REAL ESTATE
MARKET TIMES

OCT - NOV 2026

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COVER STORY

BEYOND THE CONGRESS.

How World Realty Congress is evolving into a connected real estate ecosystem.

THE CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Councils, ideas, partnerships and industry action.

INSIDE THE WRC 2026 AGENDA

Key sessions, new perspectives and greater impact.

A PLATFORM BEYOND THE EVENT

From Dubai to new markets, a year-round ecosystem.



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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Dubai's real estate sector is evolving, bringing a growing need to look beyond individual projects and transactions to the larger ecosystem shaping their long-term success.

In this October - November edition of Real Estate Market Times, our cover story, "Beyond the Congress," explores the expanding vision of World Realty Congress and its ambition to bring different pillars of real estate into one meaningful conversation. Through its Congress and Awards, industry Councils, Community Tours and WRC After Hours, the platform aims to bridge gaps between developers, brokers, facilities and community management professionals, encouraging collaboration beyond an annual gathering.

Our feature story, "The Second Life of Dubai's First Towers," turns the spotlight on the city's ageing infrastructure. As some of Dubai's earliest towers approach two decades of operation, decisions around maintenance, upgrades and reinvestment will determine whether these assets become growing liabilities or opportunities for renewed value.

Together, these stories reflect an important shift in the industry. The future of real estate is not only about creating new landmarks, but also about strengthening existing assets, connecting stakeholders and ensuring long-term performance.

As Dubai continues to mature as a global real estate market, this edition highlights the ideas, conversations and industry perspectives shaping its next chapter.

Until then,
Happy Reading!



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Senior Editor
Real Estate Market Times

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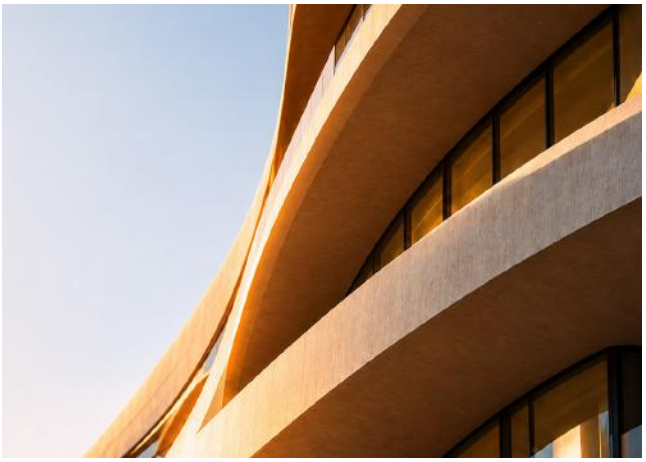
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08

COVER STORY

BEYOND THE CONGRESS

World Realty Congress expands beyond its annual gathering with Councils, Community Tours and After Hours, bringing developers, brokers, community managers and the whole industry into one continuing conversation.





THE SECOND LIFE OF DUBAI'S FIRST TOWERS

As Dubai's first towers turn 20, industry leaders explain how lifecycle planning, data, owner buy-in and targeted design can give them a valuable second life.

18

26

CAN AI HELP DEVELOPERS BUILD MORE HUMAN-CENTRED COMMUNITIES?

Eddy Nemri of Object 1 explains how AI, used before the blueprint and after handover, can help developers understand residents and build communities around people.



28

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BUILD IN DUBAI TODAY?

Gulf Modern Contracting's Shadi Küzam draws on 30 years in Dubai construction to discuss supply chains, quality, in-house contracting and what makes developer partnerships work.





PALM JEBEL ALI: FROM BLUEPRINT TO BEACHFRONT

As first handovers approach and private developers join Nakheel, Palm Jebel Ali enters delivery, opening a new waterfront growth corridor for the wider property industry.

34

42

INDIAN CAPITAL TURNS TO DUBAI'S COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

ANAROCK Middle East CEO Aayush Puri explains why Indian investors are moving into Dubai's offices, retail and logistics, and which segments and micro-markets stand out.



DUBAI LAND DEPARTMENT NEWS

DLD Strengthens Emirati Careers in Real Estate

Dubai's Real Estate Empowerment Programme created more than 2,100 employment opportunities for Emiratis between 2023 and 2026, strengthening partnerships, professional development and long-term career pathways.



Dubai's Real Estate Empowerment Programme created more than 2,100 employment opportunities for Emiratis between 2023 and 2026, reflecting the impact of coordinated efforts to strengthen national participation in the emirate's expanding real estate sector.

The programme supports the objectives of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 and the Dubai Real Estate Sector Strategy 2033, which recognise national human capital as an important contributor to sustainable economic development and long-term competitiveness.

A National Partnership Delivering Results

The achievements were supported by collaboration between the Emirati Human Resources Development Council in Dubai, Dubai Land Department (DLD), the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, and the Nafis programme.

The partnership combines regulatory frameworks, federal incentives, financial support and private-sector cooperation to improve employment opportunities for Emiratis. It also aims to encourage professional development and strengthen employee retention within participating real estate companies.

Launched in 2023, the programme's initial initiatives focused on attracting and preparing Emiratis for careers in real estate. These included career awareness, job matching, practical training and continued professional support.

Over the following three and a half years, the initiative increased Emirati employment across real estate companies compared with its initial baseline. It also expanded cooperation with companies committed to Emiratisation and encouraged the development of clearer career pathways.

Supporting Sustainable Career Growth

DLD highlighted the effectiveness of cooperation between local and federal government entities and the private sector.

The programme's next phase will focus on improving the quality of employment opportunities, expanding specialised roles and supporting sustainable career development for Emiratis working in the industry.

The Department also emphasised the importance of aligning national workforce development with changing market requirements.

