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Fulfilling the green plan

Mulpha's property helmsman Ronn Yong feels everybody has a role to play in saving Earth from global warming



Property

By S.C. Cheah

The current global Green revolution is a topic closest to the heart of Ronn Yong, executive director of public-listed Mulpha International Bhd, and he is happy more and more property developers are jumping on the bandwagon to combat global warming and offer healthy lifestyle products.

Yong, who is also general manager of Mulpha Land Bhd's property division, credits his boss Lee Seng Huang, chairman of Mulpha International, as the "key driver" behind his company's green vision and the reason why several eco-friendly features have been applied to the RM2.6 billion Leisure Farm

Resort in Iskandar Malaysia, Johor.

"As one of the early embracers of environmentally sustainable architectural designs and concepts, he (Lee) has set the benchmark for everybody in Mulpha to follow," says Yong.

"He guided us to adopt creative green ideas more than eight years ago and shared with us his efforts in developing green lifestyle projects in Australia.

"His forward-thinking approach, dynamism and global influence will spearhead the group as a green developer."

With the vision cast, Yong's task is to ensure its fulfilment – a mission made easier since

the 45-year-old architectural graduate is also a strong green advocate.

His journey into "green architecture" began during his student days in Ohio, the United States, where he enrolled in Kent State University's School of Environmental and Architectural Design.

With a schooling that "greatly emphasised modelling energy concept buildings", Yong says the background has "given me a better understanding of green architecture and energy consumption in the current environmental climate.

After graduating with a Master of Architecture degree, he went on to work in the US and was "exposed to the idea of managing a 4,000-acre development in Houston, Texas that enabled me to understand key green considerations such as preservation,



Preservation, protection and conservation by reusing, recycling and reducing is gradually catching on, says Yong.

conservation and the need to use environmentally sensitive and sustainable architecture".

The degree and experience also helped him upon his return to Malaysia to convince consultants, contractors, sub-contractors and colleagues to believe in the green approach.

"It was a challenge ... however, with our continuous exploratory influences and through examples of work done by local architects and landscape architects such as Kevin Low and Seksan Design, the approach to preservation, protection and conservation by reusing, recycling and reducing is gradually catching on," he says.

Yong, who has more than 20 years experience in property development, points to Leisure Farm's win of the coveted Prix D' Excellence Award conferred by the International Real Estate Federation (Fiaeci) as a source of inspiration that has "influenced other reputable developers and universities to visit us and adopted some of our green concepts".

"Mulpha's green commitment began nine years ago, when we used this approach to develop the Canal Park, the D'Rimbunan sales and service centre and the Bale Equestrian and Country Club in Leisure Farm.

"For Canal Park, we transformed an existing drain reserve along the main spine of the resort into a green space instead of leaving it as a concrete storm



What would usually be a concrete storm drain has become a landscaped space.

drain.

"In doing so, we preserved 90 per cent of the existing tree species and transplanted 60 per cent of the trees ... we also minimised earthwork, saved on construction costs and created a green lung as a selling feature," he says.

In the D'Rimbunan service centre and sales office, Yong says double roof systems, deep overhangs, high ceilings that promote natural cross ventilation and lighting and glass panels that capture the surrounding green vistas were incorporated.

"The roofs are punctuated with rhythmic skylights to draw diffused lighting for the gallery and cafe to make the indoors seem like outdoors," he explains.

"By naturally ventilating and lighting the entire area, air-conditioning usage has been kept to a minimum ... we also used sustainable, locally sourced material for the finishes to keep operation and long term maintenance costs low.

"The rainwater collection system is another feature that lowers costs as it channels water into the landscaped feature pond and the canal for landscape watering and recreation," he adds.

In the Bale Equestrian Club comprising five conical Alang-Alang roofs from Bali with natural ventilation as well as Leisure Farm's residential phases such as Pinggiran Bayou and Bayou Water Village Homes, deep roof canopies and overhangs, floor to ceiling windows, courtyards, skylights, vent stacks and energy-saving lights have also been incorporated.

In Mulpha's latest 3G

(Green, Gated, Generation) homes called Merbok Creek Villas and the up-and-coming Precinct 7 slated for launch by the third quarter of next year, canal view garden bungalows and semi-detached houses will feature similar green elements.

In Kuala Lumpur, Yong says Mulpha's soon-to-be launched RM75 million Enclave Bangsar project with seven units of 3G Villas will also "explore and redefine new concepts for green living such as rainwater channelling for recycling and recreation, green roofing, better insulated local construction materials, lower energy consumption and higher green plot ratios".

The company's proposed RM350 million 29-storey office building along KL's Jalan Sultan Ismail designed by KPF New York Architects will also be green certified," he says, adding that Mulpha's Malaysian projects will continue to follow the green footprints left by its Australian ventures.

"Our focus is to continue developing creative boutique and green lifestyle-related projects similar to what we have accomplished in Australia," he says.

Down Under, most of Mulpha's projects have green certifications, including the new Transport House in Sydney; Gaswork building in Newstead; TAC building in Geelong, Victoria; and Lifestyle Building in Brookvale.

S.C. Cheah is a veteran journalist with his ears and eyes fixed on the property scene. If there are projects you want him to see, email him at sccheah.nstproperty@gmail.com

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Year 5	—	A\$390 x 52 weeks	=	A\$ 20,280
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