



Building sustainable communities for the present and future

PROPERTY developers play a vital role in building a community. Without a community, a place would just be an empty shell.

As such, Sunway Property as a master community developer places the community first at the core of every initiative, especially during these unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a well-rounded industry player, the developer took into consideration various challenges faced by the communities from all walks of life and provided residential and other projects which benefited them in various aspects of their livelihood.

By optimising its expertise and multiple resources, the developer is taking it seriously to make a difference in the communities' lives.

Challenges faced by the communities

During the pandemic, just as in cities around the world, the largest economic impacts and the highest rates of infections occur in cities. Selangor was among the states which recorded the highest incidences for Covid-19 which resulted in a lockdown for many months.

There were major concerns about food scarcity, higher rate of unemployment and worsening poverty in the wake of the pandemic.

Some experts had even estimated that some 30% of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have shut their businesses last year, with more to come when the bank moratorium ends as compared with other recessions.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), SMEs contribute to 38.2% of Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 and extended employment to 7.25 million people in the same year.

Unique model

Since its inception, Sunway Property has been building communities throughout Malaysia with a unique co-investor model that creates thriving sustainable communities.

Sunway Property will hold a major stake in the townships that it builds, re-investing capital in order to deliver long-term growth for its communities – a win-win for both parties.

Sunway Property managing director Sarena Cheah, said: “Our brand promise, as a master community developer, describes our philosophy towards building.”

“At the beginning of every single project, we start with a vision that we are creating a community that we will be investing in, for each and every one of them. What we have in mind is the joy and the growth of people, not just about bricks and mortar,” she said, while sharing the award-winning property developer’s success secret.

The success of this philosophy and the unrelenting dedication of Sunway’s business model is apparent in the continuous growth of its flagship city of Sunway City Kuala Lumpur.

Starting its transformation close to four decades ago, Sunway City Kuala Lumpur has been rehabilitated from a mining wasteland into Malaysia’s first Green Building Index certified sustainable city that houses a vibrant community of 200,000 who live, work, and play together in a safe, connected and healthy environment today.

Besides being a thriving hub for economic, cultural and social exchange, the presence of three universities, commercial entities and Sunway Medical Centre has turned the city into a living laboratory and a test bed for innovative ideas.

On top of the research and development, and the investments in infrastructure that made the city grow perpetually, Sunway Property also dedicates resources in terms of voluntary man hours and financial support to the surrounding communities, with the belief that investing in uplifting communities creates the best future for all.

Additionally, it has committed to stand beside the community with more resources dedicated to uplift the burden of those who were most vulnerable and the hardest hit by contributing food donations, monetary or healthcare support through partnerships with government agencies and non-governmental organisations, even by having its staff volunteer in a PPV vaccination centre to expedite the vaccination process.

One of its latest initiatives is to highlight 64 local food and beverage (F&B) heroes from Aug 31 to Oct 31 in conjunction with the nation’s 64th Independence Day under its “Be The Hero Today” #MyCommunityHeroes project. The #MyCommunityHeroes was initiated in 2020 to highlight stories of everyday community heroes who played a significant role in their respective communities.

Extending its Malaysia Day celebrations this year with an aim to help more people, the developer took to its social platforms to provide awareness for the local F&B merchants and gave out vouchers to the public so that people can continue to support them.

“We understand the hardships that are being faced by the SMEs out there, especially the ones in the F&B industry. As such, we wanted to extend these people a little help by extending our platforms to create awareness for their brand and to encourage the public to support local businesses,” Cheah explained.

Public are encouraged to check out the Sunway Property App daily for the daily merchants and register for the vouchers.

In conjunction with the Malaysia Day celebration, the developer also contributed Sayang Malaysia care packs in collaboration with Sunway FutureX Farm, where they sponsored 100 healthcare packs to charity homes.

The overall initiative saw more than 800 beneficiaries receiving care packs during the campaign.

As a group, Sunway has committed almost RM60mil to support the battle against this global pandemic, which includes providing the government four vaccination centres (PPVs), spanning close to 200,000 sq ft, for free up to 12 months.

Sustainability focus

Simultaneously, Sunway Property has been accelerating its efforts transforming its townships into low-carbon sustainable cities – a test-bed for future solutions to help build community resilience against humanity's next biggest challenge: Climate change.

Cheah emphasised: "We are deeply concerned about climate change. It could devastate entire communities with extreme weather or natural disasters.

"It could result in biodiversity loss which can ruin human wellbeing. In fact, we are already seeing its effects, and we cannot afford not doing something about it."

The developer has the resources to execute their respective plans, to achieve its targets effectively by utilising Sunway City Kuala Lumpur as a test-bed and leveraging its agglomeration of catalytic components and expert teams who also now works with the leading minds around the world from Harvard, MIT, Oxford and Cambridge to create future solutions.

Sunway Property works closely with Sunway Innovation Labs (iLabs), which helps to generate ideas and turn them into solutions in addressing the challenges facing humanity through six verticals to support the city as a living lab: Smart Cities, Digital Health Tech, EduTech, Agrifood Tech, e-commerce and Fintech.

While intelligent solutions for managing energy consumption, safety and security are already powering Sunway City Kuala Lumpur, the developer intends to harness 5G technology, which has a speed that's 100 times faster, to transform cities through a collaboration with Celcom, Axiata and Huawei.

This will result in innovations such as efficient driverless busses that will reduce carbon dioxide emissions significantly, encourage remote education, blockchain technology for academic certificates, and delivery of medicine using drones.

To meet the challenge of food scarcity, Sunway Property had also partnered up with Sunway iLabs to set up the first urban farm innovation hub in Sunway City Kuala Lumpur – Sunway FutureX Farms.

The innovation lab intends to place urban farms within the community's reach to build community resilience in case of food supply interruptions, as was reported during the pandemic.

To decentralise energy sources, Sunway Property has also invested in incorporating solar panels into its buildings. Solar power produces clean energy that helps alleviate the damage of acid rain, climate change and contaminated water sources as well as fog.

Sunway also invested in a water treatment plant which treats water for commercial use. The decentralised water source lifts the burden of an equivalent to 10,000 households of the main water supply in water-stressed Selangor, as well as acts as a redundancy measure which helps businesses continue to operate even if there are water cuts.

Sunway has partnered with French tech school Ecole42 to equip the young people with the skills and aptitudes to thrive in a digital economy amid the 'new normal' post the Covid-19 pandemic.

Learning from its experience in Sunway City Kuala Lumpur, Sunway's pocket developments will continue to follow the city's blueprint for success. Even at the land banking stage, the developer considers the elements that make a development work for its residents.

Built with community in mind, every development has public accessibility, are located in strategic locations with an abundance of amenities, has a host of facilities that encourage green community living, and comes with designs that are liveable with considerations for a new normal lifestyle.

It's an ongoing journey for Sunway Property. With talents, technology and innovation, Sunway Property is determined to put communities first and build the best liveable communities for the present and the future.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/starpicks/2021/10/13/building-sustainable-communities-for-the-present-and-future>