



Green and affordable: Is it possible?

Housing affordability is a core concept of sustainable cities, but with most green homes priced way above the standard of affordability, developers need to return to the drawing board to find the right balance.

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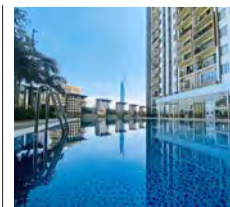
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Understanding the low bar on affordable housing

Malaysian housing is considered seriously unaffordable, but what do people mean by affordable?

By LIEW JIA YI (YANIKA)
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OVER the last few years, affordable homes have become the darling of the property market, as more developers have turned their attention to this market niche. But with salaries stagnating and prices increasing, homes labelled as affordable are quickly becoming unattainable to the middle and lower income groups. We keep hearing the word affordable, but it is time to set the record straight. What does affordable actually mean?

According to Bank Negara Malaysia, a house is considered affordable if its cost does not exceed 30% of an individual's gross income and the price-to-income ratio should not exceed 3.0.

"This means house prices should ideally be three times your yearly household income. Say, for example, your yearly household income is RM60,000. Therefore, the affordable price threshold is RM60,000 times three, which is RM180,000," Khazanah Research Institute (KRI) director of research Dr Suraya Ismail said.

"The signal of a well-functioning housing market is when most prospective buyers can afford to buy a house irrespective of which segment of the income distribution they occupy," she stated.

However, property speaker and investor Charles Liew pointed out that as of 2020, that ratio for Malaysia stands at 4.72. In Sarawak, the ratio tops the list with a house price-to-income ratio of 7.1, with an annual median household income of RM42,972 and a median house price of RM326,500.

"If the affordable house price threshold is based on three times the annual median income, the affordable house price would be just RM137,916. To that end, statistically speaking, only 12.9% of Sarawakians would find the 2020 median house price affordable," Liew said.

National House Buyers Association (HBA) secretary-general Datuk Chang Kim Loong defined affordable properties as properties priced between RM150,000 and RM300,000, depending on rural or urban areas. These properties must be conducive for family living or intergenerational families and have a minimum size of 800 sq ft, with at least 2 bedrooms.

They should be located in areas that are connected by good public transportation infrastructures such as buses and rail links like the light rail transit (LRT), mass rapid transit (MRT) and KTM Komuter, and located in areas with good public amenities including government schools, public hospitals and shopping venues.

These properties must be differentiated from social housing units such as low-cost housing also known as PPR units priced below RM100,000. The hierarchy of housing thus begins with low-cost housing, to affordable housing, to high-end housing, which serves low-income earners, middle-income earners and high-income earners respectively.

According to Chang, these requirements are the bare minimum but look at any property listing now, most apartment units are well above RM300,000. When it comes to landed



properties, most Malaysians can kiss that dream goodbye.

Next steps

To encourage more affordable housing projects, Chang stated that there must be transparency and accountability. Affordable housing schemes should be sold only to first-time home buyers, and not owners of existing properties.

Liew gave some examples of how Sarawak and Malaysia can do better.

"A lot of major countries around the world have in the last couple of decades consistently worked towards eliminating fragmented efforts and building systems that are more centralised, and this extends to affordable housing.

"It would really help if we are able to have a centralised entity, be it at a national level or a state level, as opposed to fragmented agencies. Currently, with over 20 national and state-level agencies involved in the provision of affordable housing, efficiency becomes a real problem," Liew said.

These comments mirror KRI's suggestions regarding a better application of affordable housing.

"The centralised database will assist state governments to identify housing demand and needs of their localities, plan the local housing supply accordingly and monitor the housing stock. It is also highlighted in the recently published 12th Malaysia Plan that a data centre on housing, integrating relevant data from the Federal and state governments as well as private developers will

be established to strengthen the institutional capability," Suraya said.

"To bridge the existing data gaps, the government should embark on a National Housing Survey to collect necessary data to feed into the database," she added.

In terms of the affordable housing landscape in East Malaysia, under the Sarawak State Budget 2022, the Sarawak Government will be providing an allocation of RM10 million for the Housing Deposit Assistance



"The government should embark on a National Housing Survey to collect necessary data to feed into the database," Ismail said.

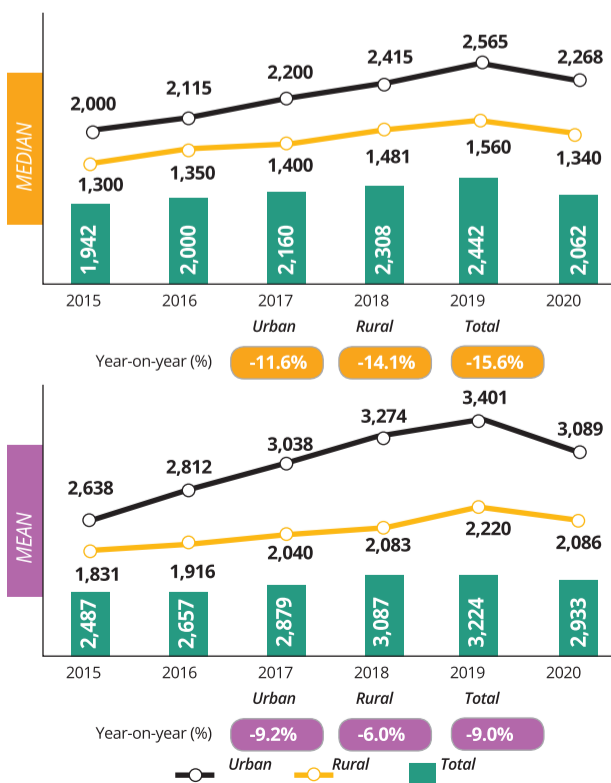


As of 2020, the price-to-income ratio for Malaysia stands at 4.72, said Liew.



Affordable properties are priced between RM150,000 and RM300,000, said Chang.

Median and mean monthly salaries & wages of employees by strata, Malaysia, 2015-2020



Source: Department of Statistics, Salaries and Wages Survey Report, Malaysia, 2020

Scheme, to benefit about 1,200 first-time homeowners under the B40 and M40 categories for payment of housing deposits.

"If these efforts are continuous, sustainable and not a once-off, I believe we are heading in the right direction, despite the long journey ahead, considering recent statistics about Sarawak having the least affordable housing anywhere in Malaysia," Liew said.

He echoed Suraya's comments regarding how Malaysia could improve its affordable housing, calling on a centralised entity to oversee efforts, a centralised database to consolidate data relating to all housing availability and affordability as well as to oversee any applicant registry and education to increase financial literacy.

The urgency of affordable housing increases as urbanisation in Malaysia continues to increase.

"If you cannot build a good quality home at a decent price for a teacher, someone who is instrumental in creating a good society, I think there is something fundamentally wrong with our society as a whole," Suraya said. 🏠



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Developed by Gandingan Jakel, J.Satine asks homebuyers the quintessential question: Why should you have to compromise between price and lifestyle? The development aims to uplift first-time property seekers by prioritising practicality and convenience through design planning and smart living. With a gross development value (GDV) of RM1.08bil, J.Satine is a mixed development spanning 9.19 acres. The development offers 3,600 units priced affordably at RM300,000, with a variety of pro-social amenities expertly designed to improve the lifestyle aspects of its residents.

