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Design your dream home to win RM10,000 and a trip to Paris

BY **RACHEL CHEW****PETALING JAYA:** It isn't every day that you get to win a RM10,000 cash prize or a paid trip to Paris, but take part in the EdgeProp.my-TAHPS Beautiful Home 2017 Interior Design Contest and you may find yourself doing just that.

Organised by EdgeProp.my and TAHPS Group Bhd, the interior design contest will see eight winners from two categories — individual and student — walk away with total prizes worth over RM30,000.

“We are excited about the contest as it offers an opportunity for everyone — students, professionals and non professionals — to showcase the interior design of his or her dream home and win a prize in the process,” said EdgeProp.my managing director and editor-in-chief Au Foong Yee.

Clever interior design can do wonders to a home, she said. “Creative interior design ideas are able to, for instance, transform a modest room into a seemingly bigger yet cosier space.

“Indeed, with property prices climbing due to the increasing cost of doing business as well as land cost, more people are moving into high-rises these days,” Au added.

Meanwhile, TAHPS group CEO Eugene Khoo views the collaboration with EdgeProp.my as a strategic partnership, given the latter's focus in the property sector.



PICTURES BY LOW YEN YEING | EdgeProp.my

Au: Creative interior design ideas are able to, for instance, transform a modest room into a seemingly bigger yet cosier space.



Khoo: The partnership would allow us to contribute to the development of the interior design industry.

“The partnership would allow us to contribute to the development of the interior design industry. We see the interior design industry as complementing and contributing to the development of the property industry in general,” he said.

The contest is open to any student, interior designer, interior architect or individual residing in Malaysia and aged 18 years and above.

Participants are required to submit their design based on TAHPS' Epic Residence duplex unit (Type C1) floor plan.

Epic Residence is a 21-storey serviced apartment built on a 2.3-acre prime freehold land in the thriving township of Bukit Puchong, Selangor.

The exclusive and low-density project offers 300 units in two blocks.

“We chose Epic Residence duplex unit for the floor plan as it has a larger built-up area of 1,860 sq ft, which is much bigger than

the typical serviced apartment size. Given this size, it would allow designers to be more creative with the use of space in their concept and design. We expect a wide variety of creative design ideas. We did not want to limit the imagination of the designers by choosing a small built-up area,” said Khoo.

The grand prize winner of the student category will be walking away with RM10,000 cash prize. There are also three consolation prizes of RM800 each.

Meanwhile, the grand prize in the individual category is a paid trip to the Maison&Objet Fair 2018 in Paris worth up to RM15,000, while there will be three consolation prizes of RM1,000 cash each.

All entries must be: submitted online at <http://go.edgeprop.my/idcontest2017>, and delivered to The Edge Property Sdn Bhd at Level 3, Menara KLK, No 1, Jalan PJU 7/6, Mutiara Damansara, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.**LAUNCHES + EVENTS**How do I get past issues of this weekly pullout?
Go to **www.EdgeProp.my** to download for freeIf you have any real estate-related events, email us at editor@edgeprop.my.
Events listed here will also appear on **www.EdgeProp.my**.**Gamuda Gardens official opening****Date:** Sept 30 (Sat)
Time: 10am to 6pm**Venue:** Gamuda Gardens Sales Gallery, Lot 3825 & 3826, Jalan Sungai Serai, Kampung Sungai Serai, Rawang, Selangor
Contact: (03) 6037 2888
Gamuda Land is unveiling new show units for phase 2 of its latest township, Gamuda Gardens. The first phase of this 810-acre township had comprised 2-storey terraced houses with built-up sizes of 20 ft by 70 ft.**Magical Reunion at Setia EcoHill****Date:** Sept 30 and Oct 1 (Sat and Sun)
Time: 6pm to 10pm**Venue:** Setia EcoHill Welcome Centre, 2, Jalan Ecohill 1, Setia Ecohill, Semenyih, Selangor
Contact: (03) 8724 2255
Visit Setia EcoHill this weekend to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival with sumptuous food from a variety of food stalls and trucks while enjoying a jazz band, kung fu dance and Chinese orchestra.**VERVE Suites KL South's Mid-Autumn Festival Celebration****Date:** Sept 30 and Oct 1 (Sat and Sun)
Time: 11am to 3pm
Venue: BKP Gallery, VERVE Suites KL South, 355, Jalan Klang Lama, Kuala Lumpur
Contact: (03) 7980 8999
Celebrate this Mid-Autumn Festival at VERVE Suites KL South and take part in fun-filled activities and enjoy performances including mooncake making, colouring contest for kids, games for all ages, traditional dance, Chinese orchestra

and diablo performances. Refreshments will be served.

