

Editor's Note: This year marks the 40th anniversary of the launch of China's reform and opening-up policy.

China Daily profiles people who experienced or witnessed the important drive.

BORN

Singapore, Feb 23, 1938

EDUCATION

- 1962: Bachelor of architecture, University of New South Wales
- 1965: Master's in city planning, Yale University
- 1995: Doctor of science (honorary), University of New South Wales

Liu Thai Ker

Urban planning adviser

CAREER

- 1969-89: Chief architect and CEO, Housing and Development Board of Singapore
- 1989-92: Chief planner and CEO, Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore
- 1996-2005: Chairman, National Arts Council of Singapore
- 2000-09: Chairman, Singapore Tyler Print Institute
- 1992-2017: Senior director, RSP Architects Planners and Engineers
- 2008-present: Founding chairman, advisory board of the Centre for Liveable Cities
- 2017-present: Chairman, Morrow Architects & Planners

AWARDS

- 2001: Medal of the City of Paris, France
- 2014: Business China Excellence Award
- 2015: Singapore Institute of Planners' Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award

MAJOR PROJECTS IN CHINA

- 1997: Fuzhou Changle International Airport, Fujian province, 120,000 square meters
- 2002: Huafa Xincheng, Zhuhai, Guangdong province, 450,000 sq m
- 2011: Weifang Cultural Center, Shandong province, 294,000 sq m
- 2011: Guilin Watermark Lijiang Residential Development, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, 116,000 sq m

AWARDS FROM CHINESE AUTHORITIES

- 2011: China Construction Engineering Luban Award for Weifang Workers' Hall and Youth Hall
- 2015: Jinan Wenbo CBD Planning Award
- 2016: Weifang Planning Award



The man who helped design China's urban landscape

Since meeting with Deng Xiaoping in 1978, Singaporean has helped plan nearly 50 cities nationwide



A model of the Fujian-Singapore Friendship Medical Service Center, designed by Liu, is unveiled in Xiamen, East China's Fujian province, on Aug 8, 2009. The center was opened in 2011. YANG FUSHAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

By **LOW SHI PING** in Singapore
For *China Daily*

He is best known as Singapore's "father of city planning", but Liu Thai Ker can also boast of having a hand in shaping the urban landscape in China.

You could say it started in 1978, when Deng Xiaoping visited Singapore.

"I was asked to take care of him as I could speak Mandarin well," recalled Liu, the chairman of Morrow Architects & Planners, who served as chief planner and CEO of Singapore's Urban Redevelopment Authority from 1989 to 1992.

Deng was taken to the rooftop of the Ministry of National Development building, where Liu explained Singapore's urban planning.

"I like to think that partly because of that, when Deng went back to China a few months

later, he made the announcement (that China would learn) urban planning from Singapore," Liu, 80, said.

Back then, Liu was a junior staff member at the Housing and Development Board (HDB), Singapore's public housing authority, where he rose to become chief architect and CEO.

"I was an ignorant young man, but I knew that Deng was a very important reformer for China," he said. "He was very down-to-earth with no airs. He asked pointed, practical questions. I was very comfortable briefing him. He made a very good impression."

A year later, Liu made his first visit to China, where he made stops in Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai and had the chance to see the country at the start of reform and opening-up.

"I saw the historic parts of Beijing, with a lot of *sheyuan*," he said, referring to the capital's traditional courtyard homes. "Unfortunately, most of them are gone already."

"In those days, people in the street wore either black or blue colors. They were very drab-looking, and yet the historic buildings were so beautiful."

It wasn't until the early 1980s that Liu received his first commission to plan a city in China — Fuzhou, the capital of East China's Fujian province — through the Singapore government.

His experience on the topic stems from planning new towns for Singapore, each capable of accommodating about 200,000 people. By the end of his 20-year HDB career in 1989, he had created 23 new towns, including public housing and complementary facilities and amenities for their residents, such as playgrounds for the children and community centers for recreational activities.

"When I did the planning at HDB, I also planned the surroundings to protect the neigh-