

Top 10 architectural trends for new Malaysian properties in 2014

Posted on November 7, 2013 | 55486 views | Topic : Home & Living.

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THE trends for new properties have seen the mushrooming of landed, gated and guarded properties, projects clustering around upcoming MRT and LRT stations, green-rated buildings and branded residences, not to mention top-to-toe glass-clad residences.

Here are more innovative offerings which have caught StarProperty's eyes:

1. Iconic sculptural structures



Iconic architecture is a dominant trend that's set to stay, judging from the wave of new buildings such as The Capers and The Fennel (pic, above left) developed by YTL Land & Development Bhd, Datum Jelatek by PKNS (Selangor State Development Corporation), Angkasaraya by UEM Sunrise Bhd and Icon Residence Mont'Kiara (pic, above right) by Mah Sing Group Bhd. Few in number but growing in stature, they make their presence felt with creativity and imagination.

The Fennel, for example, alters the skyline with its sharp and angled towers. "Its form, while unique to high-rise towers in KL, is actually a composition of standardised floor plates for the units – albeit stacked in a manner where every floor is incrementally adjusted outward or inward in groups of eight.

The result is a distinct profile in the skyline – somewhat “gravity defying” – but the floor plans are typical and repeated,” shares Rene Tan of RT+Q Architects, the firm which designed the 38-storey residential towers.

2. Dual key units



Offering a studio apartment attached to the main apartment, each with separate entrances, dual key units are increasingly gaining ground with developers.

Recent projects offering this layout include Zefer Hill Residence developed by Villamas Sdn Bhd, AraGreens Residences @ Ara Damansara by HSB Development Sdn Bhd, **Urbana Residences @ Ara Damansara by Weida (M) Bhd** and EcoSky @ Taman Wahyu by Eco World Development Sdn Bhd. They promise flexible occupancy for multi-generational families to co-exist under the same roof, or the ability to subsidise loan repayments by renting out one of the apartments.

“A family could live here and rent out the studio unit, or it could be for adult children who want their privacy and independence. It could also be the other way around. If the children leave, the husband and wife can move into the studio, and rent out the main unit,” says developer Mitraland Group’s CEO Chuah Theong Yee of his Vina Versatile Homes project (pic, right) in Taman Seri Taming, Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, which offers dual key units among its choice of layouts.

“The response to the dual key units has been pretty encouraging,” adds chairman Datuk Johan Ariffin. “People like it and they see the possibilities. It’s good for them to have the option for the older child to have privacy, or to rent out the studio to subsidise loan repayments.”

3. Condo beaches



The last few years have seen a race by property developers to offer the country’s first man-made beach for private residential dwellings. Projects include Verve Suites Mont’Kiara (pic, above) developed by Bukit Kiara Properties Sdn Bhd, LaCosta by Sunway City Bhd and Le Yuan Residence by UOA Group.

Christened Versilica Sky Beach, Verve Suites' sandy playground is not only the first to complete, it physically tops the others by crowning one of its four condominium blocks, rather than being located on a podium. Besides the beach, a pool, cafe, "chill zones", recreational rooms, Jacuzzi and sun garden with sunken seater sit on top of 37 storeys of 250 fully furnished suites.

4. Private lift lobbies

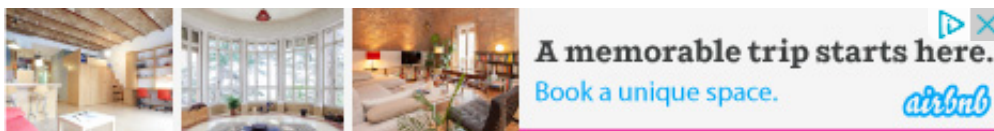
Lending one added advantage of security and exclusivity, private lift lobbies can be found in developments such as Sunway Palazzio by Sunway City Bhd, 28 Mont Kiara by UEM Sunrise Bhd and IOI Properties' Puteri Hills luxury town villas.

The lift opens straight into your apartment as doors may open on opposite sides and on specific floors designated by your access card.

Another project to offer private lift lobbies is Serai by Bandar Raya Developments Bhd, currently under construction in Bukit Bandaraya. The RM900mil luxury project will comprise 121 apartments in two 21-storey towers. Its five spacious layouts are generously proportioned from 4,000 sq ft to a royal 14,000 sq ft in the penthouse.

"Serai is poised to take your breath away with a treasure trove of thoughtful, well-designed luxuries," says Hud Bakar, managing director of RSP Architects Malaysia which designed the project.

5. Landscaped back lanes



It seems that back lanes are now becoming obsolete. These forgotten wastelands, historically populated by rubbish bins and alleycats, are increasingly being turfed over and made into car-free communal spaces.

Examples include Ken Rimba in Shah Alam developed by Ken Holdings Bhd (pic, above left), LakeClub Parkhome in Rawang by DA Land Sdn Bhd, Parkville townhouses by Sunway City as well as Tiara South (pic, above right) in Semenyih developed by Kueen Lai Development Sdn Bhd.

