

# Smoother days for Mont'Kiara

As the popular residential enclave grows, so do the traffic problems. But relief is in sight, with more being done to keep traffic moving, writes **Rosalynn Poh** on pages 8 and 9.



# Easing the jam

Mont'Kiara resident Jamie Lee loves living in the high-rise residential enclave in Kuala Lumpur, but these days leaving her home at the "wrong" time means spending "quality time" with her car and radio. "Mont'Kiara is ... in the middle of everything, but I have to strategise my trips to and from home. Six years ago, there were fewer condominiums and retail centres. It has changed so much but I still love living here, although I do hope the traffic problems can be solved soon," she tells City & Country.

Robert, who has been working in Mont'Kiara for the past eight years, noticed a marked increase in traffic along Jalan Kiara when the DUKE Highway (Duta-Ulu Klang Expressway) opened. "I think the majority of the cars are from the DUKE Highway coming through the access near Solaris Mont'Kiara, and I believe they are merely passing through Jalan Kiara to avoid worse traffic jams elsewhere. Eight years ago, the roads were not as busy as now, but of course the number of developments in Mont'Kiara has increased since," he says. DUKE Highway was officially launched in January 2009.

Traffic woes in Mont'Kiara are not a new thing. Key developers there and City Hall (DBKL) are taking steps to improve the situation. For example, there used to be car park spots along both sides of Jalan Kiara, leading to Mont'Kiara Sophia, including many illegally parked cars as well. Today, the roadside parking spots along Jalan Kiara (especially right after Plaza Mont'Kiara) have been removed, making the road wider.

More improvements can be expected in the near future. City & Country speaks to Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Minister Datuk Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin who says plans are in the works for an additional access into Mont'Kiara as well as possibly providing public transportation options to the area.

In addition, key developers in Mont'Kiara have also proposed solutions that will further enhance living and working there.

## The choice location

Mont'Kiara is an international enclave popular with expatriates and Malaysians alike. The first development there was Mont'Kiara Pines condominium by developer Sunrise Bhd, comprising 508 units within three towers on an eight-acre tract that was completed in 1993.

Today, there are more than 15 condominiums in Mont'Kiara, some super-exclusive bungalows, as well as commercial and retail outlets. Construction is going on continually, with projects such as 1 Mont'Kiara. The joint venture between Aseana Properties Ltd and CapitaLand, managed by Ireka Development Management Sdn Bhd, comprises condominiums and retail/commercial components. The 350,000 sq ft neighbourhood mall is expected to open in 2H2010.

There is also YNH Bhd's upcoming mixed development called Kiara 163 (previously referred to as D'Kiara Place), situated just beside Plaza Mont'Kiara, which will comprise retail space, an office tower, multipurpose hall and serviced apartments.

Construction of Sunrise Bhd's award-winning 28 Mont'Kiara condominium, situated along Jalan Kiara, is also ongoing. The high-end development, consisting of 40-storey twin towers, has seen a take-up of 50% since its soft launch in December last year.

With more development and expected population growth, how can traffic be managed effectively?

Recently, there have been reports on the soon-to-be-completed ramp near the Desa Sri Hartamas traffic light intersection heading towards Penchala Link, after nearly eight years of alleged land dispute/title issues.



Raja Nong Chik (above): A lower plot ratio may be implemented for new developments in Mont'Kiara

Highway builder Sprint Sdn Bhd also announced the closure of the slip road leading to Jalan Kiara from Sprint Highway and Desa Sri Hartamas. The slip road (see red arrow on map) is a long-existing temporary access road to Jalan Kiara and Penchala Link.

