Commercial
Diversity
IN BUGIS

ROCHOR
CENTRE

SIM LIM
SQUARE

FU LU SHOU
COMPLEX

Albert Street

ALBERT
CENTRE

Bencoolen Street

Queen Street

Commercial space
Most accessible
Least accessible

Public Space
Most accessible
Least accessible

Dwelling Space

Unavailable

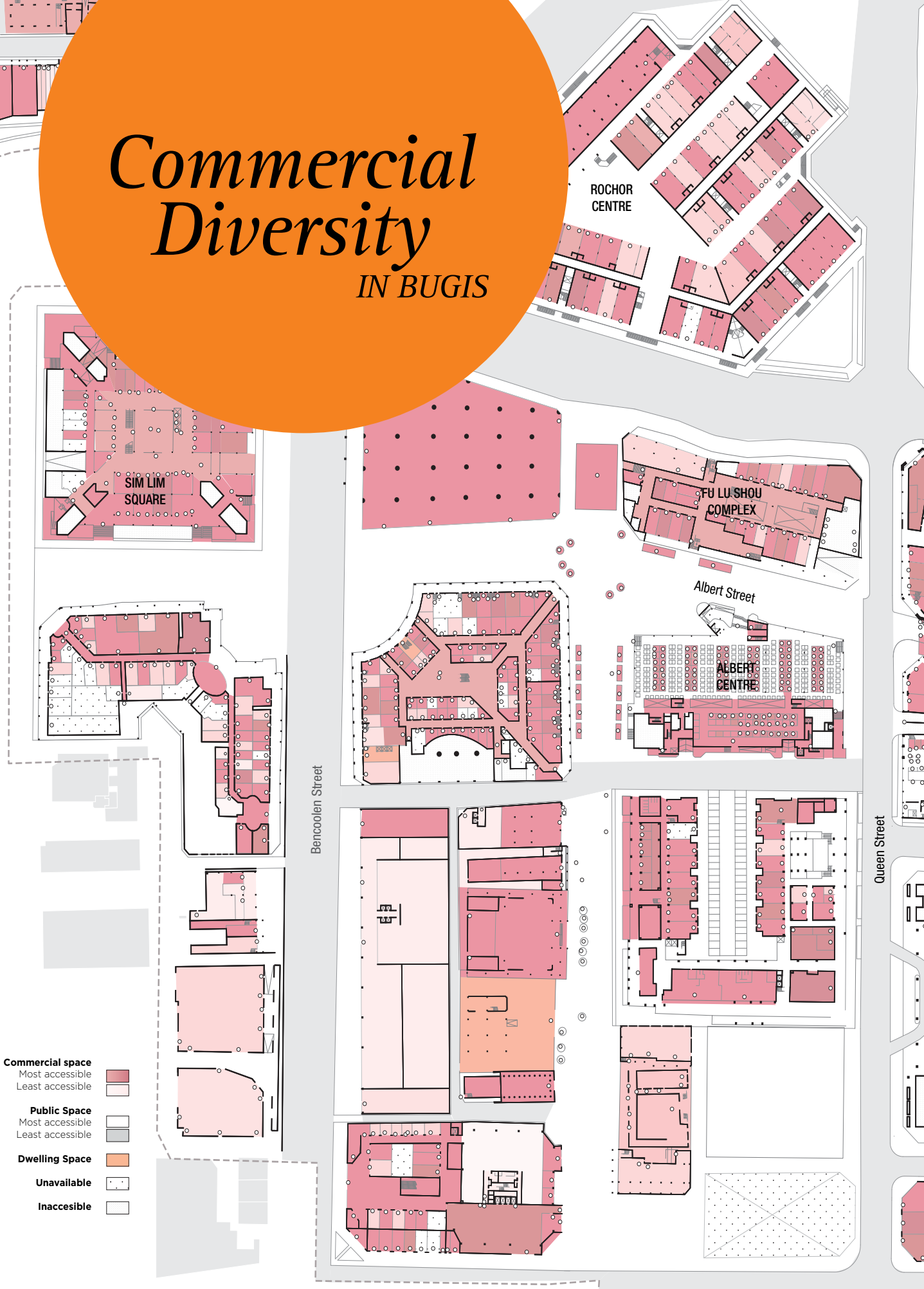**Inaccesible**

T his map of Bugis – one of Singapore's most diverse and intense neighbourhoods – is the result of a detailed survey by the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) **City Form Lab** in 2013. It captures all the outdoor and publicly accessible indoor spaces within a 10-minute walking radius of the Bugis metro station – including 696 buildings, 4,952 ground-floor entrances, 3,435 businesses and 2,500 dwelling units across all floors (shown partially here). The study explored how policy, planning and design can support more diverse, accessible and inclusive urban environments. These ideas are highlighted on the following spread.

Rochor Road

Bugis MRT

BUGIS
VILLAGE

BUGIS
JUNCTION

Victoria Street

North Bridge Road

Liang Seah Street

BUGIS
PLUS

Manila Street

Middle Road

N

Diverse, Accessible and Inclusive Urban Environments

An equitable high-density urban environment offers something for all, regardless of income, age or ethnicity. Singapore's downtown Bugis district – one of the city's most diverse commercial quarters – offers amenities ranging from eateries, textile traders and small Buddhist paraphernalia stores, to grade "A" office space, banks and modern shopping malls. This illustration of an imaginary area resembling Bugis introduces 10 policy and planning solutions that may be generalised from its structure for achieving diversity, accessibility and inclusiveness elsewhere. (Source: SUTD City Form Lab)

1 NEIGHBOURHOOD DENSITY

Who visits stores, how often, and consequently what stores survive, depends on who lives in their catchment area and at what densities. Higher densities can generate enough demand for infrequently bought goods like furniture.

2 MUNICIPAL SPACES

Municipally owned commercial spaces (e.g., public housing blocks) tend to produce a different commercial image and rarely attract high-end chain stores. They are well suited to small individually owned enterprises.

