

Making Space for Sustainability

For Sime Darby Property, being intentional with placemaking is a critical step in safeguarding biodiversity, promoting inclusivity and reimagining spaces for a sustainable future.

As it is, the world's population is on an uptrend. According to the United Nations ("UN"), there were eight billion people on the planet late last year - up from 2.5 billion in 1950.

And here are some more glaring statistics: According to the World Bank, more than 50% of the world's population or 4.4 billion people today reside in cities - and this trend is showing no signs of abating. Experts anticipate that by 2050, the urban population may very likely more than double in size, with roughly seven out of 10 people living in cities.

While the rising global population is a boon for human capital and economic growth, it also magnifies the hurdles in ensuring inclusive and sustainable development in the future. This planet is all we have - if things continue the way they are, we will have depleted all the resources and space currently at our disposal.

Keep in mind that cities are major contributors of greenhouse gas emissions and consume close to two-thirds of global energy, putting further strain on land and natural resources.

Urban expansion in tropical cities is a major contributor to the loss of biodiversity. Urbanisation resulted in habitat changes, fragmentations, reduced environmental qualities, and micro-climatic alterations, which led to a decrease in species diversity, populations, and ultimately increase the extinction risk of flora and fauna. In many cases, biodiversity loss have cascading effects on ecosystem functioning, including impacts on pollination, pest control, and nutrient cycling.

SUSTAINABILITY STARTS AT YOUR DOORSTEP

Adopting the **triple bottom line** approach of People, Planet and Prosperity to sustainability from the get-go was certainly not a decision made by Sime Darby Property on a whim. Thanks to its Purpose in multiplying value, the real estate company has cemented its position as an organ-



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isation that emphasises innovation, sustainability and attaining environmental, social and governance ("ESG") goals in all its endeavours transcending property development.

"Our Purpose guides us to be a **Value Multiplier for People, Businesses, Economies, and the Planet**. What kind of buildings and townships do we wish to create? What kind of neighbourhoods do we desire to live in? What kind of future do we see for the world, and how can we contribute to making that vision a reality? These are the central questions of sustainability," said its Group Managing Director, Dato' Azmir Merican.

For the property developer, there are many different and progressive ways to up the real estate development game and at the same time, drive sustainability. But more often than not, placemaking and its role in spreading value for people, prosperity and the planet is often overlooked.

Placemaking is a people-centered approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. If executed correctly, placemaking can increase the value of a public space by managing it in an environmentally responsible way.

Placemaking can go beyond a place for people to gather - it can serve as a platform where people experience how

sustainability is being applied by the materials used, waste and energy consumption and the use of nature based solutions. The experience could encourage people to live sustainably and raise the expectations for others to follow.

Today, industry players are taking the real estate game up a few notches and adding value to the development chain by creating quality places where communities can live, work, play and learn. Sime Darby Property is already on that train.

"We have a strong commitment to developing projects that are both people and environmentally friendly and doing it with integrity and care. As a **'Force for Good'**, we seek to safeguard the needs of future generations, while recognising the importance of community cohesion, well-being and happiness," said Dato' Azmir.

To this end, Sime Darby Property regards placemaking as an integral component in the design of a successful township. "Any township gains life through placemaking. It may not be the only best solution to nurture nature and communities, but Sime Darby Property keeps its mind open to innovative solutions that would fast-track the creation of future living that enhances the quality of life, with respect for nature."

UNLEASHING THE POWER OF PLACE

Across continents, 60% of consumers surveyed in the 2021 Global Sustainability Study ranked sustainability as a crucial criterion for their purchases. This trend is expected to continue as more young people enter the housing market as both purchasers and renters.

On top of location, price, accessibility and overall convenience, today's homebuyers prefer to invest in taking shelter (literally) in a neighbourhood that is in tune with nature and where social potential is aplenty. Sime Darby Property excels in this department by proactively delivering on customer trends and integrating feedback into its business decisions.

The Leaf in its Serenia City township, for one, is an epitome of placemaking and spotlights the company's property-level approach to ESG.

Consisting of four parks namely Central Park, Serenity Park, Aman North Park and Aman South Park, The Leaf, a landscape masterplan project spanning across 85.2 acres, incorporates placemaking elements including guarded neighbourhoods, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design ("CPTED") features as well as eco-friendly transportation routes.

