

Alternative face of festivity

> A take on non-traditional holiday decorations to dress interiors

BY ALYSSA J. OON

It is one of the most wonderful times of the year, so expect to hear bells ringing and Christmas carolling on your visit to shopping malls as people make haste to nab the best deals in their hunt for festive gifts.

Unlike in Western countries, where the Christmas season is given great importance, Malaysians who do not celebrate the occasion in a religious way view this time as a public holiday to celebrate family and togetherness, some even exchange gifts.

Whatever your reason to celebrate the season, you can still invite festivity into the home with decorations that veer from the traditional red, white and gold.

TREE ON THE WALL

The evergreen Christmas tree is a prominent piece of decoration in homes during the holiday season. It is believed that Germany began the tradition of putting up Christmas trees in the 16th century.

However, instead of buying a new fake tree to put up, along with a host of other decorations which add to the cost, go for an alternative. Get creative and make a "non-tree" using string, wood planks, wash tape, or try assembling one just using ornaments and string lights. The alternative Christmas tree can also help save space in smaller rooms if it is hung on the wall.

As a general rule, the bottom of the "tree" should be at least 12 inches from the floor. Using whatever materials you wish, arrange them to form the shape of the traditional Christmas tree or a pyramid. The alternative tree has a host of styles you could try. Sit down with the family and decide what materials to use and then start decorating together.

The best part? You won't need so much space to store it for the following year.

CREATIVE WREATHS

It is said that the early Romans gifted branches of the evergreen tree on New Year's Day as a sign of bestowing health and vigour on family and friends. Eventually, these branches were shaped into the wreaths we know today.



Tree on the wall.



The looking glass.



Creative wreath.

configurations instead. A prominent feature in this trend are star-shaped wire frames with minimal decorations on it. Maybe just a small evergreen branch, ribbons or string lights. But if the round shape still rolls for you, there are countless other ideas to make it a little different.

Make a colourful wreath using scraps of fabric, tying them on a round wire frame. If baubles make the world go round for you, make a wreath using round baubles in different colours. For a fun activity with young kids, make a paper wreath with paper cut-out red ribbons as decoration.

SCANDINAVIAN FESTIVE
It's no secret that the Scandinavian home design is an everlasting trend, so it comes as no surprise when people look to Scandinavian design principles when decorating interiors for the holidays.

Probably the cutest decoration are the clusters of mini holiday trees placed on tables. Some are made of porcelain in white while others come painted in varying shades of green and gold to create "ornaments" on the little trees.

To do this, the gold dots are painted in lines to mimic strings of light or random dots representing baubles on the tree. The other variation (of these cluster of trees table

decor) can be made with wooden blocks instead, and then painted with bright pastel colours and metallic silver and gold paint.

Wreaths are also a common Scandinavian holiday feature, but instead of one large wreath placed on the door, a few small to medium-sized ones are hung from a long tree branch to create a wall display.

The wreaths are typically bare and the ribbons used to hang the wreath are in reds or neutral tones. Some, however, display an oddity of baubles or handmade felt decorations in shapes of reindeer, baubles, hearts or trees.

Mounted deer heads are prominent in Scandinavian homes. Instead of looking for a real one that might scare the daylight out of the children who will be visiting, look for faux mounted deer heads in white for a modern feel.

Extra festive points are awarded if the antlers are painted in gold or a wreath has been placed around the head. The geometrical outline of a full body deer is the modern take on this traditional decor.

Usually in black, the geometrical element fits in well with modern-themed rooms.



THE LOOKING GLASS

Terrariums are another interior design trend that has managed to find its way into the festive season. Instead of the usual glass bowl, decorators use metal lanterns, glass jars or baubles. Festive terrariums imitate common

holiday scenes around the world. The usual miniature green trees and grass are sprinkled with fake snow to recreate a snowy forest. White forest creatures are added to the scene.

A snowy Scandinavian village is another scene that is commonly recreated for festive terrariums. Little wooden or brown cardboard houses are placed among miniature trees in fake snow. String lights are added for the festive atmosphere. For a fun twist, paint and decorate the little homes to look like gingerbread houses and add mini candy canes next to it.

