HD City & Country: Property Briefs

BY Compiled by Amy Tan

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Launch of The Pall Mall Collection

The Pall Mall Collection (above), located in St James, is a conversion of the landmark Pall Mall office building into a series of upscale private residences with an art gallery on the ground floor. The building's original façade will be retained. There are only four apartments within the building, and comprise a mix of three- and four-bedroom units sized from 1,762 to 2,575 sq ft (excluding the 549 sq ft outdoor space).

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The project, launched by Amazon **Property** and marketed by Knight Frank, is open for **sale**. The **property** is in the vicinity of landmarks such as Buckingham Palace, St James's Palace, Fortnum & Mason, The National Gallery and The Ritz **Hotel**. The **property** will be completed in January 2015. Unit prices start from £5.9 million ($12.04 million).

Private home sales up 18% in October

The private housing market picked up pace in October, with sales of new homes rising 18% from the previous month. The improved sales came as more units were launched for **sale**. A total of 649 units were launched in October, up from the 514 units launched in the previous month. Sales in October were driven by Marina One Residences, which **sold** 334 units at a median price of $2,228 psf.

Existing launches such as Coco Palms and Lakeville also managed to clear units without developers having to offer discounts, with 34 units (median price $1,039 psf) and 32 units ($1,340 psf) **sold** respectively. "Instead of launching new projects, developers focused their efforts on clearing units from existing projects," says ERA Realty's key executive officer, Eugene Lim.

According to URA, there are a total of 19,270 unsold units, including some 6,542 launched but unsold units in the market. "October sales numbers provide yet another piece of evidence that the total debt servicing ratio (TDSR) measures introduced 15 months ago has served to stabilise the sales volume of new homes," says Desmond Sim, head of CBRE Research, Southeast Asia.

Record leasing **transactions** in 3Q2014

The **residential** leasing market was buoyant in 3Q2014, with a new record of 17,775 **transactions**, according to URA data. This implies a 15.2% increase q-o-q and 11% growth y-o-y. However, rents of private **residential** homes continued to soften by 0.8% q-o-q after a dip of 0.6% in 2Q2014, says Alan Cheong, head of research at Savills Singapore in a report.

On a yearly basis, rents declined by 2.5%. Rents of non-landed **residential** properties dropped by 1.1% in 3Q2014, compared with the 0.2% decline in 2Q2014. Rents in the Core Central Region (CCR) fell by the widest margin of 1.9%, followed by the Rest of Central Region (RCR), which weakened slightly by 0.2%, while rents in the Outside Central Region (OCR) saw no change. Similarly, the average monthly rent of high-end condos tracked by Savills continued its downward slide since mid-2011, with average monthly rents falling by 2.2% q-o-q to $4.66 psf.

At end-3Q2014, there were a total of 302,510 available private homes across the **island**, an increase of 1.5% from 297,998 units at end-June. The total number of vacant private homes stood at 21,569, an increase of 1.4% q-o-q. This brings the vacancy rate of private **residential** units to 7.1% in 3Q2014. The rate has been increasing since 2Q2013. "With leasing numbers still rising strongly, landlord sentiment will be supported," says Savills' Cheong. "Although rents may soften somewhat, we are still not too concerned about the onslaught of supply." He reckons a total of 4,218 new homes will be added to the existing stock by end-2014, with another 20,200 units expected to be completed in 2015.

Malaysians top foreign buyers in Singapore

About 82% of **transactions** in 3Q2014 from Singaporean permanent residents and foreigners came from the top four markets: Malaysians (28%), mainland **Chinese** (27%), Indonesians (14%) and Indians (13%), says DTZ in a research report on Nov 20.

The proportion of mainland **Chinese** buyers declined 3% q-o-q in 3Q2014, according to DTZ. The 200 units they **purchased** were the lowest quarterly figures achieved since the height of the global financial crisis in 1Q2009. The slowdown in private home **purchases** from mainland **Chinese** could be attributed to their return to their home market after the **Chinese** government unwound some of its **property** cooling measures.

The drop in private home **purchases** by mainland **Chinese** means that Malaysians emerged as the largest non-Singaporean buyers in 3Q2014, with 214 units transacted. The number of **transactions** by Indonesians and Indians was 106 and 95 units respectively, over the same quarter.

Unlike the Singaporean buyers who had focused on properties in the secondary market, foreigners from mainland **China**, Indonesia and Malaysia dominated the primary market sales.

CapitaLand unveils JV project in Indonesia

CapitaLand has entered into a 50-50 joint-venture agreement with a subsidiary of Credo **Group** (CG) to develop an integrated development in Central Jakarta. The development, CapitaLand's first in Indonesia, will comprise a Grade-A office tower, mid- to high-end **residential** units, serviced residences and supporting retail space, with a total gross floor area (GFA) of 430,560 sq ft. Construction is expected to commence in 2015 and end in 2018, with the total development cost estimated at $220 million.

Two new GLS sites up for **sale**

Two sites in Sengkang and Yishun, which will yield about 700 homes in total, have been put up for **sale** by tender. One of the 99-year leasehold sites is an executive condo (EC) parcel in Anchorvale Crescent, Sengkang, while the other is a mixed **residential**-cum-**commercial** land parcel in Yishun Avenue 4.

The **site** at Anchorvale Crescent is within walking distance of the Farmway LRT station, and has a total area of 187,830 sq ft. With a GFA of 563,490 sq ft and a plot ratio of 3.0, it can yield some 525 EC units. Currently, four EC projects in the neighbourhood of Sengkang are under development; they have not been launched for **sale**. These projects could yield an estimated 2,320 units, says Nicholas Mak of SLP International.

Meanwhile, the mixed-use **site** in Yishun Avenue 4 spans 105,054 sq ft of land with a plot ratio of 2.8. It can be developed into 294,151 sq ft of GFA, with about 180 homes, as well as a **commercial** podium. The **site** is located within a 10-minute walk to the Khatib MRT station and is the first GLS land parcel where the developer is required to use prefabricated prefinished volumetric construction technology.

New York's Fifth Avenue most expensive retail rents

According to Colliers International's global retail report on Nov 18, the world's most expensive retail rents can be found at New York's Fifth Avenue, which recorded rents of US$3,550 psf per year. **Hong Kong**'s Queen's Road Central and Canton Road (Tsim Sha Tsui) were in second and third places, at US$2,073 and US$2,011 psf per year respectively. Singapore's Orchard Road ranks seventh with retail rents at US$348 psf per year.

Sydney by Crown to launch

Australian **property company** Crown **Group** launched its new A$250 million ($280 million) tower Sydney by Crown (right) on Nov 22 at Regent Singapore. Located at 161 Clarence Street in Sydney's CBD, the freehold project is designed by renowned Koichi Takada Architects. The 25-storey building is within walking distance to Sydney's new waterfront precinct at Barangaroo, new Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wynyard station and Darling Harbour.

The project is expected to be completed in 2017 and will comprise 220 one-bedroom suites, one- to three-bedroom apartments, one- and two-bedroom plus study units and penthouses. Unit sizes range from 505 to 1,485 sq ft with average prices of A$2,000 psf. CBRE is the sole marketing agent for the project. According to Stephen Ho, director of international project marketing in Asia, only 20 units are available for sale in Singapore. — Compiled by Amy Tan

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