

## REAL ESTATE

# GuocoLand's Dora Chng on flex designs and biodiversity to lure new condo buyers

The younger generation continues to show a strong affinity for homeownership, says developer's residential director

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AS CUSTOMERS' needs evolve, having a flexible layout can be a big draw for discerning condo buyers here, according to Dora Chng, residential director of GuocoLand.

A flexible layout allows a family with young children that requires three bedrooms in their home today to remove a bedroom easily and create a larger living/dining area in future when the children grow up and move out of the home, noted Chng.

Speaking to me on a recent episode of the PropertyBT podcast, Chng highlighted how GuocoLand designs condo homes where the bedroom that is closest to the living room can be easily removed. For example, the flooring of the living room extends into the bedroom so when the wall between the living room and bedroom is removed, an owner seamlessly gets a larger living room.

She also highlighted that more new condos are catering for people to hold gatherings in dining rooms provided in the development's clubhouse.

Condo owners may want to invite family and friends to their home, "but they may be worried that there isn't enough space for accommodating everybody in the home," she said.

However, with dining rooms that can be amalgamated, condo owners can hold parties of up to 50 people, noted Chng.

## Springleaf Residence

A recent area of focus for Chng is biodiversity. GuocoLand's next condo launch, Springleaf Residence in Upper Thompson Road, is nestled beside a 30-hectare forest and has unobstructed views of the central catchment nature reserve.

According to her, 99-year leasehold Springleaf Residence is the first private residential development here to adopt the biodiversity sensitive design and development approach.

She emphasised the need for Springleaf Residence to strike a balance between being next to the forest and "living with our neighbours who are in the forest". For example, the development will use less reflective glass for the windows to minimise bird strike issues.

The developer is also looking at

bringing the native forest species into the development "so that we feel and look like part of our neighbouring nature reserve", said Chng.

Other features at Springleaf Residence include a literal forest corridor to act as a buffer to the actual forest.

The development is located close to Springleaf MRT station on the Thomson-East Coast line, which is one stop away from the Lentor MRT station that serves several of GuocoLand's new condo projects.

Chng is pleased with the take-up rates at GuocoLand's Lentor area condo projects, where buyers are predominantly Singaporeans. Among them are young families who are drawn to three-bedders, as well as downsizers and first-timers who like two-bedders.

## Love for new condos

In the Singapore condo market, many buyers like new projects, which can command hefty pricing premium on a per square foot basis versus comparable older condos nearby.

Chng said an appeal of new condo homes is that they are typically in move-in condition. Other pluses include a fresh land lease, modern facilities, efficient layouts and the use of the progressive payment scheme to pay for new homes that are bought off-plan.

When it comes to marketing new condo homes, many developers put great effort into building swanky show galleries and show flats. All this despite the growing power of virtual reality tools.

Chng does not expect virtual reality to replace physical show flats over the next few years. As the purchase of a home is usually the largest purchase in a person's life, people "like to see and feel how the development looks", she said. Potential buyers may want to know how the solid surface top feels like or feel the actual space of a unit, she elaborated.

Asked whether, with prevailing economic uncertainties, if now is a good time to buy a private home, Chng argues "when there is a need, I think anytime is the best time". She added that buyers just need to buy within their means and affordability.

One thing that developers need not worry over is a move from the younger generation here away from homeownership. Chng notes currently the younger generation continues to show a strong affinity for homeownership.