Sports and health facilities

Whether during the weekends or after work, these sports facilities provide a range of options for fitness enthusiasts to go nuts. Work out at the fully equipped gym or play a round on the basketball and futsal court. For those who enjoy a cool dip, the property comes with both a swimming pool and a wading pool. Spend your weekends exploring the luxuries of your home at J.Satine. Look no further than the games room, the reading room, meditation shelter and children's playground for building healthy relationships with your family, friends and neighbours.

J.Satine is within the range of a variety of international and national schools, giving parents their choice of institutions for their child. Conveniently located nearby are Sri Utama International School, Fairview International School, SMK Danau Kota, SMJK Chong Hwa and many more.

Through these accessible features, J.Satine aims to create a sense of community among its residents, encouraging blossoming relationships with new people. Whether it is sports enthusiasts, meditation partners or other parents, find your community. With a healthy network to rely on, the residence strives to achieve the Kita Jaga Kita spirit that has flourished during the pandemic. Practical amenities are also available within the apartment building, such as a surau, a dobi and a sundry shop. These facilities were designed with convenience in mind, reducing the amount of transportation time between tasks for working professionals.

Unparalleled accessibility

Forget your groceries while you're out? Don't worry, J.Satine is strategically located next to many shops and retail outlets, such as the Giant Hypermarket Setapak, which is only a 10-minute walk away from the residences, making the trip a convenient one that encourages healthy and eco-friendly means of transportation. Less than 1km away is the Setapak Central Mall, where you can spend your weekends with your friends, shop or watch a movie.

These are not the only malls in the area, as residents will be able to have their pick of AEON Alpha Angle, PV 128, AEON BiG @ The Palette, and Wangsa Walk. Never get bored of your neighbourhood and find new places to explore in this thriving environment. Residents looking for fresh produce will be able to acquire them through NSK Wangsa Maju. With offices, shop lots and plenty of spaces to socialise, residents are bound to enjoy a balanced lifestyle alongside the abundance of amenities.

With retail units below its apartments, J.Satine also creates a sustainable community by integrating office and retail space into its development. These spaces allow access not only to amenities but also actively facilitate job creation in proximity to the apartment units.



ABOVE
 J.Satine offers 3,600 units priced affordably at RM300,000.

Residents will be able to work close to home, or even start their own businesses. With its own economy to look out for, the neighbourhood becomes a thriving, self-sustaining project which redefines convenient connectivity.

But what about security? Homebuyers can put their worries aside, as J.Satine makes use of a multi-tier security system, consisting of an RFID system and a car plate recognition system for vehicles to separate shoppers from residents. For further security within the residences, there will be lift lobby access control and lift level access control, ensuring that those entering truly belong. J.Satine is also equipped with well-established security systems such as CCTV surveillance and guard patrols.

Embracing the advancement of

security through technology and smart-living, the development also makes use of JaGaApp to manage their property. This Smart Community app operates as a community solutions platform, allowing residents to settle their maintenance fees, book facilities, engage lifestyle service providers and many more. It is this attention to detail that sets J.Satine apart from other affordable properties, with practicality and convenience packaged into a single bundle.

When it comes to public transportation, look no further than J.Satine. Apart from retail stores, offices and surrounding malls, the neighbourhood is a stone throw's away from several LRT stations, such as the LRT Wangsa Maju, LRT Sri Rampai and LRT Taman Melati. Residents will be able to skip the jam and leave their car behind, go to work or meet their friends economically and sustainably. With the increasing connectivity between cities, people are beginning to demand more from their place of residence, and J.Satine complies with a range of transportation options, provided with the well-being of their residents in mind.

A holistic and practical solution to the modern professional, J.Satine is tailor-made for first-time homebuyers looking to establish a pragmatic, smart and luxurious lifestyle. For more information on J.Satine, visit <https://www.jsatine.com.my>.

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You don't have to be rich to own a smart home

Accessing smart technology is easier than ever, but do Malaysians know that?

By YANIKA LIEW yanika.liew@thestar.com.my

In this day and age, smart technology has been embedded in everyday life. Social media is abuzz with fancy new gadgets that will make your life easier, using platforms like Facebook, YouTube and TikTok to sell a dream lifestyle to the public. But is smart technology all that is needed to make a smart home? And how much of this lifestyle is accessible to the general public?

According to the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), smart technology is defined as Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology, which allows remote control and monitoring of other devices.

Smart homes are homes connected to appliances such as ventilation, air conditioning, entertainment as well as kitchen and cleaning ware, all of which can be utilised through a single app.

"Smart home in my definition means the electrical appliances in the home can be controlled by the apps on the mobile phone. It allows home users to control their energy usage properly just by controlling using the apps connected to the electrical appliance. Also having smart homes enhance the security of the house by having connected CCTV, alarms and locks," Kith and Kin Realty co-founder Joseph Chan said.

"Just imagine, you can remote control the equipment in your house. Does it look cool? But first, we need to ensure that an Internet connection is available. Smart Home Technology gives us a lot of benefits, such as keeping our eye on kids or ageing parents at home and protecting the surrounding of the house," Tech Realtors Properties business director Sebastian Siew said.

Ruma Automation, a smart home installation company, business development manager Jeremy Beh observed that common purchases of homeowners tend to be lighting fixtures, TVs, air conditioners and motorised curtains.

Smart gadgets

"Smart speakers like Google Home, Apple Homepod and Amazon Echo are very popular as well since they are very affordable and packed with many functions in one gadget. On top of controlling your smart home devices using voice command, they can be your personal assistant," Beh said.

Beh noted that smart homes did not necessarily need to be a system of devices. He elaborated on a different understanding of a smart home, which is any technology or device put into a house to make one's life easier.

"It could be very old technology such as clapping hands to turn on lights as long as it fits the habit of the house owner. Surprisingly when I tell others I'm doing a smart home, dozens of people have



asked me whether it is clapping hands to control lights over the past few years. So yeah, you can call a house a smart home as long as there are devices in the house that can make one's life easier," Beh added.

It took a while for the general public to catch on. While smart devices started appearing in the 1960s, smart homes' popularity only accelerated in the 2000s with the number of smart homes forecast to grow and surpass the 350 million mark by 2023.

According to Statista, a leading provider of market and consumer data, the number of smart homes worldwide is estimated at 258.54 million in 2021 with a value worth of US\$99.41bil (RM437.85bil).

"The most common question I get regarding smart homes is what are smart homes all about? Many are still not aware of the benefits and features of having smart home devices. And another common question is asking about the pricing of installing smart home devices. These days, there are so many options to choose and they are relatively affordable," Chan said.

Siew describes the process of turning your home into a smart home, stating that it depends on the range of systems and devices used, as well as the platforms and brands that are being sourced from. The cost of the products and installations will depend on these factors.

Nowadays, with the popularisation and evolution of technology, Siew noted that demand for smart homes has become the norm.