These are only some of many ideas to help inspire you to make the home livelier and brighter this holiday season. Get the family in on these to foster closer family ties and bonds this festive time. Rule of thumb - there is no right or wrong in being creative, so be open and "don't get your tinsel in a tangle".



The geometrical outline of a full body deer.



Cluster of trees table decor.

PHOTO: WWW.SUGARANDCLOTH.COM

PHOTO: WWW.HEX-LIBRIS.COM

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Choosing affordable homes

> Other means and ways to 'save' apart from considering the price tag

BY ALYSSA J. OON

WHEN one hears the word "affordable", the "\$" symbol (\$) automatically comes to mind. Without having to think much, money registers and one considers saving costs, budget lifestyles, modest living areas and being thrifty. But affordable living does not necessarily have to always correspond with money predominantly. There are in fact, many other ways one can indirectly "save", hence, we look at affordable living from a larger perspective and scour some property developments, plus ways and means to help one grow the "reserve or resources kitty".

We begin by exploring the ecosystem of affordable living and consider some points in an article written by Jason Lim for iProperty.com, along with views and comments of others.

MATURED RESIDENTIAL TOWNSHIPS

Lim's idea on affordable living focuses on a couple of aspects, apart from the obvious price tag. He asks one to consider living spaces that can bring positive benefits and advantages to the inhabitants and ultimately save costs. His first point to consider is living in a matured residential township appended with good public infrastructure and convenient amenities that make every day living more manageable.

There are many "matured" housing areas where one can find some of the "oldest" public spaces and convenience stores.

Sometimes, these areas that have stood the test of time become "tourist attractions", attracting people and increasing the economy and amount of activity in the areas, for examples Klang, Kajang, Ampang, Cheras, Rawang, Taman Tun Dr Ismail and Subang.

This writer recalls a friend who said she never left her "taman" for more than a year as she found everything she needed within easy reach in the township she lived in. From her place of work to her children's schools, plus all the companies, brands and organisations she needed to engage and connect with for all her business, social and daily needs. Good or bad, it really depends on one's perspective. But she saw this in a positive light, claiming to have saved a lot of time, money and stress having to commute farther, daily.

GOOD CONNECTIVITY

Living in a housing area that is easily accessible via highways and byways will reduce commuting time, hence, saves one a lot in many ways. Reducing time commuting to and from work plus cutting down on travel time with the availability of many entry and exit points to one's place of residence makes sense.

For instance, there have been many people complaining about the traffic congestion that sees them spend a lot of unnecessary time in their vehicles and on the roads. A daily occurrence which sometimes takes the toll out of one's sanity. While some housing developments only come with one entry/exit point, there are others with direct access to highways and byways,



Bird's eye-view of a renowned and matured township in the Klang Valley that offers a good mix of old and new development projects..

some that are also linked to public transport facilities that connect easily to other townships and cities.

Living in an area with good connectivity does save a lot of time, money and stress indeed especially with the heavy traffic and increasing amount of vehicles, not to mention the rising population.

AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

While having easy access in and out of one's residential location with good connectivity to places one often visits – family, relatives and friends' homes, activity pursuit locations, major towns, etc – would be ideal, the availability and easy accessibility of public transport would help tremendously.

Especially in cases of vehicle breakdown, sudden requirement of two people having to use the family vehicle, or even in terms of tightening one's belt and resorting to cheaper means of daily commuting alternatives (if it works out cheaper than using one's car). Having an option or plan B in terms of your daily commuting arrangement is always good.

Depending on which mode of transport one uses, time and money can be conserved and spent in better ways. Moreover, using public transport usually requires one to move or take a few steps more compared to moving from one's main door to the car door and into the office building. This will surely help one increase "activity", hence, improve one's well being or even health.



Kelana Jaya LRT station.

CLOSE PROXIMITY

These days most residential townships come complete with all the necessary facilities and amenities to make one's life a lot easier. While living close by to daily conveniences with ample availability of services makes sense, there are the odd housing projects that are situated in rural and remote areas, probably attracting buyers looking for "cheaper" homes. It is true that some consumers may opt for cheaper housing for a lower mortgage rate, but their expenses will peak in other areas.