The Leaf demonstrates Sime Darby Property's vision to loop the serene, historical value of the landscape together with the community by leveraging sustainable and innovative placemaking.

This mega initiative did not go to waste. Recently, Sime Darby Property emerged as a double winner at the Malaysian Institute of Planners Planning Excellence Awards 2022 ("MIPPEA 2022").

The company bagged the Silver award in the Private Sector category of the 'Placemaking and Public Space Award', which recognises projects that have successfully improved the physical or environmental quality of a development area, in turn contributing towards the economic and social wellbeing of a community.





On top of that, Sime Darby Property's Inclusive Playground in the City of Elmina, the first of its kind in Malaysia, bagged the Bronze award for the 'Inclusive Design Award' category. Launched in partnership with UNICEF Malaysia, the Inclusive Playground aims to welcome people of all abilities to play, learn and grow together and was designed in collaboration with critical end-users such as children with and without disabilities, parents, grandparents, and technical specialists.

It is however worth mentioning that this is not all the City of Elmina is known for. The 6,500-acre township showcases Sime Darby Property's largest rewilding efforts which aims to restore ecosystem health by protecting core wild or wilderness areas and conserve biodiversity.

practices are implemented in our townships. We understand that our role is to meet the demand of the property market, and also help regenerate urban biodiversity. This partnership supports our journey as we bridge the gap between property development and biodiversity conservation," said Dato' Azmir.

By 2040, a total of 210,000 trees, of which 10% will consist of trees that are assessed as Endangered, Rare and Threatened ("ERT") by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, are expected to be planted throughout the City of Elmina. Almost 50,000 trees, in which 6,579 of them are trees with high conservation values, have been planted in the township so far, adding to the existing trees across Sime Darby Property's developments over the past decade.



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For that purpose, the real estate player joined forces with the Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre ("TRCRC") to run the conservation programmes at the Elmina Rainforest Knowledge Centre ("ERKC") with funding support from Yayasan Sime Darby.

The ERKC and its neighbouring Elmina Living Collection Nursery ("ELCN") make it possible for both Sime Darby Property to have a steady supply of native forest trees for planting in its townships and outside parties to carry out forestry projects.

"Through our partnership with TRCRC, we have translated the learnings into our day-to-day management systems to ensure that good biodiversity



The conservation programmes at the ERKC will ensure a steady supply of forest trees for planting in Sime Darby Property's townships



parc will enable sustainable lifestyles, foster social support networks, and create resilient communities

In the same vein, Sime Darby Property acknowledges the power of engaging communities to create sustainability impact. Hence, it is forging ahead with the revolutionary Project Arc ("parc") initiative in Subang Jaya.

A sustainably driven community hub developed to become a space to harness the collective good and accentuate the values of people, planet and prosperity, parc will serve to enable sustainable lifestyles, foster social support networks and develop resilient communities once it is fully open tentatively this year.

With the young and vibrant population of Subang Jaya serving as its backbone, parc will be the epicentre for innovation and change, by driving greater adoption of sustainable practices such as recurring recycling efforts, responsible consumption habits, zero waste practices, and better collaboration between individuals, families, and communities.

Through urban agricultural initiatives, the installation of renewable energy systems, and other initiatives, the organisation seeks to foster greater self-sufficiency and resilience within the neighbourhood while also fostering healthy social capital.

"Our efforts to push the Sime Darby Property brand closer towards the new paradigm of value creation is aligned with our purpose of enabling communities, the environment, businesses, and the economy to co-exist harmoniously and thrive for generations to come. We will continue maximising the positive impact from our resources, skills and influence in building stronger and more resilient communities," said Dato' Azmir.

FROM NET ZERO TO NET IMPACT

It's impossible to deny that the property market is a mature and highly competitive one, with industry players finding the value of their offerings under pressure.

Understandably, the priority of companies is to ensure revenue and profit margin growth, but given the multi-faceted nature of property development, companies are well-positioned to meet the sustainable goals envisioned by the UN.

"Sime Darby Property has steadfastly introduced and embedded sustainability initiatives, goals and targets to improve our business operations while creating a legacy of positive economic, social and low-carbon environmental impacts," said Dato' Azmir.

"We are very proud of everything we have achieved along our journey towards creating positive social impact and values to the communities in which we operate as well as for the coming generations. Our efforts and resulting achievements will only push us to do better as we continue to multiply value for People, Businesses, Economies, and the Planet," added Dato' Azmir.