



## The drawing power of placemakers

Placemakers transform non-happening spaces into vibrant ones and pull in the crowd, encouraging community engagement.

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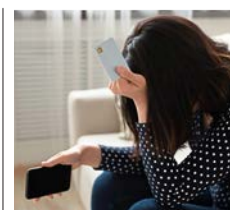
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# More than just a place

Strong crowd pullers are becoming a part and parcel of newer developments

By JOSEPH WONG

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**T**HE times have changed and things will never be the same again. This cannot be more true for the property industry that has undergone so much disruption over the last nine years from a slowdown of the sector since 2013 to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, new trends have come to the fore with the changing times.

One of the most impactful is the emergence of placemakers, and many property developers beginning to see the value of such additions to their projects, especially those with bigger acreage and further away from Kuala Lumpur City.

While the pandemic saw the majority of the population restricting their movement, the relaxation of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and the pent-up desire to return to the norm have heightened this new phenomenon. Nowhere is this reflected better than in how the use of public spaces has been transformed.

Historically, Malaysians generally love to flock to the newest hotspots, drawn by the latest placemakers and crowd pullers. Among the property developers who are prominent for their placemakers are heavyweights Gamuda Land and Sunway Property with their play on promoting the placemakers that they have created or natural sanctuaries they have taken advantage of.

An example of the latter is the 1,111-acre Paya Indah Discovery Wetlands next to Gamuda Cove. Along with the development's many heart-pounding outdoor escapades like the Goosebumps Rope Course and panoramic viewing experiences at the Cove Aerobar, Discovery Park, these placemakers have the potential to draw the footfall of millions of visitors every year.

"Malaysians are keen to get out and about and connect with nature in the new normal. Goosebumps Rope Course caters for this demand, with a fun and safe environment and exciting challenges for all ages, including 11 elements just for children. In addition, its strategic location next to the 1,111-acre Paya Indah Discovery Wetlands allows residents and visitors at Gamuda Cove to really experience, enjoy and learn about Malaysia's natural heritage," said Gamuda Land commercial real estate executive director Larissa Chan.

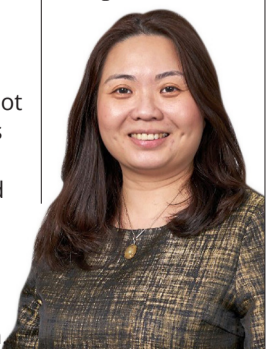
The same placemaking strategy is also used in Gamuda Land's Gamuda Gardens and Twentyfive.7 developments. But Gamuda Land is not the only property developer that uses placemaking to enliven its projects.

Sunway Property's fully-integrated green township Sunway City Kuala Lumpur is equally impressive with its placemaking initiatives covering a full range from daily conveniences to outdoor activities like Sunway Lagoon.



**ABOVE**  
Gamuda Garden's Big Bucket Splash is a big hit among residents and visitors alike.

"However, until now, placemaking remained a vague term that encompasses anything and everything that inspires people to want to use and stay in a space, and become a community," said Wong.



And they are not the only ones. Ironically, many were already successfully making use of placemakers without acknowledging the terminology like Genting Group with their Genting Highland projects and other big players such as Mah Sing Group Bhd, Matrix Concepts Holdings Bhd and Tropicana Corporation Bhd.

Interestingly, placemaking has already been within Malaysia for a long while. It is only that the industry and stakeholders are beginning to realise its worth now that a term has been used to describe it.

## What is placemaking?

In the recent past, this property terminology was perhaps best described as crowd pullers, a term used by shopping malls.

However, until now, placemaking remained a vague term that encompasses anything and everything that inspires people to want to use and stay in a space, and become a community, said Knight Frank Malaysia research and consultancy executive director Amy Wong.

So, who is bringing in placemakers? "I think that right now, in the Malaysian context, they are the ones who reimagine (and sometimes, redesign) public spaces into an inspirational place that draws people in. And I am happy

to note that some property developers have taken the concept of placemaking seriously, as the way to elevate the community address," she said.

Are placemakers effective in

encouraging buyers and investors to buy properties nearby? The answer is a resounding yes, if the younger generation has a say about it (see page 4).

Placemakers draw people in as humans are social creatures.



“By nature, humans are social creatures. We are not natural hermits. People buy homes close to amenities that they find useful like schools, parks and malls that they frequent the most. Investors buy commercial properties in busy attractive locations that have a reason to draw in the crowds because investors know this makes for good rental and capital appreciation,” said Wong.

### The way forward

“I am a supporter of placemaking, so I would naturally say yes. About 10 years ago when I first embarked on my research into placemaking for an assignment, this term was quite unheard of in Malaysia.

“We analysed why cities like London and Shanghai and Hong Kong continued to attract talents to relocate to those cities – and then we asked what was lacking in Kuala Lumpur. Then we saw what ThinkCity has successfully achieved in Penang’s Georgetown and in KL’s Chinatown.

“Developers then realised that they couldn’t just build bricks and mortar, the hardware. Their developments needed a soul, the software. And so, successful placemaking efforts have increasingly become a selling point for astute developers because all we want is to be in a great place,” said Wong.

### StarProperty Awards 2022

Acknowledging this new phenomenon, the StarProperty Awards 2022 has introduced The Placemaker Award to its list of accolades, recognising the efforts of property developers who have played a role in the creation of such crowd pullers.

“This new category will bring attention to the initiatives carried out by the property developers that help their communities become lively again after a tumultuous period,” said StarProperty general manager Mindy Chia.

The award was created to showcase projects rolled out to help communities make use of public spaces and support local businesses, she said.

**BELOW** When placemaking is done right, the place works.

# Ideas for property developers

By implementing placemaking in community engagement initiatives, property developers can tailor their approaches to issues like the need for more green spaces or encourage a healthier lifestyle. Here are five ideas to add to placemakers.

## 1. Improve walking and biking infrastructure

More pedestrian and bike-friendly spaces that the public could use to get around are being encouraged by many local governments, non-governmental organisations and individuals. Developers should not just create such pathways but also consider how to create spaces for rest, play and connection along the way. Through such placemaking, they can address several issues within their community, including traffic and air quality, in the specific part of their city that was most affected.

## 2. Nature preservation

Residents can be approached to share their favourite landscapes, weigh in on which roads could be improved for cyclists and pedestrians, and what the town square of their dreams would look like. This creates resident engagement and they can be a source of ideas for future placemakers. Developers would be wise to preserve natural sanctuaries or incorporate them into their developments as the community has become more aware of the importance of nature preservation, which could be a selling point for the projects.

