

SUBDIVIDING AND DEVELOPING

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Guam's 135,680 acres are deceiving. Even with that area, there is a severe scarcity of land available for appropriate development.

Guam's only master plan, published in 1966, indicated projected utilization in 1985 as follows:

Roads	2,227.42 acres
Residential	3,927.34 acres
Conservation	6,057.01 acres
Military holdings	45,716.15 acres
Commercial	538.42 acres
Industrial	442.58 acres
Public and Semi-public	2,192.39 acres
Undeveloped	74,578.64 acres

Guam is undergoing unbelievable growth. Events are happening so rapidly and situations changing so quickly that it is difficult to maintain realistic data and project realistic utilization. Despite potential changes resulting from the Navy's possible interest in Cetti Bay, potential national park sites, or commercial and hotel development, projected available land is unquestionably overstated.

If we further analyze what is available and deduct that which is totally unbuildable, that which must be put aside for school sites, road rights-of-way, recreation areas and drainage facilities, we're down to 30,000 to 40,000 acres of land possibly "available" for development.

Such availability is limited by a combination of other factors

involving : Location
 Ownership, and
 Land Use.

Location

Most of Guam's available undeveloped land either has "unfriendly" site problems, is too far from employment centers, or both. For example, site improvements such as providing access and extending necessary utility services to outlying areas are very costly. In addition, the developer/landowner must "wait out" provision of major public improvements, such as highways, or pay for them himself. Providing these services and/or waiting out public improvements pushes up home costs. An unfavorable location for higher cost homes seriously hampers marketability of such a project.

Ownership

Title to "available" land is held by many individuals, much of it has not been registered or properly surveyed. 55% are less than 25 acre parcels, and 25% of the balance are less than 50 acres ^{in size} and for the most part parcels are small in size and of improper shape.

Land Use

Land suitable for homebuilding in terms of terrain and marketability is effectively rationed not only by competing economic demands, but by government land use policy: The Zoning Code, FHA policy, Public Works specifications, and Environmental Control (~~Public Health~~), involving sewerage disposal, sound, water and air pollution.

To make use of available land, we "develop" and/or subdivide.

Subdivision, by Guam Law (Government Code of Guam 18002(2)) means the division of any parcel of land into six (6) or more lots, subject to the following conditions:

- a. Must not be contrary to Zoning Law.
- b. Each lot must abut a 40' road right of way (minimum)
- c. Subdivider must provide for installation of power, water, and telephone lines, fire hydrants, roads, streets, curbs, sidewalks
- d. Subdivider must provide for uniformity of street widths and alignment in established areas and for continuation of existing street names
- e. Subdivider must provide for adequate light, air and privacy of all lots regardless of land use and design streets to prevent excessive grading and scarring of the landscape
- f. Subdivider must provide sufficient drainage to prevent flooding
- g. Subdivider must provide that streets within residential areas shall not be planned for through traffic.

The Subdivision Law provides for agricultural subdivisions having no lots less than 40,000 SF, such sites to be used for agriculture, single family residence lots or a combination of both. The law further provides for lot parceling, the division of a lot legally existing into no more than five parcels.

The law provides for distribution of land in decedents estates without conditions previously enumerated, except that provision for road and utility easement right-of-way must be designated before such distribution.

The law further provides for distribution of land owned for not less than five years by parents to children, without conditions previously enumerated except that alienation clauses must provide for no sale, lease or other alienation for at least five years and, before ^a map is filed for record, must provide for street and utility easements.

Developing land is the field action, the expenditure of money and effort, required to provide essential site facilities according to subdivision plans.

Land development is far more comprehensive in scope than subdividing.

Development can occur in existing planned subdivisions or can use improved techniques in the creation of new environments providing better and more ample living for the residents of Guam.

Such techniques include a

~~new~~ new land use concept--developing a parcel of land as a unit instead of individual lots.

The idea called Planned Unit Development (PUD) is based on a land-use plan that allows for higher density by bringing together a mixture of single and multi-family housing types, open space for recreational use and, in some cases, shopping and other community facilities. The area varies in size from a few acres to several hundred.

