A city hostel for 1 in 4 students

ONE in every four students at the Singapore Management University (SMU) will be able to live in the city while studying there.

SMU’s first hostel will be ready by the middle of next year and be within walking distance of its Bras Basah city campus. It will be located in the Selegie Road/Middle Road area and will have 800 to 850 beds.

The university is in talks with various agencies to use some government-owned flats and heritage buildings in the vicinity.

One possibility is vacant Housing Board blocks in the Short Street and Prinsep Street area near the SMU campus.

University president Howard Hunter said the residential experience was a valuable part of university education.

Added SMU chairman Ho Kwon Ping: “City hostels will give life to the area and add to the night-life here.

“Students can walk back after studying late and there will be a buzz in the area,” he said.

SMU currently has 3,600 undergraduates and will have 6,000 in about five years’ time.

While SMU declined to provide details on the exact location, it said the buildings were within a 2km to 3km radius of the campus and it was close to securing one.

The university has been planning a city hostel since scrapping plans for a Jurong hostel two years ago.

Then, it had wanted to build a 300-bed hostel at Jurong West Street 41, a 10-minute walk from Lakeside MRT Station, and at least 30 minutes away by train from the city.

But most students said they would not want to live there because of its distance from the campus.

SMU discounted the possibility of a city hostel then because land in the city was expensive and rents would be too high for students.

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