

SINGAPORE PROPERTY

Johor regent applies to build GCBs, low-density housing on Holland Road land; URA to rezone site

Part of the land will also be designated as a Good Class Bungalow Area if rezoning proposal is approved

By Chong Xin Wei

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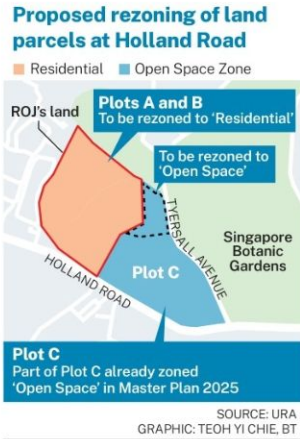
THE Regent of Johor (ROJ) Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim has submitted a development application to build low-density housing and Good Class Bungalows (GCBs) on freehold land owned by him in Holland Road, following a land swap between the Singapore government and the ROJ.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) has reviewed the application with technical agencies, and is proposing to rezone the ROJ's land parcels in Holland Road to "residential", it said on Tuesday (Mar 17).

In total, Tunku Ismail now owns 16.6 hectares of land bounded by Holland Road and Tyersall Avenue. The parcels sit in an exclusive residential enclave nestled between designated GCB Areas on freehold land.

If the development proposal is approved, a part of the land parcels zoned "residential" will be designated as a GCB Area, URA said.

In June 2025, the government announced that Tunku Ismail had plans to develop his land parcels in Holland Road, and that it would be carrying out a land swap with him so that the planned developments would be further away from the nearby Singapore Botanic Gardens,



A view of the plots of land near Singapore Botanic Gardens that were part of the land swap deal.
PHOTO: BT FILE

a Unesco world heritage site.

The government agreed to swap a state land parcel of 8.5 hectares (ha) – about 900,000 square feet – along Holland Road for a 13-ha plot in the same area belonging to the ROJ.

The 13-ha parcel is part of a larger 21.1-ha swathe of freehold land just outside the Singapore Botanic Gardens, owned by the Johor royal family for generations. With the swap, the ROJ owns 16.6 ha of land in the area.

Tunku Ismail was appointed the ROJ in 2024, ahead of his father's ascension to the federal throne as the

17th king of Malaysia. He is the eldest of six children of Sultan Ibrahim and Johor queen Raja Zarith Sofiah.

The regent has submitted an application to develop his land for low-rise, low-density housing with a gross plot ratio of 1.4, as well as GCBs, said URA. The government will keep its plot, currently zoned open space and special use, undeveloped for now. URA is proposing to rezone the special-use portion of the plot to open space to reflect future plans.

The regent's proposed plans are "compatible and sensitive to the

surrounding residential neighbourhood and comply with current height restrictions that protect the visual amenity of the Singapore Botanic Gardens", it added.

The developer will be required to undertake environmental studies before starting works to mitigate any potential impact on the environment.

The proposed designation of the land will create a new GCB Area, adding to Singapore's 39 gazetted GCB Areas, mainly in Districts 10, 11, 20, 21, and 23.

Properties in GCB Areas must have a minimum plot size of 1,400

square metres (roughly 15,000 square feet), with strict building requirements governing site coverage and setback from boundaries to ensure space and privacy. Building height is limited to two storeys, with basements and attics allowed. Ownership is also generally limited to Singapore citizens.

The strict classification makes for a very limited supply of GCB properties, which change hands for tens of millions of dollars. It is estimated that there are less than 3,000 GCBs across the 39 designated areas.

The highest-priced deal on rec-

ord in more than a decade was a December 2025 transaction of a Peirce Road GCB which sold for S\$148 million. The house was jointly owned by the daughter of Metro founder Ong Tjoe Kim and the grandniece of Singapore's "Rubber King" Tan Kah Kee. It was sold to a boutique property developer.

In nearby Gallop Park, one mansion sold for S\$58 million in January 2025. A 1,098-square-foot unit at the Botanika condominium fetched S\$2.6 million a month later, and a 2,842-sq-ft apartment at Gallop Gables changed hands in December that same year for S\$6.9 million.

"Any addition of fresh land parcels into (the GCB segment) is significant and reinforces the long-term scarcity that underpins the value of GCBs," said Singapore Realtors Inc's head of research and data analytics Mohan Sandrasegeran.

He also pointed to rising activity at the top end of the landed market. In 2025, about 30 caveated GCB transactions were recorded, up from 23 in 2024, reflecting a gradual return of participation among high-net-worth buyers.

Landed transactions in the price range of S\$10 million and above also increased, supported in part by renewed interest in GCB properties, he said.