

Living the green life in Leisure Farm

BY Wong King Wai

A resort-like home in an exclusive, landscaped and eco-friendly precinct is what the new Bayou Creek Precinct 7 homes in Mulpha International's Leisure Farm Resort in Johor aims to offer.

Leisure Farm Resort, a 1,765-acre development in Iskandar Malaysia, is strategically located a short distance from Singapore via the Second Link and is linked through a network of highways to Johor Baru, Port of Tanjung Pelepas and Senai International Airport.

Bayou Creek Precinct 7, which aims to provide a comfortable abode in eco-friendly surroundings, is a gated and guarded project with just 332 units — 130 bungalows and 202 semi-detached houses.

The whole development, which sits on 57.2 acres, has a gross development value (GDV) of RM700 million and will be launched in four phases. The first phase — Phase 7A (GDV: RM115 million) — was soft-launched in July. Its official launch is in early 2012, once the landscaping and show units are ready for viewing, according to Ronn Yong, the deputy CEO of Mulpha International.

The first phase offers 96 units — 46 bungalows (50ft by 100ft) and 50 semidees (40ft by 80ft). All bungalows have 5+1 bedrooms while the semidees have 4+1 bedrooms. Completion is slated for 2013.

The remaining phases will be launched one year apart with Phase 7B to be launched in 2013. Yong says each phase will feature homes that differ slightly from current ones to cater for changing needs and trends.

In the current phase, all the bungalows and some of the semidees face a canal while the others face the parks. Yong allays concerns about flooding caused by heavy rainfall, stating that the houses are elevated to prevent floodwaters from entering them.

The selling price of the bungalows starts at RM2.35 million while that of the semidees starts at RM1.56 million. The target buyers are Singaporeans and expatriates due to the prox-

An artist's impression of the bungalows at Bayou Creek Precinct 7 facing a canal and surrounded by greenery



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PATRICK GOH/THE EDGE MALAYSIA

imity of Leisure Farm to Singapore and also because it is situated in Iskandar Malaysia, says Yong. So far, 30% of the units in the first phase have been sold.

Sustainable development

Every home has been designed according to Mulpha International's SEEDS philosophy, which stands for sustainability, energy, environment, design and security. "Nine years ago, we introduced green elements into Leisure Farm. We followed the basic principles of LEED but didn't get certification because nobody knew what LEED was at the time," Yong remarks.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is an internationally recognised green building certification system. It provides building owners and operators with

a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions.

The homes in the first phase of Bayou Creek Precinct 7 have adopted green design elements — an indoor courtyard that provides better ventilation and lets in more natural light, overhangs that offer more shade, a rainwater harvesting system and windows that have good shading co-efficiency to filter out light intensity.

Additionally, the homes are fitted out with a range of energy-saving devices, such as an inverter air-conditioning system and a water heating system that uses only 12 volts and is able to suck in ambient air to heat water while helping cool the interior. The roof has been specially designed to remove hot air before it gets trapped in the roof cavity and seeps into the house.

Departure from tradition

Besides the green elements, the design breaks away from the traditional boxy homes. Individual spaces are compartmentalised and arranged so that each space stands alone. "In a normal house, it is usually walled up," Yong explains. "What we are trying to do is break the form so it is not one huge enclosed box. As a result, there is a higher window-to-wall ratio that allows more light and natural ventilation into the segregated spaces.

"When you have everything walled up within a box, it is very hard to segregate the usage and celebrate each space."

Other features include auto sensor lights at the front and back of the house and security alarm. The homes also come with high-speed broadband connection, making Bayou Creek Precinct 7 the first residential project in Iskandar Malaysia to have this service.

Yong also explains how the phase's landscaping ensured nothing was wasted and everything was used. "Over 100 trees have been transplanted from elsewhere in Leisure Farm into the parks and earth removed from one site was used in another site."

Once completed, Bayou Creek Precinct 7 will have four parks and 11 gardens for the enjoyment of residents.

A risky move?

Will current global economic uncertainties impact market sentiment and sales?

"Leisure Farm's products sell on its strengths and we have a very strong point — location," Yong points out. "We are in one of the largest economic zones in Malaysia with a beautiful en-



Yong: Leisure Farm's products sell on its strengths and we have a very strong point — location

vironment and landscape. Bayou Creek Precinct 7 is also a fantastic product — landed eco-homes with individual titles."

Another reason is Singapore's property market. "House prices in Singapore are reaching an unrealistic level — S\$2,000 [RM5,000] to S\$3,000 psf. Here, we start at RM400 psf for the semidees and RM550 psf for the bungalows," says Yong. Hence, he believes demand will continue for Bayou Creek Precinct 7 with its innovative designs and good management.

Leisure Farm now has under 700 acres of undeveloped land. At the present time, about 200 and 500 families live on Leisure Farm during the weekdays and weekends respectively. It is about 50% occupied during the weekends. There are over 36 nationalities living there. The top four are Malaysian (51.52%), Singaporean (34.5%), Indonesian (4.78%) and British (2.56%).

The accolades

Leisure Farm has won several Fiabci (International Real Estate Federation) awards over the years and recently bagged another for its Bayou Water Village for the Best Residential Low-Rise at the Fiabci Malaysia Property Awards 2011. This 22-acre development consists of 213 water

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More completed bungalows to be launched annually

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(on stilts) and hill chalets. About nine acres are open spaces with 20 themed parks.

Be that as it may, Mulpha is not resting on its laurels and has started planning a new product in Leisure Farm — bungalows under the build-then-sell (BTS) scheme. Next year, says Yong, 30 completed and fully furnished bungalows will be opened for sale. Mark Mobius, global investor and emerging markets fund manager and the executive chairman of Templeton Emerging Markets Group, has

already bought one, he adds.

The first batch of the BTS bungalows are going for RM3.7 million to RM7 million. The plot size of the bungalows ranges from 18,000 sq ft to under an acre. According to Yong, more completed and fully furnished bungalows will be launched annually.

It is hoped that the BTS scheme in Leisure Farm will help populate the area now that Iskandar Malaysia is starting to move, says Yong. Moreover, research has shown that about 90% of the buyers plan to occupy

the bungalows themselves or use them as weekend homes.

Enclave Bangsar in Kuala Lumpur is another BTS project under Mulpha that will be completed by the end of this year. With a GDV of RM90 million, seven 3-storey bungalows sit proudly on the site, with prices starting at RM11.5 million. Their built-ups start at 8,000 sq ft and they are designed for three generations. All units are linked to a linear garden deck with standard features, such as a private lap pool, glass lift and large parking bays. ■