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YUEN LONG

Fast track to growth

People continue to flock to the area with the construction of numerous housing projects in the past decade

Jimmy Chow

Yuen Long has the trappings of a modern city filled with yuppies and young families after a decade of non-stop development since the completion of the West Rail Line and the early phases of Yoho Town.

On its outskirts lie several low-density residential developments and many modernised village houses, ideal for those pursuing a lifestyle away from the city. As Yuen Long South develops, the district will remain a major source of housing supply before the North East New Territories (NENT) new development area takes shape. This area will eventually be absorbed into a huge new town of 860,000 people.

In the past 12 months, at least seven new housing projects, featuring more than 3,000 units across Yuen Long, have gone on sale. These include The Spectra, Twin Regency, Park Vista (Phase 1A), La Mansion, The Parkhill, Yuccie Square and Domus.

Residential projects likely to go on sale this year include Grand Yoho, Park Yoho (Park Vista Phases 1B and 1C), and the 36-house project Casa Regalia, providing nearly 1,600 units.



The next two phases of Sun Hung Kai Properties' Park Vista project in Yuen Long are expected to go on sale this year. Photo: Edward Wong

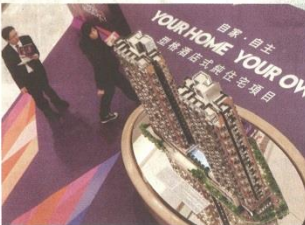
Yuen Long has provided the largest pool of housing supply for the past six years. Rating and Valuation Department (RVD) statistics suggest. From 2010 to 2015, 11,972 residential units were built, and the RVD has projected the completion of 5,274 units this year, which would make Yuen Long the top supplier. "In early 2015, best-selling projects were geared to young couples and newlyweds, who are mainly first-time buyers," says Perry Fong, a senior sales director at Centaline Property Agency. "But in recent months, the market has shifted from studios and one-bedroom apartments to meet the needs from families for two- and three-bedroom apartments."



The newest projects on the market that comprise more than 1,000 units have better clubhouse facilities, a bigger communal garden and more amenities. They cater more to families with children. Because there are more residents to share the maintenance and running costs in larger residential complexes, Fong says property management fees tend to be lower. "Due to a larger inventory and existing mortgage restrictions, sales at recent launches have slowed. It will probably take a longer while for the market to absorb the current inventory for sale," he says. The Planning Department indicated in 2014 that



Cheung Kong Property's Yuccie Square in Yuen Long. Photo: David Wong



A model of Twin Regency development is on display at Yoho Town in Yuen Long. Photo: K.Y. Cheng

consultations on proposals to develop four new development areas in Yuen Long containing 123,800 residential units would be held over the next few years. The proposals include a review of the existing land use in Kam Tin South and Pat Heung, a plan to build a new town in Hung Shui Kiu, a feasibility study on developing Wang Chau, and a preliminary plan to develop Yuen Long South. Yuen Long South is located near the well-developed Yuen Long New Town and the proposed Hung Shui Kiu new development area to its south. The government has drawn up a draft outline to create three residential zones on the 223 hectares of land presently dominated by open-storage operators, as well as building shopping, open storage and community facilities. The three-stage community engagement was completed on April 1 this year, following two earlier rounds in 2013 and 2014. The latest plan contains proposals to build 27,700 units accommodating up to 85,000 people in three major residential zones: "Urban Living", a high-density zone close to Yuen Long New Town; "Leisure Living", a medium-density zone; and "Garden Community", a low-density zone.

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PERRY FONG, SENIOR SALES DIRECTOR, CENTALINE PROPERTY AGENCY

Forty per cent of the new homes in Yuen Long South will be private, the rest are intended for public housing. The other two zones, the "Employment Belt" and "Green Zone", are for storage and workshop operators, and farmland, respectively.

The development of Yuen Long South is another decade-long project that involves lots of consultation, land resumption, compensation and relocation, not to mention resistance from affected land owners and occupiers, says Chiu Kam-kuen, the general practice division chairman at the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS).

He adds that the government needs to adopt a comprehensive and sustainable land-planning strategy to achieve a better land-use balance. The HKIS is studying how to streamline the processing of applications for land-use conversion as one of the ways to accelerate citywide development and regeneration," Chiu says. "The government aims to create self-contained communities in future new towns. The addition of commercial floor space, which could be retail, office or industrial, in the latest plan, is meant to create local job opportunities for residents."

However, he says the strategic role of Yuen Long South as a sub-region has yet to be explored, adding that commercial land uses are more attuned to market forces, instead of government handpicking.