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## Sixth Sense

Sonu's next exclusive development



Redefining



Chiang Mai



Krabi's



Schematic:

# REDEFINING THE CONDO

BY JULES KAY

With no immediate sign of either swift or sweeping changes to the FBA, the trend towards condominium development continues to drive markets in Thailand's main resort destinations. New projects are constantly being launched, which means that competition is increasingly fierce, particularly in terms of price and the provision of on-site amenities. At the high-end, however, some developers are taking things a step further by offering innovative, low-density designs that blend and benefit from their surroundings. In fact, the demand for low impact, environmentally-sensitive resort and residential concepts has created something of a niche market for high-end developers in Thailand.

Today's investors increasingly attribute value to factors such as privacy, peace and natural surroundings. But until recently, such considerations were not primary in the condominium sector. That's now changing fast and a new breed of condominium projects in Thailand aims to provide more than simple investment returns.

MODENA, located in Pranburi on the Gulf of Thailand just 30 kilometres south of Hua Hin boasts direct beach frontage, and will enjoy spectacular ocean and mountain views from its 27 freehold condominiums.

Developed by Sukhothai Capital Co. Ltd., MODENA was designed by South East Asia's celebrated GFAB team and features one, two and three bedroom units, plus four pool villas; all nestled in a peaceful landscape of palm trees and tropical greenery. "We have tried to include functions that on the one hand are typical of a resort, but without the hard sell," explained Gary Fell, the project's head concept designer. "Circulation is brought into a public arena with water features and over-sized staircases to encourage chatting and socializing. Within the condominiums, we have created open airy spaces where cooking, eating and lounging exist in one space, which also has views and aspect. The material selection is definitely not urban

but tempered towards what we might expect in a beach setting, albeit one with style."

World class resorts like the Six Senses and Alcora have certainly influenced both the designs and types of investor attracted to Pranburi. The location appeals to both Thai and foreign investors and the relatively remote setting guarantees spacious, natural surroundings.

Another project with a range of innovative designs in Pranburi is Prana Luxe by the Supharat Group, an elegant beach-side community with 43 upscale tropical villas set on 16 rai of coconut plantation. The contemporary tropical architecture features elements such as custom glazed tiling, teak doors and windows, as well as unique and distinctive roof forms inspired by the oceanside setting. The designers have also kept the villa designs deliberately light and flexible so as to allow owners to add their own personal touches during construction. There's a choice of three or four-bedroom homes and privacy is a priority, but the on-site amenities also allow for a more social lifestyle with a club house, recreational areas and central pool available for residents to use.

MODENA and other developments like it may inspire a change in direction for condo developments in Thailand as lifestyle considerations take precedence.

"One doesn't consciously set out to create a lifestyle," continued Gary Fell, "rather, one designs a series of living spaces that express an attitude. We have tried to develop a design that encourages that through material selection, spatial layout etc. But in many ways this is merely a complement to the attitude people arrive with, namely that they are away from the pressures of a workday week and are able to relax, kick off their shoes and enjoy what is popularly known as 'resort living'."

"The space available for each unit is considerably less than that of a villa and thus the challenge is to create the sense of openness and space typically found in one of our villa developments," explained Gary Fell. "In the case of MODENA we have aspects and views that differ considerably as one rises through the building,

Design and use of space are important considerations for condominium buyers.



**TODAY'S INVESTORS INCREASINGLY ATTRIBUTE VALUE TO FACTORS SUCH AS PRIVACY, PEACE AND NATURAL SURROUNDINGS. BUT UNTIL RECENTLY, SUCH CONSIDERATIONS WERE NOT PRIMARY IN THE CONDOMINIUM SECTOR.**

The upper apartments have views to the hill behind and are every bit as beautiful as those towards the ocean."

As construction in the major resort locations like Phuket, Pattaya and Koh Samui becomes increasingly dense, less renowned destinations like the area around Hua Hin offer a peaceful alternative for investors seeking a greater sense of privacy and exclusivity. The nearby Pranburi Forest Park personifies the area's natural ambience, a large protected area that includes a kilometre stretch of pine-leaf beach and mangrove nature trails.

"Another distinguishing factor is accessibility," says Robert Collins, managing director of Agency and Investment for Savills (Thailand) Ltd, who will be professional management consultants for the project. "With Hua Hin and Pranburi accessible by car, this opens up markets in the Gulf of Thailand to residents in Bangkok. The landscape south of Hua Hin is seen as the evolution of the southerly external market and already has a huge following both locally and from repeat international visitors.

Pranburi and other less visited locations expected to grow. Demand is already evident. With strictly enforced set-back and planning regulations, agents and developers feel that the area is off to a very good start.