Today, most housing projects come facilitated with at least a row or two of shops – some with malls and office blocks, high-rise towers even. From neighbourhood supermarkets and grocery stores to banks, telecommunication company outlets, eateries to appease all sorts of appetites, plus specialty stores, laundrettes, wet markets, fitness and grooming centres, hawker stalls and more – these help make life a lot easier while saving costs, as residents need not travel far to make use of these services, which are so necessary in today's lifestyle.

Having saved time, petrol and money – all these "savings" can be put to better and more impactful/meaningful use as in spending quality time and money on one's family, loved ones and helping the community and such.

NEARBY WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine walking to work every day or simply having to



A BRT bus at USJ7 BRT-LRT interchange station.

take a five-minute drive up the main road to arrive at one's workplace. While for many, this would sound like a dream come true, this writer actually knows a couple of people who have made this their priority when taking up employment. Cutting time commuting and saving travel expenses are sure things but life is not all about money, and in this case, those who regularly trudge through the horrendous traffic might want to re-think and work closer to home.

Lim on the other hand brings to light the low-cost labour force who will be able to save a lot of the little they earn. He highlights the fact that living within close proximity to public transport and one's place of work makes it easy for the "industry" to provide competitive salaries without putting their staff under wage pressure. He also brings attention to the employers who subsidise or provide living quarters for their staff, which help hugely in many ways and means.

AFFORDABLE PRICE AND GOOD SIZE

Ultimately, when one talks about affordable living, the price of one's property is questioned. While Lim states that buying a "cheaper" property will help consumers reduce their mortgage arrears and debts, they might have to forgo benefits and conveniences in other

areas as mentioned above and increase their consumption in those avenues.

Looking at the choice of "affordable homes" that were first introduced, many were situated in the "backwoods" or rural outskirts, or as some call it in "No Man's Land". Some developers also trimmed their costs by cutting down on using more expensive building materials, to provide the people with more affordable homes. Another way was to offer smaller living spaces, some quipped, almost the size of a "doll's house".

No doubt, scaling down on the size of one's home, the quality of the building, and living in the middle of no where with hardly or no conveniences (where land prices are cheaper) would certainly, and in most cases, come with a lower price tag. However, it might not be the wiser choice especially in this time and age, when more developers are offering affordable homes that come with all the perks, benefits and conveniences, and some situated in the best locations too.

Follow our article next week to learn of some of the areas and housing developments that tick all the right boxes for a convenient and "affordable" lifestyle.

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The ecosystem of 'affordable'

> Cities and towns that offer efficient and effective lifestyles **PART 2**



View of part of the matured municipality of Klang.

PHOTO: WWW.SHARESINFOAU.COM

CONTINUING from our article last week where we discussed the ecosystem of affordable living, which explored ways and means to “save” when purchasing property (apart from considering the price tag), this week we examine some towns/cities that meet those elements.

To recap, these are the elements that can help one “save” when purchasing property, besides considering the “affordable” price tag. They are also required for the ecosystem to flourish and become sustainable for its inhabitants. Purchase property:

- ▶ in an area which is easily accessible;
- ▶ good connectivity served with public transport;
- ▶ close proximity to amenities and facilities – good infrastructure; and
- ▶ nearby work place and career opportunities.

According to Jason Lim (in an article he wrote for iProperty.com), three among other cities that meet the “affordable living” elements are Klang, Rawang and Semenyih. All three cities are also located approximately the same distance to the city centre, each considered

satellite cities located in the north, south and west of Kuala Lumpur, with the Titiwangsa Mountain Range on the east.

KLANG

Lim reveals that there are nine medical centres and 33 schools located in the Klang metropolis. The township is also easily accessible with five major highways, along with five KTM Komuter stations, plus terminals for buses and taxis, all which provide access and exits into Klang, making it a suitable place to reside and providing connectivity to its townfolk. The residents also benefit from the various shopping malls and retail centres like Aeon, Centro, Big, Giant, Tesco, GM, Klang Parade, Shaw Centrepoint and KSL City among others.

