

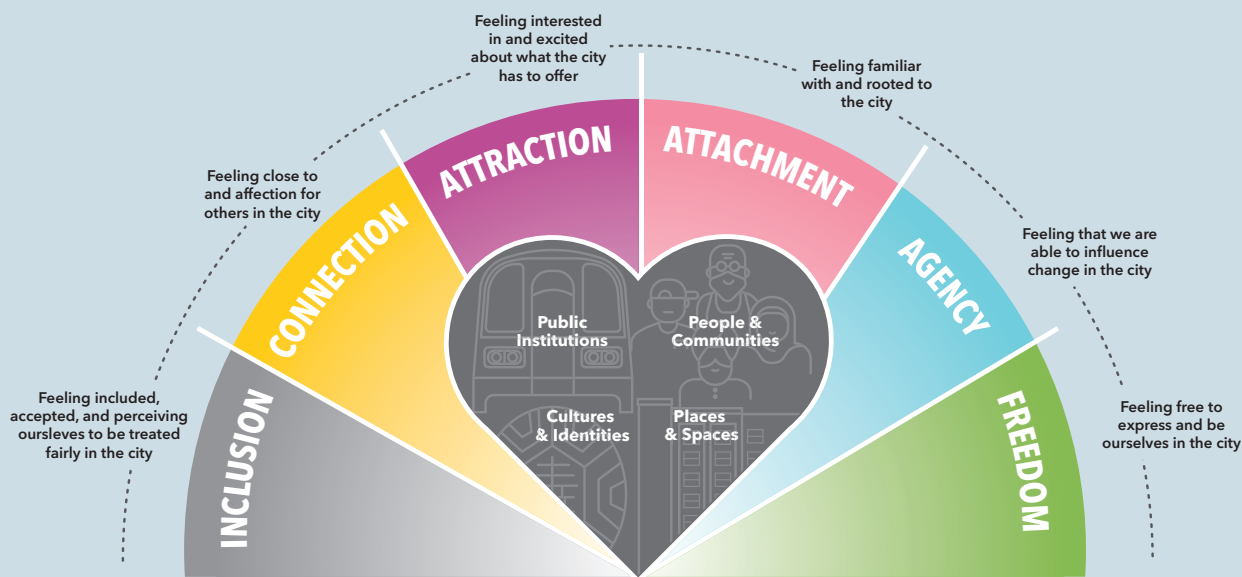
EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Singapore: Designing a Loveable City

TEXT: DESIGNSINGAPORE COUNCIL AND PARTNERS

The Loveable Singapore Project is a multi-party initiative that seeks to uncover what residents love about their city, and what else would boost that love. Led by the DesignSingapore Council as part of an ongoing conversation about Singapore's future as a loveable city for all, the study gave birth to the Loveability Framework, which maps out a spectrum of emotional connections to the city.

Project Partners: Centre for Liveable Cities; Deloitte Center for the Edge; Urban Redevelopment Authority; Centre for Sustainable Asian Cities (National University of Singapore); Housing & Development Board; Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth; Participate in Design; DesignSingapore Council



OUR METHODOLOGY

Love is a social activity, so we designed our approach to be dialectic, not didactic.

Understanding enablers that drive loveability: What we want to protect, maintain, amplify

What is loveable about Singapore

What would make Singapore more loveable

Identifying opportunities for interventions: What we want to discuss more, improve, plug gaps in

Total Number of People Engaged:

2,503

Total Duration Engaged in mins:

63,610

The Loveability Framework

Through a multimodal engagement with 2,500 people across Singapore, DesignSingapore Council (DSG) developed the Loveability Framework based on six types of emotional connections to the city-state, across the four areas of lived experiences that the survey respondents found most impactful. The emotional connection types are: attachment, inclusion, attraction, connection, freedom and agency.