"We can't say smart homes are only for rich Malaysians, as the consumer can look for something based on their affordability. They can choose what kind of smart home they like," he said.

It is estimated that a partially automated home will run for around a few hundred to thousand ringgit, while

fully automated homes are estimated for RM5,000 to RM20,000. Luxurious options might run up from RM30,000 to RM100,000.

Those who are really attached to the smart home concept were between 25 and 43 years of age, and their average income range was estimated to be around RM48,000 to RM120,000 annually, Siew said.

Do it yourself

Alistair Nicholas, 23, installed his own smart home device, connecting various appliances in his apartment to his phone. He had stumbled across smart switches online while looking for new switches. Thinking it was interesting, he looked to YouTube for tutorials and found a plethora of guides and videos, making the process quick and simple.

"You don't need any wiring knowledge to install the smart switch. Smart switches are basically WiFi switches that can be turned off and on using the Internet just on your phone. And then upon doing more research, I found out that everything, from smart switches, smart bulbs and IR blasters, can be connected to a single system called the Google Home," Nicholas said.

Google Home is a free mobile app, which can act as a central control system, connecting to smart appliances such as Nicholas' smart switches. For those who are interested in voice-activated



"They can choose what kind of smart home they like," said Siew.



A majority of clients who look for smart homes are from the middle-upper class, said Chan.



"You don't have to be a millionaire to buy it," Nicholas said.

appliances, there are speakers called Google Home Minis or Google Nest Minis that can also be bought online.

"These smart speakers can work as music players, daily reminders or even a recipe book. As it is voice-activated, you could say a command like, OK Google, turn off my lights, and your lights would turn off if they have smart switches," Nicholas said.

In addition to connecting his air conditioner to the network with smart switches, Nicholas had also utilised smart bulbs, IR blasters and smart plugs.

"Smart plugs are basically a way of letting you turn on and off plugs at home. Let's say you want to charge your phone while you're sleeping. You can schedule your smart plug to turn off after two hours so that you don't overcharge your phone and can save some electricity as well. So, I connected all these objects to my Google Home on my phone, and using the Google Nest, I use my voice to control all these smart objects," he said.

"You don't have to be a millionaire to buy it. There are many options for smart objects. The smart switches that I bought cost only RM30. Smart bulbs also cost RM30. It is very affordable and there are not that many parts to install as well. The IR Blaster that I got was RM50. So it's all around that price range," Nicholas added.

Regardless of its cost, the concept of the smart home is still viewed as a luxury. Chan noted that a majority of clients who look for smart homes are from the middle-upper class.

"Most of them belong to the T20 income group. There're also some young graduates who are passionate about tech gadgets," Beh agreed.

While it is agreed that the smart home concept has greater accessibility in today's modern day, it is undeniable that it is still perceived as a luxury good. Those with more urgent needs on their mind are unlikely to consider smart homes as a necessary expenditure, and there are possible disadvantages to such technology.

"The second common question we get is about security and privacy, consumers are concerned about the potential of their personal data leaking, due to some of the devices may capture user lifestyle behaviour data," Siew said.

Smart home enthusiasts look forward to a better quality of life as their common goal. While it is certainly true that smart home devices are accessible to a majority of people, it is the lack of knowledge of this accessibility that has cultivated such an image. 🏠



Redesigning living spaces

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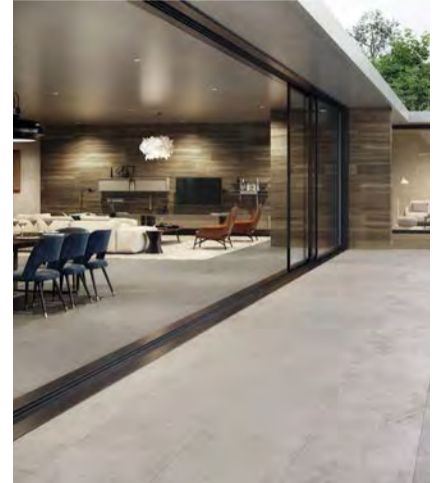
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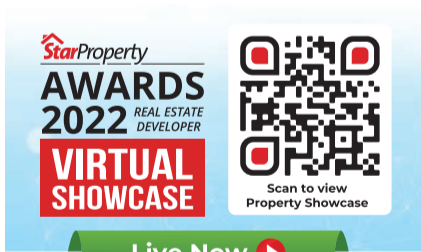


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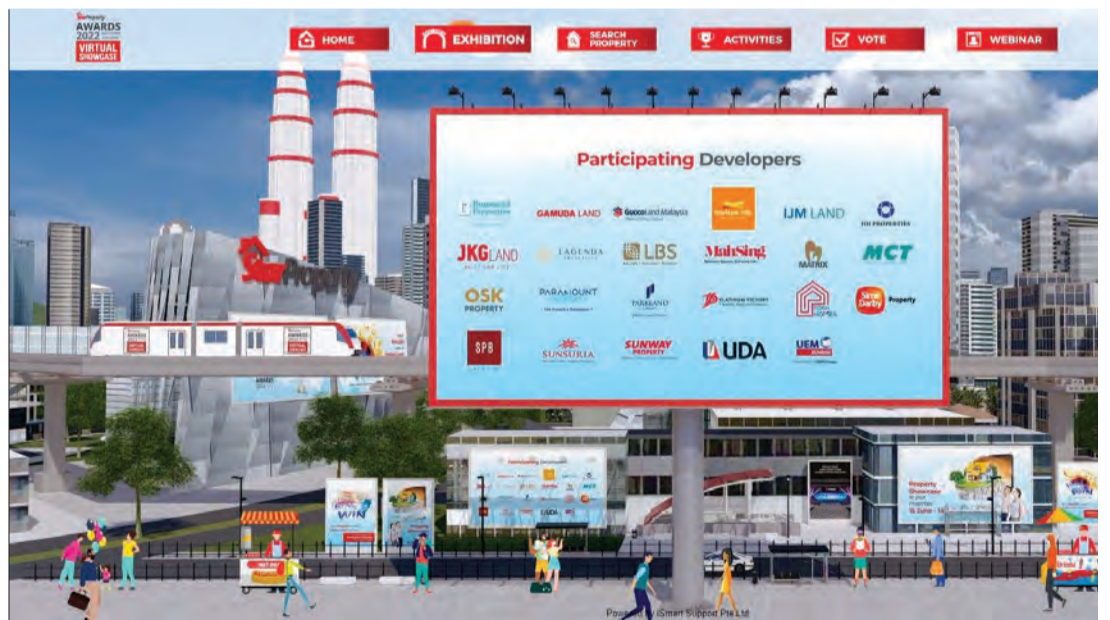
Running from June 15 to July 14, the StarProperty Awards 2022 virtual showcase allows homebuyers and industry professionals to play the part of a judge, inspecting properties participating in the StarProperty Awards 2022. Preview some of the best developments the real estate industry has to offer.

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KITA Mesra is all about building friendly homes for us

Focus is on affordable, family-centric and community bonding features

CREATING a township that ticks all the right boxes is easier said than done. The efforts that go to creating a place for people to call home and a community that fosters closer ties with each other is a monumental task.

