

THE EDGE
MALAYSIA

**Affordable Urban Housing
Excellence Award 2024**

WINNER | Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil | Gaya Kuasa Sdn Bhd

PICTURES BY GAYA KUASA

Going the extra mile

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As one approaches the uphill stretch from Jalan Bukit Jalil Indah, the terraced hedges of Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil create a visually striking and harmonious landscape that adds to the overall charm of the development.

"We go above and beyond for the homebuyers." That is the principle that Gaya Kuasa Sdn Bhd (a subsidiary of Pesona Metro Holdings Bhd (KL:PES-ONA), the developer of Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil, adopted during the development of this housing project, which is part of the Residensi Wilayah affordable housing scheme.

Gaya Kuasa non-independent non-executive chairman Wie Hock Kiong tells *City & Country* that this principle is in accordance with the company's tag line, "Premium Homes For All", which shows its commitment to providing homebuyers with affordable homes without sacrificing quality.

In line with this principle, the developer opted to build more extensive and spacious units for the residents. "At 900 sq ft per unit, it is larger than the typical affordable housing units out there, which is usually around 800 sq ft. We decided to go the extra mile and provide more space for the comfort of the homebuyers," says Wie.

Located on 5.6 acres of leasehold land, Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil comprises 1,260 condominium units spread across two 42-storey blocks. Each unit has a built-up area of 900 sq ft and comes with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a yard and a balcony. The project was completed in September 2023 and is fully sold. The units were priced at RM300,000 each.

"In construction, the project timeline and achievement of key milestones are paramount. Despite our project being halted due to the Movement Control Order measures implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic, we adhered to the construction timeline. As a result, we successfully delivered the project ahead of schedule on Sept 13, 2023," says Wie.

The RM378 million development is strategically located in the heart of Bukit Jalil and about 800m from the Alam Sutera LRT station. It can be easily accessed via the Bukit Jalil Highway and the Shah Alam Expressway (Kesas). Furthermore, the Tzu Chi International School Kuala Lumpur is along the same road while Pavilion Bukit Jalil is about a 10-minute drive from the development.

"When we started this development, we had a long deliberation as this was our first project for Residensi Wilayah, so we wanted to set a higher standard than for the average development under this scheme," says Wie.

This has led to Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil's recognition as the winner of *The Edge Malaysia Affordable Urban Housing Excellence award* at *The Edge Malaysia Property Excellence Awards 2024*.

Sustainable development with proper planning

Having visited numerous affordable housing projects in the country for inspiration, the developer wanted to design a project skewed towards sustainable living. "One that also provides long-term



Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil comprises 1,260 units spread across two 42-storey blocks



PATRICK GOH/THE EDGE

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value for the homebuyers. It is about future planning. We must get things right from the get-go. There is usually not much room for retrofitting or building extra infrastructure after completion," says Wie.

Instead of following the typical high-rise design of having double-loaded corridors, Wie took some design cues from Singapore Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats and employed single-loaded corridors instead. He notes that

this type of corridor helps improve ventilation.

"To start with, we want to improve the air quality for the residents. As more floors and units are added to high-rises, indoor air quality for the units may be affected by double loading them. Hence, all the units here are designed to maximise cross ventilation and natural lighting, reducing energy costs. No air wells are needed. It was done even though single-loaded corridors cost more to build," explains Wie.

He adds, "With ample natural lighting, there is hardly a need to switch on the lights in the common areas and the lift lobbies during the day."

When it comes to the balcony, he notes that affordable housing projects tend to omit it as one way to save cost. Each unit of Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil has a balcony. "The slabs, railing and waterproofing work for a balcony will factor into the cost of a unit, but we decided to provide one for each to enhance the residents' comfort."

As for the façade, the developer decided on a special ledge design for the outdoor air-conditioning units, sharing some space with the balcony. "As the exterior is the first thing one would notice in a development, this special design aims to create a neat and harmonious façade. More importantly, the air conditioning can be neatly stacked and easily accessible for maintenance. This ensures the safety of the technicians. There is no longer a need to climb over the ledge to service the air conditioners," says Wie, adding that piping and power points for the air conditioning are also provided.

Practical and high-quality facilities

Affordable housing developments do not necessarily equate to a lack of facilities or amenities. In addition to the basic facilities, the developer has provided additional ones that can rival those in some of the higher-end offerings.