The Henley Homes Collection – first international launch in KL**Date:** Sept 30 and Oct 1 (Sat and Sun)
Time: 10.30am to 6pm
Venue: Straits Boardroom, The Westin Kuala Lumpur, 199, Jalan Bukit Bintang, Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur
Contact: (012) 633 1006 / (017) 703 2413
Amax Real Estate is bringing London-based developer Henley Homes' first international property launch in KL this weekend. A seminar titled “The London & Manchester Property Market Today — What Should You Buy” will be held at 11am and 3pm on both days.**Yarra One showcase****Date:** Sept 30 (Sat)
Time: 2pm to 5pm
Venue: EcoWorld International, 2, Jalan Hang Tuah, Kuala Lumpur**Contact:** (03) 2116 2525
EcoWorld International is showcasing Yarra One — a 27-storey tower that houses 268 apartments located at South Yarra, Melbourne, Australia. The event will also feature a talk by SMATS Group director Ravin Chatlani and a cooking demonstration by Diana Chan, the winner of MasterChef Australia 2017.**Celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival at Bandar Rimayu****Date:** Oct 7 (Sat)
Time: 6pm to 9pm
Venue: The ARC, Bandar Rimayu Show Gallery, 1, Jalan Flora 3, Telok Panglima Garang, Selangor
Contact: (1800) 22 8686
IJM Land's Bandar Rimayu is celebrating the festival with homeowners and the public. Guests will have the chance to discover how the Mid-Autumn Festival is celebrated in Japan, Korea, China and Vietnam, and enjoy it Malaysian style.EdgeProp.my-TAHPS
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What should you do when your home catches fire?

BY RACHEL CHEW

PETALING JAYA: Can you escape if a fire breaks out in your apartment block? Was the building built or renovated with fire safety in mind? Are you sure the staircase is clear and offers you a path to escape? When there is a fire, what should be your first response — try to douse it or run? Get the answers to these questions and more at the upcoming EdgeProp.my Symposium 2017 “Is Your Home a Fire Hazard?”

Organised by EdgeProp.my, the half-day free symposium will be held on Saturday, Oct 14 from 9am to 1pm at the Hilton Kuala Lumpur. Participants can register online based on a first-come, first-served basis.

The symposium is presented by Gamuda Land and supported by Nippon Paint Malaysia.

Five experts will be sharing fire safety and prevention measures in buildings and homes. They are Architect Centre accredited building inspector and trainer Anthony Lee Tee, Lee Siong Architect principal architect Chong Lee Siong, Fire and Rescue Department Malaysia's (Bomba) Fire Safety Division assistant commissioner Hamdan Ali, Henry Butcher Malaysia (Mont Kiara) Sdn Bhd executive director Low Hon Keong and the Energy Commission's Electrical Equipment Unit — Electrical Safety Regulations Department officer Nur Faidarina Alias.

EdgeProp.my managing director and editor-in-chief Au Foong Yee said the symposium is aimed at raising awareness on the need for everyone to stay vigilant and updated on fire safety procedures and responses.

She noted that, unfortunately, there are people who think they know what to do if there is a fire, and others who, worse still, choose to brush off the subject simply because they think it will not happen to them.

“Fire safety awareness goes beyond the correct selection and use of fire extinguishers, for instance. If you are staying in a high-rise building, do you know if it has been designed, built and managed with fire safety in mind?”

“In communal living especially, what role does one play to keep fires from happening? What can and should you do to help yourself in case of a blaze? Suffice to say, there is no room for apathy,” added Au.

Gamuda Land CEO Ngan Chee Meng believes the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London serves as a grave reminder to all of us to constantly be aware of the risks we are exposed to, including in our homes where we should all be able to feel safe and at ease at any time.

“The incident reminds us that it is imperative for the community to be vigilant and report any potential fire hazard.

MOHD IZWAN MOHD NAZAM | THE EDGE MALAYSIA



Lee: Not many know where the fire staircase of their own condominium is [located at].



Chong: Some people don't even know whether the building is up to standard or not.



Hamdan: Generally, new buildings in Malaysia meet fire safety standards.



Low: Fire staircases and other fire prevention features are crucial when fire breaks out.



Faidarina: I think this symposium is a good opportunity to stress the importance of responsible behaviour towards the use of electricity.



Au: Fire safety awareness goes beyond the correct selection and use of fire extinguishers.



Ngan: This symposium sets the stage for open communication among key parties.

“This symposium sets the stage for open communication among key parties, including residents, to delve into areas that could be strengthened to improve safety at home as well as creating awareness on the roles we all play in reducing the risk of fire hazards within our own development and community.

