

Residential developers up focus on architecture, design



Interior design
by Naoto
Fukasawa at the
Rhythm
Sathorn.

ENERGY-SAVING THEME ALSO ON THE RISE AS FIRMS STRIVE TO DIFFERENTIATE OFFERINGS IN HIGHLY COMPETITIVE MARKET

SOMLUCK SRIMALEE
THE NATION

ALTHOUGH LOCATION is normally the main factor when buying a home, architecture and interior design by well-known practices are crucial ways for leading developers to differentiate their projects at a time of intense competition.

"We believe location is still the main reason behind a decision to buy a home, but the question is what will be the deciding factor or factors when you see houses or condominiums at the same location," said Vittakarn Chandavimol, AP (Thailand)'s chief marketing officer.

"Architectural and interior design together form the next factor that customers will take into account, and this is why property firms are increasingly interested in architecture and design – to differentiate their residential projects from those of other developers," he explained.

AP (Thailand) is one property company interested in developing its projects this way, and has tied up with an international designer for the interiors of its condominium units.

The company's latest move is to open five condos in the Sathorn area whose interiors are created by globally renowned Japanese designer Naoto Fukasawa, who has designed products for B&B Italia, Maruni and Issey Miyake, said Vittakarn.

Sansiri, meanwhile, has engaged the services of a big-name fashion designer to create the interiors of its luxury condominium, the Stable by Sansiri, on Wireless Road.

The project is the first by the developer that will not be open for presales until after it is completed. Construction is under way, with completion scheduled for 2017.

The Stable by Sansiri will be the first condominium project in Thailand – and possibly in the whole of Asean – with an interior design by American fashion brand Ralph Lauren, said a source at the interior designer.

"When home-buyers make a decision to purchase a luxury residence, they don't just buy the building, but also buy into the social and environ-

mental aspects of the project. Buying a luxury home is like buying fashion products, as it tells people what you are. This is why we have a trend of designing luxury residences that match with fashion," Sansiri president Srettha Thavisin said during an interview with The Nation early this year about the design trends for luxury condominiums.



FUKASAWA

Meanwhile, Fukasawa, who has designed the interior of eight rooms at AP(Thailand)'s Rhythm Sathorn condominium, said he used a 'slow' design theme for the collection, defined by the "unhurried elegance of the Chao Phraya River, with the black monotonic space whispering quiet opulence".

An iconic Naoto-designed Maruni chair completes each of the rooms with its humble curves.

"My question is how the space should be formed, and this at once answers how it should perform. The kitchen and cabinets are carefully placed on the walls. In a room where space is limited, spaciousness is by itself the most vital function. From my question I was inspired to create the slow collection for the Rhythm rooms," he explained.

Architectural theme

Besides interior design, a project's architect is clearly another key marketing tool to inspire homebuyers to buy one property over another.

"When we want to launch a new condominium project, we have to be concerned about getting the right architect and function, after finding the best location for our customers," said Ananda Development CEO Chanond Ruangkritya.

For example, the developer's latest

condominium project, the Ashton Chula-Silom, is designed by A49, a well-known Thai practice with expertise in modern-style architecture.

The project's interior design, meanwhile, is by design worldwide partnership. The internationally renowned company, more commonly known as dwp, is based in Bangkok.

Chanond said people buying a condominium costing more than Bt10 million also needed a design to match the location, and one that was also socially right for them.

"Location is still at the heart of building condominiums and other residences, but design and function are what inspires people to speed up their buying decision," he said.

Pace Development Corp, meanwhile, is a luxury developer very much concerned about the architectural concept of a building, and it selected a well-known architect to be the adviser on the design of each of its condominium projects.

For example, Pace selected German architect Ole Scheeren as its adviser and joint designer with a Thai architect for the MahaNakhon mixed-used project on Sathorn Road.

"Our buyers [at MahaNakhon] not only needed a residence, but wanted to own part of a Bangkok landmark," Pace CEO Sorapoj Techakaisri said, explaining how crucial it was to have exactly the right architectural-design team on the prestige project.

Energy-saving concept

Meanwhile, the trend for green housing is an increasingly important factor for many homebuyers when deciding what type of property to pur-

chase. "We have been studying the construction of energy-saving homes for both low-rise residences, such as detached houses and townhouses, and condominiums by learning from our Japanese and German partners," said Pruksa Real Estate's chief operating officer, Lersak Chuladesa.

The developer's first energy-saving project - the Plant Pattanakarn, which uses Japanese technology - will be launched next year, with detached houses starting from Bt5 million apiece.

Lersak said the company's vision is to develop innovative residential projects to serve demand under the 'Four Consumer Mega Trends' concept, whose themes are: safe home, healthy home, green home and smart home.

LPN Development has also been considering the development of energy-saving condominiums to add value to its projects.

"We have started to build an energy-saving condominium, the Lumpini Park Beach Cha Am, under the LPN Green Design concept.

The design will use construction materials that reduce heat from outside to inside, and have designed the building to match the location, which also reduces the amount of heat on the building," said managing director Opas Sripayak.

During a period of intense competition, such as now, the company has to create additional value for customers and differentiate its offerings from others developers in order to boost sales, he explained.

When developing residential projects at this fiercely competitive time, it is not just a matter of location, but about adding value to the projects, especially via the architectural theme, interior design, and creating value for residents under the theme of energy-saving, according to property experts.