

Design concept key in any development



OUR homes and the way that we live are central to the basic core of our lives. That is why we, as property developers, spend a lot of time and effort to create greater livability and lifestyle in all our development projects. We put a lot of thought into the design and layout of all the units that we build, whether they are houses or high-rise apartments.

The environment in which we live, down to the materials used to build our homes, can affect our psyches and physical well-being. Much thought should, thus, be put into the development of homes for enhanced livability. Having large windows, for example, will give residents a feeling of being connected with the outside. As space is of utmost importance, especially in city living, the rectilinear use of space optimises the area available and cuts down wastage.

Every parcel of land is different. While some may give residents the conveniences and benefits of living in a city, others provide dwellers with the peace and beauty of natural surroundings. The idea, always, is to optimise the use of the land available so that homeowners get the best of everything that is possible.

For example, in Jia on Wilkie Road, our newly-launched development in Singapore, we have put the swimming pool on the rooftop. This achieves two aims: it saves space on the ground, giving ground floor units their own private gardens; and it gives pool users a commanding view of the skyline.

Product development involves looking at users' needs as well as their desired way of living. For example, the provision of both wet and dry kitchens, a maid's room, gym facilities and swimming pools have, more or less, become standard items in any high-end development.

Just as our needs and requirements have evolved over time, so too have housing developments in Malaysia evolved. Standards are now higher. No longer are the typical rows of traditional terraced houses, semi-Ds and

bungalows sufficient to appease a buying public that have been exposed to the houses and lifestyles overseas.

Developers have had to respond to these changing demands by bringing in new concepts and ideas. Over the past several years we have seen property developments in Malaysia take on a more international flavour, with many innovative features now being taken for granted in the more exclusive housing projects.

Homeowners are turning their backs on the "gilded" look and expressing their preference for a more relaxed, yet sophisticated feel. To this end, the choice of building materials has moved towards those that give off a calmer, more natural feel, such as bricks and concrete

that have not been covered and painted over.

Gated and guarded developments have also become fairly widespread as homebuyers start to demand security, greenery, private open spaces, recreational facilities and a communal lifestyle all at the same time. Gita Bayu in Sri Kembangan, a combination of strata homes and bungalows with a clubhouse, is a good example of this type of development. It sits on what used to be a rubber plantation and some portions of this have been retained for the back-to-nature feel.

With our 20trees development in Melawati, we took some time to get the project off the ground because we wanted to make sure that all the houses and apartments to have a view of the Melawati Quartz Range. 20trees has

been designed in such a way that residents get to feel a connection to nature in their daily lives.

Developers also have to think of other factors that may affect the livability of the development - for inner city dwellers, for example, the problem of noise can be a constant one and developers need to think about how to provide for this. Thick walls and insulated windows will help keep the noise level down.

Some developers of high-rise properties have also started to cater to the attachment that Malaysians and Singaporeans have to their cars. 51 Gurney in Kuala Lumpur and Hamilton Scotts on Singapore's Scotts Road will both provide car parking facilities within the apartment units - a veritable car park in the sky for owners to showcase their cars in their own units. Special lifts will be used to bring the cars up to the correct apartment units.

In order to come up with concepts that fit the way people want to live, developers constantly look out for effective design and architecture that really work. The biggest challenge right now is for developers to ensure that they are able to continue this evolution and deliver creative and innovative ideas that will sell while keeping current escalating costs in check. This is a big test and developers ought to focus on how they can control, rather than cut, costs.

House buyers, for their part, tend to end up living the way the developer has visualised it. The initial concept of a product is critical to the way that the product finally turns out and the way that people are able to live.

● *The writer is the managing director of SDB Properties Sdn Bhd, a lifestyle property company. Bouquets and brickbats are welcome, send in your email to md@sdb.com.my.*

