

GuocoLand taking its capabilities up a notch

Its integrated mixed-use projects demonstrate its capability to execute large-scale complex projects

TOWERING over Singapore's central business district, the 290-metre tall Tanjong Pagar Centre – Singapore's tallest building – has clearly become a landmark development redefining Singapore's skyline.

The complexity of the project, which sits on top of an MRT station, and the speed at which its commercial spaces are filled amid market softness also epitomise GuocoLand's executional capabilities.

Indeed, GuocoLand has come a long way from a pure residential developer to one that can undertake a diversified portfolio of residential, commercial, hotels and integrated projects.

Its integrated mixed-use projects, notably Tanjong Pagar Centre in Singapore, Shanghai Guosun Centre in China, and Damansara City in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, have demonstrated the group's ability to execute large-scale complex projects from the design and development stage to asset and property management.

"With these projects under its belt, GuocoLand will continue to leverage on its proven execution capabilities to undertake more development projects to create value and scale in its business model," says group president and CEO Raymond Choong. "Our developments will demonstrate our attention to detail in anticipating customers' needs and best-in-class standards."

Taking the example of Tanjong Pagar Centre, which received its temporary occupation permit for its offices and basement retail last October, Mr Choong recalls the challenges of working on such a massive project with five different components of offices, residences, retail, a hotel and an urban park being inter-connected.

"As the site is flanked by skyscrapers and conservation buildings along Wallich Street and Maxwell Road, we had to work very closely with our neighbours and the authorities to ensure that our project development would not cause any major disruptions," Mr Choong explains.

"Being right on top of the Tanjong Pagar MRT station, this was an added challenge and required even greater efforts in coordinating with various stakeholders."

The office and retail components of Tanjong Pagar Centre are currently about 90 per cent committed and have started operating in phases since November. The exclusive collection of 181 units at Wallich Residence, located on the 39th to 64th floors of the building, has become Singapore's tallest residential development starting from a height of 180m, offering unparalleled sea and city views.

GuocoLand's interest in integrated developments also stems from a broader strategy to build a portfolio of recurring-income assets. Having new management teams in China and Malaysia over the past 18 months has also contributed to rebuilding its business in these markets.

Like Tanjong Pagar Centre, GuocoLand's latest projects in



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Chongqing and Shanghai in China are set to showcase its development and executional capabilities, Mr Choong says.

The four land plots in Chongqing are located right next to one of the city's historical neighbourhoods named 18 Steps, which is currently being redeveloped into a new urban attraction reminiscent of Shanghai's Xin Tian Di.

Mr Choong says the group plans to build a mixed-use development comprising residential, commercial and retail components with a total above-ground gross floor area of 5.5 million sq ft. He foresees there will be challenges arising from the revitalisation of the area and integrating the development with the historical neighbourhood.

GuocoLand's next major development in Shanghai is an iconic, large-scale mixed-use project, which will be seamlessly connected to an upcoming Shanghai metro station.

Located in a mature bustling neighbourhood next to the popular Changfeng Park in Putuo District, there will be two high-rise towers and three low-rise buildings offering international Grade-A office space and a retail and F&B component.

The seven billion yuan (US\$1.42 billion) project – spanning a total gross floor area of about two million sq ft – is the first large-scale commercial project in Shanghai to adopt the international WELL

Building Standard, which puts human health and well-being at the centre of building design and construction with the aim of creating "healthy buildings".

GuocoLand is no stranger to China, having invested in the country since 1994 in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing and Tianjin. Still, developing a large-scale project in a well-developed neighbourhood in Changfeng has its own challenges. "This will require greater co-ordination and cooperation with the authorities and our neighbours to minimise any disruptions," Mr Choong says.

Similarly in Malaysia, GuocoLand Malaysia is planning to develop a mixed-use development with residential and commercial components at Batu 9 Cheras, where it acquired two land parcels with a combined area of over 500,000 sq ft this year.