The range of facilities caters for all ages and is

CONTINUES ON PAGE 74



PICTURES BY GAYA KUASA

The facilities podium of Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil

Quality facilities for residents

FROM PAGE 72

primarily located in a separate, connected building that also houses eight storeys of parking lots.

“We wanted practical yet aesthetically pleasing facilities for the residents. It is heartening when we obtain feedback that the facilities are usually well utilised and the residents are happy with their quality and condition,” says Wie.

Facilities include an infinity swimming pool, wading pool, indoor and outdoor gymnasium, children’s playground, nursery and multipurpose hall that doubles as a badminton court. “Not many [affordable] developments provide an indoor badminton court. The three courts are almost fully booked in the evenings and weekends, serving as a great place for the community to mingle. In fact, the multipurpose hall recently had its first event, which was a wedding,” says Wie.

In addition to the louvred windows, the hall is equipped with two industrial high-volume low-speed (HVLS) fans to provide greater ventilation. Furthermore, the use of glass panels instead of walls allows for maximum natural lighting.

As for safety, the development has a two-tiered security system to ensure residents’ peace of mind.

Communication is key

Wie says the developer received feedback from the homebuyers via a dedicated WhatsApp group throughout the construction process. “It was through their complaints and compliments that we knew we were on the right track,” he adds.

He gives the example of an incident involving the building of shoe racks at the entrances to the units. “We received negative feedback from many customers as the racks were taking up too much space and encroaching into the yard. Hence, we decided to omit them entirely from the design.”

Wie continues, “Communication is key, and I understand that we won’t be able to satisfy 100% of our customers. However, we are open to feedback, and I am glad to say that the majority of the homebuyers here are happy. We feel satisfied as we received their seal of approval.”

Managing costs

Cost is a significant factor when it comes to affordable housing projects. “Cost management is vital as profit margins for affordable homes are thin and highly sensitive to cost variations and project delays. Close monitoring of operational cash flow is crucial to maintaining liquidity, financial stability and project sustainability. To ensure effective cost management and prevent potential cost

overruns, we have implemented detailed expense tracking against the budget,” says Wie.

He reveals his formula for cost management: “First and foremost is volume. The higher the volume, the lower the price for most building materials. The second is by carefully selecting our materials. By getting more hands-on with the project during the planning stages, we gain deeper insights and discover ways to maximise cost efficiency further. Finally, we maintain strong and enduring relationships with our contractors and suppliers, many of whom have been with us for over 20 years through prosperous and challenging times. Their loyalty and support have been invaluable, providing us with credit facilities that reduce our reliance on bank financing, resulting in a lower gearing ratio.

“Thus, for Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil, we achieved reasonable and sustainable profits within the industry norm,” says Wie.

In terms of maintenance charges, the monthly fee is currently set at 28 sen psf, including sinking fund. “For affordable homes, we recognise that sustainable maintenance is crucial. Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil cannot be considered affordable if the maintenance cost is too high and unsustainable. People choose affordable homes because they need affordability in most aspects of their lives, including maintenance.”

Buoyed by Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil’s success, Wie says the company will focus more on building affordable housing projects moving forward. “We will be able to leverage our experience to keep the cost manageable.”

To date, Gaya Kuasa has delivered boutique residential projects such as Zehn Bukit Pantai in Bangsar, GenKL in Kuchai Lama and Sastra U-Thant in Taman U-Thant. In the near term, the developer will focus on Phase 2 of Residensi Aman Bukit Jalil, known as Ren Residence (Residensi Renaisans Bukit Jalil), which is not part of the Residensi Wilayah affordable housing scheme.

Scheduled to be completed in 2026, the project will comprise two twin residential blocks with 630 units each, with built-ups of 950 to 1,680 sq ft. The units are priced from RM537,000.



The main entrance of the development



The landscaped pathways leading to the car park and facilities podium



MOHD IZWAN MOHD NAZAM/THE EDGE

Wie (centre) with (from left) *The Edge Malaysia* editor-in-chief Kathy Fong, editor emeritus Au Foong Yee, *City & Country* senior editor E Jacqui Chan and *The Edge Media Group* publisher and group CEO Datuk Ho Kay Tat



The outdoor gym with the reflexology footpaths



ZAHID IZZANI/THE EDGE

The multipurpose hall which houses three badminton courts



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