## 3. Greening the city

Trees and shrubs can be used to lower temperatures in dense areas and bring the nurturing elements of nature into an urban setting. In addition, having a green rooftop can help to reduce

cooling costs and add a placemaker for residents. Similarly, introducing scrubs and miniature trees to facility podiums that are exposed to the sun can cool down these areas to make them more comfortable spaces for residents.

## 4. Safer streets

Residents place value on safer and community-friendly aspects. By employing the crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) approach, landscape designs are very carefully arranged to deter criminal opportunities. This makes for practical safe designs and at the same time encourages residents to make use of the placemakers like children’s play parks which have incorporated the CPTED approach.

## 5. Think big and small

It pays to think alongside residents on a variety of topics. While there is a shift to eco-friendly power sources, and some developers turning to solar and wind power generation in their developments, the small steps are equally important. Having the people’s input by giving them an understanding of opportunities and constraints from the beginning of the process, initiatives for placemakers will be better received. ↗

**BELOW** An aerial photo of people enjoying themselves at Sunway Lagoon. — Low Lay Phon / The Star



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# The younger generation's take on placemakers

It is not unexpected that placemakers tend to draw in the younger generation as these venues provide the attractions that would appeal to this age group. Here is what they have to say about placemakers.

"Only certain placemakers enhance a property development. Not everyone wants to live in a tourist destination, such as a theme park as it would generate too much crowd. I would only live in an area with a placemaker if it is something I want in my lifestyle, such as green areas. If so, then I would like to live nearby so that I can access it easily."

**- Cassandra Urai Victor, 22**

"Yes, I think placemakers add value and are convenient for residents. I would live somewhere close to a placemaker because it is more convenient for entertainment."

**- Tan Lee, 21**

"I think placemakers definitely enhance a property development. They are points of interest and reasons for people to visit. The placemakers I like visiting are theme parks. I would like to live nearby so that it is more convenient and I can go there anytime."

**- Wan Mohamad Fawwaz, 24**



Cassandra Urai Victor



Tan Lee



Wan Mohamad Fawwaz

"A placemaker can enhance a property by giving more purpose to the area other than residential and is an easy option to visit during holidays or weekends. Unfortunately, I don't visit placemakers often because they are far from where I stay. I would like to live close to one so that I don't have to travel so far or wait for long weekends to visit."

**- Meshvinny Nelson, 23**

"The overall appearance of a residential area will be improved by a placemaker. However, the presence of a placemaker would not influence my decision to live in that property. I am more concerned about the house, location and environment of the property instead."

**- Pang Shiang Yih, 23**

"I think that a property with a placemaker will make the development more recognisable and memorable. Staying in an area with a placemaker is a good place to invite friends and family. I would like to stay in an area with a placemaker, especially if there are places for jogging and exercising."

**- Ho Jia Quan, 20**



Meshvinny Nelson



Pang Shiang Yih



Ho Jia Quan



## New deals, new prizes @ StarProperty Fair IOI City Mall

WITH many coming back from the long holiday, mall-goers can also celebrate the return of crowds, togetherness and fun. Those looking to buy a new home can rejoice with the knowledge that StarProperty is also coming back in a big way. Hosting its third fair for 2022 at IOI City Mall, Putrajaya from May 18 to 22, StarProperty strives to bring you the best selection of developers for discerning

homebuyers. The properties highlighted at the fair are Bumiputera units. Bumiputera buyers will have a wider selection of property choices at this fair.

While bringing back fan-favorites such as IOI Properties Group and Tropicana Corporation, mall-goers will also be able to catch exclusive deals from other reputable developers like Binastra Land, Gamuda Land, IJM Land, Lagenda Properties, Mah Sing Group, Matrix Concepts Holdings, Nadi Cergas Development, OSK Property, Seri Pajam Development and SP Setia. The fair will be taking place from 10am to 10pm, with every exhibitor having prepared their own time-limited promotions and campaigns.

Fill in the StarProperty Fair's visitor's survey, which is open to all visitors, and be eligible to win gifts worth up to RM3000.

The visitor's survey is not the only activity to look out for. Esteemed homebuyers who secure a unit at one of the booths will find themselves entitled to win more gifts. Simply submit a copy of the sales order form, proof of payment and a copy of the purchaser's MyKad

at the StarProperty booth.

Grab the opportunity to gain limited vouchers to a free plant-based culinary workshop by the Malaysian Institute of Baking (MIB) as this is a limited offer at the StarProperty Fair. MIB has created plant-based dishes that are wholesome and nutritious.

While parents are browsing the properties at the fair, StarProperty has an abundance of activities to keep children entertained. These activities include balloon giveaways and a balloonist clown, who is sure to bring a smile to anyone's face.

StarProperty Fair will be happening throughout the year at your favourite locations including Central I-City, Sunway Pyramid, Sunway Velocity, IOI Mall Puchong and Mid Valley Exhibition Centre, each with their own exclusive promotions to look out for.

Visit [www.facebook.com/StarPropertyMY](http://www.facebook.com/StarPropertyMY) for the latest updates and turn your dream homes into reality. 🏠



Home buyers looking at properties available at the recent StarProperty Fair.



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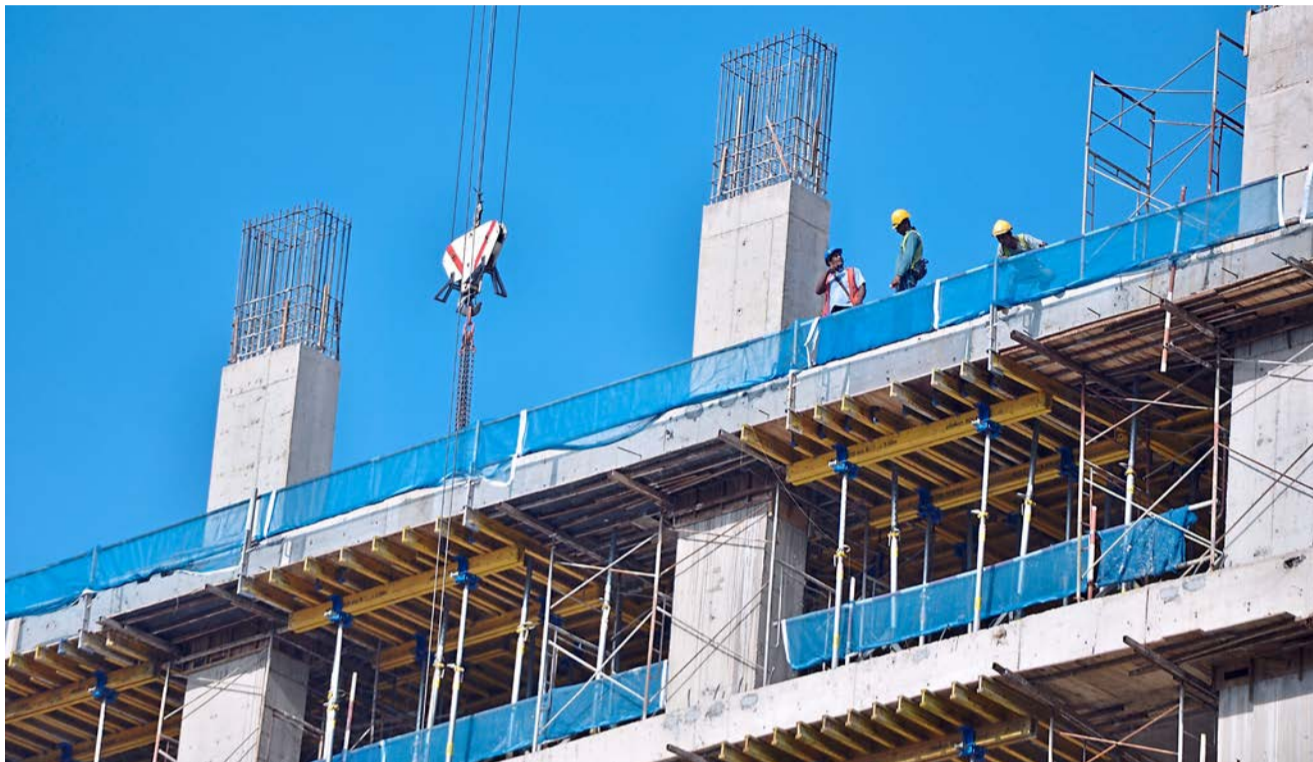
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# A new future for workers' accommodation