“As the saying goes: ‘Prevention is always better than cure,’” said Ngan.

One of the speakers at the upcoming symposium, Lee from

Architect Centre, believes fire safety awareness is low among Malaysians.

“We have seen many fires, electrical accidents and fatalities in Malaysia and other parts of the world. Many people may know how to put out a fire, but not many know where the fire staircase of their own condominium is [located at]. So, the first and foremost thing is to create awareness; next is taking the correct proactive action,” said Lee.

Lee's talk will be entitled “Burning facts that you cannot ignore”, where he will share facts and figures based on real-life fire incidents in Malaysia, as well as electrical safety issues.

Bomba's Hamdan will be expounding on the topic “Fire safety and building regulations — Is Malaysia outdated?”

“I will be focusing on the four Es — Engineering, Education, Enforcement and Emergency Response Plan. The four Es pretty much cover the role of the developer, authorities and users in building fire safety,” Hamdan said.

“There is a certain regulation that all buildings have to follow with regards to fire safety. I would say generally, new buildings in Malaysia meet fire safety standards but older buildings that were built before the regulation have yet to comply and the [fire services] department is ready to provide guidance and assistance in upgrading fire safety standards for older buildings. But most importantly, the residents have to understand the basic structure of the building they are residing in,” he added.

Henry Butcher's Low concurred with Hamdan that understanding a building's structure is crucial in saving lives and property in a fire.

“We have noticed that when shopping for a property, people are often concerned about the condition of the house and how many car park bays are allocated, but what is the fire prevention feature? Have you ever considered that your expensive property may disappear into thin air if you do not have fire prevention equipment?” Low warned.

In his talk, Low will highlight the importance of fire prevention features, such as fire staircases and firefighting water pumps in a property.

“More than half of the new residential projects in the city are high-rise, so fire staircases and other fire prevention features are crucial when fire breaks out. However, sadly, most people ignore the fact,” he shared.

THE GRENFELL IN LONDON FIRE TOOK AT LEAST 70 LIVES. IN DUBAI, THE TORCH TOWER CAUGHT FIRE. CAN IT HAPPEN IN MALAYSIA?

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Meanwhile, Lee Siong Architect's Chong will be speaking on the topic “So, your home was built with fire safety in mind?”

“Some people don't even know whether the building is up to standard or not. This is very important, especially if you are going to stay there. Imagine if you accidentally removed some important structure or misused something. Bad things may not happen immediately but it is a time bomb,” said Chong.

Last but not least, Energy Commission's Faidarina will be sharing about guidelines and offer tips on how to safeguard your home against electrical incidents.

“I think this symposium is a good opportunity to stress the importance of responsible behaviour towards the use of electricity. I will be highlighting the practices, behaviour and attitude that are required for people to be energy-smart and safe,” said Faidarina.

Consider new ways to sustain the property market

BY SHAWN NG

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian property market has been rather lacklustre in recent years. Some say it is due to the cooling measures taken by the authorities as well as an oversupply in certain property sub-sectors.

What will it take to get us out of the doldrums? We probably need to start thinking out of the box and adopt new approaches to ensure market sustainability, offered Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) CEO Tan Sri Datuk Michael Yeoh.

"I think the main challenge for the property sector today is the difficulty in obtaining end-financing, which is impacting developers' sales. Hence, there is a need for new financing mechanisms for home and property financing that can make the property market more sustainable," Yeoh told EdgeProp.my.

He believes the market is still buoyant although caution has to be taken in certain sectors and areas, such as the high-rise condominium segment in Iskandar Malaysia and some parts of the Klang Valley, as

well as the shopping mall and office segments.

More on where the property market is heading will be discussed by speakers at the 20th National Housing & Property Summit 2017 organised by ASLI on Oct 5 and 6 at Sunway Resort Hotel & Spa in Bandar Sunway. EdgeProp.my is the official media partner for the event themed "The State of the Housing & Property Industry — Where do we go from here?"

PNB Development Sdn Bhd CEO Mohd Salem Kailany said an important issue that the residential property market is facing is the issue of affordability.

Mohd Salem, who will be speaking at the summit in a session entitled "Rethinking and Restrategising the Housing & Property Sector: The Way Forward," said he will be talking about transit-oriented developments (TODs) and the use of the industrialised building system by developers towards more affordable housing.

"Providing affordable homes is becoming a vital issue to meet the rising demand for houses in line with population growth," he said.



Yeoh: The main challenge is the difficulty in obtaining end-financing.

He added that the property market is expected to recover in 2018 and the TOD sector will see tremendous progress as developers are placing more focus on this segment.