In terms of work opportunities, Klang is known as a commercial and manufacturing hub, not forgetting its port, supplemented by the many companies providing warehousing, distribution and import/export services. There are also a host of industrial parks within Klang located within its vicinity - Bukit



Panoramic view of the suburban city of Subang Jaya.

PHOTO: WWW.PANORAMIO.COM

Raja, Kapar, Meru, Taman Klang Utama, Sungai Buloh, Pulau Indah and Teluk Gong.

Integrated Industrial Park and Kawasan Perindustrian Kundang.

SEMENYIH

The once upcoming Semenyih has already arrived, reaching the “matured township” status as a “model city”. The once quaint town now boasts 16 medical centres and 25 primary and secondary schools plus universities. Semenyih is well connected to other major towns via the Kajang-Seremban Highway, the Kajang Silk Highway and the Lekas Highway. Hotspots and retail centres can be found in Semenyih Central Plaza, Karuma Supermarket, The Store, Tesco, Mydin and other newly established malls.

Economic activities that spur the town’s growth include plantations, processing plants and factories like Semenyih Rubber Estate, Ladang Dunedin, Ladang Geleworie and Ladang Sydney. Industrial parks located within Semenyih include One Semenyih Industrial Park, Taman Industri Mega, Kampung Rinching Hulu and Villaraya Industrial Park.

RAWANG

Similarly, there are seven hospitals and medical centres in Rawang, apart from five universities and 22 primary and secondary schools. Rawang is easily accessible via the North-South Expressway, the Guthrie Corridor Expressway, Kuala Lumpur-Kuala Selangor Expressway, and the Batang Berjuntai trunk road. Entertainment and retail outlets within this township include Rawang Central Market, NSK, Tesco, Parkson, Giant and Aeon.

Anchor industries that fuel the economy of this town are predominantly palm oil plantations and tin mining activities. Rawang is also known for its Perodua car manufacturing plant and the La Farge cement production plant.

Widely known are the industrial parks in Rawang that include the Rawang Industrial Park, Rawang

Up-style your kitchens with KubiQ Kollektion

FOR the modern family who understands that the kitchen is a significant part of one’s home and lifestyle, check out Kollektion by KubiQ.

Give kitchens a new lease of life and an exciting outcome with the Colour Kollektion from KubiQ. Home owners can personalise kitchen spaces with modular shaped kitchen furniture and accessories, plus splashes of colour ranging from aqua, magenta, yellow and metallica, combined with wood laminates.

For a cosmopolitan appeal reflective of sleek, matt, handle-less, high gloss and sometimes industrial-styled furniture that communicate a contemporary ambience, KubiQ’s Urban Kollektion is a must. Designs,

combinations and colours in this collection exude taste and style of the unconventional cosmopolitan that reek elegance and class.

While big may be better, small can be petite, yet beautiful, all-inclusive and utterly charming. At KubiQ, all one’s kitchen and wardrobe wants and needs are satiated with its “chic styling meets functional” designs. This festive time, revamp these interior spaces especially with KubiQ’s special package under Bank Rakyat’s Personal Financing for I-Home Improvement Campaign that offers low financing rates. For more information, check out KubiQ’s main showroom in Puchong, its website or selected Bank Rakyat branches.



A komuter station in Klang.

PHOTO: WWW.SKYSRPERCTY.COM

KLANG	RAWANG	SEMENYIH
Bandar Armada Putra, Bayu Villa Apartment, Golden Villa, Kemuning Aman, Apartment, Kota Pendamar, Pangsapuri Akasia, Pangsapuri Palma, Perdana Villa Apartment, Taman Mewah Jaya, Taman Pendamar Indah, Taman Sentosa, Taman Sri Sentosa and Taman Telok Gedong Indah.	Bandar Baru Kundang, Bandar Tasik Puteri, Laguna Biru, Taman Bukit Rawang Jaya, Taman Bukit Rawang Putra, Taman Jati, Taman Matang Jaya, Taman Pelangi, Taman Setia Rawang, Taman Tun Teja, Taman Velox Rawang and Tasik Biru.	Anggerik Villa, Bandar Rincing, Bandar Teknologi, Taman Asa Jaya, Taman Dusun Jaya, Taman Segaman, Taman Semenyih Impian, Taman Semenyih Indah, Taman Sri Haneco and Taman Sri Tanjung.



