

SE Top Stories  
 HD **More players tussling for property dollar here**

BY Lynette Khoo  
 WC 874 words  
 PD 18 August 2014  
 SN Business Times Singapore  
 SC STBT  
 LA English  
 CY (c) 2014 Singapore Press Holdings Limited

LP  
 Aussie **company** opens sales office; **China firm** launches Iskandar project

[SINGAPORE] The tussle for Singaporeans' **property** dollar looks set to intensify with the opening of a sales office here by Australian player Walker Corporation and the initial launch of Princess Cove by Guangzhou-based R&F Properties over the weekend.

TD

Walker Corp, one of Australia's largest private developers, said that the 1,700 square foot office in Liat Towers on Orchard Road would promote its domestic projects and its sole project in Malaysia, Senibong Cove, which it is developing with Iskandar Waterfront Holdings.

**Group** executive chairman Lang Walker told BT: "The opening of the sales office in Singapore will be very important to our Senibong project and it gives us a foothold in the Singapore market." But the billionaire has no interest in developing homes in Singapore where he thinks the market is mature and "**(residential)** products are very expensive".

More Singaporeans are snapping up properties across the Causeway, where prices are sometimes one-third of that back home. Going by central bank estimates in May, slightly more than half of real **estate** investments abroad went into Malaysia last year.

Interest from overseas buyers for Senibong Cove, the 220-acre gated project with a marina and retail precinct, has grown significantly with Singaporeans accounting for over 70 per cent of total overseas buyers, Mr Walker observed. Overseas buyers make up 40 per cent of sales in phases two and three, up from 20 per cent in phase one. Mr Walker noted that buyers in phase one are seeing "an 80 per cent uplift in value" of their properties when compared to prices in phase three. Apartments in phase three are going for averages of between RM670 (S\$265) per square foot to RM860 psf.

Also in the works is an adjoining 16-ha Senibong Hill, which Mr Walker is developing with the Wong family that is behind Singapore's fashion brand Charles & Keith. According to Mr Walker, both sides decided to work together after buying the adjacent plots. Their master plan for 2,000 units of landed homes and high-rise condos - with a gross development value of RM2 billion - will be unveiled in October.

Several other overseas developers have set up shop here to tap continued demand from Singaporeans. Last month, Guangzhou's R&F Properties opened its sales gallery at East Coast Road to showcase the initial 3,200 units of Princess Cove's phase one in Iskandar.

Over the weekend, R&F launched three out of the 15 blocks in phase one, with prices starting from slightly above RM1,100 psf for a studio and above RM900 psf for a dual-key three-bedder. The **Hong Kong**-listed developer acquired the 116 acres of land near the first link in Johor Bahru for RM4.5 billion in December and is said to be planning as many as 30,000 homes in total.

R&F also held its first seminar here yesterday, where Ho **Chin** Soon, **property** analyst and map-maker for Iskandar Development, spoke on the potential of Iskandar in a ballroom packed with over 150 people at Village **Hotel** Katong.

Meanwhile, despite concern over potential oversupply of homes in Iskandar, Mr Walker said that he was taking a long-term view. The Senibong project spans 8-10 years, during which one should expect peaks and troughs, he added. When completed, the US\$1.3 billion project would have more than 8,500 villas and high-rise apartments.

While there is bound to be competition, there are differences between the Australian and the **Chinese** models, Mr Walker continued. While the **Chinese** developers are building ahead of demand, Senibong Cove is "building on natural demand" as it needs to move at least 30 per cent of units in each phase before building.

"The **Chinese** are coming to Malaysia and other parts of the world with massive projects where the plot ratio is in the 6-10, whereas Senibong Cove is at 3.2," Mr Walker added. More than half of Senibong homes are low-rise landed units, while most **Chinese** projects tend to be fully high-rise condos.

Walker Corp is well-remembered for breathing life back into heritage sites in Sydney. After listing the **company**, Mr Walker **sold** control to Australand in 1999 to focus on his private **property** portfolio but retained the rights to reuse the **company** name after five years. In 2003, Mr Walker re-established Walker Corp.

Mr Walker has A\$12 billion (S\$14 billion) worth of development in the pipeline in Australia, including some 25,000 **residential** units and 450-ha of industrial landbank. This is why he is sitting on the sidelines for further land-banking since "it is hard to beat the **Chinese** with their cheque books".

The **group** is also undertaking Australia's largest **commercial** development, Collins Square in Melbourne's CBD, in which the Kuok **Group** was its partner until 2-3 years ago. Walker Corp is now developing the project on its own.

**ART** Mr Walker: 'The opening of the sales office in S'pore will be very important to our Senibong project ...'  
- PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

**CO** gzrfpc : Guangzhou R&F Properties Co Ltd | iswhsb : Iskandar Waterfront Holdings Sdn. Bhd. | walcor : Walker Corporation Ltd

**IN** i501 : Building Construction | i85 : Real Estate Transactions | iconst : Construction | icre : Real Estate/Construction | ireest : Real Estate

**NS** c182 : Asset Transactions | c24 : Capacity/Facilities | cprdp : Facility Openings | c18 : Ownership Changes | cactio : Corporate Actions | ccat : Corporate/Industrial News | ncat : Content Types | nfact : Factiva Filters | nfcpin : FC&E Industry News Filter

**RE** singp : Singapore | austr : Australia | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | seasiaz : Southeast Asia

**PUB** Singapore Press Holdings Limited

**AN** Document STBT000020140817ea8i00004