This will negatively impact the industry in suburban areas as consumers would focus more on urban areas, he opined. "Hence, developers will have to come up with innovative marketing strategies and more collaboration with the government and investors."

Meanwhile, Iskandar Regional

PICTURES BY SAM FONG | THE EDGE MALAYSIA



Mohd Salem: Providing affordable homes is becoming a vital issue.

Development Authority vice-president of planning and compliance Sakurah Jamaluddin will be giving a talk entitled "Special Update on the Iskandar Region — Future Prospects, Future Opportunities".

Sakurah noted that although there may be an oversupply in Iskandar's high-end property segment, which mainly comprises serviced apartments while demand for high-end landed residential property has slowed down, the demand for housing in the Iskandar region is expected to be strong going forward.

"Iskandar Malaysia will be attracting a work population that will comprise all levels of the workforce. As such, more supply is required as we go down the housing spectrum. By 2025, it is estimated that Iskandar Malaysia will have a population of three million with 817,500 jobs created, hence an additional 500,000 units of housing will be required," she said.

Among other industry players who will be at the summit to offer insights into the property market and strategies to overcome the current issues challenging the market will be International Real Estate Federation of Malaysia president Tengku Datuk Abdul Aziz Tengku Mahmud, the Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association Malaysia president Datuk Seri FD Iskandar Mohamed Mansor, Malaysia Retail Chain Association president Datuk Garry Chua, and Selangor State Development Corp CEO Norida Mohd Yusof.

Log on to www.EdgeProp.my on Oct 5 and 6 for the latest coverage of the summit.

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TOPICS

So, your home was built with fire safety in mind?
Chong Lee Siong, Principal Architect, LeeSiong Architect

Fire safety in communal living
Low Hon Keong, Executive Director, Henry Butcher Malaysia (Mont Kiara)

Fire safety and building regulations - Is Malaysia outdated?
Hamdan Ali, Fire Safety Division Assistant Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Department Malaysia

Burning facts you cannot ignore!
Anthony Lee Tee, Accredited Architect, Architect Centre

Ensuring electrical safety at home
Nor Faidarina binti Alias, Electrical Equipment Unit, Electrical Safety Regulation Department, Energy Commission Malaysia

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COVER STORY



LOW YEN YEING | EdgeProp.my

Housing estates in Selangor faced some price corrections last year, with transacted prices of landed homes in as many as 30 housing areas seeing more than 5% dip y-o-y, according to data from the National Property Information Centre's (Napic) Property Market Report 2016.

The five areas that recorded the steepest decrease in the transacted prices of landed homes were SS 3 in Petaling Jaya (-10.7%), Taman Bukit Teratai in Ampang (-9.5%), Section 22 in Petaling Jaya (-9.5%), Taman Kajang Perdana in Kajang (-8.6%) and Section 20 in Petaling Jaya (-7.4%).

Interestingly, all these five areas are matured, self-contained housing estates with easy accessibility and established amenities.

A reflection of the times

Although the information collated by Napic is based on the number of transacted properties selected randomly from the total sales available in a location within the review period, consultants and real estate negotiators view the results as a reflection of the overall price corrections that the property market is experiencing.

Jordan Lee & Jaafar Sdn Bhd (JLJ) executive director Chin Shiew Wei says it basically mirrors the current weak property market sentiments. "The trend is in line with the overall Malaysian property market performance, which has shown a downward trend in terms of volume and value of transactions since 2012," she tells EdgeProp.my.

Acrehill Properties real estate negotiator Michelle Lee concurs that as the market continues softening and new launches get more appealing with attractive marketing packages, house owners in these areas are getting more realistic and flexible on pricing.

Despite this, Kim Realty Sdn Bhd CEO Vincent Ng says this doesn't mean owners are throwing prices to below market value.

"These are old and established housing estates. Some owners have likely either paid off their housing loans or have only minimal outstanding loans. Most of them are selling because they see cash-out opportunities due to capital appreciation over the years," he opines.

Beside this, Ng notes that as much as the sellers would like to sell at higher prices, the banks' valuations of the properties may not correspond due to stricter lending rules. This could have also capped the asking prices of the properties.

SS 3, Section 22 and Section 20

The largest price dip of 10.7% y-o-y was seen in SS 3 where a 2-storey semidee was sold at RM2.1 million last year compared with RM2.38 million in 2015.

As of July this year, EdgeProp.my listings showed that the average asking price for a 2-storey semidee in this area is RM2.38 million.

SS 3, also known as Taman Universiti, is a matured housing estate located opposite Sungai Way Free Trade Zone, next to SS 5, SS 6, SS 1 and SS 9.

