

GuocoLand cements status as Top Developer for quality liveable homes



Top
Developer

BY TIMOTHY TAY

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GuocoLand's string of victories at the EdgeProp Singapore Excellence Awards (EPEA) 2023 is a testament to the property developer's clout as a leading stakeholder in the local residential market, as well as its award-winning talent to create liveable, useable, and adaptable projects.

It is the fourth year the property developer has been honoured with the Top Developer Award — it took home this highly coveted prize at EdgeProp's annual property awards in 2022, 2021 and 2018. GuocoLand's integrated project, Lentor Modern, also swept the board to win seven awards, including Top Development, Sustainability Excellence and Design Excellence.

Taking the stage to accept the Top Developer award on behalf of GuocoLand, Dora Chng, director residential, GuocoLand, says the honour of winning the coveted prize is especially meaningful as it is also a recognition of the collective efforts of the entire GuocoLand team.

"Building a development takes several years, so this award is not just a measure of our success in the last year, but we also take it as a recognition of our evolution over the years (as a company)," she says, adding: "Our dedication to redefine modern living for the better remains our guiding light."

Liveable, useable and adaptable

As a leading property developer in Singapore for over 30 years, GuocoLand has refined the guiding principle that has enabled it to deliver highly liveable homes that are functional and practical for a diverse range of homeowners, says Chng.

She adds: "We prioritise liveability, usability and adaptability in all our developments. We design from the 'inside-out' — meaning we consider the user's perspective and imagine how we ourselves would want our home to be if we were living in it."

At the heart of this design philosophy is "people-centrism" — a guiding principle that ensures each step, from conceptualisation to design and from interiors to the choice of facilities, is geared towards enhancing the lives of residents, says Chng.

Crafting liveable homes goes beyond the four



The Top Developer award was received by Dora Chng, director, residential, at GuocoLand

walls of each condo unit and apartment. GuocoLand has demonstrated that its projects take a holistic approach focusing on design, connectivity, concept and community. Some of its landmark projects that best reflect this vision include integrated developments such as Guoco Tower in Tanjong Pagar, Guoco Midtown in Bugis and Lentor Modern in Lentor.

"The concept of the development and the community living within it are key differentiators that make our projects an outstanding quality home. A development with a strong concept can attract like-minded people with similar interests, creating a harmonious community where residents feel a strong sense of belonging," says Chng.

Spearheading rejuvenation in Lentor

The most recent example of GuocoLand's hand in this type of placemaking and community building can be seen at Lentor Modern, a landmark development in the Lentor neighbourhood and the only integrated development in that area.

"Lentor Modern has attracted homebuyers who seek a contemporary lifestyle directly connected to the MRT network, shopping and F&B options, and close to nature," says Chng. "With Lentor Modern, we are spearheading the rejuvenation and transformation of the Lentor neighbourhood."

Lentor Modern comprises 605 residential

units across three 25-storey residential blocks and a 96,000 sq ft retail mall directly connected to Lentor MRT Station on the Thomson-East Coast Line. The project was successfully launched for sale in September 2022 to overwhelming response from buyers who snapped up 508 units (84%) on opening day on Sept 17. According to URA developer sales data, the project was about 92% sold as at the end of September this year.

"As the only integrated, mixed-use development in the area, Lentor Modern enhances connectivity and brings modern conveniences to residents and visitors," says Chng. She adds that careful consideration was taken to ensure that Lentor Modern, like all of GuocoLand's residential projects, is future-oriented but also adaptable to changing needs.

The panel of judges of the EPEA 2023 were also convinced of the forward-thinking planning and design consideration demonstrated by Lentor Modern. They gave the project high scores across all judged categories. Thus, Lentor Modern took home awards for Landscape Excellence, Design Excellence, Sustainability Excellence, Innovation Excellence, Marketing Excellence, and Showflat Excellence, as well as Top Development in the Uncompleted (Mixed-use) category.

Only two projects this year claim a clean sweep across all judged categories; the only other project was UOL Group's AMO Residence. Chng

says that GuocoLand is working hard to outdo itself at its subsequent development in Lentor, which it won in a government land sale with joint venture partner Hong Leong Holdings in April. The new project at Lentor Gardens is targeted for launch in 1H2024. "We envision another high-quality residential project imbued with modern concepts of living amidst nature and greenery and elevated by convenient access to amenities in the neighbourhood," she says.

Empowering innovation

Top developers like GuocoLand pave the way forward by pushing the envelope for good design standards and empowering innovative good practices. This is driven by a common goal to uplift the lifestyles of residents, tenants, and other uses of the spaces we create, says Chng.