Placemaking makes its impact on the construction sector



By **JOSEPH WONG**  
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FOR a long time, both foreign and local workers, particularly those in the construction industry, have been putting up with deplorable living conditions but that is changing. While we still see squatter-type abodes that are hastily built alongside property developments, these temporary homes for workers are slowly being edged out, partially due to stricter enforcement but mainly as a positive consequence of the outbreak of Covid-19.

Despite the pandemic's severe impacts, this is one area where things have improved. Many workers, particularly foreign labourers, have previously lived in situations that could easily be mistaken for slave camps, lacking even the most basic of amenities such as toilets.

In 2017, there was a change that pushed for better workers' accommodation beginning with the government's proposal to amend Act 446 of the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990, a law that previously only covers mining and plantation workers.

Several companies have already taken advantage of this situation to cater to this potential demand. Among them are Johor based AME Construction Sdn Bhd (AME), Singapore based Centurion Corporation Ltd (Centurion) and the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB). Also joining their ranks are STF Saujana Sdn Bhd which recently debuted its Q Centre, a centralised labour quarters and private housing unit for STF Group of Companies.

## Improved facilities

But it was not until the advent of the

pandemic that pushed the agenda for safer accommodations, partly to curb the further spread of the virus. While the cost of construction and in turn, the prices of property are likely to rise, the benefits of having proper workers' accommodation are manifold. Aside from allowing the businesses to effectively manage their manpower, logistics and productivity, the multi-faceted benefits include promoting structure and organisation, which impacts traffic and congestion.

Such organised developments ensure residents' and the community's well-being and will foster an environment that is both sustainable and liveable. We see facilities that have become more common including cashless payment systems where workers can purchase items and remit money without going to the remittance or money changer, 24-hours security, biometrics security systems, automated laundrettes, grocery shops, clinics, canteens and water vending machines. There are even multi-purpose halls and open spaces for healthy recreational activities. Who would have thought that workers' accommodation could be elevated to this stage?

For example, Penang's Westlite Bukit Minyak provides a 6,600-bed facility and is specially designed with all the necessary facilities including a supermarket, gym, food court, barbershop, internet service, recreation rooms as well as outdoor exercise areas equipped with basketball, volleyball and street soccer courts.

Its strategic location next to a key highway provides the workers with easy access to the Bukit Minyak Industrial Park, the Science Park, as well as the Batu Kawan Industrial Park.

## Increased productivity

The improved environment has helped in reducing the number of workers taking medical leave and increased productivity. Not only have operators given the thumbs up but the workers themselves enjoy staying at the dormitory as it has all the facilities where they can exercise or carry out their activities.

By adding jogging tracks, outdoor exercise equipment and sports facilities, workers can enjoy a healthier lifestyle, and a healthy worker can perform better.

## A bright future

Workers' accommodation is still a relatively new market in Malaysia that has yet to be fully explored. So far, only a handful of companies have ventured into this form of property development and management.

"Part of their success is driven by understanding the needs of the workers and providing for those needs at a price that is compatible with what the employers want and in a location that is near to the workplace.

"Apart from the basic facilities such as bed, toilet, good ventilation and electricity, other amenities such as supermarket, food court, Internet, sports and recreation, are considered important



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**LEFT**  
The push for better workers' accommodation is giving rise to a new form of such facilities.

to foreign workers. "It is also equally important that there is tight security and that the environment is one where workers feel safe and comfortable living there," according to a report by real estate consultancy JLL Property Services (M) Sdn Bhd.

The potential going forward is good as demand for foreign workers would continue as Malaysia has a growing manufacturing and construction industry.

Prior to the pandemic-induced economic slowdown, the growth in infrastructure spending in Malaysia was among the fastest in the world going forward, averaging 15.5% in nominal terms, according to Timetric's Infrastructure Intelligence Centre (IIC).

"Based on our research, we believe the potential for this business looks bright. Taking the lead from Malaysia's neighbouring country, there are three companies, namely Centurion Corporation Ltd, Tiong Aik Corporation Ltd (TAC) and Capital Development Pte Ltd (CDPL), which are already in the business of providing workers' accommodation in Singapore," says the report.

## Other opportunities

Taking this workers' accommodation model a step further, the potential of providing such lodging needs to local workers in areas where housing stock is low and suffering from traffic congestion can be a lucrative enterprise, said a property observer.

With the current shortage of affordable housing and bad traffic congestion in Kuala Lumpur, there could be a potential for building and operating this type of accommodation for local workers or foreign employees, especially in Greater Kuala Lumpur, where the demand for such workers is on the rise, now that the outlook for the property market has improved. 📍

**BOTTOM LEFT**  
The Westlite Bukit Minyak workers' accommodation is a far cry from yesteryears' hostels.

**BOTTOM RIGHT**  
Surrounded by greenery with ample space for exercise, these facilities have added benefits to employers.



# Building our communities around places

Thoughtful creation of public spaces as the heart of every community

**W**HILE it may seem as if placemaking is merely the creation of attractions around urban areas, property developer Gamuda Land does not agree with this approach. To this town-maker, placemaking strengthens the connection between communities and the places they share. More than just promoting good urban design and town planning, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to physical, cultural and social characteristics that define a place and its on-going evolution.

