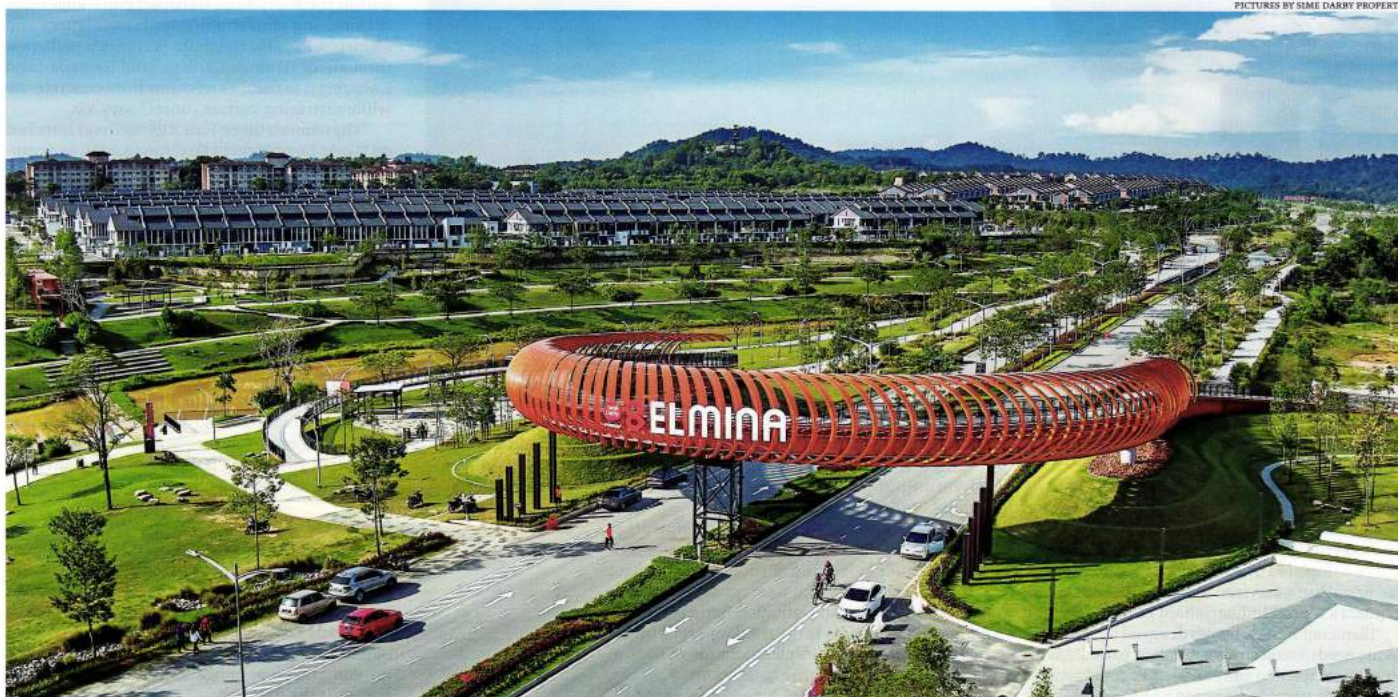


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# A holistic township built for tomorrow

BY CHAI YEE HOONG  
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**B**eing Sime Darby Property Bhd's (SDP) flagship for sustainable development, the extensive 6,500-acre City of Elmina integrated township has all the attributes that live up to its rank and more.

Among its key features are well-designed, spacious multigenerational homes, a 300-acre Central Park, 90km of jogging and cycling tracks and 480 acres of local parks. It is also adjacent to a 2,700-acre forest reserve.

This year, City of Elmina is the winner of *The Edge Malaysia* Property Development Excellence Award, which recognises successful, large-scale property developments that have made a significant impact and are catalysts for growth while continuing to contribute positively to the vibrance of the area.

SDP group managing director Datuk Azmir Merican says developing a strong township concept with meticulous planning of details is the key to building a successful project such as City of Elmina. "We must include the right product mix and right investment in infrastructure and placemaking.

"A committed and passionate team that keeps pushing the limits in innovating and driving the sustainable development agenda is also a valuable element to the success of a development. But more importantly, you must understand the market and introduce products that the customers want, and meet their wants of today while planning for their needs of tomorrow," he tells *City & Country* in an email interview.

## Growing a township

Strategically located along the Guthrie Corridor Expressway, City of Elmina comprises Bukit Subang, Denai Alam, Elmina East, Elmina West and Elmina Business Park.

Azmir shares how it all began. "The township started with the 250-acre Bukit Subang township during the Guthrie Property Development days in 2000 and progressed to the 1,000-acre Denai Alam in 2005. With the successful market reception of spacious homes in the tranquil setting of Denai Alam and rapid urban sprawl of Greater Kuala Lumpur, we began the masterplan for City of Elmina."

And the rest is history.

The mega-city township of City of Elmina was officially formed in 2013 when the 1,088-acre Elmina East was launched, and the first few phases of linked homes saw full take-up rates upon launch.

"Following that, we launched the 2,662-acre Elmina West in 2016 and achieved resounding success for its Elmina Valley homes, which front the majestic 300-acre Central Park," says Azmir.

"The latest addition to City of Elmina was the 1,500-acre Elmina Business Park in 2019, completing the occupational element in the 6,500-acre mega township master plan," he adds.

With an estimated development period of 40 years, City of Elmina boasts a healthy, growing population and expects an estimated 150,000 residents once the township is fully completed.

SDP has completed about 10,000 units of properties in City of Elmina and the township has about 45,000 residents based on an average of four occupants per household.