Nevertheless, award-winning property developer LBS Bina Group Bhd has undertaken this challenge with much success and since its launch a couple of years ago, KITA @ Cybersouth, an up-and-coming township in the southern corridor of the Greater Klang Valley, is flourishing.

With the focus on doing things together as its name suggests, KITA or us in English, looks into affordability with growing families in mind. KITA Mesra is part of the 633-acre KITA @ Cybersouth township, sited on Malay Reserve Land, and comprises terrace houses, townhouses, apartments, shops and commercial lots, among others.

The latest phase of KITA Mesra comprises 216 townhouses, with a gross development value of RM97.79mil, and resides on 40.99 acres, inclusive of the double-storey and single-storey terrace houses under construction.

The townhouse's ground floor has a gross built-up of 1,346 sq ft with a three-bedroom and two-bathroom configuration. The first floor has a bigger built-up of 1,483 sq ft offering a three-bedroom and two-bathroom design. The completion date is estimated for November 2025.

As its name suggests, KITA Mesra looks at all things friendly in its design to enhance liveability for the Malay Community. Family, bonding, a sense of community and safety were translated into the conceptualisation of the development.

The houses are designed with openness in mind, with wide, open spaces on the outside and a fully open-plan concept on the inside.

Furthermore, parks are located throughout the neighbourhood for the community to engage in various recreational activities.

The facility designs and landscaping take their inspirations from the Malay traditional dance, where its colours, movements and rhythms are abstractly reflected in the landscape design by material patterns, furniture elements and planting palette.

The facilities, covering all aspects of health and sports, include open spaces for recreation and interaction within the community, and are placed throughout the neighbourhood in two green parks to meet every need of the residents. Some notable facilities include:

- Irama Plaza
- Pentas Plaza
- Rebana Playscape
- Selendang Playscape
- Multi-purpose Court
- Forest Walk



An aerial depiction of the KITA Mesra development.



An artist impression of the townhouses.



The multi-purpose court comes with fencing and lighting.



Among the facilities are the sepak takraw court (above) and children's playground (below).



- Exercise Pods
- Barbeque Pods
- Takraw Court
- Backlane Gardens
- Jogging and Cycling tracks.

In addition, KITA Mesra is a gated and guarded precinct, which comes with CCTV, access card via guardhouse and perimeter patrol. So families can be assured of a safe and secured environment where their children can safely play.

As it is in Dengkil, nearby Putrajaya and Cyberjaya, all the public amenities such as police stations, fire and rescue services, hospital and a transportation hub are conveniently available in these two nearby towns. Shopping options and financial institutions are also within easy reach.

There is no shortage of educational venues. There are multiple government primary and secondary schools which are just a short drive away. For those seeking higher education, KITA Mesra

is located near local and international varsities such as Heriot-Watt University Malaysia, Limkokwing University and Xiamen University.

With the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and KLIA2 about 20km away, travelling interstate and abroad is a breeze. And it takes half the time to get to the two airports than from KL city centre.

Well-connected in all directions, KITA Mesra can be accessed using the Putrajaya-Cyberjaya Expressway via the Elite Expressway, Maju Expressway (MEX), South Klang Valley Expressway (SKVE), North-South Expressway (NSE), Damansara-Puchong Highway (LDP) and Jalan Dengkil-Banting.

Enquiries can be made at the KITA @ Cybersouth Sales Gallery, which is open from 10am to 6pm daily or call 1700 81 8998 to make an appointment. Visit <https://lbs.com.my/> for more information. 📍



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empowering individuals • enhancing communities

Affordable and sustainable housing - can they co-exist?

Green homes is possible for lower cost developments via good passive designs



By YANIKA LIEW yanika.liew@thestar.com.my

DEVELOPERS are incorporating more sustainable features into their projects, but most of these projects are on the higher end, more expensive and out of the reach of the majority of the public. Is it really affordable if it's not sustainable, and is it really sustainable if it's not affordable?

Malaysia's affordable housing developments have been steadily improving, but affordable housing must also be sustainable for proper urban development.

"Affordability and sustainability are complementary and not mutually exclusive. A green home can be affordably incorporated with enablers to facilitate sustainable living through proper site selection and good passive design," said GreenRE executive director Ashwin Thurairajah.

GreenRE, set up by the Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) in 2013 to drive sustainability in Malaysia's real estate industry, promotes it holistically across the full lifecycle of a residential project with certification standards for developers and best practice guidance for homeowners enabling them to benchmark the performance of their property.

Ashwin noted that the key to a cost-effective green home was careful planning, clear coordination and a strong buy-in by all stakeholders including developers, local authorities and homeowners.

Citing a recent study by award-winning environmental sustainable design consultancy IEN Consulting, the impact areas for focus in designing and operating a green home in Malaysia are commuter transport, construction materials and home electricity consumption.

"Passive design done right enables improved energy efficiency and enhanced indoor environmental quality in a building. It has the greatest multiplier effect in terms of cost vs environmental benefit provided it is considered early in project design. The resource consumption of a home can be reduced by up to 50% consequently lowering energy bills for operation," Ashwin said.

An example of a design approach for sustainable housing is to minimise east and west-facing facades in building orientations.

In Malaysia's tropical climate, these are the sides of a building with the most heat gain. Lowered heat gain corresponds to reduced size in the air-conditioning system, lowering upfront and operational costs.

But what about the social aspects of sustainability? Sustainability is often seen from the larger, environmental aspect, but it involves other aspects as well, especially in the affordable housing environment.

"It is important to ensure that residents benefit well from their environment, and even reduce further harm," Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Faculty of Built Environment and Surveying senior lecturer Dr Zakri Tarmidi said.

To improve the social sustainability of

these affordable homes, he pointed to the relationship between home locations and other public amenities, such as community facilities, public transportation, religious spaces as well as safety and health considerations. These amenities would create not just sustainable homes, but sustainable cities.

"If we look, affordable housing was originally focused on providing homes that

can be bought by the low and middle-income groups. If you look literally, it only focuses on the economic aspect. But unknowingly, to live with a group of people requires a better environment. Especially in terms of social aspects, human-to-human relationships, as well as facilities that can enhance interaction among residents," Zakri said.

The social aspect of sustainable

development is crucial as it is the community that creates sustainable cities.

"Progress has been slow due to the wrong perception that affordability and sustainability are competing constraints. Developers play a key role in incorporating sustainability enablers into project development. We are working closely with developers to incorporate good passive designs and low carbon materials in a



The usage of plants on the balconies and rooftops will help reduce heat build-up.



"Buyers should want to live there because they want to, and not because these are the only units they can afford," Tan said.



"It is important to ensure that residents benefit well from their environment, and even reduce further harm," Tarmidi said.



"Affordability and sustainability are complementary and not mutually exclusive," Thurairajah said.



Apartments can reduce electricity consumption by facing the parts with the biggest surface area in a North-South direction.

cost-effective manner," Ashwin said.

IEN Consultants director Tan Khim Bok pointed out that a majority of Malaysia's housing development was designed and built by private developers, and these companies exist to make a profit. In addition, developments targeting the M40 and T20 group provide better profit margins as well as visibility.