Sample of KubiQ’s Urban Kollektion kitchen composition.

NOTABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

On the left is a list of primary neighbourhoods and housing areas located within Klang, Rawang and Semenyih that underpin the “affordable living” elements.

Follow our column next week highlighting matured townships in other major cities and municipalities, all which help the ecosystem flourish and “save”.

▶ Email your feedback and queries to: propertyqs@thesundaily.com



'Old' and 'affordable'

> Exploring matured townships that yield with the 'affordable' tagline **PART 3**

PHOTO: WWW.SEGARIS.COM.MY

PHOTO: WWW.PANORAMIO.COM

HAVING published articles with a different perspective on the "affordable" housing concept over the last two weeks, today, we draw attention to some of the many "matured" townships that offer efficient and effective (hence, affordable) lifestyles.

To recap, matured townships offer:

- ▶ easy accessibility facilitated by highways;
- ▶ good connectivity to other area with easily accessible public transport services;
- ▶ convenience of nearby amenities and facilities (good infrastructure); and
- ▶ work and career possibilities and opportunities.

With that, life becomes so much easier, hence, those residing in such areas can save much in terms of time, stress (health), money, as well as the environment. While last week, we looked at cities that included Klang, Rawang and Semenyih, this week, we run by

some housing areas, many that have been home to family members over a number of generations.

TAMAN TUN DR ISMAIL

There are many who have been raised in this part of the Klang Valley who, after umteen years, still choose to stay put in this "all encompassing" township. From kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, to parks and vast green areas, private hospitals, "cool" shops and trendy-looking office towers, even hip F&B joints and great chill-out places and spaces. This is where many gather at weekends to cycle, jog, run and hike, even have family picnics and corporate outdoor events, or simply meet with friends over coffee and cake, or at the famed Sunday market.

Conveniences, amenities and facilities are aplenty, especially with the neighbouring matured township of Damansara Utama, Section 17 and Bandar Utama just a "stone's throw away". Residents living in TTDI (as it's known by) or

any of the adjacent matured townships mentioned, can easily share conveniences that include shopping malls, entertainment stores, public utilities outlets, banks and offices, maternity centres, fire brigade station, plus parking facilities and food courts.

Those looking to move into this all-inclusive neighbourhood, ideal for both families and working singles, have the option of buying newly-built or second-hand residential properties. Do check out Naza's TTDI Segaris, TTDI Ascencia and The Residence, along with Bellworth's The Greens, besides the older residences comprising single-storey link houses, double-storey terrace houses, semi-detached houses and bungalows. Now with the opening of the recent MRT station in TTDI, this "old" neighbourhood has regained its appeal, or as some say, it never really lost it at all.

SUBANG JAYA AND USJ

Another epic housing area that has grown to have a municipal council of its own is Subang. Developed by Sime UEP Properties Berhad, the property arm of Sime Darby, Subang has been and is still home to many in the Klang Valley. According to reports, construction first started in 1976 and by the 80s, people began moving into their residences in the SS (Sungei Way-Subang) areas. In 1997, Subang was granted municipal status, governed by the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ).

This is the township which many claim they do not need to step out of - being one that is completely facilitated, meeting all requirements, or as those in the property industry call it - "ticks all the right residential property DNA boxes". You name it and Subang Jaya and its newer USJ (United Estate Projects) neighbourhood has it - a couple of malls, neighbourhood retail stores, supermarkets and shopping centres, children's playgrounds and parks, even business hubs and office buildings and blocks, not forgetting the MPSJ stadium for sports.

Living spaces within Subang and USJ vary, from landed to high-rise, including low, medium and high-cost residential. Those looking to buy second-hand properties have much choice, likewise, those looking at newly launched residential properties in Subang/USJ.