These land parcels are located some 11 km south-east of Kuala Lumpur city centre, close to the new Taman Suntex MRT station in Cheras. The station is on the first line of the Klang Valley MRT project connecting Kuala Lumpur city centre to the rest of the Greater Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley region.

This follows closely GuocoLand's success of Damansara City, GuocoLand Malaysia's RM2.5 billion (S\$810 million) flagship project in an upscale neighbourhood in Damansara Heights at the fringe of Kuala Lumpur city centre.

Even as large integrated developments become a focal point for the group, it is not losing sight of building on its strengths and reputation as a quality residential developer, having successfully developed over 30 residential projects in Singapore yielding some 10,000 homes.

While the construction of Changfeng Residence, the 664-unit French-themed luxury residential component of the Shanghai project is nearing completion, the group has already sold or received bookings for over 600 units.

GuocoLand is also slated to launch Martin Modern, a luxury District 9 condominium project in Singapore, this month. Showcasing a novel landscaping concept, this 450-unit project dedicates about 80 per cent of the land area for a unique botanic garden with more than 200 species of plants and more than 50 species of trees and palms.

But the group remains cognisant that the Singapore market will remain challenging. This outlook propels its diversification strategy, underpinned by new markets like the UK and Australia.

A 27 per cent stake acquisition of Eco World International (EWI) in April marked a significant milestone for GuocoLand's expansion beyond Asia, granting the group immediate access to the UK and Australian projects that EWI is undertaking.

Eco World Development Group Berhad (EWB), a Malaysian property developer listed on Bursa Malaysia Securities Berhad, also owns an equal equity stake in EWI. EWB was founded by Liew Kee Sin, who earned a reputation in London for the Battersea project when he was president and CEO of SP Setia Bhd. Mr Choong's relationship with Mr Liew dates as far back as 30 years ago when they started their careers in banking.

The UK and Australia offer scalability due to their depth and transparency, which will provide ample new opportunities for us as we aim to achieve a more diversified mix of income streams, Mr Choong says.

UPCOMING PROJECTS



Martin Modern, Singapore: The latest luxury residential development in the Robertson Quay neighbourhood in prime District 9 enjoys proximity to Orchard Road, the central business district and Marina Bay. There are 450 units in two towers, which come with a view of the gardens, the city or the Singapore River. The future Great World and Fort Canning MRT stations are located within walking distance which will provide accessibility and connectivity to the rest of Singapore via public transport. It is slated for launch on July 22



Changfeng integrated office park, Shanghai, China: The mixed-use development will comprise mainly office and retail components with a gross development value of approximately seven billion yuan. The large-scale development is expected to yield some two million sq ft of total gross floor area and a direct underground link will be created between the offices, the retail mall and the upcoming Shanghai metro station. Located in the Changfeng Ecological Business District in Shanghai's Putuo district, it is easily accessible via private and public transport and a 30-minute drive from Hongqiao Transportation Hub

CURRENT PROJECTS



Damansara City, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: The RM2.5 billion flagship project of GuocoLand Malaysia is strategically located in Damansara Heights, an upscale neighbourhood on the fringe of Kuala Lumpur city centre. The integrated mixed-use project spans 8.5 acres of prime freehold land consisting of the 370-unit DC Residensi, two Grade-A office towers, a F&B-centric lifestyle mall known as DC Mall, and the 5-star luxury hotel Sofitel Kuala Lumpur Damansara. Construction of the development has been completed and one office tower has been sold to Hong Leong Bank Berhad. The remaining office tower and DC Mall have commenced operations



Tanjong Pagar Centre, Singapore: The S\$3.2 billion mixed-use integrated development comprises five components – prime Grade-A office space at Guoco Tower; luxury living at Wallich Residence; the 5-star luxury hotel Sofitel Singapore City Centre; a F&B-centric mall; and an urban park. It is located in Singapore's central business district directly above the Tanjong Pagar MRT station with a total gross floor area of 1.7 million sq ft. Wallich Residence, a collection of 181 luxury homes, is located on the 39th to 64th floors, offering commanding views of the sea and the city. Its construction is nearly completed, and the office and retail components are 90% leased



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