"Affordable housing developments have been largely to meet local authority requirements where a new township development requires that the developer also constructs a certain number of units of affordable housing.

"What happens is that many developers will set aside the least desirable plots of land to construct affordable housing. They would also

spend the minimal effort and cost to design and build these housing, as long as the houses

meet local authority minimum specifications of size, construction materials and finishes," Tan said.

Increasing the development of affordable sustainable housing requires not only cooperation from the government and private developers, but also the willpower to make the climb.

Tan described two options that he believed could increase such development. The first option would be a government-issued design and built contract where the land for development is owned by the government and identified to be suitable for housing development.

This type of contract is currently used for government hospitals and government schools. Interested contractors would submit their best offer and the client, in this case, the government, would specify all performance criteria that had to be met, including sustainability targets.

Once completed, the facility management

and operations, which is just as important as the design and construction, would be handed over to appointed concessionaire companies, similar to how the government hospitals have been maintained.

"The second option is for there to be a standardised affordable housing design to be adopted. The design, construction material, specifications, finishes, amenities and other features would have been well thought through and incorporated.

"There could be a design competition for design teams of architects, engineers and builders to propose their design for the affordable housing that would be most suited for the demographic of the target occupants - addressing issues of sustainability and livability. The winning design would be adopted by the government and all future designs would be constructed to this template.

"In both options, the government has to play a much more central role. This is maybe the only way to reduce the priority and focus to be profits," Tan said.

There is a large gap between the carbon footprint of the rich and the poor. Based on data, the wealthiest 10% of the people are responsible for nearly half the world's CO2 emissions.

Sustainability for affordable housing should thus focus more on making these homes more livable and reducing the cost of living, whilst still maintaining good levels of comfort and indoor quality for the occupants.

In describing what the future of sustainable affordable housing could look like, Tan drew inspiration from the architecture of the longhouses in Borneo, with the concept of living geared towards communal rather than separated homes.

"I think the best quote for this is the Chinese proverb that says, The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now. Affordable housing should be desirable. Buyers should want to live there because they want to, and not because these are the only units they can afford," Tan said.

Applying sustainable technologies to low-income housing

One of the biggest hurdles in providing sustainable technologies to low-income housing in an urban setting is the initial set-up cost even though the running costs are cheaper and save money in the long run. Not to mention, such technology is better for the environment and beneficial to the users.

"Many sustainable technologies are more expensive than traditional ones, deter residents and housing organisations alike," SOLS Energy founder and chief executive officer Teacher Raj Ridwan Singh said.

Last year, SOLS Energy deployed solar lights in over 90 Orang Asli (OA) homes across three villages in partnership with Petronas, as a corporate social responsibility initiative.

"On average, an OA homeowner gets electricity for one to two hours per night and has to pay RM4 every two days. Alternatively, they use diesel generators, kerosene lamps or candles. This is firstly costly, and secondly, it has noise pollution and air pollution from the kerosene, affecting their eyes and overall health. Going solar is so much cheaper and sustainable compared to diesel generators, kerosene lamps and candles," he said.

Despite these benefits, solar energy is not yet accessible to



everyone. The high cost of installation is one barrier, as is the lack of knowledge about how solar works and how to go about getting panels installed.

"Banks should also look into better ways of providing loans for people looking to purchase solar panels. The current interest rates available are still not enticing enough for all to get solar on their roofs. This is something we at SOLS Energy are working very hard to change. Our dream is that all the 3.9 million suitable roofs in Malaysia will be powered by solar in the next 10 years," Singh added.

He noted that sustainable technologies implemented in low-income housing communities could include energy efficiency measures, renewable energy sources, green transportation options, and waste reduction strategies.

"One way is to retrofit existing buildings, making them more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly. Another way is to build new housing developments that incorporate sustainable features, such as solar panels. And finally, we can make use of modular construction methods to create affordable housing that is both smart and sustainable." ✦

Frontier Park wins FIABCI global recognition

WB Land offers customised quality industrial space

AWARD-winning developer WB Land Sdn Bhd is committed to continue offering industrial buildings of premium quality to prospective clients looking to expand their operations.

Its managing director Kevin Woon said the company is not resting on its laurels despite winning several prestigious awards over the years. The property developer, with deep roots in engineering and construction, has more than 40 years of experience.

"We are here to serve our existing and potential clients and they should have peace of mind, knowing they can expect only the best from us," he said.

Woon said the success stories of the Frontier 1 and Frontier 2 projects are testimonies of the company's long-standing commitments to better serve its clients.

He said Frontier Park is a well-planned, well-managed and well-organised industrial park and it has the right ecosystem for companies to set up their facilities. Frontier Industrial Park sits on 136 acres of freehold land in Taman Desa Cemerlang in Ulu Tiram, Johor.

"We have been around long enough in the industrial building segment in the country and we understand the needs of our clients," said Woon.

He said as a leading industrial park developer and an experienced builder of dedicated customised factories, the company has the expertise, knowledge and experience to assist its clients.

Woon said the company's winning formula is to identify and fulfil the needs of its clients and assured these entrepreneurs and industrialists they only need to focus on businesses while WB Land would take care of the rest when it comes to factory facilities.

"Our clients only need to focus on growing their business. We'll handle everything else and we've been doing so for years now," he said. One way that WB Land has done so is to provide the Build-to-suit service to multinational companies.

"Normally an MNC will have to buy land, appoint design and engineering consultants and then engage contractors separately in a step-by-step process. We realise that they will certainly need and appreciate our one-stop solution in customising their factory. They can leave the complex tasks of design, approval and construction to us so that they can focus on what they do best," Woon said.

He said the company's mission and vision from day one have been to find new ways to serve its customers better. That has always been WB Land's top priority.

He said winning the prestigious FIABCI World Prix d'Excellence Award is a huge recognition of the efforts and dedication of the WB Land Team.

"This award is very thorough in its assessment with many rounds of judging



by experienced personnel. We are thankful that our pursuit of excellence in all areas such as design, delivery and post-handover management has borne fruits. The jury acknowledges and recognises our undivided commitment in delivering on our industrial specialty to our clients," Woon said.

He said clinching both FIABCI

World Prix d'Excellence Award and FIABCI Malaysia Award is a historic achievement for the entire Frontier community, not only an accolade for WB Land.

Woon said this is also a great validation point for all investors in Frontier Industrial Park. "The community can now say their decision has been

ABOVE

Woon (right) showing a scale model of Frontier Industrial Park. - Photos by THOMAS YONG

endorsed by the premier property awards in the world like the Oscars of the property industry," he said.

For more details please contact WB Land at 07-8619119, surf its website at www.wbland.my or visit the project and sales gallery No 7, Jalan Persiaran Maju Cemerlang, Frontier Industrial Park, 81800, Ulu Tiram, Johor Bahru, Johor. 📍



Frontier 2 factories that exude corporate design.



The nature-inspired amphitheatre is among the many amenities.



A worker's dormitory built to complement the industrial park, complete with a one-acre Sports Park.



