

# Kota Kemuning by Gamuda Land: Engineered for success

The Edge Property

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Kota Kemuning in Shah Alam, launched two decades ago in partnership with DRB-Hicom Bhd, marked Gamuda Bhd's first foray into property development.

Over the years, the 1,854-acre integrated township development has grown from an initial gross development value of RM2.9 billion to its current RM3.65 billion, spanning over 90 development phases.

Today, Kota Kemuning is home to 9,570 units of bungalows, semidees, linked houses, town houses, condominiums and apartments, commercial centres, shopoffices and factories.

The many parks, lakes and green landscapes that surround the different phases, neatly tucked away in cul-de-sacs and precincts, makes driving around the township a scenic experience.

The green and natural environment is a signature characteristic of the township.

This year, Kota Kemuning was named a recipient of The Edge Malaysia Property Development Excellence Award 2015.

Gamuda Land is the property development arm of Gamuda Bhd, whose core businesses, besides property development, are engineering and construction. It is one of Malaysia's largest infrastructure companies.

"We are very glad to have won [The Edge Malaysia Property Excellence Awards]. Kota Kemuning has been developed over 20 years and it has come to a time when it is already fully developed and matured. We are happy that investors and purchasers have been invested in Kota Kemuning all this while," says Gamuda Land managing director Chow Chee Wah.

He says the township was conceived when Gamuda Land was constructing the Shah Alam Expressway (Kesas), which passes through the site, which at that time had no connectivity and access roads. The company saw the potential to build a township there and decided to take the opportunity to diversify into property development.

"Today, it is more than just the name of a township and many people and neighbouring developments use Kota Kemuning as a location and an address, which helps further endorse the place. We feel proud that people are proud to be associated with it and this gives us the satisfaction that we did it right, even after 20 years," he adds.

### **Serene living environment**

Part of the appeal lies in the township's serene living environment. Over 45% of the land is dedicated to green lungs, including an 8km walkway that meanders throughout the neighbourhood, linking and interconnecting the various precincts.

"For us, what is important was not just allocating green features but where to allocate them and how much to allocate in order to create a lasting effect and for people to want to stay in Kota Kemuning," Chow explains.

"What is relevant is when we crafted the master plan of this township 20 years ago, we were already talking about pedestrian walkways, cycling and jogging tracks, and their interconnectivity with other amenities and facilities. These features and characteristics of Kota Kemuning are still relevant today as can be seen in later developments."

The township is home to the Kota Permai Golf and Country Club, which boasts an international standard 18-hole golf course designed by renowned architect Ross Watson. One of the top golf courses in the country, it was carved out following the natural topography of the terrain, Chow says.

A believer in the importance of engineering innovation, Gamuda Land crafted the retention pond at Kota Kemuning into the 22-acre Central Lake surrounded by a 25-acre park. Next to the lake is The Lakeside Drive, where residents can jog or stroll, or just take in the picturesque panorama.

An idle swamp was ingeniously turned into a recreational Wetland Park, which serves as a flood-irrigation mechanism that also filters sediments and hosts a variety of bird species and local flora and fauna.

Another feature is Hill Park, which includes a reflexology path, a timber lookout deck, a gazebo and a walking trail. The park sits on top of a hill and is built amid existing greenery and trees.

These features are designed to encourage the community to participate in outdoor recreation and engender a sense of appreciation for nature.

"From an engineering perspective, we must create something different ... we are creating community living. Although urban living is one thing, we also want to encourage interaction between people and their surrounding environment so we connected all the jogging tracks, cycle tracks, parks, amenities and clubhouse," Chow explains.

The clubhouse offers facilities including squash courts, tennis courts, a fitness centre and swimming pool for sports enthusiasts. In addition, there are outdoor basketball courts and a community hall that can be used for sports like badminton.



## **A visionary master plan**

The first homes in Kota Kemuning were in the Aranda and Oncidium precincts, launched in August 1995. Aranda comprises 20ft by 70ft and 22ft by 75ft double-storey linked houses, initially priced at RM168,000 and RM185,000 respectively. Over at Oncidium, double-storey bungalows were launched at RM910,000, double-storey semidees at RM490,000, and bungalow plots at RM68 psf.

In April 2008, the last parcel of 22ft by 75ft double-storey linked houses was launched at RM420,000.

