

Jan 11, 2006

What would-be buyers of 'private' HDB flats want from developers

Condo features at HDB prices, please

Pilot Tampines site can accommodate about 500 flats. Expected to be ready in 2010

By Daryl Loo

BALCONIES and planter boxes for every unit, childcare facilities and tuition centres, and playgrounds with security cameras wired up to every flat.

These are some of the suggestions HDB residents in Tampines put forward for the new experimental category of flats under the new Design, Build and Sell Scheme (DBSS).

The tender for the first batch of flats, which will be built in Tampines by private developers, closes tomorrow.

However, potential developers face a considerable challenge, in that these flats cannot be much more expensive than a typical new HDB flat.

The scheme was announced in March last year, as part of a move to increase private sector involvement in public housing.

The successful developer which buys the land, with a 103-year lease, will have some freedom to set prices and the types of flats it wants to build, but some HDB rules will still apply.

Buyers will still have to meet a household monthly income ceiling of \$8,000, priority will still be given to those who are moving into the same estate as their parents and the ethnic quota will remain.

However, the resale levy has been dropped. This is imposed on owners of new HDB flats and those who bought resale flats with a Central Provident Fund housing grant, who want to sell those to buy new flats.

The 2.1ha DBSS pilot site, on Tampines Avenue 6, has a maximum gross floor area of 67,200 sq m, enough to accommodate about 500 units. The flats are expected to be completed by 2010.

Tampines resident Amos Ho, 38, father of two girls aged nine and seven, hopes the successful developer will build a self-contained precinct that has plenty of landscaping and playgrounds for his children.

'I've also seen condominiums where the pools and playgrounds are fitted with cameras so parents can keep an eye on their kids from home. That would be a nice addition,' he said.

Madam Yuan Ping, 29, who lives in a block across from the pilot site, would like to see a whole-day childcare centre catering to working parents like herself.

'Right now, there are just not enough of these facilities in Tampines,' she said.

For Madam T.C. Sim, 69, who lives with her retiree husband, balconies and planter boxes are a must.

'But it cannot be too expensive. It is still an HDB flat.'

Tampines GRC MP Ong Kian Min said: 'Residents are hoping for some innovative features but at affordable prices that can't be too far off from current HDB flats.'

'As to what features they have, we'll have to leave it to the expertise of the developers and their designers.'

Chesterton International research head Colin Tan said private developers will face a steep learning curve to take over a role the HDB has played for so many years.

Companies that have so far expressed interest include Chip Eng Seng Corporation and Sim Lian Group. Both have extensive experience as contractors in HDB's past projects.

NTUC Choice Homes has also been named as a likely contender.

Mr Nicholas Mak, director of property consultancy Knight Frank, predicts that up to seven companies will bid for the project, with the bulk likely to be such contractor-developers.

He expects bids for the site to be around \$71 million.

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