Being mindful in its town-making approach, Gamuda Land understands that when it gets the places right, the town works for the community who call it home. An effective placemaking plan will result in the creation of quality public spaces that contributes to people's health, happiness and well-being.

"When we get it right, common problems like car-dominated streets and little-used parks can be addressed," said Gamuda Land commercial real estate executive director Larissa Chan.

## What makes a great place?

Gamuda Land looks at a few key criteria for its placemaking, first and foremost on accessibility and connectivity.

"Walkability and bikeability are very important to us. For the place to work, it must have a well-connected network of pedestrian and cyclist pathways, but we don't just stop there. We think also of the experience that our community goes through to get to the heart of town and we make that journey fascinating. We create tree-lined streets to cool down the environment and we have pocket parks along the way," Chan explained, adding that these places are located close by, easily accessible within 10 minutes via walking or biking.

Gamuda Land also looks at the aspect of sociability because a town can mean so many different things to different people. It is a place where children grow up, where people visit, a place where families and friends create lasting memories.

"That is precisely why we are careful in the curation of our gathering places, like a park and all the interesting community places. It almost has a living, breathing feel to it. So, we ensure there's always something to do in our towns. You get to know your neighbours in various different ways," Chan said.

Since its very first development in Kota Kemuning, Gamuda Land has made having a central park in all of its developments its hallmark. Be it a township development in Malaysia or Vietnam, all its township shares one similar trait - which is having a green lung where its communities can come out, and spend time in nature whilst getting to know one another.

Another aspect of good placemaking is to look into the safety of its community. Besides adopting the crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)



**ABOVE**  
SplashMania Water Park will be open at Gamuda Cove this December.



**LEFT**  
The Skyline Luge is Malaysia's first gravity-fuelled luge activity park at Gamuda Gardens.

approach where landscape designs are very carefully arranged to deter criminal opportunities, Gamuda Land also employs auxiliary police in addition to security guards to keep its public places safer.

## Getting the places right to make the town work

Today, Gamuda Land's newer townships have taken the term placemaking to a different level. We see more exciting additions to its stable of mindfully created places.

In addition to Discovery Park and Paya Indah Discovery Wetlands, SplashMania, Asia's largest rainforest themed water park, is expected to bring in one million visitors annually. It is slated for opening at Gamuda Cove in December this year.

Complementing these attractions is Townsquare, a lifestyle retail hub featuring European-inspired architecture and located adjacent to Splashmania water park. It is connected via Townsquare Park, an avenue lined with trees making it an easy stroll from the water park to the retail hub. Featuring an al-fresco layout, the community can work, play, hang out and fulfil their retail and leisure needs all within the same place.

The community can also choose to

go on the Tourist Tram that connects leisure attractions within the Heart of Cove.

Over in Gamuda Gardens, the community can already look forward to Skyline Luge, a gravity-fuelled thrill ride that originated in New Zealand and is enjoyed by millions of adventure enthusiasts around the world. To be built on a 40,000 sq m site overlooking Gamuda Gardens with themed landscaping planned along the route to enhance riders' experience.

Currently, Gamuda Gardens is already bustling with activities such as Big Bucket Splash, stand-up paddle boat, Donut boat ride, a horse-riding nature trail, solar express and more.

Adding to the vibrancy at Gamuda Gardens is the upcoming commercial

hub, Gardens Square, with pedestrian-friendly boulevards and al-fresco spaces that complement the township's residential and lifestyle components.

Similarly, in Kota Kemuning, residents of twentyfive.7 can enjoy a fun day out at The Buzz.ar which sets the stage for outdoor events. Children can ride on the Solar Express and from May onwards, enjoy a beautiful 16-seater carousel as well as the SuperFly Zipline which allows adrenaline junkies to zip through 180 metres across multiple lines as they enjoy the panoramic view above the seven-acre Quayside Lake, also in May this year.

"People remember the place they grow up in - that hometown feel. So when people come and visit our towns, they get a feel of it and want to be a part of it," Chan concluded.



**ABOVE**  
Bicycles are put ahead of cars at Gamuda Cove's Townsquare so residents and visitors can safely walk down the street.



**LEFT**  
Residents and visitors will be able to take delight in the Carousel at twentyfive.7 from May onwards.

# The self-sustaining township that creates a place in hearts

Placemaking amenities enhance the lifestyle options of Bandar Sri Sendayan residents

**D**ISCOVER the metamorphosis of Seremban with Bandar Sri Sendayan, an oasis perfectly located to capture location, accessibility, and the pursuit of happiness. What used to be jungle terrain is now a comprehensive, self-sustaining township, nestled in the heart of Negeri Sembilan's new economic growth corridor, the Malaysian Vision Valley (MVV).

Redefining property in Seremban, developer Matrix Concepts Holdings Bhd exceeds expectations by crafting a township comprising not just the residential and commercial sectors, but also the educational and the industrial. With a range of schools and parks, Bandar Sri Sendayan becomes not just a township, but a haven for multi-generational families.

Bandar Sri Sendayan's vast appeal can be credited to the incorporation of Seremban's natural opulence, and the offering of resort-style homes and contemporary suburbia. Crafted with modern architectural design, the township builds on the promise of exclusivity with its low-density homes, which are composed of clear and elegant forms.

Look forward to dropping your children off at one of the township's breathtaking selections of Matrix Global Schools (MGS), with their grand and luxurious design that firmly places them as Seremban's many landmark features. These institutions include Matrix International Pre-School, Matrix International School, and Matrix Private School, providing education for the expatriate and local communities in Malaysia from the kindergarten to the secondary level.

Never one to overlook the importance of the learning environment, Matrix Concepts situates the campus on a spacious 20-acre site with plenty of flora, its emphasis on the positive effects of the natural environment puts MGS above the rest. The campus accommodates up to 2,500 students.

If you are seeking a more classical education for your children, Bandar Sri

Sendayan strives to foster inclusivity in its wide variety of public schools, ranging from SJK (C) Bandar Sri Sendayan to SMK Bandar Baru Sri Sendayan. The evolution of its location, from stark greenery to a well-built campus, is credited to careful planning and landscaping, making the MGS a key feature of the up-and-coming MVV.

Masterfully planned to facilitate a healthy culture of walking, the Bandar Sri Sendayan commercial hub transforms the landscape of not just the township, but Seremban itself. Consisting of Sendayan Merchant Square and Sendayan Metropark, these exciting developments promise residents a wide collection of service-based businesses, restaurants, cafes, and boutique retail outlets. Sendayan Merchant Square itself has an impressive 163 units, as well as an additional 6.4 acres reserved for the development of a neighborhood mall.