But pushing the boundaries of innovation is a gradual collaborative process, she says. In her acceptance speech, she says: "Coming up with a modern and highly liveable home for our homebuyers is not always an easy feat. It takes a dedicated team who may have differing views on what should take precedence in the development that is being designed. But with strong bonds and trust between colleagues, coupled with good communication within the team and with our consultants and partners, we end up

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Lentor Modern swept the board to win seven awards this year, including Top Development and Sustainability Excellence

GUOCOLAND



The landmark Guoco Midtown office tower was completed in January. The 30-storey Grade-A building marks the first milestone completion of the integrated project

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achieving our common goal — a better product for our customers”.

“Often, the best and most widespread innovations do not need to use ‘rocket science’. Instead, it should be simple for all to use and enjoy,” she says.

At the heart of any good innovation in real estate is the community that lives, works and plays there. This helps to bring life and vitality into the development and the right placemaking efforts, especially in public spaces, can serve as communal meeting points and event spaces for the community.

An example is Guoco Tower’s Urban Park and the regular activation of the space through activities and events. This has had a profound positive impact on the Tanjong Pagar area which has transformed and activated the district into a business and lifestyle destination in the CBD.

“This placemaking strategy has also been woven into our other developments. For Guoco Midtown, we embraced an open and porous design philosophy. The development boasts 30 gardens, of which 10 are open to the public and I must say that I’m pleased with how the gardens are coming along,” says Chng.

Good design also considers the existing built environment around any new project, and at Guoco Midtown the architecture reflects the neighbouring shophouses with an open design and includes an internal street inspired by the neighbourhood. “The design of the development invites people to walk and explore the location, and facilitates alfresco dining at our retail clusters,” says Chng.

Similarly, a public plaza at Lentor Modern is

the social heart of the development. The plaza will be flanked by F&B units. When it is completed and activated with events, it will serve as a space for the local community.

Biophilic connections

This year, the EPEA shines the spotlight on sustainability in Singapore’s built environment. This is an area GuocoLand has consistently demonstrated as a critical consideration for all its projects, emphasising the biophilic connections between the built environment and society.

“Humans have an inherent inclination to seek connections and affiliate with nature and greenery, and the post-Covid lifestyle has only heightened this. There is now a renewed focus on personal well-being, the work-from-home environment, and the need for spaces that promote physical and mental health,” says Chng.

Lush, expansive greenery elevates the visual appeal and contributes to a cooler environment, enhancing comfort for residents. However, the developer also has a responsibility to ensure that curated landscapes are also natural and easy to maintain.

Biophilic spaces — designed to deliver benefits for human health and the environment — are cognisant of the diverse needs of residents. For example, open lawns where children can freely play, and adults can engage in activities like tai chi and yoga, to more intimate spaces like spa pools or niches in sky terraces.

“Ultimately, what is important is the usability and relevance of the spaces. It is essential to provide facilities that residents will use and genuinely appreciate instead of offering many amenities that remain underutilised and eventually be-

SAMUEL ISAAC CHUA/THE EDGE SINGAPORE



The landmark Guoco Tower is GuocoLand’s crowning achievement in Singapore, shaping and building Tanjong Pagar into a business and lifestyle precinct in the CBD

come redundant,” says Chng.

GuocoLand and other leading developers in Singapore have also leveraged green financing, a type of loan or investment promoting environmentally positive activities such as the purchase of ecologically friendly construction materials or the development of green infrastructure and facilities.

“Green financing is an example of our proactive approach to sustainable development. In June 2023, we introduced the GuocoLand Green Finance Framework, envisioned to bolster our ongoing decarbonisation journey and contributions to the Singapore Green Plan 2030,” says Chng.

The developer has since secured a \$974 million green facility for the refinancing of Guoco Tower and \$498.6 million of green loans for its upcoming Lentor Gardens development. GuocoLand has also pledged that the Lentor Gardens project will be its first residential project to achieve BCA’s Green Mark Platinum (Super Low Energy) with Maintainability Badge certification.

Thriving amid adversity

Although a momentous year for GuocoLand, the company has not been immune to the headwinds buffeting Singapore’s real estate market and the challenging macroeconomic climate. “Externally, the current environment is a challenging one. There are macro-economic factors that impact our costs, and there are many other uncertainties and issues that we face daily,” says Chng.

However, she says that GuocoLand’s track record has shown its ability to navigate and thrive amidst adversity. This resiliency is rooted in its belief that well-designed developments and units remain in high demand, especially in Singapore’s competitive residential market. She adds that recent successful sales launches, such as that of Lentor Modern, show that its projects resonate strongly among local audiences.

“Our continuous drive for excellence has positioned GuocoLand as a benchmark for quality in the real estate sector. Despite the uncertain external environment over the past few years, our commitment to surpassing expectations, our focus on sustainability, and our ability to navigate challenges have solidified our reputation,” she says. ■