

by Y Sanjutha



"EVER charming, ever new, when will the landscape tire the view?" asked John Dyer, a Welsh painter and poet in the early 1700s. Anyone standing on the open-air terrace of The View Rooftop Bar in GTower would answer a resounding, "Never".

While rooftop lounges may not have been Dyer's inspiration when he penned the quote, they have altered the landscape in real estate, turning under-utilised rooftops into revenue-generating hotspots.

Profit aside, rooftop bars have become destinations in their own right, creating a halo effect for the property while shaping its real estate image, brand and positioning.

Increasingly, developers are programming the use of the rooftop into ground-up projects, while outmoded properties such as Menara KH (formerly Menara Promet) and Hotel Equatorial Kuala Lumpur have cleverly used this strategy to rejuvenate the properties' positioning.

Menara KH houses the only rooftop bar in Malaysia that sits on a helipad – the Heli Lounge Bar – which opened in January. The Equatorial, which closed after 39 years to facilitate an extreme makeover, is believed to have a rooftop F&B facility planned. This augurs well for its branding and image, and will render it strong competition once it reopens in 2015.

Knight Frank managing director Sarkunan Subramaniam says using rooftops for lounges and recreational activities is a "great idea" as it uses space that would otherwise be idle. He says it is natural for building owners to seek avenues to enhance the value of their assets, and clearly the creative use of rooftop space does this.

"Here, utilising the rooftop is not an issue of a lack of space but adds a sense of exclusivity and communicates the property's positioning," he tells **FocusM**.

"However, it must be approached cautiously. I recently heard about a tent [being] blown off at an open-air venue, but fortunately the damage was minimal."

Sarkunan believes taking advantage of the rooftop could rejuvenate dated buildings to increase value and competitiveness. However, adding a rooftop recreational facility to an existing building involves more planning and investment than if it were factored in from the planning stage. An additional lift stop at the rooftop, reinforcement and water-proofing are among issues that must be looked into.

An architect with Wong CS Architects also believes water-proofing is crucial when converting rooftops into gardens and swimming pools; otherwise, over time seepage and leaks could occur, causing damage to floors below, especially in the case of residential units with rooftop swimming pools.

Apart from water drainage systems, more costs go into constructing a sky lounge as the flat roof costs more and requires a different kind of truss to support the weight. The architect also points out that proper studies must be carried out to take into consideration wind strength based on building height, especially when the rooftop facility is open-air.

Chong Kah Ann, project architect



The View Rooftop Bar (GTower)

with BEP Akitek Sdn Bhd, says rooftops, like five-foot ways in high-rise residential buildings, have to comply with basic safety requirements as stipulated in the Malaysian Building By-Laws; for example, it must have walls at least 1.2m high.

Chong, who was in charge of the GTower project, says rooftop lounges should have a recess of 1.5 to 2.5m to break a fall from the rooftop to the floor below, as factored in at The View Rooftop Bar.

"As long as safety is looked into, utilising the unused rooftop space, especially by turning it into a skybar, generates returns for the building, rendering it highly efficient. GTower is an example of a highly efficient building," he adds.

#### Social hotspots within urban sanctuaries

Cashing in on the elite crowd's fixation with exclusivity and glamour, many hotels and commercial buildings have created designer nightspots with a view.

The Luna Bar at the Pacific Regency and Sky Bar at Traders Hotel in the KLCC were among the earliest to market their popular skybars with swimming pools. Both hotels are synonymous with the bars, which are destinations rather than stopovers for

visiting guests.

Data from Knight Frank Research indicate both hotels have among the highest room rates per night, with the Pacific Regency charging RM359 to RM522 while Traders Hotel goes up to RM697.

Jalan Tun Razak's GTower Hotel wasted no time following suit with its rooftop bar concept via The View Rooftop Bar, operated by building owner Goldis Bhd's food & beverage arm Sonata Vision Sdn Bhd.

Inspired by the idea of offering its tenants and hotel guests "everything under one roof", the establishment designed a green-inspired bar on its rooftop, carrying forward the building's theme of green walls and a natural setting; another exclusive private bar on a "bridge" connecting the two towers gives patrons the feeling of being suspended in mid-air.

The View Rooftop Bar is designed in glass on a steel framework and uses the latest techniques of sustainable development, allowing patrons a breathtaking view of the city skyline.

GTower executive director and Goldis Bhd chief investment officer Colin Ng says the core function of its rooftop bar is as informal meeting place for tenants who wish to take their business meetings into the night. Given its location in the heart of the city, most tenants and hotel guests welcome the option to unwind without needing to brave city traffic.

"Our key selling point is GTower's upmarket positioning and its green-building status," he stresses, saying the rooftop and bridge bars are perfectly in line with its market focus, drawing the corporate office crowd.

According to Knight Frank Research, rental rates at GTower hover around RM7.50-RM8.50 per sq ft, while at Menara 3 Petronas – home to Marini's on 57, another popular rooftop bar – rates are a phenomenal RM12 per sq ft.

Jumping on the trend of hotels with sky lounges, Mai Bar atop Aloft Kuala Lumpur Sentral attracts guests with its

## Halo effect of castles in the air

Rooftop lounges turning underused space into revenue-generating hotspots

### Properties with rooftop facilities

Property	Location	Rooftop component
<b>COMMERCIAL</b>		
Luna Bar, Pacific Regency	KH Tower, off Jalan P Ramlee	F&B, swimming pool
SkyBar, Traders Hotel	KLCC	F&B, swimming pool
The View Rooftop Bar	GTower, Jalan Tun Razak	F&B
Mai Bar, Aloft Hotel	KL Sentral	F&B, swimming pool
Heli Lounge Bar	Menara KH, Jalan Sultan Ismail	F&B, helipad
Ceder on 15, Impiana KLCC Hotel	Jalan Pinang, KL	F&B
Marini's on 57	Menara 3 Petronas	F&B
Atmosphere 360°	KL Tower	F&B
Rootz Club	Lot 10, Jalan Bukit Bintang	Nightspot
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>		
Verve Suites Mont Kiara	Mont Kiara	4 towers with variety of F&B, sports and lifestyle amenities
Avenue D'Vogue*	PJ Sect 13	Ship housing swimming pool, gymnasium and bar
Pavilion Banyan Tree*	Jalan Conlay, KL	F&B
ViPod Suites	Jalan Kia Peng	F&B, swimming pool, garden terrace, spa
D'Majestic Suites and Residenz*	Greater KL, Pudu Corridor	F&B
The Regalia	Off Jalan Sultan Ismail	Roof garden, skylounge
Dua Residency	Off Jalan Tun Razak	Roof garden, swimming pool
Zenith Residences	Kelana Jaya	Roof garden
Setia Sky Residences	Jalan Tun Razak	Sky Club – sports club, cigar room, pool hall, swimming pool, yoga zone, gymnasium, tea pavilion

\*Projects under construction