SINGAPORE — An older HDB block with lifts that stop only at certain floors. Former army camps and military bases such as those at Depot Road. A Community Development Council (CDC).

These were some places listed when MediaCorp asked new Singapore citizens and Permanent Residents (PRs) where they would go to gain a better understanding of local culture and history.

Mr Ori Sasson, chose older public housing because it "shows specifically a norm which you cannot see in other places", and a CDC because it is where "citizens can understand the social safety network".

The 38-year-old Israeli, an assistant professor of information systems at Singapore Management University (SMU), lived here for eight years before becoming a citizen two-and-a-half years ago.

Popular choices such as Parliament House, the Istana, Little India, Geylang, Chinatown, and Changi Prison, as well as The Esplanade, Fort Canning Park and the Botanic Gardens also made it to the list of those that MediaCorp polled.

In March, the Government will roll out a pilot programme for new citizens. The Singapore Citizenship Journey will incorporate interactive online elements, site visits to places of historical significance and grassroots sharing sessions. The programme is expected to take one and a half days.

Mdm Romany Rodrigo, a PR who plans on taking up citizenship, did not think the programme would be too demanding. "If you want to become a citizen, you ought to know Singapore's history and culture," said the 46-year-old.

Poet and SMU's associate professor of literature Kirpal Singh said Depot Road, Hyderabad Road as well as Labrador Park should be visited because they have history and "have gone through a lot of changes since World War II".

Associate Professor Ho Khai Leong of the Nanyang Technological University said the programme should not be an "over-kill" and that getting new citizens to develop emotional bonds "will take time".

But he said the programme — to be tested out in Tanjong Pagar, Sembawang and West Coast GRCs — should be extended to old citizens as well.

In terms of integrating them into the community, public relations director Glenn Ng thinks it will "be a challenge to understand and accept" new citizens. "I studied in Australia, and even though Asians have been in Australia for a long time, they are still not very accepted," said the 29-year-old.

Reactions to suggestions that they do volunteer work to help them integrate have been mixed.

Mr Sasson, who volunteered at North East CDC before he became a citizen, said such a move needs to be implemented in a way that "is not too much" for the newcomer. "Forced voluntary work might not be as effective", he said.