## Ample placemaking amenities

While waiting, you may find yourself in one of the township's many parks and facilities, as Bandar Sri Sendayan provides ample reasons to create new outdoor memories with friends and family alike, promoting a lifestyle of wellness in a back-to-nature environment. Catering to all ages, the township introduces d'Tempat Country Club, Sendayan Green Park, and Sendayan X-Park as lively destinations for residents and non-residents. These locations are primed to become not just lifestyle facilities, but tourist attractions as well.

Fully immerse yourself in the urban nature of Sendayan Green Park and d'Tempat Country Club. The club has a range of sports facilities for the pleasure and enjoyment of residents and visitors, such as an aqua gym, an indoor tennis court and a fully equipped gymnasium. Its distinguished beauty offers a place of leisure and amusement to those living in, working in or neighbouring the township.



**ABOVE** The d'Tempat Country Club houses many facilities from a bowling alley to an Olympic-size swimming pool.

## Parks of all kinds

Residents will never find themselves bored with Bandar Sri Sendayan, which is one of the first townships equipped with an amusement park right in its backyard. Spanning a whopping 30-acres, find exhilarating activities to take part in with Sendayan X-Park, which has facilities such as a driving range, electric go-kart, flying fox and more. Spend an entire day with family and friends at Sendayan X-Park's paintball wargame field, before returning home with ease, courtesy of Bandar Sri Sendayan seamless connectivity.

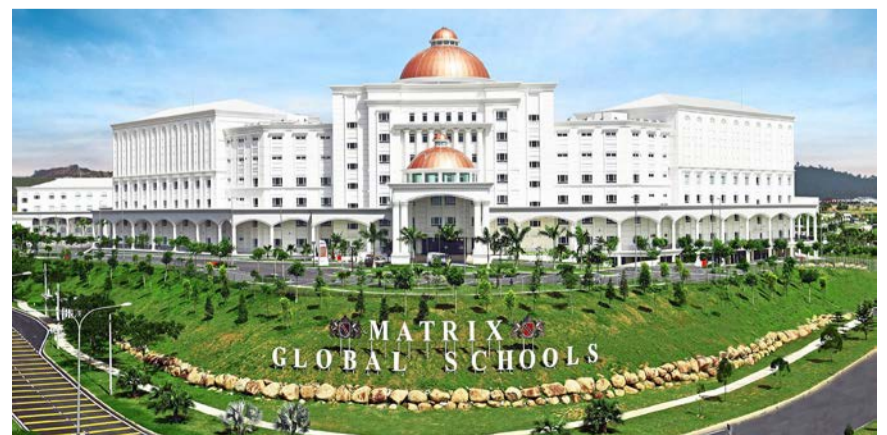
Residents will be able to find their way to such attractions without complications. Whether for fun or for employment, Bandar Sri Sendayan provides access to Klang Valley and Kuala Lumpur with its proximity to the North-South Expressway. But as many urbanites know all too well, connectivity encompasses more than just a road network. To get from one place to the next, developers must start thinking about walkability, and Matrix Concepts does just that by providing dedicated

pedestrian walkways away from the main road.

Put yourself at ease with the township's holistic security system, which provides every residential parcel with perimeter fencing and a guardhouse. Residents will be able to easily reach security guards with a press of a button through Bandar Sri Sendayan's security app via the e-intercom or panic button features. In addition, it will be a breeze to invite in friends and visitors without leaving your home via the invite visitor feature.

Its safety measures range from the most minute details such as the height of the trees and shrubbery, kept at a height of 6ft and 3ft respectively, to a comprehensive system of police patrol with beats placed at selected areas.

Bandar Sri Sendayan embodies an advancement of Matrix Concepts' holistic philosophy - Nurturing Environment and Enriching Lives - creating a self-sustaining eco-system in its quest to give more not just to its residents, but to Negeri Sembilan as a whole. For more information about Bandar Sri Sendayan, visit [www.sendayan.com.my](http://www.sendayan.com.my).



**LEFT** There is no shortage of greenery as multiple green lungs riddle the township, creating a healthy place to live.

**ABOVE** The township boasts a full selection of Matrix Global Schools, which include Matrix International Pre-School, Matrix International School and Matrix Private School.





# Your story never ends at Bandar Sri Sendayan.

Your day begins with the choice of a serene stroll by the lake, or a carefree cycle through the Sendayan Green Park. Fresh groceries at Sendayan Merchant Square, or a fresh brew at our specialty cafés. Caren down the Go Karts at the Sendayan X-Park, or up the climbing walls of Matrix Global Schools.

Then join one of our many exciting community events, and follow it up with world-class dining at

d'Tempat Country Club. Where you can also score at the 10-lane bowling alley, or catch a movie at the cineplex.

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# High-end condos or warehouses?

The changing face of industrial property

By LIEW JIA YI (YANIKA)  
yanika.liew@thestar.com.my

**D**ESPITE comprising only 2% of the property market, the industrial sector led the market in 2021. With the value for industrial properties increasing by 53% and the industrial sector accounting for 48% of total property transactions, the sector is expected to continue its strong growth trajectory in 2022. In comparison, transactions of commercial and retail sectors came to a near standstill throughout the pandemic.

While there was a decrease in industrial property from 2019 to 2020, the industrial developments being overlooked were typical designs such as terrace and semi-detached factories. It is clear that the market is demanding more from industrialists and investors, but what exactly does more entail?

In the past, warehouses used to be simple buildings consisting of a large, single space for storing and loading products. Most warehouses only have one ground floor, with the look and feel of a tin shed. Now, these old designs need an upgrade.

Welcoming the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), companies are demanding a more modern design, which could be anything ranging from multiple storeys to the implementation of facilities like jogging tracks, swimming pools and tennis courts. Industrialists are increasingly looking toward factors of livability to lure home local talents and attract international ones.

"If you go to Singapore, six, seven and eight floors are common. If you go to Hong Kong, 15 floors are common. So it's like an office building. Instead of a 15-storey office building, you actually have a 15-storey warehouse," Rahim & Co International Sdn Bhd real estate agency chief executive officer Siva Shanker said.

## Mega distribution hub

Area Logistics, by Area Management Sdn Bhd, is an example of modern industrial development. Not only is it Malaysia's first three-storey ramp-up inner-city mega distribution hub, but the 17.7-acre facility is also located 10 minutes away from Kuala Lumpur City Centre, allowing its workers and tenants easy access to nearby malls, food and beverage outlets and other establishments. These factors of connectivity present Area Logistics as an attractive place of employment, and increases the efficiency of its tenants, which are primarily e-commerce brands such as Shopee and Lazada, said Siva.