“When we first started property development, just like our engineering sector, we had to look at what is our leading edge for every project, what is our innovation and creativity, which can distinguish ourselves and our development from others,” says Chow.

“Also, as engineers, we believe it is important for infrastructure and good connectivity such as a good road network system to be in place and available from the first development phase, in addition to the facilities and amenities. So, when we delivered the first house, all these were already in place,” he adds.

Chow says about RM100 million was invested in Kota Kemuning’s connectivity as there was no access to the development site at that time.

Another aspect that the developer considered was not to build two rows of houses and hand over the keys to the buyers while adjacent construction was still going on.

“We made sure that even during the 1998 financial crisis, we continued to build — we sold what we could sell, and what we could not sell, we built, then sold. So, when the keys were delivered to our buyers, they could see that the whole precinct was actually completed, including the surrounding environment,” Chow says.

While gated and guarded schemes may be rather common today, this was not the case 20 years ago when Gamuda Land was crafting the master plan for Kota Kemuning.

The developer had the foresight to see the need for such schemes in the years to come and planned for it by forming individual residential precincts with respective cul-de-sacs.

“We only started implementing the gated and guarded scheme for the later residential precincts, during the last 10 years. In the earlier days, people who bought houses did not want recurring expenses such as security charges but we knew the mindset would change, so we put in place the infrastructure in the master plan for it. Today, I believe every precinct has happily implemented a gated and guarded community, which do not appear as ad-hoc as in many other residential areas,” Chow says.

## **Gamuda Walk**

As part of Kota Kemuning’s holistic master plan, Gamuda Land opened Gamuda Walk — a community lifestyle retail centre — in April this year to complement and add value to the township. The anchor tenant is AEON MaxValu while other tenants include Mr D.I.Y. and Kitchen Shop, F&B outlets such as Red Lobster, Nando’s, Sakae Sushi and Boat Noodle, and lifestyle convenience outlets such as Pet Lovers Centre, Focus Point and Chapter One Bookstore.

Gamuda Walk features a central podium, an al fresco dining area, indoor and outdoor green oases, landscaping, two levels of basement car park, three levels of retail space and seven levels of business suites, called The Gamuda Biz Suites.

In addition, there are several other vibrant commercial and business precincts comprising neighbourhood shops such as 24-hour convenience stores, fast food outlets, banks, clinics, pharmacies, bookshops, pet shops, tuition centres, furniture and hardware shops and auto service and repair shops.

## **Staying on course**

During the 1998 financial crisis, Chow says one of the challenges faced in developing Kota Kemuning was cash flow. During such times, he says, one must not half-heartedly make investments.

“There was a lot of initial investment we had to make for Kota Kemuning but we knew that if we dared to invest, we would see success, and that really did happen. After the crisis, people who were coming back into the property market wanted to buy and stay immediately, and we had ready houses in a nice environment

to showcase. And today, we are happy to say that those who invested in Kota Kemuning are enjoying capital appreciation, which is a win-win situation and an important aspect for us.”

The Lagoon Suites Condominium received a merit award for The Edge Malaysia-PEPS Value Creation Excellence Award in 2013 under the residential category. Its units with sizes ranging from 500 sq ft to 900 sq ft were priced from RM125,000 to RM218,000 during launch in April 2010. The condominium’s value had appreciated between 60% and 90% as at 2013, and units are currently being sold in the secondary market from RM300,000 to RM520,000.

He also remarks on the challenges in achieving consistent construction quality in Kota Kemuning. To set things right, the developer implemented Conquas, or the Construction Quality Assessment System, which is assessed by Singapore’s Building and Construction Authority.

“We award the contractors for achieving the Conquas score as we believe that if we do it right the first time, we can save cost in terms of defect rectification. Today, we still maintain the highest Conquas score outside of Singapore.”

It has been two decades and the developer is still very much present in Kota Kemuning today.

Says Chow, “We are still here to serve the residents. We work with the residents’ association and the authorities in terms of service and maintenance as we believe these aspects help grow the value of the township.”

Today, Kota Kemuning is one of the most sought after townships in the Klang Valley owing to its sustainable master plan, quality design and innovative concepts, amenities and infrastructure planning.

“A lot of effort has been put into Kota Kemuning since it started in terms of engineering innovation. As you drive through the township, you can feel the difference in the ambience from other townships, and we are glad that many years ago, we embarked on offering these important features that have made Kota Kemuning a sustainable development today,” Chow says. TEPEA 2015