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FINDING THE RIGHT MIX

As conventional shopping malls fight to maintain their appeal, integrated developments may be the the future

PHOTO: RACHEL LOI

THE IDEA that you can work, live, eat and chill out all in the same building might have been anathema years ago when the CBD was notoriously bereft of life after office hours because people just wanted to get as far away from the office once they clocked out. But now, as the financial district gains more street cred and hipster appeal, living where you work isn't such a bad idea after all.

It's an idea that's not lost on property developers constantly on the look out for ways to draw more life into their office buildings. They coined the term 'mixed-use', adding F&B outlets, retail malls and even hotels. But the newer developments coming on stream now are taking it even further, adding green spaces, gyms, concept eateries and the like to turn their properties into full-fledged lifestyle destinations.

Three new developments vying for attention now are OUE Downtown, Tanjong Pagar Centre and DUO near Kampong Glam, all with the aim of being as unlike an office as possible.

Patrina Tan, the senior vice president of retail, marketing and leasing at OUE Ltd which is behind OUE Downtown, says: "We knew from the start that we couldn't build another shopping centre, especially since the old ones are already facing challenges to stay relevant to consumers."

She adds: "Retail malls in the suburbs can still work because they serve a utilitarian function, but for this development, we concluded it cannot

just be a place for transaction; it has to also be a place for people to commune."

These new integrated developments also contribute to the Urban Redevelopment Authority's (URA) masterplan, points out Kemmy Tan, CEO of M+S Pte Ltd, which is behind DUO.

"We believe there will be an increase in market demand for integrated developments that offer an all-encompassing live, work and play concept," she says. "There is a real appetite in Singapore for developments that offer more than just one aspect and instead create a more holistic destination within the city."

It's a trend seen overseas as well, highlights Valerie Wong, commercial general manager at GuocoLand Singapore. Though the Tanjong Pagar Centre is its first such development in Singapore, it already has mixed-use developments in Malaysia and China.

"I speak to overseas developers and tenants, and the trend globally is to move towards integrated developments as they are more time-efficient and convenient ... Not that everything is cookie-cutter, it depends on each individual site's dynamics. We have the benefit of 1.7 million sq ft that's why we can incorporate so many things."

As she points out, dealing with different kinds of businesses means suiting different requirements. For instance, "we appreciate that not every office worker wants to enter through

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GUOCO AND SINGAPORE, MAS PTE LTD, OUE SOCIAL KITCHEN. PHOTO OF TONO CEVICHIERIA JOHN HENG

a mall, so we needed to build a clean, elegant office lobby as well."

For tenants like Dane Lim, director of the Spanish grill restaurant Pura Brasa, having his first outlet at the Tanjong Pagar Centre meant that it made sense to open all day, every day of the week. "The building is well-connected to the train station underground and above, so its crowd is well-diversified ranging from expats and locals to top management and high net-worth individuals living upstairs. In the afternoons, office workers come by for meetings over coffee and tapas, while on weekends we have customers from all over Singapore."

The diverse customer base is also what chef Sebastian Ng has noticed since he opened his restaurant Venue By Sebastian at OUE Downtown in May. While he still gets regulars from his days at Restaurant Ember, the pool has been growing with new customers from the offices and serviced apartments, as well as tenants from the Downtown Gallery retail mall.

Being located in the CBD means weekend traffic needs to be built up gradually though, as most people would only associate the area with office buildings. "It would mean having engaging activities to get people used to coming back and spending weekends here," says Ms Tan of OUE.

She adds: "Personally, I feel mixed-use developments are a good strategy for developers. It's a natural ecosystem and will aid in the sustainability for the property as each facet supports another, plus it gives value to the users of the space."



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(1) Artist rendering of Tanjong Pagar Centre's urban park. (2) Spread at Tono Cevicheria at DUO (3) VENUE By Sebastian Grilled Octopus, Bean Purée, Capers, Burnt Butter. (4) Pura Brasa at Tanjong Pagar Centre's Charcoal Seafood Paella. (5) Social Kitchen a new concept where people can rent a professionally-equipped kitchen.

TANJONG PAGAR CENTRE

Anyone who has passed by the Tanjong Pagar MRT station in recent months couldn't possibly have missed the shiny new exit that leads directly into the basement of the Tanjong Pagar Centre, which contains a number of F&B concepts like The Daily Cut, Guzman Y Gomez, and Food Anatomy.

Head up the escalators to the ground floor and exit the building, and you'll find yourself in the sheltered Urban Park, surrounded by a number of sit-down establishments like Pura Brasa, and Blue Lotus Chinese Grill House & Bar.

The shops and park are just two facets of this new mixed-use development, which also consists of 890,000 sq ft of office space, a Sofitel business hotel, and the luxury apartments of the Wallich Residence.

DUO

The 1.73 million sq ft development DUO is just one step towards URA's masterplan to rejuvenate the Ophir-Rochor area to complement the Marina Bay and Raffles Place financial districts, says Kemmy Tan, CEO of M+S Pte Ltd. That's why the building incorporates office blocks, homes, a hotel, commissioned art installations, as well as a mall with retail and F&B outlets.

Named DUO Galleria, the mall houses a number of F&B concepts including contemporary Peruvian restaurant TONO, the second outlet of the famous unagi specialty grill restaurant Man Man, and an Italian-inspired gastropub called Erwin's.

OUE DOWNTOWN

You've heard of co-working spaces – the new mixed-use development OUE Downtown does have one – but what if you took things one step further and combined that with food? Then you'd probably get the OUE Social Kitchen, which is a new concept where people can rent a professionally-equipped kitchen to prepare a meal with friends, and dine without having to worry about the clean-up.

It's part of OUE's effort towards building a community space for the service apartment residents and office workers that will be housed in the two tower blocks – OUE Downtown 1 and OUE Downtown 2. The podium has been turned into the new Downtown Gallery, where it offers a co-working space, retail, F&B options, as well as fitness outfits like Guavalabs, Upside Motion, and Wings To Wings.