Large single-family houses, smaller medium-priced cluster houses, townhouses and garden apartments are combined to form communities that ~~will~~ have a variety of household and family types.

The higher density obtainable through such a balanced mix results in substantial savings in land cost per housing unit. According to the United States Savings and Loan League, at a raw land cost of \$5,000 per acre, a 148-acre PUD can accommodate 424 housing units as opposed to 363 units in the conventional plan. This means an additional savings of \$350 per housing unit in land cost.

Savings are also gained by reduction of street lengths and more efficient storm drainage design. By using the natural curve of the land, PUD developers can save \$85,000 in the total storm drainage system.

Similarly, the total street system length in the PUD is almost one-half mile shorter than a conventional plan, saving \$52,000 in street costs alone on a 148 acre tract. This also shortens the length of water and sewer lines and cuts the cost of service. At least \$90,000 can be saved on these utilities.

According to the U.S. Savings and Loan League, in a 148-acre development a total of \$1000 per unit can be generated by better land use, through savings in streets, sidewalks, utilities and land cost per unit.

Such savings make it possible for the builder to include more "extras"-- such as landscaping, recreational facilities and parks.

In the successful planned community, the emphasis is on the total living environment, not just housing.

In breaking from traditional gridiron patterns, developers are freed from many conventional site plans that include sideyards and setbacks. Developers can utilize the natural features of the land, cluster houses around open space and create communities that are visually and environmentally more interesting.

A major advantage of the new land use pattern is that individual lot size is reduced without sacrificing openness and privacy.

Subdivisions today are built around the automobile.

The typical planned development has collector roads designed for automobile and service traffic. Unlike conventional gridiron streets, these curvilinear streets encourage slower, safer driving. Collector roads lead to smaller, narrower ones that provide access to individual homes. Many of the most successful planned communities also separate pedestrian and automobile traffic, giving safe, scenic pathways for children, bicyclers and walkers.

Planned development creates a place for children to play and adults to socialize through the grouping of houses around common land which maintains privacy at the same time it encourages a closer sense of community.

Developments can have a variety of recreational features such as swimming and tennis clubs, meeting halls, theaters, schools and shopping centers. In many cases, a neighborhood association composed of the residents themselves helps determine the facilities to be provided.

Random development wastes space and isolates families in their fenced off piece of property. On the other hand, planned communities have the potential of making optimum use of the land while creating a better life-style.

Specifically, what should developers do?

1. Emphasize open-space communities
2. Accent cluster planning and the need for cluster zoning
3. Work toward needed changes in the zoning law
4. Consider the separation of residential, commercial and industrial functions in planning
5. Plan roads, streets, sidewalks, bike paths and nature trails through communities to schools and parklands
6. Make high density beautiful
7. Locate leisure-time amenities in all communities
8. Understand the impact of buffer zones and traffic patterns
9. Learn how street widths, lot widths and proper densities can together enhance a community
10. In dealing with government agencies, make proper presentations, learn how the government is funding environmental goals, learn how to best handle zoning problems and get approvals, learn how the trend in donations of land or money for schools and parks affects development cost

11. Understand the politics of planning
12. Make water drinkable and sewage disposable--work with Environmental Control people
13. Turn effluent into irrigation with package plants for sewage
14. Comprehend the zero population growth movement
15. Keep incinerators and smoke stacks from ~~kx~~ making air unbreatheable
16. Overcome visual pollution
17. Protect natural resources--water, land, jungle

The surge of money into real estate development over the last few years has not always had happy results. Despite the enormous profit potential in this field, investors and developers alike have often found themselves locked into deals that fall far short of their early promise.

A major reason why these deals turn sour is that a basic fact is forgotten: The key to the success of any development is how the land is used. How the land is used affects, and is affected by, every phase of development, including financing, zoning, planning, design and marketing. If it is used right, the deal is on solid footing; if used wrong, it may never use its real potential profit and it may ~~be~~ prove disastrous for all participants.

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