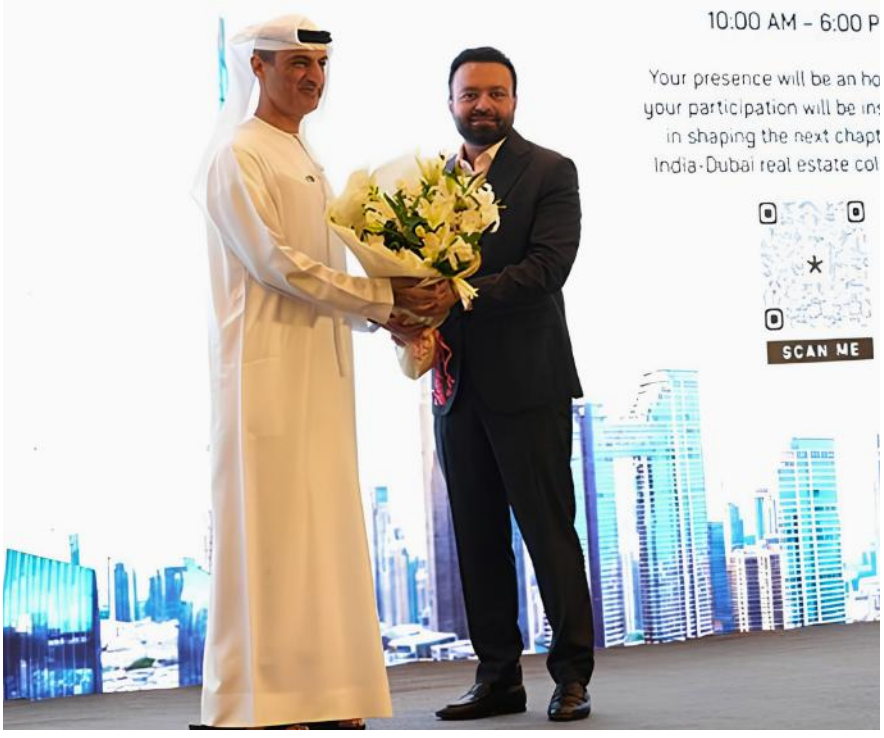
As Dubai's real estate sector continues to grow, the programme is expected to build on its achievements through targeted initiatives, broader strategic partnerships and closer alignment between professional skills and industry needs.

Its progress reflects a longer-term effort to strengthen Emirati participation in the real estate sector while supporting economic diversification, market competitiveness and sustainable growth.

DUBAI LAND DEPARTMENT NEWS

DLD Brings 'Dubai RE Connect' to Bengaluru to Expand Real Estate Investment

Dubai Land Department strengthened engagement with Indian investors through Dubai RE Connect in Bengaluru, presenting property investment opportunities, market performance, regulatory frameworks and digital services.



Dubai Land Department (DLD) participated in the 'Dubai RE Connect' event in Bengaluru, India, continuing its engagement with the country's investment and business communities.

Following previous editions in New Delhi and Mumbai, the event provided investors and real estate professionals with information about Dubai's property market, investment opportunities, regulatory framework and digital services.

Held at Conrad Bengaluru, the gathering brought together DLD, Dubai Chambers, developers, investors, brokers and industry representatives, with a focus on major investors, high-net-worth individuals and business leaders.

The initiative supports the Dubai Real Estate Sector Strategy 2033, which targets AED 1 trillion in real estate transaction value and aims to increase the sector's contribution to Dubai's economy to AED 73 billion. These objectives also align with the Dubai Economic Agenda D33.

A Market Expanding Alongside Demand

DLD presented indicators highlighting Dubai's continued real estate development.

During the first half of 2026, 104 real estate projects were completed, representing a 38.7% increase compared with the corresponding period in 2025.

Their total value exceeded AED 111 billion, an increase of 52%, while 24,537 new units were delivered, up 36%.

The Department also highlighted initiatives intended to improve the investor and customer experience, including the 'Preliminary Registration' platform, 'Tamleek+' and the 'First Home Ownership' programme.

By the end of June 2026, the First Home Ownership programme had enabled more than 3,200 residents to purchase their first homes in Dubai, generating sales exceeding AED 5 billion.

Other initiatives presented included flexible rent payment solutions, the 'Dubai REST' application and frameworks supporting Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs).

Strengthening International Investment Connections

The Bengaluru engagement built on the longstanding economic and investment relationship between the UAE and India, including Indian investors' participation in Dubai's property market.
Through 'Dubai RE Connect', DLD continues to provide international investors with access to official market information and insights into Dubai's regulatory environment.

The initiative also encourages direct engagement between investors, government entities and real estate professionals, supporting informed investment decisions and strengthening business connections between Dubai and India.

BEYOND THE CONGRESS.

World Realty Congress is growing beyond its annual gathering. The question is not how many people it can bring into a room, but what happens when different parts of the industry finally share one conversation.



REAL ESTATE IS ONE INDUSTRY. ITS PERSPECTIVES ARE NOT.

A building looks different depending on where you stand. To a developer, it begins as a vision. To a broker, it is a promise made to a buyer. To a facilities manager, it is an asset that must perform every day. And to a community manager, it is a place where expectations, budgets and everyday life meet.

They are looking at the same property. Are they seeing the same thing?

A decision made before handover can shape operating costs for years. A sales promise can become a management challenge. Yet the people responsible for those outcomes do not always meet early enough.

That disconnect is one of the ideas behind a broader World Realty Congress: the annual Congress and Awards, industry Councils, Community Tours and WRC After Hours. Different formats, linked by a simple ambition: better conversations across the full life of real estate.

ONE PLATFORM.
FIVE WAYS TO ENGAGE.

World Realty Congress is not trying to make every interaction look like a conference. Each format serves a different purpose, and each has a role in bringing the wider real estate industry closer together.

01
WRC CONGRESS
The exchange

One shared stage and specialised discussions where developers, brokers, property managers, community professionals and solution providers examine the decisions shaping real estate.

02
WRC AWARDS
The recognition

A platform to recognise achievement, people and practices worth learning from, not simply to celebrate another year.

03
WRC COUNCILS
The deeper discussion

Smaller, closed-door conversations where senior industry voices can question assumptions and develop perspectives that may inform practical recommendations.

04
COMMUNITY TOURS
The real-world lens

Opportunities to experience communities and assets beyond presentation slides, and see what design, management and operating decisions look like in practice.

05
WRC AFTER HOURS
The relationships

A less formal setting for the introductions and conversations that often become partnerships long after an event ends.

The value lies in the connections between them: a question raised privately can reach the Congress stage; a stage discussion can be tested against a live community; a meeting can become an ongoing relationship.





THE CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER.

10 DECEMBER 2026 | WRC CONGRESS | MAIN-STAGE PROGRAMME

A conventional conference tells you who is speaking. A more interesting one tells you what is at stake. WRC 2026 is built around pressing questions, contrasting positions and formats designed to keep the room engaged.

BEFORE HANDOVER

What should developers, consultants and managers resolve before a community inherits the consequences? A conversation about decisions made early and felt for years.