FIABCI world president Jordi Ribó (left) presenting the FIABCI World Prix d'Excellence Award to Woon.



FIABCI World Prix
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Kong & Associates Consultants Sdn Bhd



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Great value, conducive homes for all Malaysians

PR1MA current and upcoming developments define quality, affordable housing

WITH the rising price of housing nationwide, owning a home is more out of the public's reach than ever. In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals to recognise adequate housing as a human right, the government introduced the PR1MA Act in 2012.

With the goal of providing modern, conducive housing to Malaysians not only at affordable prices but also in strategic, sought-after locations, PR1MA ushers in the latest in comfortable living. These 61 developments are located in bustling urban and suburban locations to better meet the needs of modern living.

For instance in Ipoh, the sleek practicality of Residensi Falim has all the charms of urban living, with apartment units priced from RM145,800 onwards while offering up to three-bedroom and two-bathroom configurations. The project also provides units for two-bedroom and two-bathroom, with configurations of up to 1,065sqft.

Residensi Falim nurtures flourishing families with child-centred amenities such as a communal playground. After a day of school, parents will be able to relax while their children have fun on the slides. Other amenities include a multipurpose hall and a surau.

Be at ease when you leave your home, as Residensi Falim is a guarded community with a closed-circuit television (CCTV) system. There are also several medical centres nearby. And commercial centres, Pejabat POS Besar Ipoh, Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) and mosques are only a short distance away. Visit any one of the shopping malls, convenience stores and tourist attractions nearby such as Taman Rekreasi Gunung Lang and the Lost World of Tambun themed park.

Down the southwest coast of Peninsula Malaysia, PR1MA presents a future-forward residential apartment by integrating it into the first transit-oriented development (TOD) in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan.

Priced from RM192,960, Residensi Seremban Sentral offers units with two to three bedrooms and two bathrooms. Units are designed with high ceilings and full-height glass windows encouraging natural lighting and maximising scenery.

The apartment building was designed by Datuk Ken Yeang, one of the founding fathers of sustainable architecture, with the help of Hamzah and Yeang architecture firm, which is well known for its innovative signature green buildings.

The residence is equipped with facilities such as a sky garden, library area, laundry area and gymnasium, as well as a well-built security systems integrating gated & guarded concept equipped with CCTV system.

Located at the heart of Seremban Town, Residensi Seremban Sentral is fully developed for sustainable



urbanisation. Providing easy access for residents, the Seremban KTM station is only 600m away. With highways leading to Seremban City, the neighbourhood offers educational institutions for maximum convenience, including SMK King George V, Sekolah Methodist Wesley Seremban and Kolej MARA Seremban.

Perhaps a cooling sea breeze is more your style. Moving on to Melaka, PR1MA offers beachside living with Residensi Klebang 2, a residential apartment located a stone's throw away from Klebang Beach.

Prioritising comfort and convenience, units are priced from RM177,147. All units come with three bedrooms and two bathrooms, suitable for an entire family.

Residensi Klebang 2 is also equipped with security systems to create a safe haven for its residents while they enjoy comfortable living.

Savour Malaysia's cultural and historical richness with easy access to Melaka town, Jonker street, Mahkota Parade, Stadium Hang Jebat and Dataran Pahlawan. These popular attractions ensure that you'll never find yourself lacking in entertainment on a Friday night, providing added value to your property.

Not only is the beach a perfect destination for family bonding, but the residence is also equipped with various facilities for your living pleasure.

Highlight Developments in Selangor

If you're looking for serenity and green-living in Selangor, Residensi Bandar

Bukit Mahkota is an ideal choice with a freehold status, priced from RM259,200.

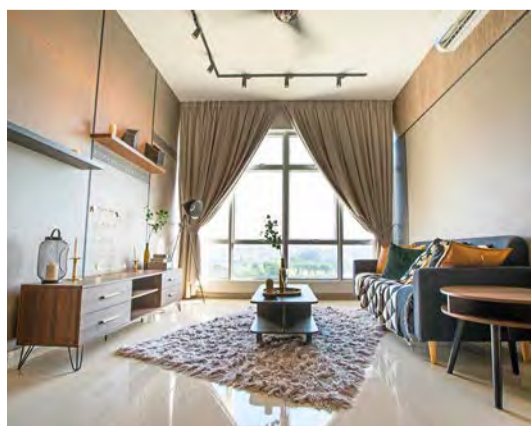
The project is enveloped by mature housing area with excellent accessibility and was created with concussive space to allow residents to perform various activities in an eco-friendly environment.

Growing families will be able to enjoy the open concept floor plans

61
developments
in strategic
locations.



An artist depiction of Residensi Klebang 2, Melaka.



Residensi Seremban Sentral, Negeri Sembilan show unit.

for increased natural ventilation and natural lighting, as every unit is equipped with three to four bedrooms and two bathrooms, totalling up to 1,107sqft.

Take advantage of Residensi Bandar Bukit Mahkota's various recreational facilities to cultivate a healthy and active lifestyle, which include a badminton court, futsal court, basketball court and gymnasium. Young families will have a variety of fun locations to go to on the weekends, as the residence is located in a recreational centre, with nearby amenities such as Kelab Bukit Mahkota, Bukit Broga and Taman Hijau UKM.

With the security features and facilities provided, Residensi Bandar Bukit Mahkota is an ideal choice for middle-income earners and facilitates easy access through the Lebuhraya Utara - Selatan and Jalan Putra Mahkota, in addition to the Lekas highway.

Nearby, educational institutions such as Kolej Universiti Islam Selangor, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Tenaga Nasional ease the way for families with older children.

Similarly within Selangor, PR1MA presents Residensi Kajang Utama, a contemporary apartment in the bustling heart of Kajang, catered to Malaysians with modern sensibilities. Priced from RM312,300, all units come with three bedrooms and two bathrooms, designed to maximise available space with units built up to 1,119sqft.

Drawing on a comfortable community-centred lifestyle, residents will be able to take a break from work on the basketball and badminton courts. This residence is also gated and guarded equipped with a CCTV for the safety and well-being of the residents.

Built in an established neighbourhood, residents at Residensi Kajang Utama can enjoy easy access to major highways such as Silk, Plus, Lekas and Elite.

With an increasingly urban population, PR1MA strives to provide Malaysians with affordable homes set to a degree of excellence, paired with well-thought location and connectivity.

PR1MA Rent-to-Own

The government has launched i-Biaya under the Home Ownership Programme (HOPE) to help increase homeownership among M40 Malaysians. Of the three financial schemes under i-Biaya, one of them is PR1MA Rent-to-Own (RTO).

The program provides 100% financing with zero down payment required. Specifically designed to have the lowest monthly payment possible, buyers will be able to experience more financial freedoms in their quest for homeownership.

Eligibility requirements include having a Malaysian citizenship, aged 21 to 70, with no more than one property. Applicants can also apply for up to 3 guarantors. For more information on PR1MA's upcoming developments and programs, visit www.pr1ma.my.

*Terms and Conditions apply.



