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Molegolar starts selling its modular-property projects

By Chiara Quintão | São Paulo



Suassuna Fernandes

Molegolar, a startup created by Pernambuco property developer Suassuna Fernandes, started a little over a month ago selling to developers projects of modular apartments — or “molegolar,” as Saulo Suassuna Fernandes Filho, the technology creator, prefers to call them.

By the year’s end, Mr. Suassuna expects to sign service contracts for R\$1 billion-worth in

developments launched or about to be presented to the market. Molegolar will receive on average 2% of the overall sales value of each development that uses its package of project, manual with several possibilities of modules combination and guidance for brokers’ training.

Mr. Suassuna says this additional cost for developers is compensated by the greater potential of appreciation of the units because of the flexibility provided by modules.

The businessman developed the technology after attending the course Beyond Smart Cities of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in mid-2015. Mr. Suassuna combined in the “molegolar” technology concepts related to micro-units (compact apartments), genome and reinvention of the automobile, discussed during the MIT program.

Molegolar proposes a Lego-like system in which property buyers choose how many modules they will purchase and apartments grow or shrink according to their dwellers’ needs. All modules have plumbing, which lets clients have a complete apartment even if they buy only one module. Each module has its individual deed, as well as maintenance fee and property tax.

When contract cancellations are at a high level, the format developed by Mr. Suassuna allows buyers who can't get banking loan to cancel the purchase of only part of the property, changing to a smaller unit. Another possibility is the lease of one or more modules by the owners in case of financial need or when children leave home.

Molegolar is developing an application for combination of modules, aiming to speed up the production.

Suassuna Fernandes launched last year two developments in the modular format, which are being built, and has three more projects in this model not yet presented.

Initially, Suassuna Fernandes intended to operate as co-developer of modular projects. Given the interest of more developers than expected, however, the company opted to create Molegolar, a platform dedicated to modular projects, and provide services related to the technology. "The company had neither governance nor funding to spread around Brazil as co-developer," Mr. Suassuna says.

For now, the startup has signed partnerships to supply the technology to eight real-estate companies — five developers, including Pernambuco Construtora and Construtora Conic; one sales coordination firm, Cia. Inteligência Imobiliária; and two subdivision developers, Cipasa and Convida Cidades Planejadas. "The initial reading is that the module format is more adequate to high-income projects," Mr. Suassuna says.

The businessman says that in areas planned for vertical projects, the demand for apartments is usually not concentrated in a specific unit size. In these cases, the subdivision developer can offer a Molegolar project, with possibility of diverse floor plans, to the developer that will build the residential buildings.

In addition to the already-signed alliances, Molegolar is negotiating with 15 developers and 3 private-sector banks, and has talks with insurers. Of the developers with which it is negotiating partnerships, four are based in São Paulo (three of them being publicly traded), four are of Recife, three of Salvador, one of Florianópolis, one is American and one is Italian.

Mr. Suassuna says that since the risk of contract cancellation and enforcement of collaterals is smaller in modular apartments, there is potential for banks to offer lower interest rates for such properties.

Molegolar is also developing a product that can fit the government housing program My House, My Life. Mr. Suassuna says the intention is to replace leisure areas of the program's projects with the possibility of more space in the apartments.

He says he believes buyers of a My House, My Life unit will have no problem with the fact that modules allow units in a building to change according to the different phases of life of its residents, just like this has not proved to be a problem in higher-income projects.