THE 3-MINUTE FIX

A recurring industry problem. A short clock. No room for vague promises. Practitioners are challenged to offer clear, usable solutions.

RESERVE FUNDS & REALITY

Is Dubai's owners association system ready for ageing communities? What does responsible long-term planning look like when today's budgets must protect tomorrow's building performance?

PECHAKUCHA POWER TALKS

Two short, image-led presentations against the clock, bringing local and international perspectives on how communities are experienced and run.

THE GREAT DEBATE

Two sides of a difficult industry question. Strong arguments, uncomfortable trade-offs and a room invited to think rather than simply agree.

AI IN REAL ESTATE

What's real and what's hype? Developers, brokers, community managers and PropTech voices separate working applications from ambitious claims.

ALSO ON THE MAIN STAGE | Welcome and Opening Keynote

AFTER LUNCH.
REAL PRESSURES.

After lunch and Industry Recognition, the programme turns to the everyday realities of running communities: the costs, the expectations and the conversations the industry does not always have openly.

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT & FM

FM PRICING WARS

Who really pays for the lowest bid?

THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTHS

The problems everyone in community management recognises but rarely discusses openly.

LIVE PULSE

The audience weighs in as the discussion unfolds.

QUIZ SPRINT

Five rapid-fire questions. A fast test of industry knowledge and judgement.

THE OWNERS SPEAK

What owners committees really expect from community managers.

BE IN THE ROOM.



THE CONVERSATION IS ALREADY MOVING.

A platform is only as credible as what happens between its headline events. WRC is building those spaces deliberately, and the first conversations are already taking shape.

WRC COUNCILS

From Discussion to Industry Insight

The WRC Leadership Council and Broker Council brought senior voices into focused discussions in Dubai in October. The aim is not another panel photograph: it is space for candid perspectives, particularly where development, sales and long-term property operations intersect. Insights from the Council discussions are intended to support a research-led white paper and future industry dialogue.



COMMUNITY TOURS

Seeing the Asset, Not Just the Presentation

A community's performance is easier to understand on the ground than on a slide. The Community Tours concept creates a practical lens on how developments operate — from the experience of residents to the everyday decisions facing management teams.



WRC AFTER HOURS

Connection Without a Conference Badge

The After Hours gatherings bring real estate professionals together in a more relaxed environment. The format is intentionally simple: meaningful introductions, candid exchanges and room for relationships to develop beyond formal meeting schedules.



Together, these initiatives give the annual Congress something it cannot achieve alone: continuity.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER EVERYONE GOES HOME?

A personal note from **Jatin Deepchandani** | Founder, World Realty Congress

I have been involved in events long enough to know a familiar pattern. We spend months bringing people together. There are interesting conversations, strong opinions, new introductions and ambitious promises to stay in touch.

Then everyone goes back to work.

There is nothing wrong with that. A great conference can be valuable in its own right. But over time I began wondering whether we could create something that lasted longer than the event itself.

Real estate is particularly interesting because so many people influence the same asset at different stages. The developer, broker, facilities manager and community manager may have very different priorities, yet their decisions affect one another. I have seen how much can be gained when these people speak directly rather than through layers of introductions.

That is one reason we are expanding WRC. The Congress remains important. The Awards recognise work worth celebrating. But I am equally interested in what happens in a Council discussion, on a community visit or over an informal conversation at After Hours.

I do not expect everyone to agree. Sometimes a disagreement is the most useful thing to come out of a room. What matters is that people leave understanding something they did not understand when they entered, and perhaps with someone they can now call directly.

I want WRC to be judged by more than attendance figures or how impressive the stage looks. I would rather hear that a conversation led to a better decision, a worthwhile relationship or a new way of looking at an old problem.

This is still evolving. We will test ideas, listen and improve. There is no reason to pretend we have all the answers. When we meet in December, I hope you come ready to challenge, question and participate. The most valuable part of WRC may well be what happens afterwards.

Jatin Deepchandani

Founder | World Realty Congress



Aldar, Arada Unveil AED 15bn Abu Dhabi Plans

Aldar and Arada have announced a strategic partnership covering approximately AED15 billion in planned developments across Abu Dhabi, bringing together two major UAE developers to deliver new residential and mixed-use communities.



Announced on 30 September 2026, the agreement marks Arada's first development presence in Abu Dhabi and establishes a framework for longer-term collaboration between the companies. The initial transactions cover a large master-planned community at Seih Sdeirah and three residential development plots on Yas Island.

At Seih Sdeirah, near the Abu Dhabi-Dubai border, the developers will jointly create a mixed-use community spanning up to 1.5 million square metres. The proposed development will primarily feature villas and townhouses, supported by retail outlets, recreational facilities and other community amenities.

Under the arrangement, Arada will lead development and construction management, while both companies will jointly handle the community's branding and sales. The structure combines Aldar's established development platform and land holdings in Abu Dhabi with Arada's experience in delivering large residential communities.

The second component involves Arada's acquisition of three residential plots from Aldar on Yas Island. Two of the plots face canals, and the three sites together cover more than 27,500 square metres, with a combined gross floor area of almost 130,000 square metres.

These acquisitions will allow Arada to introduce new residential projects within an established Abu Dhabi destination, adding to the range of homes planned across Yas Island.

The agreements were signed by **Jonathan Emery, Chief Executive Officer of Aldar Development**, and **Ahmed Alkhoshaibi, Group Chief Executive Officer of Arada**, in the presence of senior representatives from both companies.

For Aldar, the partnership provides an opportunity to develop its land portfolio alongside another established UAE developer. For Arada, it represents an expansion beyond its existing UAE development base, particularly its major communities in Sharjah.

The companies have indicated that the Yas Island and Seih Sdeirah transactions represent the first phase of their collaboration. Both intend to explore further opportunities across different sectors, property types and locations within the UAE.

Although the initial development locations and land areas have been identified, detailed residential inventories, sales launch schedules, starting prices and completion dates have not been announced.

The partnership therefore establishes a substantial future development pipeline rather than an immediately available collection of homes. Its next important milestones will be the release of individual project plans, residential offerings and construction timelines for the two Abu Dhabi locations.