“We will continue to introduce new commercial and catalytic developments such as a lifestyle mall and educational institutions in City of Elmina.” — Azmir

MOHD IZWAN MOHD NAZAM/THE EDGE



Upon completion, City of Elmina is estimated to have a total of 36,000 properties featuring a healthy mix of products, including high-rise residential, commercial, double-storey link houses, semidees, Rumah Selangorku homes and industrial properties.

"We have always looked at City of Elmina as a township where consumers can purchase their forever homes or for investment purposes. Either way, they get the best value for their purchase," says Azmir.

SDP deputy COO of township development Appollo Leong (centre) with (from left) *The Edge Media* Group publisher and group CEO Datuk Ho Kay Tat, *City & Country* acting editor E Jacqui Chan, *The Edge Malaysia* editor-in-chief Kathy Fong and *EdgeProp.my* managing director and editor-in-chief Au Foong Yee

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# Where people and nature thrive symbiotically

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Taking Ariza as an example, he notes that the first phase of link homes in Elmina East, which was launched in 2013 at a starting price point of RM599,888, is estimated to have appreciated 25% in capital today.

“Records show that the value creation that we have achieved in City of Elmina is among the highest in the industry, a positive reflection of SDP’s strategic planning and investment in infrastructure and placemaking efforts at the township,” says Azmir.

Recent launches at City of Elmina include Elmina Green Five (Phase 1), comprising 136 units of 22ft by 75ft link homes. All the units were fully taken up during the launch in October and Phase 2 has limited units left.

The Twin Factories 2, launched in November and comprising 22 units of 70ft by 160ft semidee factories at Elmina Business Park, is also fully taken up.

Its latest launch this month is Ilham Residence 2. The project commands a gross development value of RM190 million and comprises 277 units of stratified link homes. Key features of this gated-and-guarded development are its innovative design whereby each home is fitted with solar panels and come with curated back lanes as well as 1.3km interconnected jogging and cycling tracks, 22 unique facilities within the neighbourhood and multi-tier security features.

And there is more to come, according to Azmir. “We will continue to introduce new commercial and catalytic developments such as a lifestyle mall and educational institutions in City of Elmina,



An aerial view of Elmina Valley 3 and Elmina Valley 4

The Elmina Rainforest Knowledge Centre promotes forestry research, education and conservation



The Elmina Living Collection Nursery houses endangered, rare and threatened tree species from the nearby forest reserve before they are replanted in the township



and we are looking forward to the completion of the Damansara-Shah Alam Elevated Expressway (DASH), which is scheduled for next year, to provide added accessibility and convenience to our township.”

Among the new additions provided to enhance value for homebuyers at City of Elmina is the Clubhouse at Elmina East, which will house more than 20 family-centric facilities including aged day care, childcare, swimming pool, cafés, badminton courts and multipurpose hall. It is targeted to be completed in 2023.

A lifestyle mall is also underway. It will feature 215,000 sq ft of retail space when completed and front the 35-acre Urban Park.

Meanwhile, SDP is in talks with several parties to bring in private/international school operators, as well as other catalytic commercial projects to the township, with more integrated developments that feature innovative living concepts in the pipeline.

## The wellness way of life

City of Elmina was conceptualised based on eight pillars of wellness — physical, emotional, mental, community, family, intellectual, occupational and environmental wellness — to promote a holistic way of life.

“At City of Elmina, instead of focusing on just bricks-and-mortar houses, we looked at the idea of a home in a more holistic way, beyond the four walls. With Elmina’s 8 Pillars of Wellness in mind, we created an environment in which families and the community come first. These pillars guide our residents to not just turn houses into homes but more importantly, transform City of Elmina into a vibrant township with a close-knit community,” Azmir explains.

Epitomising a vision of an idyllic living environment where people and nature thrive symbiotically, SDP designed the township to embrace the existing forests and waterways to conserve the environment.

To further its aim as a sustainable development,

City of Elmina also has its own Elmina Rainforest Knowledge Centre to promote forestry research, education and conservation; Elmina Living Collection Nursery to collect endangered, rare and threatened tree species from the nearby forest reserve and plant them within the township; as well as the first inclusive playground in Malaysia, designed and built in collaboration with Unicef to promote equal play and inclusivity among children.

## Promising outlook

Despite the global pandemic, demand for properties at City of Elmina has remained resilient. “In fact, City of Elmina has had one of its best years in 2021, with an estimated gross sales achievement of more than 1,100 units,” says Azmir.

He attributes the success to strategic launch planning, innovation and adaptation to market needs, by launching homes with better layouts optimised for the post-pandemic way of life.

“Key to our strong take-up rates is our quick adoption of sales strategies like introducing the online guided sales experience, [our in-house developed] Online Booking System [which allows homebuyers to browse, select and make payment for their preferred units online], Virtual Sales Gallery for property browsing from the comfort of their homes, and digital product launch using platforms such as Facebook Live,” he says.

In terms of his outlook for the property market, Azmir has this to say, “We foresee an increase in transactions before the Home Ownership Campaign (HOC) ends on Dec 31, 2021, coupled with the low interest rate environment. These government-led initiatives have had a positive impact on our business, and we expect similar campaigns in the future to also contribute to our performance greatly.”

“Though we expect demand for properties to reduce in the first quarter of next year due to the discontinuation of the HOC, we expect buying momentum to increase in the following quarters,” he adds.



An artist’s impression of Elmina Green Five, Phase 1 of which has been fully sold and Phase 2 has limited units left

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