More information about the framework is available at:



Our Sense of Attachment

Through the exercise, we discovered that shared cultural, linguistic and behavioural practices strengthen people's sense of familiarity and rootedness in Singapore. Visual anchors preserved in our built environment also enhance this attachment, especially if they are part of local culture and identity. Shared spaces where people can hang around reinforce the feeling as well, while architectural icons inspire pride in our city.

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View of a "mama shop", a convenience store sometimes found at the ground floor of public flats.
Image: Singapore Tourism Board (STB), Singapore

Our Sense of Inclusion

Feeling accepted and perceiving ourselves to be fairly treated form another dimension of loveability that we have discovered about Singapore. For many, this means feeling welcome and being able to partake in civic life, e.g., spending time in shared spaces, and taking part in public activities and experiences. On the other hand, shared spaces that exclude certain groups or lack amenities for those with special needs can limit this sense of inclusion. Access to a good quality of life is also important. We feel less at home in Singapore when living in the city subjects us to stress, elitism and competitiveness.

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May I have
a seat
please?



Inclusive initiatives in schools and communities strengthen our belonging.

Image (from top): COVID-19 Migrant Support Coalition; Land Transport Authority (LTA), Singapore; Kindle Garden Preschool by AWWA



Our Sense of Connection

Our feelings of closeness and affection for others are built through strong micro-communities that provide care, support and resources, especially in neighbourhoods. Public spaces that let us spend time with our loved ones while encouraging interactions with others outside of our social circle can also enhance such connections. Opportunities to co-create or shape our shared spaces help us feel connected to our communities too. However, unfriendly, unpleasant or inconsiderate behaviour, often stemming from a hectic and competitive pace of life, can erode our connection with one another.



Our Sense of Attraction

Many residents feel a heightened sense of attraction to Singapore when they experience vibrant civic life and mixed typology buildings and places, be they open, unprogrammed spaces or well-planned, bustling ones. Attractive architecture, whether in the form of iconic landmarks or cultural and heritage places, also adds to this dimension of loveability. Opportunities for spontaneous interactions and surprise discoveries render Singapore more attractive too. On the other hand, the less pleasant realities of our high-density urban life, generic-looking streetscapes and the loss of authentic cultural anchors can diminish this sense of attraction.

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Vibrant streetscape of Haji Lane with high-rise at the background.
Image: Singapore Stock Photos / Unsplash

Our Sense of Freedom

Being able to access spaces that offer a break from the crowds and bustle of urban life, whether in residential neighbourhoods and other places around the island, can enhance our sense of freedom in a high-density city like Singapore. However, the same sense of freedom can be compromised when we are unable to express or be ourselves—because of, for example, limited opportunities to achieve personal aspirations, over-regulation of spaces, and a feeling of disempowerment during civic engagements.

A group of people, including a man in a blue t-shirt and a woman in a grey t-shirt, are standing with their bicycles on a paved path. The path is lined with lush green trees and foliage. In the background, a covered walkway with a metal roof structure is visible, and other people are walking along it.

Singapore's Green Corridor.
Image: Ethan Chan / Unsplash

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A wooden boardwalk winds through a dense tropical wetland. The path is surrounded by lush green vegetation, including large palm fronds and various tropical plants. Three people are walking along the boardwalk, away from the camera. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Views of the Chek Jawa Wetlands in Singapore.
Image: Singapore Tourism Board (STB), Singapore



Public engagement for Neighbourhood Renewal Programme at Tampines, Singapore. Project by Participate in Design.
Image: Participate in Design



Our Sense of Agency

The feeling that we can create change in our city is an important dimension of its loveability. Many feel a sense of agency through a shared responsibility of making public spaces and interactions safe and pleasant for all. Opportunities to co-create and shape our neighbourhoods, and to give feedback or contribute to various social causes, can also enhance this sense of agency. However, the feeling of disempowerment arises when people are unable to navigate regulations and red tape, or when they feel they lack the knowledge, skills or tools to effect change in community or national issues.