WHAT'S HOT

- **Development Value:** AED 15 billion
- **Seih Sdeirah Development Area:** Up to 1.5 million sq m
- **Yas Island:** Three residential development plots
- **Project Status:** Strategic partnership announced; individual project completion dates not confirmed

Pullman Brings Branded Offices to Dubai Meydan

Accor and CITYVIEW Developments are expanding their partnership with Pullman Residences & Offices Dubai Meydan, a mixed-use development combining 282 branded homes with what Accor describes as its first branded offices offered for sale globally.

Scheduled to open in 2029, the project will introduce a combination of residential ownership and branded commercial space under the Pullman name. The development reflects the growing use of hospitality brands in Dubai's property market, extending their presence beyond hotels and private residences.

The residential component will comprise one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom homes, offering different configurations for buyers seeking branded accommodation within Meydan. The homes will form part of a wider development incorporating workplaces and shared lifestyle facilities.

The project will be supported by Accor One Living, the hospitality group's platform for the development, design and operation of mixed-use projects and branded residential communities. This arrangement connects the residential offering with Accor's experience in hospitality services and property management. Residents are expected to have access to fitness and wellness facilities, social spaces and recreational amenities. Planned facilities include a padel court, screening room, games room, children's outdoor area, meeting and event spaces, and food and beverage venues.

The development's location in Meydan Horizon provides connections to established business and residential destinations, including Downtown Dubai and Dubai International Financial Centre. Its setting also places the project near the Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary.

While branded residences are already an established segment of Dubai's luxury property market, the proposed commercial component introduces a different approach to office ownership.

The Pullman-branded offices are intended to combine conventional workplace requirements with hospitality-led services and shared facilities. CITYVIEW Developments has also outlined plans for technology-enabled features, including artificial intelligence applications designed to support workplace operations.

The project builds on an existing relationship between Accor and CITYVIEW Developments, rather than representing their first collaboration. It also expands Pullman's presence into a development where residential and commercial owners will occupy the same branded destination.

For Dubai's real estate sector, the scheme illustrates how developers are adapting hospitality concepts to different property categories, including individually owned offices.

With 282 residences and a planned 2029 opening, Pullman Residences & Offices Dubai Meydan will add another branded residential project to the city's development pipeline while introducing a commercial ownership concept associated with an international hospitality operator.

The project's announced specifications establish its broad positioning, although detailed residential pricing, payment terms and a specific handover quarter remain unconfirmed.

WHAT'S HOT

- **Location:** Meydan Horizon, Dubai
- **Branded Residences:** 282 units
- **Configurations:** 1-, 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom residences
- **Planned Opening:** 2029



Sobha Breaks Ground on Anantara Siniya Island Project



Sobha Siniya Island has commenced construction of Anantara Siniya Island Resort and Anantara Residences Sobha Siniya Island, marking another development milestone for the 23 million sq ft waterfront masterplan in Umm Al Quwain.

The groundbreaking ceremony, held on 6 October 2026, was attended by **H.H. Sheikh Rashid bin Saud bin Rashid Al Mualla, Crown Prince of Umm Al Quwain**, alongside senior representatives of Sobha Group, Minor International and the emirate's leadership.

Scheduled to open in 2030, the project will comprise 125 hotel keys and 125 Anantara-branded residences. It will introduce the Anantara Hotels & Resorts brand to Umm Al Quwain for the first time, combining resort accommodation with privately owned branded homes.

The development follows a strategic partnership between Sobha Siniya Island and Minor Hotels through Sobha Al Siniya FZC, a joint venture between Sobha Realty and Umm Al Quwain Properties. Within the wider masterplan, the Anantara development will provide a hospitality and residential offering shaped around the island's coastal environment. The resort's design is intended to complement its natural surroundings, including mangroves, beaches, marine habitats and areas supporting local wildlife.

Sobha Siniya Island is being developed as a low-density destination incorporating apartments, villas, resorts, leisure facilities and landscaped open spaces. According to the developer, more than 60% of the masterplan is allocated to water features, greenery and open areas.

Located off the coast of Umm Al Quwain, the island is connected to the mainland by a bridge approximately 1.7 kilometres long. The destination is situated around 50 minutes from Dubai, providing access to the wider UAE while retaining its distinct island setting.

The masterplan also incorporates environmentally and historically significant areas, including mangrove ecosystems, archaeological sites and the remains of a sixth-century monastery. These features form part of the island's identity and distinguish it from conventional waterfront developments.

Francis Alfred, Managing Director of Sobha Siniya Island, has emphasised the importance of developing the destination in a manner that respects its natural setting while supporting its residential and hospitality ambitions.

For Minor Hotels, the project extends Anantara's presence in the UAE beyond its existing destinations and other planned developments.

For Umm Al Quwain, the groundbreaking represents further investment in hospitality infrastructure and branded residential property as the emirate develops its tourism offering.

The project remains at an early construction stage, with 2030 identified as its planned opening year. Its completion will add 125 branded residences and a new resort to Sobha Siniya Island's growing coastal development portfolio.

WHAT'S HOT

- **Masterplan Area:** 23 million sq ft
- **Hotel Capacity:** 125 keys
- **Branded Residences:** 125 homes
- **Open Spaces and Greenery:** More than 60% of the masterplan allocated to water features, open spaces and greenery
- **Planned Opening:** 2030

Deyaar Hands Over 711 Homes at Tria in Dubai Silicon Oasis

Deyaar Development has completed and handed over Tria, a 711-unit residential development in Dubai Silicon Oasis, bringing the developer's total residential deliveries in 2026 to more than 2,100 homes.

The completed project includes six retail units and a distinctive three-wing architectural design, with separate views towards Dubai's skyline, Dubai Silicon Oasis and surrounding green spaces.

Tria's handover follows the completion of 1,436 homes across Regalia, Jannat and Talia Residences during the first half of 2026. Together, the four developments reflect Deyaar's residential delivery activity across different communities in Dubai.

Originally launched in June 2022, Tria was introduced as Deyaar's first luxury residential tower in Dubai Silicon Oasis. The 32-storey development has a built-up area exceeding one million square feet and offers several residential configurations.

The project includes studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, alongside larger accommodation types such as townhouses, duplexes and penthouses. Deyaar's official project listing identifies apartment sizes ranging from approximately 440 to 2,900 square feet.

Its architectural design incorporates an aluminium-and-glass exterior, with floor-to-ceiling windows intended to provide natural light and views of the surrounding community.

The residential units were designed with technology and energy efficiency in mind. Features identified by Deyaar include smart-home automation, energy-efficient lighting, built-in appliances and contemporary interior finishes.

