



No more en bloc efforts

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by **Cheow Xin Yi**

SINGAPORE - It was an en bloc hopeful at the height of the 2007 property boom - and Mandarin Gardens (picture) was also one of the many battlegrounds between residents for and against a collective sale.

But last week, the collective sales committee of the 1,080-unit condominium estate officially decided to call it a day.

MediaCorp understands that letters posted on notice boards at the East Coast estate have informed residents that the Mandarin Gardens Collective Sales Committee (MGCSC) - formed since October 2007 - has been disbanded.

The letter, which MediaCorp obtained a copy of, cited unfavourable market conditions as well as giving new residents an opportunity to voice their opinions for a collective sale as reasons for the MGCSC's decision to resign.

"The MGCSC has largely been inactive since the beginning of the global financial crisis back in 2008," according to the letter.

"Most importantly, MGCSC has since had resignations either by members who had sold off their unit or resigned due to personal reasons that makes it impossible to continue as a committee."

MediaCorp also understands that the collective sales committee of the 1,093-unit Bayshore Park, another seafront condominium nearby, had ceased to exist earlier on this year after its formation was challenged by some residents.

Such sales committee are ad-hoc groups formed by residents to explore the potential of an en bloc sale, which are different from the management councils appointed during annual meetings to run the estate.

Credo Real Estate managing director Karamjit Singh said it was very common at the height of the property fever for developments, even those less than 10-years-old, to contemplate going en bloc.

"At the moment, the market's not as hot as it was in 2007, so it comes as no surprise that some developments are choosing to pause and monitor the market," he added.

"Large projects like Mandarin Gardens are in the billion-dollar league and would probably stand a much better chance of success when sentiments are much better than they are today," said Mr Singh.

Still, Mr Singh noted that en bloc sale can be feasible for some projects "even when the market is not extremely hot". This would include older and smaller developments that has the necessary push factors for owners to sell and is just a matter of adjusting expectations.

One such example would be the sale of Dragon Mansion to Roxy-Pacific Holdings at \$100.8 million, the first collective sale this year.

Meanwhile, real estate lecturer Nicholas Mak feels that bigger projects are usually harder

to go en bloc simply due to the higher number of signatures required to get the go-ahead. "One of the reasons why they would resist is that it is very difficult now to find replacement units that are so big in that area," he added.

Mandarin Gardens residents MediaCorp spoke to are also not hopeful for the prospect of a new sales committee set up anytime soon, with some being "delighted" with the status quo.

"En bloc is really meant for hopeless estates, and it is better that people soon realise that it shouldn't apply to magnificent estates where people are happy and having a community of life," said one Mandarin Gardens resident, who declined to be named.

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