About 2km away from SS 3 is Section 22, which is located close to Taman Paramount, Section 51A, Sea Park, Kampung Tunku and SS 9A. Section 22 has also seen a significant decrease of 9.5% y-o-y in 2016 for its 2-storey detached houses.

A 2-storey detached house changed hands at RM2.73 million in 2016 compared to a similar property in this area that was sold at RM3.01 million a year ago. Similar properties in Section 22 listed on EdgeProp.my are asking for an average of RM2.35 million.

Section 20 or Taman Paramount, which is just a stone's throw away from Section 22, is also among the top in the list with average transactions of terraced homes there recording a 7.4% y-o-y decrease in 2016.



Proximity to public transportation system could be one of the price growth catalysts for Section 20.

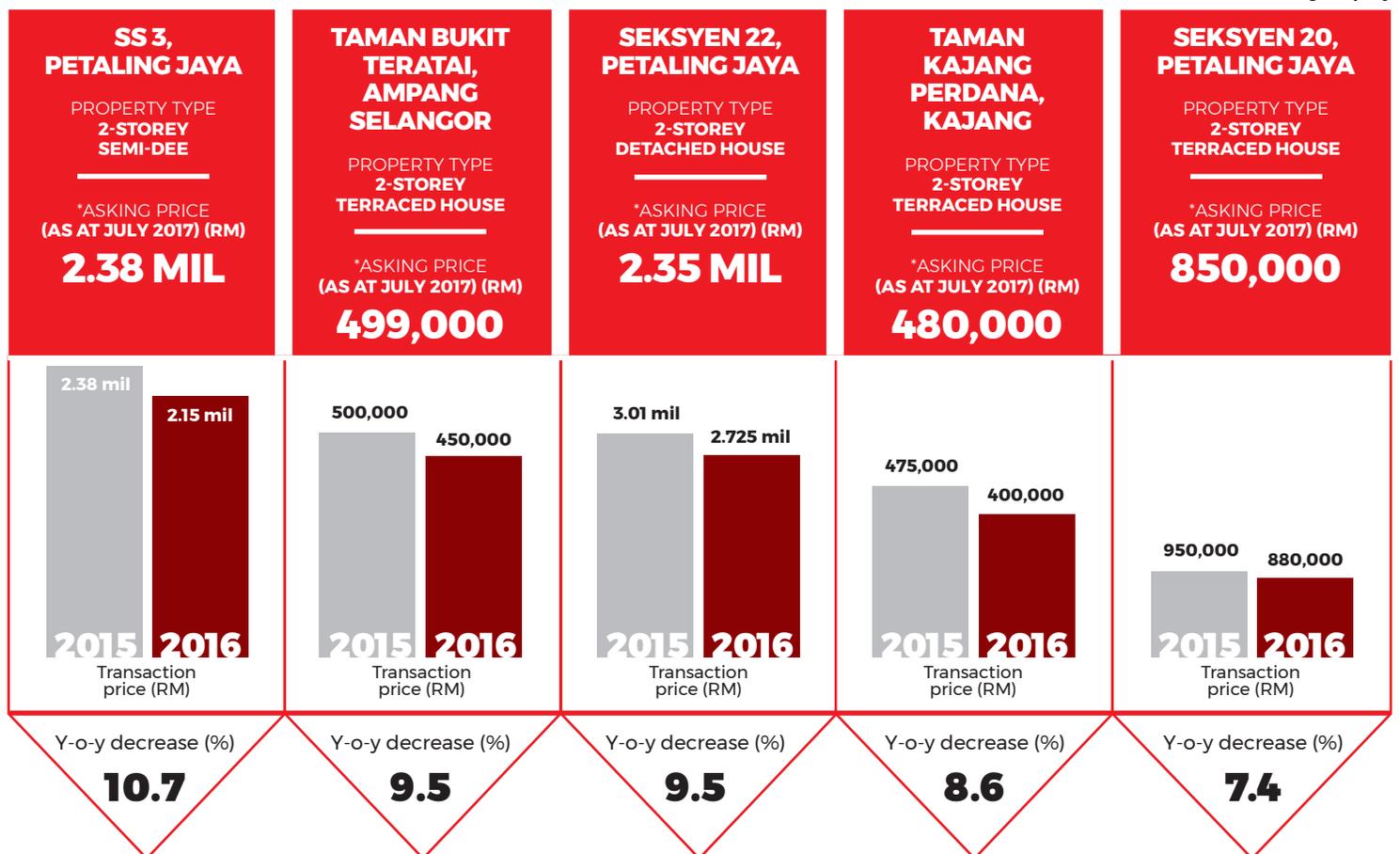


SS 3 landed houses have experienced steep price correction last year.