USJ

Do look up The Dua situated in the USJ 1 vicinity, Avalon 2 at USJ Heights, The Suave Residences in SS16, as well as Tropicana Metropark and The Greens. Talk about well connected and Subang and USJ come to mind. From highways and by-ways to the convenience of the newer LRT and older KTM rail lines, there is also easy access to buses and taxis within this township. Moreover, internationally-recognised hotel chains and boutique hotels have also set up within this hip and happening area. Other matured and relatively-matured "tamans" connected nearby would be Sunway, Puchong and the long list of SS housing areas.

AMPANG

The Ampang area is steeped in history. A parliamentary constituency that sits within the Hulu Langat District - the town of Ampang is administered by the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council (MPAJ).

According to research, back in the 1850s, Ampang was first home to Chinese tin miners. The name Ampang also has relevance to mining, meaning "dam" in the Malay language. Some of the oldest neighbourhoods within the Ampang area are Ampang Town, Ampang Malay Village, Taman Dagang and Ampang New Village among others. Famous is Ampang for its "yong tau foo" and its Hakka delicacies.

Similar to the other matured townships, Ampang too is all-encompassed and complete with all sorts of amenities and facilities, plus good infrastructure. From education centres, food, shopping,

hospitals, parks, public transport hubs and across-the-board residential spaces - Ampang is pretty much complete on its own. Still, it is further facilitated by other similarly matured housing areas nearby like Setiawangsa, Cheras, Ulu Klang, Hulu Langat and bustling Kuala Lumpur city centre.

An iconic trait about the Ampang area is the number of expats and foreigners who reside here. Reason being - its ideal location, having majority of the foreign embassy offices located here, as well as its close proximity to the main city centre. Due to its large amounts of foreign dwellers, there are international and private schools, as well as many eateries and grocery shops that cater to the wants and needs of this group of residents. Property in this part of town also accommodates the wants and needs of the large communities of expat dwellers offering serviced residences, penthouses and townhouses among other residential types.

Some newer residential property development projects to look out for include the Gemo mixed development project, which is walking distance to Embassy Row, Picasso Residence, 3rd Avenue, Novo Ampang and others. For the "old soul" who simply enjoys living in matured spaces that offer "cured and cultured" environs and gardens with glorious aged trees, plus places and people with stories to tell - Ampang beckons. Other than the above, there are many similar places in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and beyond. Do take time to explore and research the many hidden treasures in Malaysia, that provide the perfect setting for a comfortable lifestyle. Follow our column over the next two weeks highlighting the new colours and trends for 2017.



Neolofa addresses guests during the exclusive preview.

Affordable Putrajaya condos to launch

IF you have not had a chance to visit Putrajaya, you should. Other than being a well and cleverly planned city and federal administrative centre of Malaysia, one could say that the environment is well maintained and offers a clean, orderly and pretty area to live in.

Putrajaya Homes Sdn Bhd, otherwise known as Putrajaya Homes or PJH, hosted an exclusive preview of its Precinct 11 condominiums recently. During the event, local actress Neolofa was introduced as the developer's official ambassador. The young actress took guests on a tour of the show units and shared details about the modern and elegant development.

Comprising four towers offering a total of 676 condominium units, other highlights made known were the design of the exterior and interior

itself, apart from facilities like an infinity pool, learner pool, jogging and cycling tracks, a gymnasium, beautifully-designed surau, and landscaped surroundings across the 11.29 acre plot.

The development project in Precinct 11 of Putrajaya is also situated in a beautifully landscaped residential enclave within close proximity to a wide range of amenities and public facilities. A huge attraction in Precinct 11 is the 41-acre Taman Saujana Hijau which gives space for many outdoor activities, exploration and fun in nature.

The two-day sales preview offered potential buyers five different interior layouts to choose from ranging from 829sq ft to 2,250sq ft. Interested parties are urged to visit the developer's website at www.pjh.com.my or keep an eye out for the official launch in January 2017.

Correction notice

We regret to inform that there was an error in our report on page 14 of our media and marketing section on Dec 20. Sunway Iskandar won the "Best Township Development" award for three consecutive years and not two consecutive years, as published. Any inconvenience is regretted.

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