

# NORTHEAST DEVELOPERS TURN TO UDON THANI

**Proximity to Laos** under AEC expected to boost demand

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THE NATION

**L**eadng property firms and retail businesses plan to develop both residential projects and shopping centres in Udon Thani, aiming to cash in on the province becoming the gateway to Laos after the Asean Economic Community (AEC) becomes effective in 2015.

A survey by The Nation early this week showed that listed property firms are targeting expansion of their business in the northeast of Thailand, especially Udon Thani, as they see potential for strong demand from both local and foreign investors. Investors have been parading in this province since 2010, looking at avenues for investment in this province because of its proximity to Laos.

For example, Quality Houses is interested in launching new residential projects in Udon Thani. This is its new destination to expand business upcountry.

Sansiri also is studying developing townhouse projects in the Northeast, including in Khon Kaen and Udon Thani, which could see strong demand amid increasing investment in the region.

Supalai, which has experience in developing a residential project in Khon Kaen, also intends to develop residential projects in Udon Thani.

Pruksa Real Estate is considering new residential projects in the



CENTRAL PATTANA Plc's CEO Kobchai Chirathivat shows the new look of Central Plaza Udonthani on Tuesday after the completion of its Bt5.5-billion renovation.

Northeastern provinces of Khon Kaen, Nakhon Ratchasima and Udon Thani.

Meanwhile, Thailand's largest retailer, Central Pattana, has invested Bt5.5 billion to renovate its shopping centre in Udon Thani after taking over the building from a local retail developer two years ago.

Other retailers and wholesale businesses also have interest in expanding their investments in this province.

Currently, Udon Thani has 14 retail businesses owned by local developers and outside developers from Bangkok and neighbouring provinces. They include Central Plaza Udon Thani, UD Town and Tuk Com both owned by local developers, Navada Multiplex

owned by a Roi Et investor, three Tesco-Lotus branches, two Big C branches, Premium Outlet, Makro and NeSoon Super Store that is owned by a local developer.

Central Pattana CEO Kobchai Chirathivat said that the company decided to open Central Plaza Udon Thani after gauging the purchasing power of both locals and people of neighbouring countries.

"We focus on both local and neighbouring shoppers from Vientiane," he said.

Atip Bichanond, managing director of Supalai, said the company is studying expanding investment in Udon Thani.

"Demand to buy residences in Udon

Thani will come not only from locals but also foreign investors who are expanding their investment in Laos, especially people from Vientiane for whom transportation is easy," he said.

Sansiri's executive vice president for project management and marketing department, Suriya Wannabuit, said the company is studying launching townhouse projects in the Northeast, focusing on two provinces - Khon Kaen and Udon Thani. Khon Kaen has an urban lifestyle and would be liked by Bangkokians.

"The Asean Economic Community [AEC] will challenge investors to use Udon Thani as a destination to expand investments in Vientiane, Laos, to avail of the AEC privileges," he said.