3 VARIABLE VERTICAL ACCESS

Accessibility also plays out vertically. Singapore's public housing blocks with commercial podiums offer elegant examples. Out of the way and out of sight, upper floors allow non-profit organisations, educational facilities and other businesses to survive in otherwise priced-out areas.

4 TENANT COORDINATION

Asking reduced rent from tenants delivering desirable services that add to the character of a place or attract desired clientele is a strategy commonly used by different types of landlords.

5 PUBLIC TRANSIT ACCESS

Accessibility not only depends on a district's pedestrian routes, but also on a well-connected transit system that delivers customers from all corners of the larger metropolitan region. This wider clientele is a strong incentive for varied retailers to locate around transit stations.

City Form Lab
at SUTD, established in collaboration with MIT. cityform.mit.edu
Drawing by Anton Vill

6 ZONING

Zoning guidelines can designate particular businesses or functions in desired locations. Combined with appropriate tax or rent support, zoning can help achieve amenities that the market alone might not produce.

7 VARIABLE HORIZONTAL ACCESS

Location and accessibility are key to a storefront's value. Neighbourhoods with a range of accessibilities on different streets are likelier to attract a greater diversity of businesses. Side streets and back alleys often house businesses that cannot afford main street rents.

8 CLUSTERING

Clustering of stores attracts more customers by offering complementary goods or a chance to compare prices and products. Environments with small parcels and numerous buildings close to each other tend to enable retail clusters serving diverse needs.

9 VARIABLE BUILDING TYPES

Different commercial activities require different spaces. Environments that offer a diverse building stock are more likely to attract more varied tenants.

10 FOOD TRUCKS / HAWKERS

Commercial diversity is enhanced by smaller mobile solutions – food trucks, mobile carts, street hawkers, etc. Mobile vendors typically pay less rent than larger fixed tenants, allowing for a greater range of sellers to operate.