

Mulpha's countryside homes show the way to holistic living

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PETALING JAYA: When the International Real Estate Federation (Fiabci) organises its annual Malaysia Property Award (MPA), it usually coins a tagline to convey the theme for the year. Last year's awards emphasised environmental consciousness while this year's focus is on *Intrinsic Value in Holistic Living*.

If these themes are meant to be an indication of the ideal Malaysian property development, or the direction that local developers should be heading, than Mulpha International Bhd's Pinggiran Bayou Village Homes is certainly ahead of its time.

The winner in the best residential development (low rise) category at the 2007 MPA, the luxury resort homes are redolent of environmental splendour and holistic ambience.

Being a countryside development, holistic living meant its residents could interact with nature as much as possible, said Mulpha general manager (property division) Ronn Yong.

"Holistic living is about the surrounding experience. A lot of developers ignore the well-being of the nature around their development. When they finish constructing, they wash their hands and just walk off," he told *StarBiz*.

Pinggiran Bayou Village Homes is an exclusive enclave of 122 two-storey homes that are part of the company's 1,765-acre Leisure Farm Resort located in Gelang Patah, Johor and next to the Second Link Expressway to Singapore.

The homes have wide frontages with double volume living and dining rooms, enhanced with internal courtyards, skylights or roof decks and screened outdoor gardens. The low density of 10 to 12 units per acre also lines a waterway and fronts an expansive Canal Park.

"We wanted our residents to be able to enjoy the sights, sounds, fragrances and feel the wonders of living with nature," Yong said.

Epitomising a "green" architecture concept, the philosophy behind the development is aimed at protecting, preserving, recycling and conserving as much of the natural resources and surroundings as possible.

Prior to construction, the company took great pains to ensure the impact on the surrounding ecosystem was minimal, Yong said.

"We photo-document our sites prior to construction, which means that we record and study the wildlife within the area, like the birds. This is so that we would know if any wildlife was affected upon the project completion. We also expand progressively so that the impact on the surrounding nature is minimal and not too drastic," he said.

About 70% of the homes have been taken up. Residents are a mix of locals, Singaporeans and other expatriates. The homes are priced from RM500,000. Only the bumiputra units are left, but Mulpha is in no rush to sell off these units, according to Yong.

"We often rent out these units during the weekends. During festive seasons like Hari Raya, all the available units are fully booked. They're quite popular because people enjoy the peace and tranquility there," he said.

The Pinggiran Bayou homes went on to win the 2008 International Prix d'Excellence Award for best residential category – and a string of other accolades.

Yong said winning a Fiabci award helped create more recognition for not just the Pinggiran homes, but also the entire Leisure Farm development, which has a gross development value of over RM2bil.

"When we won the fiabci awards, not many developers knew about Leisure Farm. Winning gave us a certain level of prestige because developers started going 'what's this development in Johor?'"

"It (winning) has also helped build the confidence levels of our architects, consultants, contractors and others who helped develop the project," he said.

The MPA has been heralded as the "Oscars" of the local property industry.

Fiabci Malaysia will be organising the 2009 MPA on Nov 16 in Kuala Lumpur, with Malayan Banking Bhd as the official sponsor. The categories that will be contested are: Property CEO of the Year, Master Plan, Residential Development (low rise and high rise), Retail Development, Office Development and Purpose-Built Project.

Winners of the MPA in their relevant categories will represent Malaysia the following year at the International Prix d'Excellence, an annual competition that honours the world's best property projects.