PRICES FELL in these five Selangor housing estates

BY TAN AI LENG

SOURCE: NAPIC AND *EdgeProp.my



One of the transactions recorded in the Napic report showed that a 2-storey terraced house in Taman Paramount was sold at RM880,000 in 2016. A similar transaction in 2015 was recorded at RM950,000. EdgeProp.my listings show that a 2-storey terraced house in the area is currently asking for RM850,000.

All these three areas in Petaling Jaya are at least 30 years old, offering a wide range of residential choices from 1- and 2-storey terraced houses, semidees and bungalows as well as newer high-rise residential developments.

With good connectivity to the Damansara-Puchong Expressway (LDP) and Federal Highway, residents in these areas could eas-

ily access other major townships and areas in Petaling Jaya, such as Bandar Sunway, Bandar Utama and Mutiara Damansara, as well as places in Kuala Lumpur such as Old Klang Road, Sri Petaling and Bangsar.

Taman Bukit Teratai and Taman Kajang Perdana

Taman Bukit Teratai in Ampang and Taman Kajang Perdana in Kajang also saw significant price drops last year.

Taman Bukit Teratai neighbours Taman Bukit Permai, Taman Seraya, Taman Saga and Taman Putera. It is about 2km away from Hospital Ampang and 14km away from KL city centre.

Taman Bukit Teratai's average landed residential transaction price dipped 9.5% y-o-y in 2016. One of the transactions showed that a 2-storey terraced house was sold at RM450,000, from RM500,000 in 2015. Similar properties in Taman Bukit Teratai listed on EdgeProp.my are asking for an average of RM499,000.

Meanwhile, Taman Kajang Perdana has seen its average landed home transacted prices decrease 8.6% y-o-y in 2016. A 2-storey terraced house in this area was transacted at RM400,000, compared with RM475,000 for a similar property in 2015.

EdgeProp.my listings showed that the average asking price for a 2-storey terraced house in the same area is RM480,000.



Taman Kajang Perdana is divided into two parts by the Pintasan Kajang-Semenyih bypass road. Located next to Taman TTDI Grove and Taman Villa Heights, it is 7km away from Kajang town centre and 13km away from the University of Nottingham (Malaysia campus).

Affordability and safety the main concerns

Although these five areas are well-established housing estates and located close to commercial centres and amenities, real estate negotiators note that housing prices in these areas have appreciated considerably over the years and have become unaffordable to the majority of homebuyers.

Lee from Acrehill notes that as more new housing launches come up with modern designs and in new well-planned townships, old houses in matured areas will find it difficult to attract new owners. "For instance, with a price of over RM1 million for an old house that needs to be refurbished, one could get a spacious new house in a new township with a lot of offerings like clubhouse facilities and nice landscaping as well as security features."

Besides this, the lack of safety and security is another challenge for owners in these older areas to attract homebuyers.

"Older housing estates undeniably have the best locations, accessibility and amenities, but as people become more concerned over safety issues, a gated-and-guarded community will be more appealing to them," highlights Lee.

Hartamas Real Estate (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd real estate negotiator Esther Ng observes that although there is still interest in houses in SS 3, Section 22 and Section 20, transactions have significantly slowed with



Ng: Bank valuations will have an impact on transaction prices of the properties.



Lee: With the right pricing, these mature areas will remain in demand.



Wong: Location and accessibility are still the biggest advantages.

most buyers buying for own-stay rather than for investment.

"Potential homebuyers in Section 20 and Section 22 are often deterred from signing on the dotted line by the condition of the aged houses and the refurbishment cost that they have to put in," she says.

Location still sells

Considering their age and lack of features seen in new houses, it would be challenging for these older housing estates to continue their price growth momentum that they had experienced in the past. Nevertheless, property consultants still hold a positive view of these areas due to land scarcity and their excellent locations.

JLJ's Chin notes the older areas in Petaling Jaya are still sought after by homebuyers. Despite the recent price corrections, they remain attractive in terms of location and connectivity as well as proximity to major business hubs in the Klang Valley.

Similarly, for places like Taman Bukit Teratai and Taman Kajang Perdana, consultants and real estate negotiators still see opportunities in these areas.

For the Kajang area, GS Realty Sdn Bhd senior negotiator Aaron Wong says housing and commercial development has expanded from the crowded Kajang town to other places such as Taman Kajang Perdana and TTDI Grove.

"Taman Kajang Perdana is over 10 years old. It is a good place for owner occupiers because of its good accessibility using the main road — Pintasan Kajang-Semenyih bypass road," he notes.

However, the non-gated-and-guarded community and the lack of amenities might be its biggest drawbacks for investment seekers.

