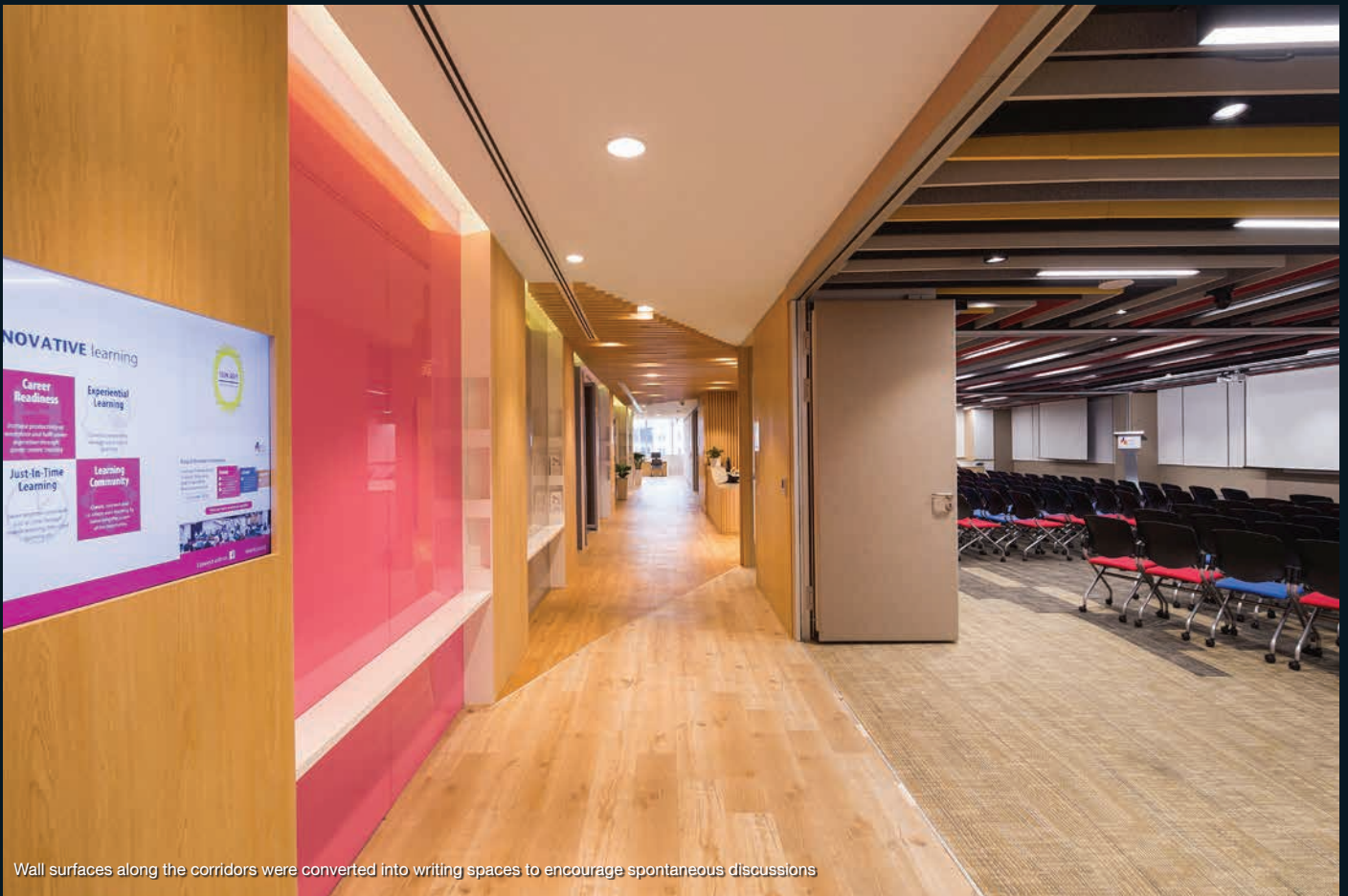
The client also wished to have collapsible spaces that could host small and large groups of students at any time and interactive breakout spaces. Informal collaboration space for staff



Phone booths allow staff to retreat if they need a quiet space to work.



A universal design was adopted in the common areas such as the reception counter, which was purposefully lowered to facilitate visitors on wheelchairs



Wall surfaces along the corridors were converted into writing spaces to encourage spontaneous discussions



Operable walls were fitted into the auditorium and classrooms for flexibility of space

and students was also a key element to be implemented.

SOLUTIONS

Since SSI is both an office and training facility for social service professionals, a universal design was adopted in the common areas such as the reception counter, which was purposefully lowered to facilitate visitors on wheelchairs.


Instead of adopting a strict segregation of training facilities and staff office by floors, half of the area (public) of each floor was allocated to students and the other half (private) to staff. To facilitate interaction and collaboration among students, educators and staff, the designers created common areas such as pantries and the resource hub, where public meets private. Wall surfaces, such as those along

corridors, were wrapped by back painted glass around the entire core at every floor and converted into writing spaces to encourage spontaneous discussions. Even the lift shaft, which was clad in glass, can be used as a writing surface for informal collaborations. A similar design layout concept was adopted on all four levels of the split-level office space to achieve a sense of continuity, which is felt when users travel from one floor to another for training and meetings, as well as when they interact at the informal collaboration spaces.

The auditorium on the 18th storey is the largest event space. The size of the auditorium can be configured in accordance with the needs of the events through the use of operable walls on all sides. It could be divided into three classrooms or a large auditorium. The space can be further

enlarged by opening up the walls along the corridor, hence making the corridor part of the auditorium. The use of operable walls is also extended to all classrooms such that the size of the classroom can adapt according to the class size.

The staff office is planned in an open concept layout with quiet workstations in a phone booth concept. These phone booths allow staff to retreat if they need a quiet space to work.

Without high partitions, the layout hopes to encourage communication and collaboration among staff. Walls along the corridor are designed as full height cabinets with pin-up boards for informal collaboration spaces. 

PROJECT DATA

Project Name

Social Service Institute (SSI)

Location

Central Plaza, Singapore

Completion Date

April 2017

Gross Floor Area

2,600 square metres

Building Height

4 floors

Client/Owner/Developer

National Council of Social Service

Architecture Firm

TA.LE Architects

Principal Architect

Tay Yanling

Interior Design Firm

TA.LE Architects

Principal Designer

Tay Yanling

Mechanical & Electrical Engineer

KTP International Pte Ltd

Quantity Surveyor

BKG Consultants Pte Ltd

Interior Fit-Out Contractor

L&RUI Concept Group Pte Ltd

Images

TA.LE Architects



Interactive breakout space



Meeting room



Pantry