Tria also incorporates a broad selection of recreational and wellness amenities. These include swimming pools, a clubhouse, gymnasium, yoga pavilion, steam and sauna rooms, squash and padel courts, and an outdoor cinema.

Landscaped gardens, terrace areas, children's play facilities and outdoor dining spaces provide additional shared areas for residents. The mix of facilities was planned to support everyday family living alongside fitness, recreation and social activities.

The development is located within Dubai Silicon Oasis, an established mixed-use district that combines residential communities with commercial, educational and technology-related facilities. Its position provides access to major transport corridors, including Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Road and Al Ain Road, connecting residents with other parts of Dubai.

Deyaar appointed the project's main construction contractor in March 2023, when it identified an overall project cost of AED 515 million. The company had previously targeted completion in 2025, making the reported 2026 handover a later milestone than its original construction timetable.

Saeed Mohammed Al Qatami, CEO of Deyaar, said the handover adds another 711 homes to the company's delivery momentum following three earlier project completions. With Tria now delivered, Deyaar has expanded its completed residential portfolio in Dubai Silicon Oasis while progressing its wider development pipeline across the emirate.

WHAT'S HOT

- **Location:** Dubai Silicon Oasis
- **Residential Units:** 711 homes
- **Retail Units:** Six
- **Apartment Sizes:** 440–2,900 sq ft
- **Project Status:** Completed and handed over





THE SECOND LIFE OF DUBAI'S FIRST TOWERS

Dubai's first towers are approaching 20 years, and much of what keeps them running is reaching the end of their first life. Whether that becomes a burden or the market's next great opportunity depends on decisions owners are making now.

~Tripti Mehta





Wael Boureslan
Group Head of Engineering
Arabian Construction Company (ACC)

> Renewal work rewards contractors who understand why a building is failing, rather than simply replacing what is visible

The skyline that announced Dubai's arrival as a global property market is no longer new. The towers delivered between 2005 and 2012, across Dubai Marina, Jumeirah Lakes Towers, Business Bay and the early phases of Downtown, went up at a pace few cities have matched. Two decades on, many of the systems installed at handover, from chillers and lift controls to façade sealants and waterproofing membranes, are nearing the end of their first service cycle.

For an industry long organised around launches and handovers, this is unfamiliar ground. It is not, however, a story of decline. A mature building renewed with intent can compete on location, community and proven performance, advantages that new stock takes years to acquire. The more pressing questions are how that renewal should be approached, who delivers it, and where the value it creates will settle.

Wael Boureslan, Group Head of Engineering, Arabian Construction Company (ACC), sees the work already moving towards systems that rarely draw attention until they fail. "As Dubai's building stock matures, some of the most significant renewal needs are often less visible. Chilled-water systems are a good example. Deterioration of pipe insulation and vapour barriers can lead to persistent condensation, which can damage ceilings and finishes, contribute to corrosion and result in recurring maintenance issues. Waterproofing and wet areas, particularly toilets, are similarly important. Localised failures can allow water ingress and, if left unaddressed, affect multiple occupied spaces and lead to more extensive repair work," he says.

Vertical transportation sits in a category of its own, where routine servicing can mask a deeper need. "Elevators are slightly different, as they typically benefit from continuous specialist maintenance. However, maintenance should be distinguished from modernisation. As installations age, controls, drives, door systems and other components can become obsolete. Targeted modernisation, or more comprehensive replacement where necessary, can improve reliability, safety, energy performance and ride quality, while also helping to ensure the continued availability of spare parts," Boureslan says.

Planning Ahead Of Failure

Buildings of this generation share a broadly common clock. Operators who read it early can choose the timing and scope of their interventions rather than have both imposed on them by a breakdown.

"Absolute success comes from moving from reactive maintenance to structured lifecycle planning. In older



Gary Reader
Group Chief Operating Officer for Subsidiaries, Union Properties

> Waiting for an asset to fail narrows the available options and raises the cost of intervention

buildings, several systems are typically approaching the point where declining efficiency, rising maintenance demands and component obsolescence start to affect both operating costs and occupant experience. By assessing asset conditions early and prioritising interventions by risk, performance and remaining useful life, operators can address challenges before becoming disruptive or significantly more costly," says **Gary Reader, Group Chief Operating Officer for Subsidiaries, Union Properties.**

Jamal Haja, Chief Executive Officer, Al Najma Al Fareeda International Facility Management Services (ANAF), points to the local conditions that make early identification a necessity rather than a refinement. "This is particularly important in Dubai, where many buildings are exposed to high temperatures, humidity, dust and intensive year-round use, which can accelerate the ageing of equipment and building systems. A planned lifecycle approach helps property owners identify ageing assets early and schedule refurbishment or replacement before major failures occur. This reduces emergency repair costs, service disruptions and unplanned capital expenditure," he says.

The Economics Of Timing

The financial argument rests on a simple asymmetry. An asset replaced on schedule costs less, in money and in disruption, than one replaced in an emergency.

"Timing is critical. Waiting for an asset to fail narrows the available options and raises the cost of intervention. A planned programme enables owners to coordinate operations, minimise disruption and prioritise investments with measurable operational benefits. In this sense, renewal is not simply expenditure, it is a mechanism for improving a building's long-term operating economics," Reader says.

Haja frames the return in broader terms than the maintenance budget alone. "From an FM perspective, planned renewal enables better budgeting, procurement and resource planning, while allowing work to be scheduled around occupancy and business requirements. It also reduces the risk of service interruptions and reputational impact. Ultimately, the economics are not only about reducing maintenance expenditure; they are about maximising asset performance, extending building life, improving occupant experience and protecting property value," he says.

Efficiency upgrades tend to deliver the earliest returns, and in a climate where cooling runs for most of the year, the chilled-water plant is the obvious place to begin. "Improving chilled-water system performance, optimising Air Handling Unit (AHU) and Fan Coil Unit (FCU) operation, maintaining coils and filters, balancing air and water systems, calibrating sensors and replacing inefficient equipment can significantly improve efficiency and occupant comfort. LED lighting, supported by occupancy and daylight sensors, offers another practical opportunity, particularly in lobbies, corridors, parking areas, plant rooms and back-of-house spaces. It



Jamal Haja
Chief Executive Officer, Al Najma Al Fareeda International Facility Management Services (ANAF)

> A well-stewarded building should not simply survive its second decade, it should become more efficient, resilient, reliable and competitive

reduces electricity consumption as well as lamp replacement and maintenance costs," Haja says.