As for Taman Bukit Teratai, Wong opines that there is always demand for property in this area due to its location as residents could easily access Dato Keramat, Taman

Desa, Cheras and Kuala Lumpur's Golden Triangle areas.

"This is an old housing estate of over 20 years. Many new buyers are buying for the location. The condition of the house is usually not a concern as many buyers rebuild the entire house into a new one," he explains.

Despite last year's price drop, over the years, Taman Bukit Teratai owners have seen house prices increase significantly. For instance, a low-cost 2-storey terraced house sold 16 years ago at RM88,000 has seen transaction price surge to RM450,000 this year.

Still worth the buy?

Acrehill's Lee says with the right pricing that meets buyers' expectation and affordability, these matured areas will still remain in demand.

Ng from Kim Realty says these matured neighbourhoods are conveniently located with existing amenities nearby and there are still a lot of interest in such areas instead of new township developments that have just begun to thrive.

"Any or all of these areas are worth buying as landed properties are getting fewer due to scarcity of land. In terms of redevelopment, the possibility is minimal as the returns might not be encouraging for developers to pursue due to escalating land prices in these areas," he concludes.

Chin from JLJ sees other catalysts that could support the price growths in these areas.

She notes that the improved public transportation system — such as the mass rapid transit and light rail transit lines, enhancement in living environment and availability of existing amenities such as shopping malls, schools and hospitals — are still the fundamentals that most property buyers seek.

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Integrating sustainability into business

BY TAN AI LENG

Many companies today cite sustainability as one of their business goals — some take it even further and make sustainability their business.

Needless to say, integrating sustainability in a business takes holistic planning in all aspects of the business from beginning to end — from site selection, material selection and design of the product to end-user delivery.

One company that has taken this approach to sustainability is Swedish home furnishing retailer IKEA as seen in the evergreen design of its products and the way it attracts customers to continuously revisit its stores.

The existing two stores in the Klang Valley — IKEA Damansara and IKEA Cheras — have attracted close to 10 million visitors in 2016. Online, there are over one million Facebook fans following IKEA's movements and new promotions in the country. Its third and fourth stores in the country are slated to open at the end of this year in Johor and early 2019 in Penang.

At the Future Forward Forum 2017 on Sept 7, IKEA Southeast Asia (Singapore) head of sustainability Dr Lee Hui Mien said the IKEA brand's popularity is mainly driven by just one basic principle

— to create a better everyday life for the people.

"It all begins on the drawing board where we take a democratic approach in our product design," Lee told the audience during her talk entitled "The IKEA way of integrating sustainability in everyday business" at the forum organised by Rehda Youth, the Youth division of the Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association Malaysia, in partnership with Nippon Paint Malaysia. EdgeProp.my was the official media partner.

This means that every product has to fulfil the company's five criteria including form (beautifully designed with Scandinavian feel), function (convenient and inspirational), quality (long-lasting for at least 20 years), sustainability (resource-efficient and environmentally friendly) and low price (cost-consciousness).

"We want to create well-designed, long-lasting products that are affordable to most people. In terms of shopping experience, we aim to create a healthy environment that could give consumers a very different customer experience," she noted.

The same concept also applies to its store management and construction of new stores where 12 principles are followed. These principles include site selection, use of renewable energy, strong commercial offer, lowest carbon emission, good neighbour, zero

Lee: Create a better everyday life for the people is the main principle that led to the success of IKEA



waste, change agent, sustainable building material and sustainable operations.

All the principles are interrelated and complement each other towards achieving the goal of business popularity as well as being sustainable and environment-friendly. For instance, in site selection, the company will focus on locations that could offer renewable energy and ample human resource. It should also be a place that enables customers to travel to the store at the lowest

carbon emission, with proximity to existing or future public transportation system.

In the construction process, sustainable building materials are used while emphasis is given to the minimal use of energy and water. For instance, the company has set a target that its buildings strive to achieve the LEED platinum and a minimum LEED gold or the local equivalent green-building certification standard.

IKEA also adopts life-cycle costing for all its new project

investments to maximise their long-term potential in cost and sustainability.

The company also aspires to be a good neighbour in the local community that it operates, by offering convenience and a wide range of functional products to households and making the store itself a meeting place for everyone.

Creating a positive impact on society

While IKEA's model may not suit other companies, its three arching principles could serve as a guide: protecting the environment, promoting a better society and making better business.

"IKEA as a brand stands for a lot of things; it is a strong and powerful brand that is easily relatable to the things that help improve people's lives," Lee told EdgeProp.my.

Having been with IKEA Singapore for over five years, Lee is happy to see the company forming a positive impact on society with its unique philosophy.