6. Double decker grounds

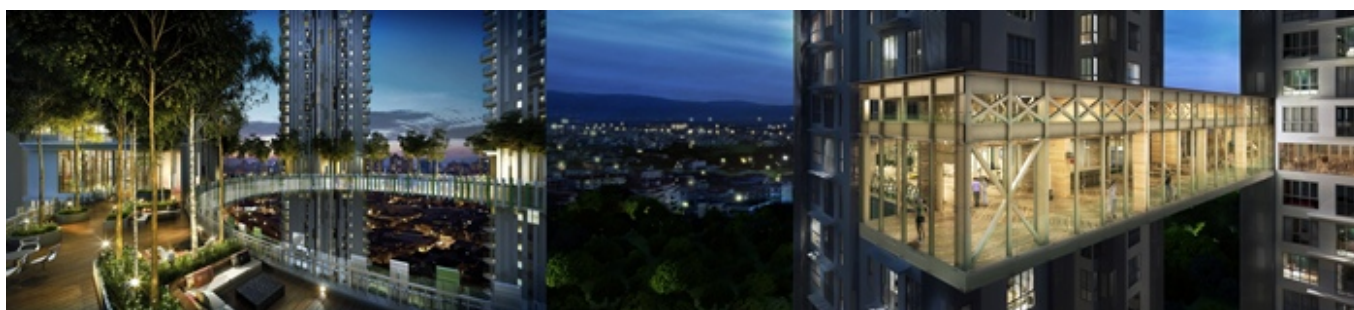


Pedestrian lifestyle facilities above car parking in landed strata developments make life a breeze at The Arie in Bukit Sri Damansara developed by Loh & Loh Corporation Bhd, Embun @ Kemensah Heights (pic, above right) by Titijaya Group and 16 Quartz Melawati (pic, above left) by Mitraland Group.

This way, cars are confined to the lower levels without endangering children at play. This leaves the upper grounds blissfully free of asphalt while being generously peppered with water features, walkways and playgrounds.

“Large sliding doors have been selected for the balconies and main entrances to blur the definition of private and public domain fronting the common open space. Hence, the courtyard becomes the ‘extension’ of the living room at ground level and the balconies above,” says Ar. Woo Yoke Khing of Kumpulan Senireka Sdn Bhd, commenting on Embun @ Kemensah Heights.

7. Sky bridges



More and more projects are offering sky bridges or communal spaces that connect towers at upper levels. Examples include Datum Jelatek (pic, above left) by PKNS and Verve Suites KL South (pic, above right) by Bukit Kiara Properties Sdn Bhd.

“Sky lounges have been quite a trend in the last few years as developers innovate to improve the overall lifestyle of apartment community living. Sky bridges, in particular, are emerging for a few reasons.

Sometimes, the existing building’s constraints do not allow for a rooftop sky lounge so facilities bridging between the two towers are a brilliant solution to getting resident activities off the ground,” says Dion Vercoe, managing director of Palladio Interiors which worked on Verve Suites KL South.

8. Generous, full-width balconies



Large balconies which either span the entire living room, or are outdoor terraces in themselves, can be witnessed in projects such as Arcoris Residences (pic, above left) in Mont Kiara by UEM Sunrise Bhd, KM1 East by Berjaya Land Bhd (pic, above centre) and Eco Sky Residences by Eco World. These spaces are large enough to accommodate alfresco dining and entertainment.

"The outdoor lifestyle is more holistic and more people want to enjoy the extension of their spaces, hence, the trend for bigger balconies that are also great for hosting parties.

And, while the whole unit is 2,400 sq ft in space, the balcony takes up to nearly 400 sq ft," says Benson Saw, director of VW+BS, which furnished an apartment with a balcony converted into an outdoor lounge within the Troika condominium (pic, above right) near KLCC.

9. 'Floating' gyms



Not content to be tucked away in a corner, gyms are now being offered with a view. Often dubbed "floating gyms", these workout spaces are usually designed to overlook swimming pools, magnificent views or lush landscaping.

Examples include Verdi in Cyberjaya by UEM Land Holdings Bhd, Laman Granview (pic, above right) in Saujana Puchong by IJM Land and Zeva (pic, above left) in Taman Equine by Trinity Group Sdn Bhd.


10. Communal streams



Swimming pools aren't enough anymore. Developers now want to mimic or make the most of existing terrain with communal streams, lakes and wetlands. Examples include Tijani Ukay developed by Symphony Life Bhd (above, right) and Parkville homes in Lake Edge Puchong by YTL Land (pic, above left).

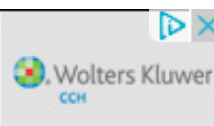
The Glades at Putra Heights, developed by Sime Darby Property Bhd, offers a lush and connected green lung centred by a wetland area. A central pond with miniature streams add allure to a morning stroll or evening jog.

As part of its By the Sea (pic, above centre) luxury condominium project, meanwhile, Selangor Dredging Bhd invested RM2mil to rehabilitate a stretch of river running through its site. The result becomes a plus point for house buyers, says its managing director Teh Lip Kim.



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