Reader places the building management system at the centre of that effort. "Building Management Systems are equally important because they provide the visibility and control needed to optimise the way building systems operate rather than simply replacing individual components. There is no universal solution, though. The fastest payback depends on a building's condition, usage patterns and existing systems, so the most effective approach is to start with an energy and asset assessment and prioritise interventions on measurable performance and payback," he says.

Boureslan adds a note of engineering discipline to any discussion of payback. "The level of savings will vary depending on the building's condition, existing



Ibrahim Imam
Co-Founder and Co-CEO
PlanRadar

> The advantage is not simply more data, but stronger evidence of responsible asset management

systems and operating profile, so generic percentages should be treated with caution without a proper audit and engineering assessment. More broadly, coordinated MEP renewal can extend an asset's useful life, reduce breakdowns and maintenance costs, improve occupant comfort and help owners move from reactive repairs towards more planned, long-term asset management," he says.

Renewing A Building That Never Closes

Most towers of this vintage are occupied and earning. Emptying them for a refurbishment is seldom an option, which makes the delivery model as consequential as the scope of works itself.

"Phased retrofit is a significant opportunity because many owners cannot simply close an income-producing asset for a major refurbishment. Dubai already demonstrates different approaches to lifecycle renewal, with Mall of the Emirates undergoing a major transformation around 20 years after opening, while Burj Al Arab has announced a phased restoration programme after more than 25 years of operation," Boureslan says.

The practical burden of that model falls on the contractor. "For contractors, the challenge is maintaining operations while managing access, logistics, shutdowns, temporary services, safety and occupant experience. Environmental control is particularly important during fit-out; prolonged exposure of materials and finishes to uncontrolled temperature or humidity can contribute to movement, condensation, mould or deterioration," he says.

That complexity favours firms that diagnose before they build, and it is diagnosis, in Boureslan's view, that turns a single contract into a long relationship. "Renewal work rewards contractors who understand why a building is failing, rather than simply replacing what is visible. A leaking ceiling, for example, could be caused by chilled-water condensation, waterproofing, drainage or another concealed interface. Fixing the symptom without identifying the root cause often means the problem will return," he says.

"Ultimately, repeat work hinges on predictability: early risk identification, safeguarding ongoing operations, and returning systems that consistently perform well. For owners, that means greater confidence that the investment will deliver lasting value rather than simply solving today's problem," Boureslan says.

When The Building Keeps Its Own Record

If diagnosis is the contractor's discipline, data is fast becoming the owner's. Many older towers still hold their history in paper files, scattered invoices and the memory of long-serving engineers. Digital platforms are beginning to change what an owner can know, and how early.

"A manual inspection provides an important snapshot but connected building data reveals what is changing



Karan Nag
Head – Middle East, Anacity

> Age alone does not determine whether an asset should be replaced

over time. By combining inspection results, recurring defects, maintenance frequency, response times, equipment age and, where available, sensor or energy data, owners can identify patterns that may remain hidden across separate reports and spreadsheets. For example, an increasing number of HVAC interventions in the same location may indicate declining performance rather than isolated faults," says **Ibrahim Imam, Co-Founder and Co-CEO, PlanRadar.**

Karan Nag, Head – Middle East, Anacity, argues that better information changes the question owners ask in the first place. "Instead of asking, 'When does this equipment typically need replacement?', owners can ask, 'What is the condition and cost trajectory of this particular asset?' This distinction can be particularly important for older buildings. Age alone does not determine whether an asset should be replaced. Better data can identify where an ageing system still has useful life and where

continued maintenance is becoming uneconomic," he says.

"It also facilitates more flexibility in sequencing capital expenditure, prioritising interventions and avoiding the temptation to treat an entire building as equally old simply because it was constructed in the same year," Nag says.

The same discipline is reshaping how reserve funds are planned in jointly owned buildings, where every renewal budget must be justified to owners and regulators alike. "For older buildings, this makes it easier to prioritise limited capital according to condition, operational risk and long-term value. Different renewal scenarios can also be evaluated: replacing an entire system, renewing it in phases or combining replacement with energy-efficiency improvements. In Dubai's jointly owned properties, where reserve expenditure is subject to regulatory oversight, reliable records can provide stronger evidence behind proposed scopes and budgets," Imam says.

Technology, however, is not a substitute for accountability. "Human oversight remains essential wherever decisions involve safety, significant capital expenditure, compliance, occupant wellbeing or competing operational priorities. AI can identify patterns or recommend actions, but someone still needs to understand the context and take responsibility for the decision," Nag says.

Bringing Owners With The Plan

In strata buildings, renewal is a collective decision. A sound technical case is necessary, but it rarely secures funding on its own merits.

"Owners are much more inclined to support reinvestment when there is a clear case for it. They need to understand what the work addresses, why it is being proposed now and, most importantly, what delaying it could mean for the property," says **Ali Al Marzooqi, VP – Property & Community Management, Deyaar.**

Anas Gahshan, Director of FM, HSE & Sustainability, KAIZEN Asset Management Services, locates the obstacle elsewhere than the sum being requested. "Resistance to reinvestment is rarely about the capital. It is about the absence of clarity. Strong management gives every line of spend a clear purpose, grounded in technical evidence and a data-led view of the value it creates," he says.

"Ultimately, owners are not being asked to invest in something separate from their property. They are reinvesting in the asset they already own. The clearer the connections between that expenditure, the standard of the community and its long-term value, the stronger the case for owner support," Al Marzooqi says.

Once funding is agreed, the order of works shapes how residents judge the outcome. Gahshan sets out a deliberate hierarchy. "Cleanliness and visible upkeep are the baseline. Professional security follows, establishing control at every threshold and creating a sense of safety long before aesthetics enter the conversation. Then wellbeing, through fitness facilities and flexible spaces that give a community reason to gather. Then experience, where a modernised lobby, lighting, air quality, and even scent reset how a building feels. Safety sits outside the ranking. It anchors the start of any credible sequence," he says.

Al Marzooqi cautions against investment that improves one space while leaving its neighbours behind. "It is also important to avoid upgrading spaces in isolation. If you invest heavily in the entrance but the corridors, lifts or amenities remain outdated, that first impression disappears very quickly. Each phase should build on the last, so there is a visible improvement in the overall standard of the property rather than a



collection of disconnected upgrades," he says.