What if developers took the concept of industrial livability even further? Area Compass @ Kota Seri Langat aims to integrate industrial work life and lifestyle, providing amenities such as a clinic, food court, sporting facilities and more within the development itself. Furthermore, worker accommodations are being developed a short walk from their employment. Compass also has a direct interchange to the West Coast Highway (WCE), allowing workers access to Klang Valley through its highways.



An artist impression of AREA Logistics @ Ampang.



An artist impression of Area Compass' gated-and-guarded entry.

"As you go into it, you'd think it was a high-end condo. It has workers' quarters. It has a nice makan place, a jogging track, a bicycle track and greenery. So this is the way (forward). Industrialists now no longer want spartan finishes. They want a bit of look and feel. They want a bit of lifestyle to attract talent," Siva said.

Similar projects have not just sprouted up in the Klang Valley but also in Johor and Penang where there is a demand for such developments. It is not surprising that developers like EcoWorld Development Group Bhd to hop on the bandwagon with their Eco Business Park series.

Rapid urbanisation has increased demand for bigger warehouses, particularly from e-commerce businesses, which have flourished since the pandemic. However, with 66% of property development being residential, the supply of these industrial developments is being vastly overlooked and requirements for

new warehouses are starting to change. Another interesting consequence of the new demand is that warehouses with higher eaves height are now preferred. Where previously companies only needed racking systems of up to seven levels, they are now looking to go higher, noted Siva.

When it comes to efficiency, more sophisticated and dynamic racking systems are being sought after, such as automated machines being used to fetch products, reducing the need for human labour. Companies want warehouses which are equipped with better safety systems, with Siva pointing out that the most common accidents within a warehouse occur because of forklifts. Another requirement for an improved development is higher load-bearing floors to accommodate heavier machinery.

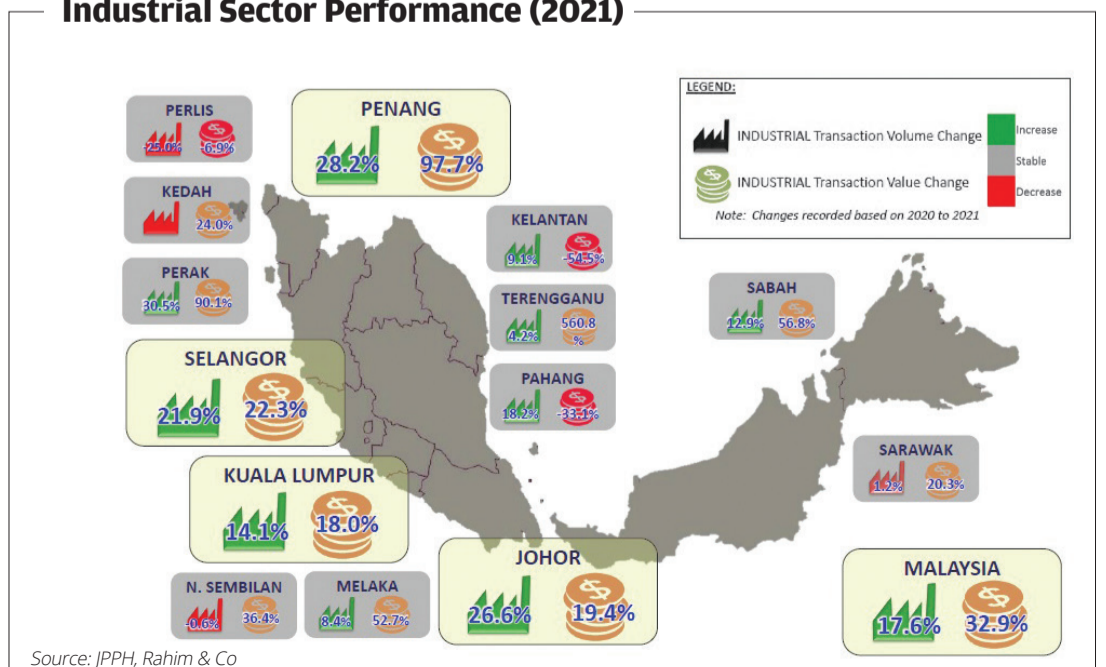
## Land scarcity

The issue of land space is prevalent when talking about industrial developments, which necessitate a large amount of land. Industrialists want larger spaces near ports, for ease of transportation. However, such resources are difficult to find in the economic centres of Kuala Lumpur and Klang, so companies will be forced to move to places like Perak and Kedah for sizable land to accommodate their businesses. In their quest for cheaper land, Siva speculates industries will begin moving towards Perak, as Perak is well-positioned between Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

"What's going to happen really, is as these preferred locations become more expensive and more dense and land availability continues to reduce, we are going to be seeing industrialists wanting to expand and move towards other locations. Negeri Sembilan and Melaka are obvious choices, but we are going to start seeing Ipoh and Perak prospering as well," Siva said.

**"Industrialists now no longer want spartan finishes. They want a bit of look and feel."**  
– Siva

## Industrial Sector Performance (2021)



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# Have property scams grown in the pandemic?

Home buyers should verify the authenticity of the real estate practitioners they are dealing with

By LIEW JIA YI (YANIKA)  
yanika.liew@thestar.com.my

If you are new to the property scene, dipping your toes in can feel like taking a dive. It can be intimidating to wade through stories of digital impersonations, stolen deposits and backdoor deals. The digitalisation of commerce has skyrocketed as a result of the pandemic. Enterprising companies are launching platforms for their services in a changing market and property is no different. With more real estate businesses moving online, it is easier than ever for fraudulent transactions to take place.

Take the recent cases in Singapore where scams involved convincing victims to pay a home-viewing deposit to secure an appointment. Armed with unregistered identity cards, scammers impersonated property agents by sending a picture of their credentials to the victims. There are multiple instances of scammers uploading fraudulent listings on websites. By the time their victims realise they have been duped, it is already too late.

"Scammers use technology and social media to reach out to prospects more easily. It is very disturbing and there is very little anyone can do to help buyers and sellers who have been cheated by unregistered estate agents or unregistered real estate negotiators," Malaysian Institute of Estate Agents (MIEA) president Chan Ai Cheng said.

Real estate transactions are a gold mine for scammers, as the process involves large amounts of money being transferred to another account. Scammers can create fake online websites to get customers to bank in the money to them, said Propnex Realty chief operating officer Evon Heng, who is also MIEA secretary-general.

According to both Chan and Heng, many transactions involve collecting a deposit in a sale or rental, and this money is kept by the individuals. It is a very common case for scammers to abort the deal without returning the refund, causing the buyer to lose out on the deposit. Whereas a registered agent is required to transfer any and all deposits to an account managed by the firm, under the client's name. This ensures that the buyer is protected by the law should anything happen, significantly reducing the risk of exploitation.

