

Meeting buyers' increasing needs and wants



BUYING a home is a big investment for the vast majority of us. So most of us agonise over it for a long time before making the investment.

We want the best for the money we pay, especially when we have to part with a lot of it. We expect to receive value for money. In fact, some of us expect to receive more than what we pay for, but that's only human.

And our expectations have risen steadily over the years, mainly influenced by prevailing conditions, changing trends and, in no small way, what we see and experience elsewhere around the world.

There was a time when providing a roof over our heads was the primary and perhaps only consideration when we purchased a home. What came inside was secondary.

Drop in at one of those houses built in the 1970s or 1980s and you will probably find only one bathroom, to be shared by the entire family and their guests. Metal grills for the doors, windows and a fence around the house were all the security you could expect to get.

Life had other considerations then, and security was not such a big issue. Today, a developer sets himself apart by the extras he can offer home purchasers as much as

the location, price and quality of his project.

So what do buyers expect of developers today? For the most part, security has gained the highest consideration. Everybody wants to feel safe. In response to this need, gated communities with provision for tight security have sprung up.

The guard post has also become part and parcel of any high-rise development today. In high-rise projects, there is the addition of a secured lift access card – a facility that has become basic.

Once the project has been completed and the keys handed over to the purchasers, the developer is expected to organise the security detail and maintenance services until the Joint Management Board (JMB) is formed, which takes place within a year. The responsibility is then handed over to the JMB.

Beyond that, there are other considerations. Lifestyle facilities such as a clubhouse, swimming pool or gymnasium are now a must. The more affluent the purchasers, the higher their demands.

Apart from the swimming pool and gymnasium, purchasers now also expect a function room, a yoga or pilates room, and a children's playroom.

Wireless Internet access, a barbecue pit, jogging tracks, laundry service and a convenience store are important. Jacuzzi, tennis court and sauna are plus points.

A purchaser's choice of property to buy is also influenced by his status in life. The bachelor or a newly-married couple just starting out

in life are more likely to opt for an apartment with additional facilities such as a rooftop lounge.

A couple with young children is more likely to opt for landed property that comes with some garden space for play. High-rise projects with large open recreational spaces built in also appeal to such buyers.

Buyers who have aged parents living with them will opt for more "user-friendly" homes where there are not too many levels to climb up or down, and where at least one room is at the same level as the kitchen and living area for the old folks' easy access.

The size of a property one buys is, of course, influenced as much by the price as the size of his family.

Logically, a large family, especially with three generations living together, will need more room, while a young couple will opt for a smaller unit that is more affordable. Room must also be made available for the domestic maid who is now a must for every Malaysian family.

Having said that, one can safely assume that an apartment with about 2,000 sq ft and three-plus-one bedrooms is about right for the average Malaysian family. The "plus-one" bedroom is presumably for the domestic help.

The buyer of a landed property would most likely expect four or five bedrooms. Whether apartment or landed property, buyers now expect a bathroom attached to each and every bedroom.

Now that we have the basic structure of four walls and a roof, with the requisite number of rooms



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and the facilities taken care of, what else do buyers want?

In most families today, both the husband and wife work. So there is little time left to worry about getting the little things for a new home.

In light of that, developers are beginning to throw in at least the basic appliances and built-ins to help ease the buyer and his family into their new home.

Many developers now provide as basic items such as built-in wardrobe and kitchen cabinets. Also being given as part of a package now are air-conditioners and water heaters.

Going green is also becoming quite trendy, with a number of buyers inquiring about environment-friendly designs. Some developers have taken the initiative to design homes that, for instance, let in more natural light so that there is less of a need to switch on the lights.

High ceiling and large windows that make the interior more airy also help to reduce the use of the fan or air-conditioning, all of which also help to cut energy costs, which is a bonus for purchasers.

As expectations increase, developers have to become more creative and innovative. At the same time, such extras do come at a price and in the end, some of it has to be passed on to the buyer.

Having said all that, there are some who do not even bother to look at the floor plan or want to know what facilities are available before placing an order for several units at the same time. These are the hardcore property investors and theirs is another story.

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