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EDGEPROP-ILAM MALAYSIA'S  
SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE AWARD 2019

SILVER

Valencia

BY NATALIE KHOO

Entering the township of Valencia, we were immediately greeted by majestic trees towering above us. It seems like we were entering into a forest. Located in Sungai Buloh, Selangor, the 278-acre development with a golf course has 916 homes. It is developed by Gamuda Land. Completed in 2012, the township located in Sungai Buloh is currently managed by Gamuda Land Property Services Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Gamuda Land — the property arm of Gamuda Bhd.

Of Valencia's 278 acres, 28 are open spaces while the golf course covers 54 acres. The landscaping within Valencia has been seamlessly blended together — the trees, the streams, the lakes, the rolling fields and the golf course all exist in harmony with one another. Valencia's beautiful landscapes were rewarded by a Silver in the EdgeProp-ILAM Malaysia's Sustainable Landscape Award 2019 which is part of EdgeProp Malaysia's Best Managed Property Awards 2019. Two years earlier, the township was a Gold winner in the non-strata residential category at the inaugural TheEdgeProperty.com Malaysia's Best Managed Property Awards 2017.

Gamuda Parks chief operations officer Khariza Khalid who is also Gamuda Land head of landscape architecture shares that Valencia's landscaping was very much determined by the land's natural attributes such as how the land rises and falls.

"The types of trees in Valencia are very similar to those found at the adjacent forest reserve where the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) is. We wanted to form a dynamic spectacle which integrates our green spaces in the foreground and the forest reserve in the background. By working with nature, we embed our homes and town centre into the undulating terrain that this land is blessed with. As time passes, our initial curation was taken over by nature that continues to turn Valencia into a lush wilderness," Khariza explains.

#### Soaked with biodiversity

With more than 100 types of trees and shrubs, this "wilderness" has become a habitat for various flora and fauna and is the home to at least 20 bird species as recorded in the landscaping team's most recent biodiversity audit where they scientifically document and monitor the health of the environment from time to time. The



Valencia's 9-hole private golf course is for residents' use only and they also get to enjoy a 6km jogging path which meanders around the course.



Khariza: Ultimately, a beautiful landscape must also be sustainable in the long-run and this includes having efficient cost management.

## Harnessing nature's bounty

audit is part of Gamuda Parks' initiative to promote sustainable landscapes.

"About 35% of the land is dedicated to greenery with 80% native species planted here. This contributes to the regeneration of the environment and its biodiversity. Among some of the trees planted here are the Kapur, African Tulips and Cannonball while some of the wildlife we have here include the white-throated kingfisher, magpie robin and the black-crowned night heron. We are planning to create a nature sanctuary where residents can experience and get a closer view of the animals. This also helps to educate the younger generation to care for the environment," Khariza says.

Apart from the golf course, Valencia is divided into four housing precincts with each individual precinct having its own pocket gardens.

"These pocket gardens support recreational activities with their amenities such as playground, exercise station, reflexology path, BBQ area and others to encourage community-centric activities. This is how we draw people to come out of their homes, to get to know each other, live and play together and ultimately form a tight-knit community that will look out for one another," Khariza adds.

The verdant landscape in Valencia also acts as a cooling agent, helping to reduce excess urban heat.

Meanwhile, Valencia's 9-hole private golf course is for residents' use only and they also get to enjoy a 6km jogging path which meanders around the course.

"When you manage a township with a golf course, you need to take into consideration flying golf balls and weed control. The matured trees in Valencia act as a golf ball screen while salt is used as a natural weeding agent to eliminate nut grass as opposed to using expensive chemicals. The minimal use of chemicals in maintenance practices enhances the natural aspect and sustainability of a development. There is definitely more cost saving though the effective time may be longer," explains Khariza.

The cost of maintaining the landscape of Valencia was reduced from RM30,000 a month to RM15,000 currently with a staff of 10.

"Ultimately, a beautiful landscape must also be sustainable in the long-run and this includes having efficient cost management. We adopt a lot of technology and machinery to improve day-to-day landscaping precision and efficiency so that we can reduce manpower dependency. Some of our efforts include using LED light bulbs to reduce electric consumption, using a blower to replace manual sweeping and utilising a mechanical mower to replace grass cutters in bigger spaces," Khariza explains.

Ultimately, she says, with Valencia, it is not just about creating a beautiful master plan but it's about a place that people love to call home.

"Gamuda Land's focus of listening to what the land has to say allows us to seamlessly integrate the natural with the manmade. With that, we managed to build Valencia into a town like no other, a town with its own unique identity."



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