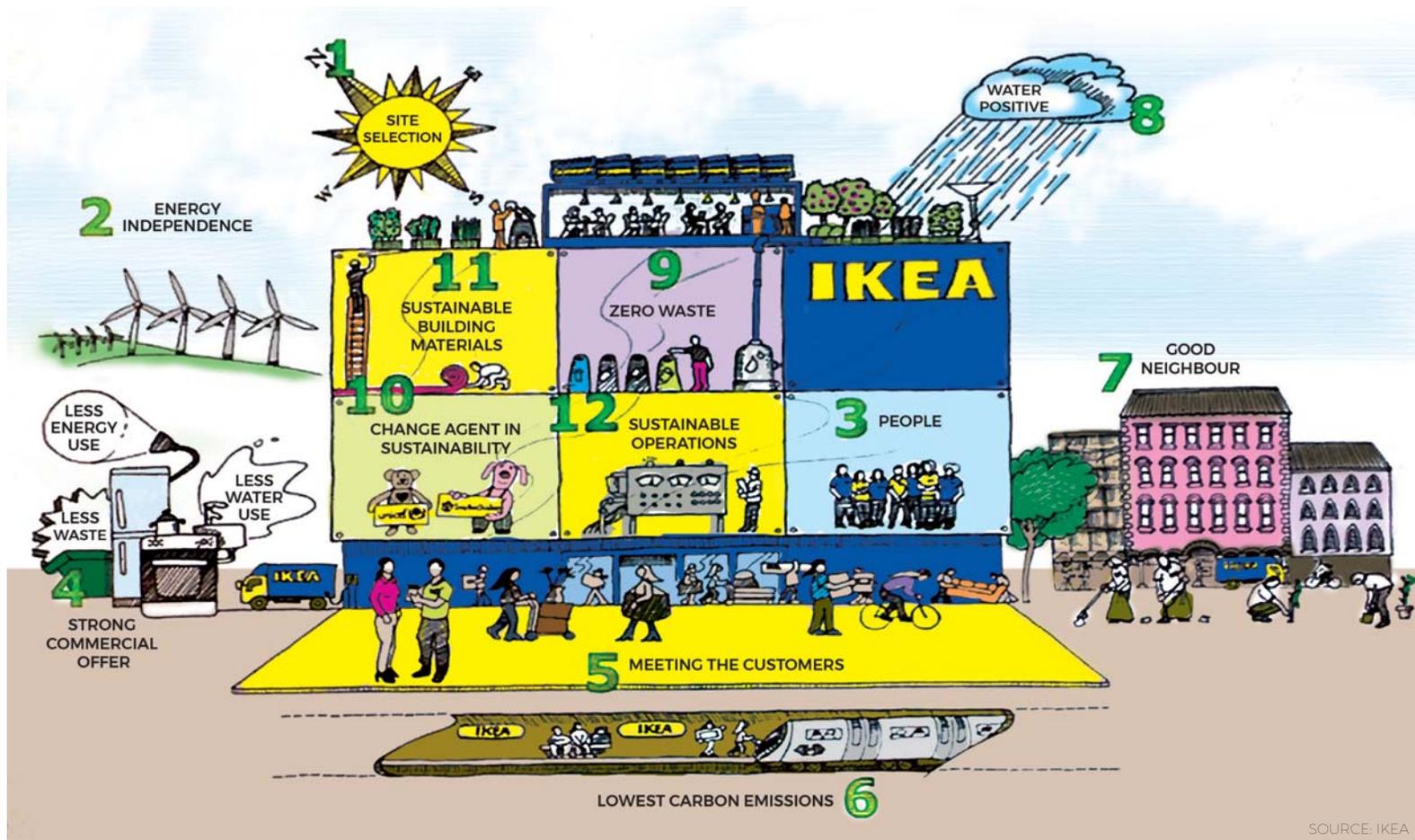
However, she admitted that the company faces different challenges in realising its sustainability goal in different countries. For instance, in Malaysia, the challenges include the lack of infrastructure in waste management and renewable energy.

"Turning waste into energy is not common in Malaysia. We are looking at introducing innovative projects or ideas and work closely with the Swedish embassy to look at how we can be a pioneer in this area," she offered.

The upcoming IKEA Tebrau in Johor Bahru is slated to start operation by year end while IKEA Batu Kawan in Penang will open in 1Q19.

"By and large, IKEA is a popular brand in Malaysia. Johor Bahru residents know about this brand through IKEA Singapore while the northern region shoppers know about IKEA through existing stores in the Klang Valley. Both southern and northern region shoppers are enthusiastic about IKEA's arrival," remarked Lee.

12 sustainability principles



SOURCE: IKEA