**PRIMA CORPORATION
MALAYSIA**

61 Projects Nationwide

Homeownership made easy for all Malaysians

In PRIMA, we aspire to deliver exceptional value for money and high-quality homes with integrated community facilities inspired by modern living concepts. PRIMA proven track record has been testified by our delivery of 27,821 residential units nationwide, with another 21,460 units under construction and planning (info as at 15 June 2022).

Ensuring good liveability of our developments has always been a key focus. Our steadfast commitment to quality is demonstrated in the adoption of QLASSIC (Quality Assessment System in Construction) for PRIMA developments and ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System certification.



PRICE STARTING FROM
RM192,960*

Residensi Seremban Sentral, Negeri Sembilan
Apartment | 2 - 3 Bedrooms | 839 - 1,237 sqft

*All moveable items installed in the show unit is intended to create visual impression purposes and is not offered with the purchase of the actual unit.



PRICE STARTING FROM
RM177,147*

Residensi Klebang 2, Melaka
Apartment | 3 Bedrooms | 1,000 - 1,200 sqft



PRICE STARTING FROM
RM176,400*

Residensi Meru, Perak
Apartment | 3 Bedrooms | 959 - 1,137 sqft



PRICE STARTING FROM
RM145,800*

Residensi Falim, Perak
Apartment | 2 - 3 Bedrooms | 785 - 1,065 sqft



PRICE STARTING FROM
RM312,500*

Residensi Kajang Utama, Selangor
Apartment | 3 Bedrooms | 904 - 1,124 sqft



PRICE STARTING FROM
RM259,200*

Residensi Bandar Bukit Mahkota, Selangor
Apartment | 3 - 4 Bedrooms | 859 - 1,107 sqft

Beyond crafting quality homes with great affordability, PRIMA Rent-To-Own programme is introduced to boost ease of home ownership. With this programme, you stand to enjoy greater flexibility and cash flow efficiency with no downpayment required and lowest monthly payment*.



100% Financing*



No Downpayment required*



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With PRIMA, home ownership is no longer just a dream. Talk to us today to make your dream comes true.



For more info, please scan QR code.

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Facilities like the swimming pool can be classified as a luxury item.

Affordable luxury - a possible oxymoron

By HO JIA WEN
jiawen.ho@thestar.com.my

As we enter a post-pandemic era, home buyers are more aware of their living spaces and are seeking a better home life. Although many home buyers now have an increased taste for exquisite living, the fact that most luxury items are highly-priced, thereby increasing the price of homes once such opulence products are added.

So buying a home that is both luxurious and affordable seems like a double win. Strange as it may sound, luxury homes need not put a hole in your pocket. Luxury and affordable may look contradictory but it is a category that is becoming more prominent in the market.

However, it is important to note that luxury living can differ for each individual as it is a matter of preference for those from different backgrounds or income groups. The perception of luxury by someone from a B40 group and another from an M40 group can be very different.

"For example, a swimming pool may be a standard requirement for some, but for those moving from a place without pool access, it will

be an upgrade or even a luxury to have a pool in their living quarters," said Knight Frank executive director Amy Wong.

However, there are features that most will agree to be luxurious living. A property in an accessible and premium location along with high-quality facilities would be considered luxurious.

Moreover, beautiful architecture, large spaces, quality finishes, fittings and fixtures add to the entire luxurious ambience of the property, according to Association of Valuers, Property Managers, Estate Agents and Property Consultants in the Private Sector president Michael Kong Kok Kee.

Yet luxurious living is not only reserved for those in higher income groups. "There are some developments that can be classified as affordable luxurious homes," said Kong.

Another example is micro-apartments in upscale condominiums that have high-quality finishes, an array of common amenities and good security for all within a range of RM600,000, according to Wong. At this price range, it is within reach of the upper M40 group.

For high-rise properties, luxurious living can be made possible through a wide range of well-

maintained communal facilities that serve the needs of residents. Doorstep facilities such as swimming pools, children's playground and gymnasium which are features of many high-rise properties do provide a semblance of luxury. Cost for other luxurious amenities like a spa can be kept low by outsourcing external operators for maintenance, commented Wong.

"However, to have luxury and a lower price tag simultaneously means trade-offs would be made because all things come with a cost," said Kong. Most affordable luxurious properties would be found in high-rise units, meaning smaller places, where only couples or small families can fit. Moreover, more home buyers and investors are now seeking premium properties. Developers will find it challenging to keep prices low while providing luxurious amenities.

Certain architectural designs can be implemented to allow the property's luxurious elements to shine while keeping costs low. "Luxury is elegance and extreme comfort, and it is relative and a matter of perception," said Veritas Design Group principal and director Alif Arif Iskandar Abd Wahab. In both interior and architecture designs, there are three considerations that Alif suggests



"Developers will find it challenging to keep prices low while providing amenities that are luxurious," said Kong.



"Not many individuals can afford premium luxury, there is a gap in the market for property that is both affordable and luxurious," said Wong.



"Luxury is elegance and extreme comfort, and it is relative and a matter of perception," said Alif.

for developers when planning an affordable yet luxurious development.

Firstly, it is to provide an enriching spatial experience. This can be achieved through quick access to units from car parks and drop-offs, and also more communal facilities. Usually, large common spaces will not cost much if it is properly planned. For individual units, higher ceilings and large private balconies can bring more space for exclusive relaxation, and enhance luxury.

Secondly, luxury is about creating an impression on people who are entering the place. Using quality brands and elegant materials are keys to making an environment luxurious. Materials that have a luxurious touch and feel, such as metal, natural stone and timber can be placed in more prominent areas, where people can look at them. These materials can be sourced from affordable sources to keep prices lower.

Finally, additional aesthetics can make the property more luxurious through carefully designed lighting and the arrangement of loose furniture. A tastefully designed interior can really elevate the space. Brands do matter for these finishes, and most brands do have a selection within an affordable range but are still reputable.

"Most importantly, an affordable luxurious place should have facilities and features that are flexible and provide features that appeal to all ages," said Alif.

For the children, the facilities should

be spacious so that they can run and play. For young adults, chic, stylish and private spaces are particularly attractive and considered to be luxurious facilities. They can use the space for private parties or other activities to interact with one another. Other exciting facilities that have a luxurious touch are a roof deck with views and branded equipment. Working parents would appreciate spacious flexible rooms that can also be converted into working spaces. Luxury catered for the elderly can be more convenient from shorter distances from the units to car parks and drop-offs as well as automated doors for hassle-free access, according to Alif.

Another luxurious feature that can be added is a good security system, as safety is an important consideration for many buyers. A minimum of a three-tiered security system would bring a sense of luxury and exclusivity. A concierge service to assist all ages to usher guests and residents to the development is also another feature of perceived luxury.

All these features will contribute to luxurious living while being realistically affordable when planned properly. As luxurious developments are sensitive to cost, an extensive plan by an experienced consultant is crucial for cost control. This is to ensure the entire project remains consistently on a budget, said Alif.

Luxury may not be confined to expensive indulgence in high-quality goods. Rather, in the case of affordable luxury, it can be a variety of thoughtful



facilities and interior design that adds extra comfort and enjoyment to living. It is this category of luxury that can be made affordable for those in lower-income groups.