Design That Earns Its Place

Next door, new launches set the benchmark for finishes, amenities and arrival. Repositioning an older tower against them is less a matter of imitation than of understanding what the market now rewards.

"You cannot compete with new stock by simply making an old building look newer. You have to understand why the newer building is attracting tenants or buyers in the first place. I always start with the customer journey: arrival, first impression, circulation, lighting, smell, temperature, finishes and how the space actually functions. Then I look at where capital will create the strongest commercial return," says **Leann King,**

"The mistake is spending money everywhere. Good repositioning is targeted. You retain what still works, remove what dates the asset and invest heavily in the areas that influence perception, usability and value. The objective is not imitation; it is making the building relevant again, bringing it back to life," she says.

King is equally clear that design cannot carry a renewal alone. "But design alone is not enough.

If the lobby looks beautiful while the lifts are unreliable, the cooling is inefficient or the facilities are poorly maintained, the value uplift will not last. The best refurbishment combines visual improvement with operational performance," King says.

Many of these buildings also carry the attachment of owners who bought into them when they were new, which makes the question of what to keep a sensitive one. "I never believe in changing something simply because it is old. If an element has character, quality or emotional value, that can become part of the asset's strength. The first question should be: what is worth protecting? From there, you identify what is genuinely holding the building back," she says.

"The best refurbishment feels evolutionary rather than forced. People who knew the original building should still recognise it, while someone



Ali Al Marzooqi
VP – Property & Community Management, Deyaar

> Owners are much more inclined to support reinvestment when there is a clear case for it

experiencing it for the first time should never feel that they have walked into an ageing asset," King says.

A Record Worth Showing

Renewal also changes how an older asset is bought and sold. Due diligence on a mature tower turns on what a buyer cannot see, and a documented history can answer questions that a viewing never will.

"For an older tower, this creates a clearer distinction between chronological age and actual condition. A 20-year-old building with documented façade work, renewed systems and a transparent maintenance history may present a more understandable risk profile than a newer asset with incomplete records. The advantage is therefore not simply more data, but stronger evidence of responsible asset management," Imam says.



Anas Gahshan
Director of FM, HSE & Sustainability
KAIZEN Asset Management Services

> Resistance to reinvestment is rarely about the capital. It is about the absence of clarity

Al Marzooqi sees the same logic extending to the community as a whole. "When someone is considering a property, they are not only looking at the apartment or villa. They are looking at the condition of the building, the quality of the amenities, the service charges, and how well the wider community is being managed. A clear reserve and renewal plan shows that there is proper planning behind those standards and that future requirements have been considered," he says.

"For a buyer, that documented track record removes guesswork and turns an unpredictable liability into a managed one. How a community has been maintained is the closest thing the market has to a forecast of what it will sell for," Gahshan says.

The Communities That Keep Climbing

Age, then, is not the deciding variable. Some established communities continue to gain in desirability while others





Leann King

> You cannot compete with new stock by simply making an old building look newer

plateau, and the difference lies largely in how they have been managed.

"Age does not have to work against a community. Established developments can have advantages that take years to build, including mature landscaping, well-used amenities, an established resident base, and locations that have grown significantly around them. The challenge is making sure the property itself keeps up with the changes," Al Marzooqi says.

Gahshan regards the years a building has already lived as an asset in their own right. "An established asset holds what a new tower cannot yet claim: a documented history. Its systems have been tested in real conditions, its weak points exposed and addressed. That record is a commercial advantage when treated as live intelligence rather than an archive. Communities that keep climbing read their history as a plan. They direct capital toward the gaps the data shows and stay agile as the ecosystem moves around them. Foresight is earned through management. It is never installed," he says.

"For a building entering its second decade, the focus should also extend beyond individual equipment to the overall occupant experience, reliability and efficiency of the asset. The strongest buildings are those where maintenance, technology, energy management and capital planning work in tandem. Ultimately, good stewardship is about anticipating what the asset will need next and making informed interventions before performance or value is compromised," Reader says.

Haja puts the ambition more plainly. "A well-stewarded building should not simply survive its second decade, it should become more efficient, resilient, reliable and competitive as it moves into its next phase," he says.

"The next phase of Dubai's renewal market may therefore be defined not just by how well existing buildings are refurbished, but by how intelligently they are monitored, maintained and improved throughout their next lifecycle," Boureslan says.

For two decades, Dubai measured its property success in launches, handovers and skyline milestones. The next measure will be quieter, found in plant rooms, reserve fund statements and condition reports that seldom make headlines. The towers of the first boom were built quickly and bought with conviction. Their second life will be earned more deliberately, by owners who plan before they are compelled to, contractors who investigate before they replace, and managers who can evidence every decision they take. The consequences reach well beyond individual buildings. As a growing share of the city's residential and commercial stock reaches maturity, the quality of its renewal will shape how investors, tenants and residents judge the depth of Dubai's property market over the long term.

Established communities that treat their history as evidence will be well placed to hold their own against whatever rises next door, drawing on locations, landscaping and loyalty that no new launch can replicate overnight. Those that defer the conversation will find the timing, scope and cost decided for them, on terms they did not choose. Dubai's first towers proved that the city could build at speed. Their renewal now offers something more enduring: the chance to prove it can build to last.

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CAN AI HELP DEVELOPERS BUILD MORE HUMAN-CENTRED COMMUNITIES?

Before the first resident moves in, data can already reveal how a community will live, connect and grow. **Eddy Nemri, Vice President at Object 1**, explains why AI's real value lies in building around people.



The UAE's ambition to become a global Artificial Intelligence leader is already changing how industries think about data, technology and decision-making. Under the UAE National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence 2031, the country is building an ecosystem designed to embed AI across priority sectors. For real estate, the opportunity is particularly significant. Property development generates enormous amounts of information around location, pricing, buyer behaviour, building performance and resident needs. But the most interesting application of AI is not necessarily another smart-home feature or automated customer service tool. It is whether technology can help us build more human communities.

After all, developments are not simply collections of buildings. They are places where people raise families, establish routines, meet neighbours and build a sense of belonging. If AI is going to play a larger role in shaping these environments, its value should ultimately be measured by how well it improves everyday life.

AI Should Enter Before the Blueprint Is Final

Too often, technology is introduced after the major development decisions have already been made. The bigger opportunity is to use AI much earlier. Before designing a project, developers are trying to answer fundamental questions: Who will live here? How will their needs change over the next decade? Which amenities will genuinely be used? How will people move through the community?