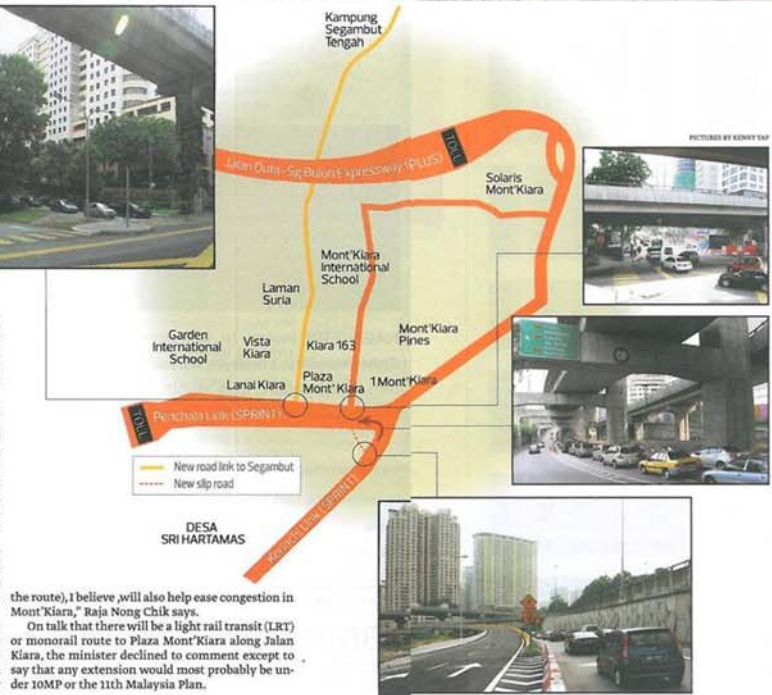
Developers in the area have raised concerns over the intended closure, but Raja Nong Chik tells City & Country he believes the slip road will not be closed, as it helps ease congestion in the Mont'Kiara area.

Besides this, Raja Nong Chik says an additional alternative road access to Mont'Kiara is on the way to relieve the current congestion in the area, hopefully by up to half. The construction of a new 100 ft access road will connect Jalan Kiara 4 behind Plaza Mont'Kiara to Jalan Segambut Tengah (see map).

"The additional access road will be implemented during the remaining period of the 9th Malaysia Plan (9MP) and the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP). The design for the road has been done. The first phase is currently in the tender process and I believe construction will start by this year. The road should take about two years to complete," he explains. As the access road will be 100 ft wide, it will also require the acquisition of some tracts of land to make the road widening possible. The 9MP runs from 2006-2010.

Raja Nong Chik says the government will study the situation to evaluate if it should reintroduce public transportation to the area. Previously, there were public buses servicing the area but these were stopped due to a lack of response.

"According to our data, there are 13,000 residential units in Mont'Kiara and 51,000 cars. This translates to an average of about four cars per unit. There are also 26,000 office workers in the area. "Bus services (given there is a sustainable number of bus passengers for



He adds that a lower plot ratio may be implemented for new developments in the area. The permissible plot ratio in Mont'Kiara, according to the Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020, is 1:4.

The minister concedes that traffic accessibility should be planned right from the beginning, including road capacity to avoid congestion as it appears to be quite a common problem for thriving areas.

To help ease traffic within Mont'Kiara, lead developer Sunrise Bhd is currently providing shuttle bus services for its residents to its commercial development. The developer is also exploring, with its consultants, four major traffic relief proposals for quick entry, exit and transit options.

Sunrise Bhd has contributed and invested upfront construction costs for roads, including Jalan Kiara, since 1995, from the traffic light at Hartamas right through to Mont'Kiara, as well as the 100 ft Jalan Dutamas and 80 ft Persiaran Dutamas.

Sunrise Bhd assistant general manager for development Raymond Cheah notes that development brings traffic, and traffic generates and further spurs development. While metropolises like Singapore and Hong Kong are limited in terms of land size, traffic volume does not hamper their growth, he says.

A well-planned, efficient and effective traffic system, with enforcement by the local authority is what makes all the difference. "Mont'Kiara will continue to thrive as an international zone, property prices will largely be driven by market demand and traffic considerations are just the enabler towards a better community for the benefit of the larger city," he tells City & Country.

The Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020 provides for LRT connections for Mont'Kiara and Hartamas. "We urge the authorities to fast-track construction of this urban rail link. In the meantime, frequent public bus services from Mont'Kiara and Hartamas to LRT stations in Bangsar and Sentral would help," Cheah says.