Another common scam involving property is the sale of a project that is non-existent, such as the scam promising victims affordable housing. Scammers claim they have access to units from a high-demand affordable housing scheme, without complying with the eligibility criteria.

While there are instances of affluent victims being caught up in these scams, Chan reports that a majority of property scam victims are in the B40 category, the second being the M40. These groups are less aware or experienced in real estate matters. Similarly, those located away



from the city, in small, rural towns are disproportionately targeted. These areas are especially vulnerable due to fewer safety nets available. With B40 families having fewer resources than other income groups, they have more to lose and fewer pathways to receive support, whether from authorities or their community.

So who do you have to watch out for? Chan outlined a framework the public can use when identifying these scams.

"The case of scams defined as defraud or embezzlement in an estate agency transactions is predominantly by illegal brokers as they are not regulated by law and also because they need not operate via a firm," Chan said.

Real estate practitioners are required to follow strict guidelines when advertising, which include the practitioner's real estate negotiator (REN) or real estate agent (REA) number and the registration number of the firm they represent. This is crucial information that the public can use to verify with the Board of Valuers, Appraisers, Estate Agents and Property Managers (BOVAEA). Those who are unable to present proper paperwork should be questioned. Chan also warned the public against real estate practitioners who pressure their clients into financial commitments, more so when they seem to be withholding information.

**With more real estate businesses moving online, it is easier than ever for fraudulent transactions to occur.**



"Scammers use technology and social media to reach out to prospects more easily," Chan said.



"Research and verification are vital for any transaction or purchase," Heng said.

## What can you do?

When you realise you have fallen for a scam, the first instinct is to panic. MIEA reported that one of the barriers to victims coming forward was the embarrassment they faced when they admitted to falling for a scam. Particularly in regards to transactions that do not involve a large sum of money, victims seldom choose to confront the situation.

Regardless of such inhibitions, Chan recommends victims lodge a report to the police. If the scam involves a housing development, victims should lodge a report with the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT). These reports will be able to provide authorities with data, assisting not just yourself, but future victims. In order to warn the rest of the public of such instances, she added that victims could contact the press for further outreach.

Homebuyers are encouraged to work only with registered RENs or REAs, whose authenticity can also be verified via a written authorisation from the owners of the property being sold. In the case of homeowners eager to rent or sell their

property, reach out to professionals rather than appoint an unregistered broker, even if it is someone you trust. Especially when making deposits, ask yourself these questions; could it be an individual's bank account you are sending your money to? If it is a company, is it a registered one?

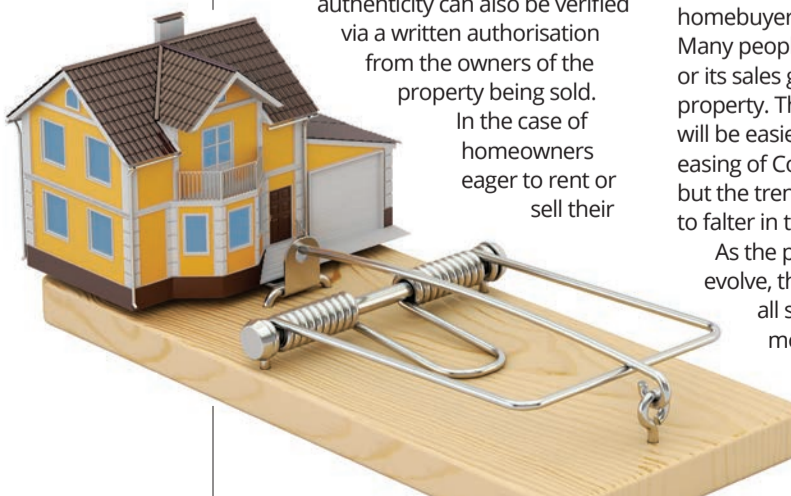
"By no means it's all safe and well, dealing with registered persons but at least they are known, the regulatory bodies are able to take more immediate action or even deregister them, there is accountability when one is registered," Chan said.

As more and more Malaysians become comfortable handling transactions online, their vigilance begins to diminish.

"Not only are property scams more prominent, but other scams are also. Research and verification are vital for any transaction or purchase," Heng said.

She noted that the digitalisation of real estate created other challenges for homebuyers and estate practitioners. Many people enjoy visiting the unit itself or its sales gallery when looking for property. These are preferences that will be easier to accommodate with the easing of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, but the trend of digitalisation is not likely to falter in the coming years.

As the property industry continues to evolve, there will be new challenges for all stakeholders involved. Learn more about protecting yourself in real estate transactions by visiting MIEA's public awareness campaign, via [www.instagram.com/myrealagents/](https://www.instagram.com/myrealagents/)



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# Strong appetite for Malaysian hotel investment

Survey reveals many investors are considering increasing their exposure to the industry

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

It has been over two years since the Covid-19 pandemic caused a massive global shutdown of the travel industry. After several false restarts, there is a renewed sense of optimism that 2022 will be the year of recovery, especially with many countries reopening their borders, including Malaysia.

Along with the optimism, the hospitality industry's stakeholders are already strategising travel trends, along with plans for hotels and lodging operators to overcome the obstacles and seize the opportunities.

International property consultant Knight Frank Malaysia, having recently concluded its second Malaysian Hospitality Investment Intentions Survey, revealed that 64% of respondents are considering increasing their exposure to the Malaysian hotel sector, a sharp hike in comparison with 36% back in 2020.

On the opposite end of the pendulum, 36% of respondents are currently not interested in increasing their exposure in hotels but this is a significant drop compared to the 64% in 2020. This is a positive sign that sentiment towards the sector is returning.

The survey analysed the investment perspectives of hotel owners, operators and owner operators to draw a comparison with its earlier survey to compare how they have continued to be impacted by Covid-19 in Malaysia, the level of investment demand, investment preferences, and investor sentiment towards the sector.

## Tumultuous years

"Given the last two tumultuous years, it is not surprising that investment in hotels across Malaysia fell from a 2017 high of RM2.2 billion to just RM556 million in 2020 and RM177 million in 2021," said Knight Frank Malaysia capital markets executive director James Buckley.

"Since our first survey, we have seen a rapid and widespread distribution of Covid-19 vaccines globally, an increasing list of countries opening their borders to international travellers and airlines re-establishing some of their flight networks. International traveller's confidence is slowly returning and this is filtering through to the 2022 survey with investor sentiment recovering. We



The doors are opening again for the hotel industry.

do expect to see an increasing number of hotel transactions over the next 24 months," he said.

Investors continue to seek high returns to offset the risk of investing in the sector. 33% of respondents are targeting a net yield of above 7% (versus 36% in 2020) when acquiring a 4 to 5-star hotel in Malaysia. 26% of respondents are targeting net yields of 6-7% (versus 29% in 2020), whilst 19% would accept 5-6% (versus 29% in 2020).