Luxurious affordable housing is gaining popularity amongst property buyers. "Most property buyers are searching for a haven to come home to, a space to relax, work and spend time in," said Wong. These would be homes that offer facilities, good security

and quality finishings. However, as not many individuals can afford premium luxury, there is a gap in the market for a property that is both affordable and luxurious.

Kong agreed that the demand for luxurious housing is there. However, it is the cost for such luxury that is concerning. With better and more strategic planning, hopefully developers can develop more properties that are both luxurious and affordable. ❧

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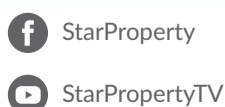
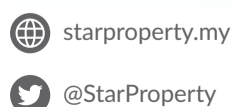
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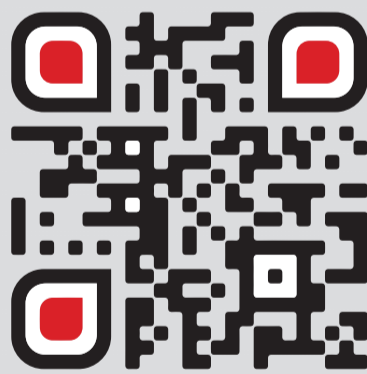


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Logistics and industrial sub-sectors remain the darlings

Sabah, Johor and Penang are the next-best locations to invest in, other than Klang Valley

By JOSEPH WONG
josephwong@thestar.com.my

WITH an obvious increase in the general property market activity in 2022, there is also a general increase in investments across the board in almost all sub-sectors, possibly signifying a full recovery from all the negative impact of Covid-19 and the subsequent movement control orders (MCOs).

Certainly, there is optimism among property investors in this period of economic recovery. There are many indicators that the property sector is poised for a bounce-back, albeit at a slower and steady pace as many are still cautious after being burnt by the disruptions.

With the renewed interest, one of the more prominent questions is where commercial property investors are looking to venture in the near term?

Independent global property consultancy Knight Frank, in releasing its Malaysia Commercial Real Estate Investment Sentiment Survey for 2022, gives an inkling.

Carried out across the Malaysian commercial property industry, the purpose of this survey is to comprehend current sentiments towards the commercial real estate sector and where it may lead in the near future.

Among the factors affecting this sector include the present low interest rates (OPR at 1.75% to 2.00% at the time of writing), the multiplier effect of ongoing mega projects, and continued foreign direct investment (FDI) into Malaysia.

According to Knight Frank Malaysia research and consultancy executive director Amy Wong, people appear to have a better risk appetite for alternative investments in the next two to three years.

The survey revealed almost equal interest to participate in serviced residences, hotels, co-working and flexible offices, senior living and retirement homes as well as data centres. And they are not just focusing on Klang Valley, location-wise, as the



The increase in e-commerce activities and technology adoption gave rise to the demand for warehousing.

survey points to Sabah, Johor, and Penang among the popular destinations for these alternative investments.

In regards to capital value, more than two-thirds of the respondents (76%) expect the industrial and logistics sub-sectors to enjoy capital value appreciations in 2022, with slightly more than half the respondents (57%) also anticipating the same for the Healthcare sub-sector.

In terms of yield performance, 68% of respondents expect yields to increase in the Logistics sub-sector, with anticipated higher yields for Healthcare and Industrial sub-sectors.

Predictably, these opinions are comparable on increase in rents, with rents of Logistics properties expected to increase, according to 64% of respondents; and 53% also agreeing that increases are expected in the Industrial sub-sector, in line with growing demand for space in these 2 sub-sectors.

There are similar expectations in the occupancy rate for the same two sub-sectors, and it is worth highlighting that there is a predicted reduction in occupied office space, due to the reality

of continued pressure on occupancy rates and rents as supply continues to outpace demand. These views are unsurprisingly echoed in the predictions on the market itself.

"Through this survey, which highlights the Logistics and Industrial sub-sectors as the favourites, respondents have expressed their confidence that these sub-sectors will be the quickest to recover within the next twelve months, along with the Healthcare sub-sector. The traditional sub-sectors of Hotel / Leisure, Office, and Retail are seen by respondents as a long-term play," said Wong.



There is a need to cultivate resilience in real estate portfolios, said Sarkunan.

As the nation navigates the new economy in a somewhat changed world that is anticipating further disruption, there is a need to cultivate resilience in real estate portfolios to anticipate risk and minimise disruption in an increasingly complex world, said Knight Frank Malaysia group managing director Sarkunan Subramaniam.

"The growing awareness and adoption of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) frameworks in the real estate industry will help drive the value of sustainable real estate into the future," he said.

Figure 1 Alternative Investments by Location

ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS BY LOCATION	
	TOP 3 Preferred Locations
Buy / Sell existing commercial assets	Sabah, Johor, Klang Valley
Serviced residences / hotels	Penang, Sabah, Klang Valley
Co-working / flexible offices	Penang, Sabah, Johor
Senior living / retirement homes	Penang, Klang Valley, Johor
Data centres	Johor, Klang Valley, Sabah
Workers' accommodation	Penang, Johor, Klang Valley and Sabah
Co-living / students' accommodation	Klang Valley, Johor, Sabah
Wellness centre / hub	Klang Valley, Sabah, Penang
Themed / recreational parks	Other States (Other than Klang Valley, Penang, Johor and Sabah)

Figure 2 Predictions on the outlook for the commercial real estate market

Improvement	Decline
93% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rise in e-commerce and technology adoption Expansion of warehouse and distribution facilities Growth of Industrial Production Index (IPI) Growth of electrical and electronic products industry Growth of healthcare / medical technology industry 	7% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost increase in raw materials Manpower / labour shortage (border restrictions for foreign workers) Supply chain disruption
80% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reopening of country's borders Easing of COVID-19 restrictions Economic recovery / tourism growth Influx of international tourists Pent-up domestic travel demand 	20% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of travel confidence Low international arrival numbers Reduced spending power / decrease in tourism spending Strict travel requirements (eg: COVID-19 testing, quarantine etc.)
67% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in COVID-19 situation Economic recovery Consumer spending trend 	33% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth of e-commerce shopping Disruption due to COVID-19 Delay in economic recovery Retailer consolidation
45% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic recovery Improvement in COVID-19 situation Growth in workforce scale / return of workforce 	55% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming supply of new office space Increase in hybrid workplace models Implementation of Work-From-Home (WFH) policy Cost saving strategies in companies / scale down of office space



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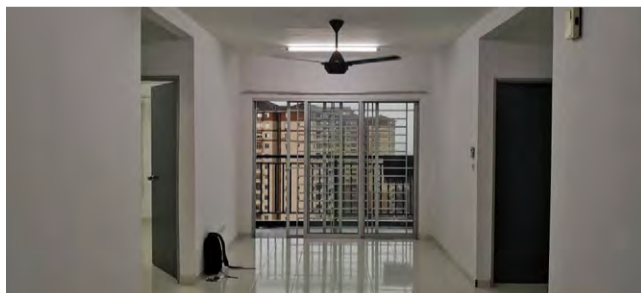


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