During The Edge Investment Forum on Real Estate 2010 held in April, Ho Chin Soon, director of Ho Chin Soon Research Sdn Bhd, said the condominium market in Mont'Kiara is sustainable: "The area's growth rate is at 16% per year on a compound basis, from five projects to 56 projects within 16 years. This rate will increase by 2% to 3% over the next two years."

Ho, who spoke on "Value creation in property

Traffic entering Jalan Kiara



investment" during the forum, says high-end condo Mont'Kiara Damai by Sunrise saw a 5.9% capital appreciation a year. "In 2001, the asking price for Mont'Kiara Damai was RM388 pcf and in 2010, it has increased to RM650 pcf. Meanwhile, the average price of 10 Mont'Kiara, by the same developer, rose 6.9% per year from RM520 pcf in 2006 to RM680 pcf in 2010," he said.

Ireka Development Management Sdn Bhd COO Lim Ech Chan tells City & Country in an email interview that "as Mont'Kiara is located close to the city centre, it is inevitable that there will be traffic congestion at peak hours, but with such comprehensive components within a locale, I believe that the traffic situation here is not as severe as assumed."

Lim says possible immediate steps the authorities such as the Public Works Department, LLM and DBKL can take to help ease congestion would be to disallow the current illegal side parking along Jalan Kiara as this has reduced the four-lane road to only two lanes. "Recently, we have also seen effective enforcement by DBKL to curb illegal parking on both sides of Jalan Kiara. This is a commendable effort that paves way for a smoother traffic flow along the main artery road of Mont'Kiara," he says.

Ireka Development has engaged traffic consultant Perunding Trafik Klasik to look into the traffic management of the area. "One of the proposals is the installation of a new traffic light at the junction between Jalan Kiara 1 and the main access road leading to 1 Mont'Kiara. Our consultant is looking into the proposal to ensure that the suggested new signalised junction will integrate with the existing main signalised junction in and out of Mont'Kiara."

Will the traffic congestion eventually affect property values in Mont'Kiara? "As one of the key developers ... we are positive that property values within Mont'Kiara are backed by many strong factors, such as the appealing product mix, credible products by trusted developers and the international appeal of the neighbourhood. But it is still our sincere hope that the traffic congestion problem at peak hours can be addressed effectively with cooperation from the relevant authorities and public transportation companies. I believe all developers would lend assistance to ensure prime residential areas such as Mont'Kiara continue to thrive," Lim says.

Meanwhile, YNH head of corporate services Daniel Chan says the traffic congestion is mainly due to the attractiveness of the Mont'Kiara enclave with its luxury lifestyle living and international schools. "All these factors attract a lot of expatriates to live here. This will definitely contribute to higher traffic in Mont'Kiara. However, with the new access roads coming into Mont'Kiara, we believe the authorities will take the necessary action to solve it," he says.

**DTZ** **Nawawi Tie Leung**

**PRIME SERVICED APARTMENTS**  
**St Mary Residences - Tower B**  
**KUALA LUMPUR - GOLDEN TRIANGLE**  
**SEEKING OPERATOR / LESSEE**

Our client is the owner of a block of apartments comprising 200 units. The project is located within the commercial heart of Kuala Lumpur, amongst prime business and tourist areas. DTZ is seeking an established serviced apartment operator with a strong track record to undertake a long term master lease, for the purpose of managing and operating the property.

The project is currently under construction with a scheduled completion date of June 2012 and will be fitted with high quality finishing.

DTZ is inviting expression of interest from potential operators seeking a major presence or an opportunity to expand their activities in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. An information memorandum with further details is available from DTZ, the exclusive marketing agent.

For further enquiries, please contact:  
**Brian Koh / Tony Decosta**  
**DTZ Nawawi Tie Leung Property Consultants Sdn Bhd**  
**Tel: 603-21617228**  
**brian\_koh@dtz.com.my**  
**tony\_decosta@dtz.com.my**