"I think investors are seeing 2022 as a good time to invest in Malaysian hotels. They can see the economy is recovering, especially now that the borders have reopened. Many can see the strong pent-up demand for holiday travel and in the short term, Singapore tourists, coupled with domestic demand will drive hotel performance in 2022.

"We expect to see hotel transaction volumes increase in 2022 as the price gap between vendors and purchasers

will narrow as investors become more optimistic with the border opening and increasing arrivals. Although bank financing of hotels has been quite difficult during the pandemic, banks will also see the improvements in the sector and begin to lend again," said Buckley.

Historically, Malaysia has attracted a diverse pool of international tourists from all over the world and is particularly well-positioned to capture the growth of Halal Tourism. Malaysia ranked as the top destination out of 140 countries in the MasterCard CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index 2021 for being the most Muslim friendly holiday destination, beating Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Traditionally prime hotels do not come to market regularly and the next 12 months present a window of opportunity to acquire some unique opportunities.

The majority of the hotels have conservative levels of gearing. A total of 43% have less than 49% loan to value ratio whilst 17% have no debt at all. However, 31% have the loan to value ratio of between 50% and 69% and 9% have high gearing of above 70%. On a whole, hotel owners with conservative gearing have managed to weather the pandemic storm

and have not had to sell at fire-sale prices.

"The survey indicates that owners of Malaysian hotels tend to have quite conservative levels of debt. Lower leveraged properties carry less risk and are better equipped to weather market fluctuations and might explain why we have not seen any notable distressed hotel sales during the covid-19 pandemic," Buckley added.

## International travel resumes

On the global front, the international tourism arrivals plunged by 73% in comparison to 2019, marking the worst year on record for tourism, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The numbers were only slightly better in 2021, with a modest increase of 4% over 2020.

Looking ahead to 2022, the path to recovery has been disrupted by the Omicron variant, which has spread like wildfire around the globe. According to the UNWTO, international tourist arrivals could grow by 30 to 78% in 2022 compared to 2021, but that's still 50 to 63% below pre-pandemic levels. The majority of the UNWTO's global panel of tourism experts, 63%, don't expect global tourism to recover to 2019 levels until 2024 or later.

**LEFT** Investors are seeing 2022 as a good time to invest in Malaysian hotels, said Buckley.



## Factors Affecting Hotel Performance in 2022

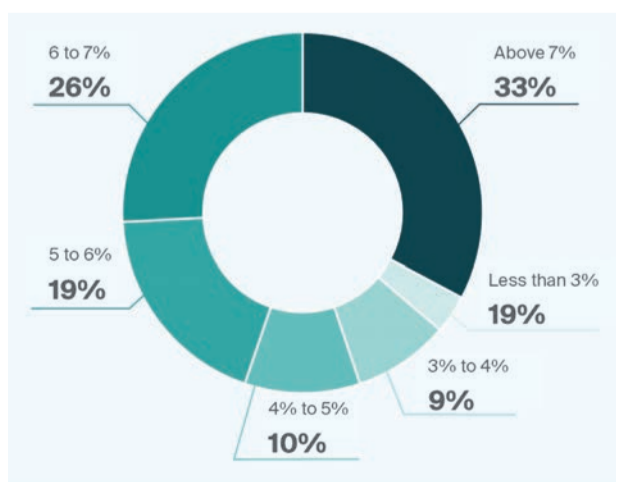
Issues likely to affect hotel performance in 2022, aside from pandemic measures and travel limitations, are:

**Lack of staff** - As demand recovers and hotels look to hire new staff from a shrinking labour pool, the hospitality industry's labour crisis is expected to gain traction. This will raise wages, making it difficult for hotels to meet demand, hire new personnel or improve employee morale.

**Scaled back services** - During the pandemic, many hotels cut back on services, which they have yet to fully restore. The property will determine whether services are restored in 2022, but the alterations have had a negative impact on guest satisfaction.

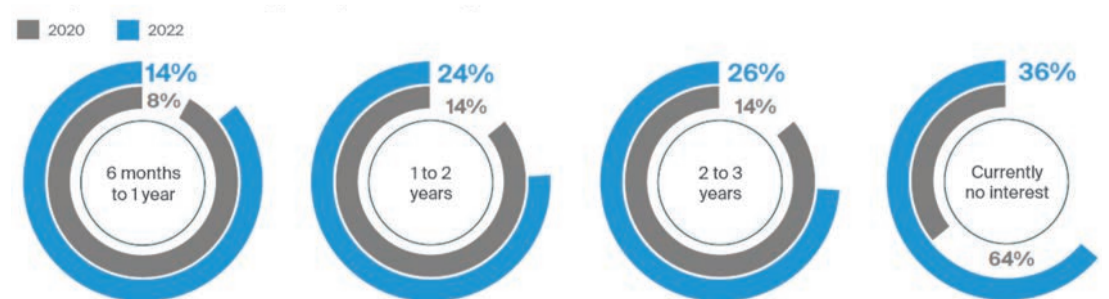
**Increased costs** - Hotel costs are rising as a result of inflation, from real estate and employees to food and supplies.

### Expected average overall net yield for 4 to 5-star hotels



Source: Knight Frank Malaysia

### Would you consider increasing your exposure to Malaysian hotel sector?



Source: Knight Frank Malaysia



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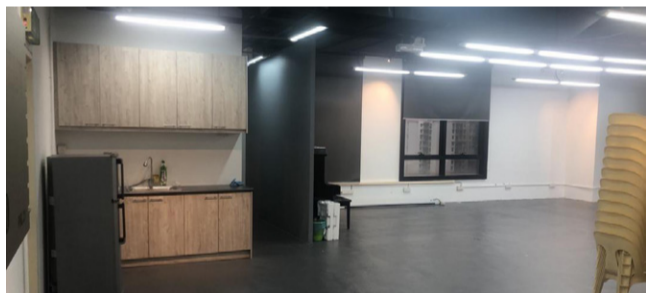


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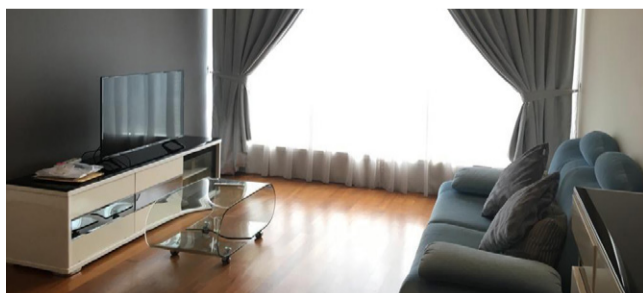


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