

3,000 HDB retailers to get help with upgrading

Shop owners to have role deciding best use of \$12m fund to benefit all

By LINETTE LAI

HEARTLAND retailers will be able to spruce up their shops for less money

thanks to an expanded HDB scheme.

The \$12 million Revitalisation of Shops (ROS) programme, entering its second phase, will cover 33 HDB estates comprising 3,000 shops.

Owners must be represented by merchant associations to ensure the upgrades benefit all shops in the area.

The funds will go towards subsidising upgrades of common areas, promotional



An artist's impression of the new-look Bukit Batok Neighbourhood Centre 3, one of the 33 housing estates covered under the expanded HDB scheme. PHOTO: HDB

events and rent-free periods for tenants to renovate their shops.

Shop owners have to put their heads together to decide what kind of upgrades they want, for example, to replace their awnings with colour-coordinated ones.

The HDB and town councils will bear 50 per cent, or up to \$10,000, of upgrading costs for each shop owner.

They will pay 100 per cent, or up to

\$20,000, of upgrading costs for rental shops.

Senior Minister of State for National Development and Education Grace Fu announced the scheme's new scope yesterday during a visit to Bukit Batok Neighbourhood Centre 3, one of the sites to be covered. She said:

"Since 2007, we have launched the ROS scheme where we primarily help

groups of shops to increase their appeal to residents... and to help them in their marketing activities.

"This year, given the poorer economic sentiments, we thought it's good that we extend it to more shops and that more estates will benefit from this."

The ROS scheme began in 2007 and covered 1,500 shops spread out among 14 selected sites in HDB estates. Shop owners were given funding to upgrade and enhance their shops.

Feedback from shop owners involved in the scheme has been positive.

"As you can imagine, for many of them this is the first time they've got together as a group - as a very informal alliance - and they have to work out the budget, the design, and all that," Ms Fu said. "It's taking them some time but they are progressing well."

In 2007, Spring Singapore launched its Heartland Retail Programme in conjunction with the ROS scheme. The programme provided funding for revitalisation projects such as engaging business consultants for local firms.

Spring is extending the scheme to more sites in view of its success.

A panel comprising grassroots leaders, town council officers and representatives from the HDB, Spring and the various merchant associations will be formed to help implement the two programmes.

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