

## 23 Jun 2008: City & Country: Boutique homes in Damansara

By Sharon Kam

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On top of a hill in Lorong Basong in Damansara Heights, Kuala Lumpur, a boutique development with ambitions to set a benchmark in luxury residential homes in the country, is taking shape.

Named Zephyr Point, this project aims to make people go "wow!"

Because it is perched on a hillock about 60ft above street level, there is a constant breeze that flows through the area, hence the name Zephyr Point. Zephyr means "gentle breeze" or "west wind" in Greek, after Zephyr, the mythical Greek god of the West Wind.

The project also hopes to take advantage of the elevated land by offering panoramic views.

There will only be seven units, comprising four bungalow villas of different design and three penthouse-size apartments on the 1.5-acre freehold site.

This is Urban Hallmark Properties Sdn Bhd's first development.

"I had to put on my thinking cap to think through what high-end buyers are after. I wanted something that truly stands out," says Datuk Jeffrey Ng, Urban Hallmark's managing director.

"I had been planning to come up with a benchmark development for a long time. I wanted to build a development that we can readily say could compare with the best in Singapore or Hong Kong. I would enjoy a lot of satisfaction if we can achieve that," he says.

Ng is a well-known figure in the property circle, having been in the industry for more than two decades. He set up Urban Hallmark after his stint as the managing director of Asia Pacific Land and senior executive director of the Low Yat Group from 1994 to 2006.

"I have worked in a public-listed company for so long that when I left, I felt I was ready to try something different as an entrepreneur. I am not young anymore so I consider this as my next phase of growth," says Ng who is in his early 50s.

"I understood that I would not have the same amount of resources as a corporation would have but I don't want to come out and do something too basic. Even if a project is small, it can have great impact, which is why I chose to go for boutique-size development. To make it really boutique, it must also provide an interesting living concept. This means coming up with winning features," adds Ng who is also an executive director with Sunway City Bhd.

Space is a luxury, they say, and Zephyr Point is the epitome of that. Each of the apartments, or skyhouses as the developer calls them, has an immense floor plate of 10,000 sq ft. The vast space allows for a spacious living lounge and an open concept gourmet kitchen complete with state-of-the-art appliances.

Each unit also comes with a sky terrace or entertainment deck.

Beneath the three penthouse units are a car park and a "breezeway" where the common recreational facilities for all residents of Zephyr Point, such as the swimming pool and the gym, are located.

The breezeway also houses seven private home offices, one for each homeowner.

"Instead of having a home office within your unit, you just step out of your door and stroll over to the office at the breezeway. It will provide greater privacy for both business clients and homeowners as one can invite clients over without them stepping directly into your home," says Ng.

There is also a common function lounge on this level leading to the infinity pool.

Another attention-grabbing feature of the penthouse/breezeway block is the outdoor glass-encased elevator that allows passengers a full view of the surrounding area while riding it.

The four 3-storey bungalow villas are each unique in design and concept but they all

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share one interesting feature — a self-contained retreat studio complete with kitchenette and spa pool. One can actually live in this part of the house alone. “You can tuck yourself away in this retreat studio whenever you want some ‘alone time’ without having to step out of the house. It could also be private guest quarters,” says Ng.

The villas have built-ups of between 8,000 and 9,000 sq ft, so there is really nothing small about this development.

One can expect solid timber and marble finishes, designer sanitary ware and appliances and other details which allow “one to entertain and impress your guests,” says Ng.

“We are setting ‘gold’ standards for residential living. The finishes we are adopting will impress buyers who are interested in the highest quality and where money is not an issue,” he says, adding that the units also come with private lockup garages.

The gated and guarded development with three-tier security is scheduled for launch early next year. Construction has begun as Ng wants one of the completed homes and penthouses to double as show units. “Once the show units are ready, we will launch,” says Ng. Pricing has not been determined yet and will be decided closer to the launch. Current property values here range from RM800 to RM1,200 psf.

Ng, who is the immediate past president of the Real Estate and Housing Developers Association, acquired the land in Lorong Basong back in 2004 at about RM130 psf.

“When I first saw it, I did not know what to build on it. In fact, I was not sure if anything could be built on it. Even the architect says it’s difficult to build there because the land is perched so high up. But I saw it as a challenge, to build something beautiful on it, so I took the risk in acquiring the land,” he says.

“I believe I am experienced enough to push back the boundaries to new levels and create something new and exciting,” he adds.

During the planning process, Ng demanded that his project consultants think outside the box and come up with unique ideas, such as his idea of a retreat studio.

He is confident that the project would interest buyers among the super-rich. “Sales may take a slightly longer time, considering the current cautious sentiment in the property market but these are buyers whom we need to approach personally, not one of those who would bother with brochures and launches,” says Ng, adding that he is working with Regroup Associates on this.

Although the rising costs of construction is a concern, he feels the need to be fair to his contractors and allow price adjustments for their work. “We want to work well and maintain a close relationship with our contractors and suppliers but more importantly, we don’t want to deal with the issue of quality at the end of the day especially when it comes to high-end properties,” says Ng.

Next up for Urban Hallmark is another boutique development, this time an office development on 18,000 sq ft of land in Lorong Universiti, Petaling Jaya. “We are currently working out the plans,” adds Ng.

Besides his personal venture into property development, Ng joined Sunway City in March this year.

Juggling his time between Urban Hallmark and his duties at Sunway City certainly keeps him occupied.

“I have not rested since leaving AP Land. I had been planning Zephyr Point for a while and now I am with Sunway City. I am still moving at full pace. It keeps my adrenalin flowing,” says Ng, also the Malaysian Australian Business Council vice-chairman.

At Sunway City, he is responsible for developing and preparing for the launch of its real estate investment trust.

“At Urban Hallmark, I am happy to just deliver some good products which people appreciate and at the same time enjoy what I do. Sunway City is just an additional challenge that I believe I can deliver,” says Ng, a father of two.

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