Digital twins and AI-supported modelling can help turn these questions into testable scenarios. If data indicates that an area is attracting more young families, for example, that insight should influence the amount and location of children's spaces, pedestrian areas and community facilities. If professionals make up a growing proportion of residents, connectivity, flexible working areas and mobility may become more important. The objective is not to let an algorithm design a community. It is to give planners better evidence before making decisions that will affect residents for decades.

That distinction matters in a market moving as quickly as Dubai. More than 270,000 real estate transactions worth AED 917 billion were recorded in 2025. At that scale, relying purely on assumptions about what buyers and residents want becomes increasingly difficult.

Completed Communities Should Teach Us What to Build Next

One of real estate's biggest untapped advantages is the information generated after people move in. A completed project should not represent the end of the development process. It should become a source of insight for the next one. AI-driven PropTech can help developers and community and facilities management teams understand





Eddy Nemri
Vice President, Object 1

how spaces perform in practice. If an outdoor area receives limited use during hotter months, perhaps the issue is not demand but insufficient shading or cooling. If particular amenities consistently experience higher usage, future developments can allocate space differently. Resident behaviour, operational trends and investor data can therefore create a continuous feedback loop between existing communities and future projects. This is particularly valuable for newer developers. Market reports can explain broad demand, but they cannot replace proprietary knowledge of how your own residents behave, what they value and where their frustrations emerge.
Over time, that knowledge can become a competitive advantage.

> AI becomes a tool for understanding a community before that community physically exists

In an Off-Plan Market, Communities Exist Before Buildings Do

There is another area where AI can play a surprisingly human role. Dubai's off-plan market means developers often have relationships with future residents months or years before they receive their keys. During that period, buyers ask questions, raise concerns and reveal what they expect from their future homes. Those interactions contain valuable information. AI can help organise that information and identify patterns across the buyer journey. Families may repeatedly ask about schools, children's spaces or community services. Investors may focus more heavily on rental demand, property management and long-term value.

These are not simply customer-service queries. Collectively, they provide an early picture of the community that is forming. Used intelligently, this information can help developers prepare resident onboarding, community programming and facilities operations before handover. AI therefore becomes a tool for understanding a community before that community physically exists.

The Smartest Communities May Not Feel "Smart"

Over the next decade, AI will increasingly sit quietly behind how communities operate. Digital twins could simulate foot traffic, mobility, amenity demand and public-space usage before construction begins. Once residents move in, AI could help optimise energy and water consumption, anticipate maintenance requirements and reduce waste. But the more interesting possibilities may be social rather than technical.

With appropriate privacy safeguards, resident platforms could help people discover neighbours with shared interests, connect families with community activities or identify what types of events residents genuinely want. The best outcome is not a community overwhelmed by technology. It is one where technology works almost invisibly in the background, making services faster, spaces more useful and everyday interactions easier.

Human-Centred Development Still Requires Human Judgement

AI will undoubtedly become more influential across UAE real estate, but developers should resist treating it as an objective in itself. A community cannot be reduced entirely to datasets. People's behaviour changes, families evolve and some of the qualities that make neighbourhoods successful: identity, belonging and emotional connection, are difficult to quantify. AI can tell developers what is happening and help identify patterns in why it may be happening. Human judgement must still determine what to do with that information.

The developers that benefit most from AI will therefore not necessarily be those deploying the most technology. They will be those asking better questions of it. Because ultimately, the goal is not to build communities around Artificial Intelligence. It is to use Artificial Intelligence to understand people better, and build communities around them.

The views expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the editorial position of Real Estate Market Times.

What Does It Take to Build In Dubai Today?

Three decades on Dubai's building sites have given **Shadi Küzam, Founder and CEO, Gulf Modern Contracting**, a rare view of what really determines whether a project succeeds. He explains why delivery, workmanship and partnership matter more than any brochure.



(L-R) Shadi Küzam, Founder & CEO, Gulf Modern Contracting with Jatin Deepchandani, CEO, Eventyst Global

As you grow, you have to have more leadership skills and look at it as more an art than a science

Behind every Dubai launch is the contractor who turns drawings into towers and villas. In the latest episode of Construction Pulse by Real Estate Market Times, **Jatin Deepchandani, Chief Executive Officer, Eventyst Global**, sits down with **Shadi Küzam, Founder and CEO, Gulf Modern Contracting (GMC)**, a construction leader with 30 years of experience. Together, they explore how contractors are adapting to a shifting market, what protects quality on site, and why collaboration between developers and contractors matters more than ever.

What role does the developer-contractor relationship play when market conditions shift?

It is not only about a contract, it is about the relationship with the developer. At the end of the day, the developer wants his project delivered. To protect delivery, you have to go all the way down the supply chain, because a project can be held back by a single subcontractor. Aluminium or elevators may be less than 10 per cent of a tower's value, yet they can delay it by months. Neither the developer nor the contractor can afford that, so you solve problems jointly. And even when a contractor is compensated for a delay, we are not happy, because we do not make money from prolongation.

Will supply chain pressures lead to project delays?

Some activities will be affected, as certain materials are shipped from abroad and some have become harder to find. However, a delayed activity does not mean a delayed project. If that activity falls on the critical path, it affects the completion date. If it has float, it can

be delayed without affecting the rest of the programme. Everyone invested in a project understands the situation, as long as any delay stays within range and quality is not compromised.

Are developers asking contractors to cut corners on quality?

We look at quality from two perspectives. The first is workmanship, such as how you fix tiles or install cladding. There, we make no compromise, whether we are making money or not. The second is materials, where a project may undergo value engineering if the contract allows. That does not always mean lower quality. Sometimes a specified product, such as an air-conditioning unit, is coming from abroad, and a locally available alternative saves time and money without affecting the end user. We have also seen the opposite. On one project, the client chose to upgrade, rebranding an unbranded tower as Mövenpick. The cost was higher, but so was the revenue, and early buyers effectively received a free upgrade. End users should always check that they are getting what they signed for.

Many large developers now run in-house construction arms. How does that affect independent contractors?

It is a growing trend, and it is not a bad one. It makes sense when you have a steady pipeline of projects. The benefit is not really cost, as it will cost roughly the same either way. The benefit is control. You can set priorities and you face fewer variation orders and claims. The risk is that if projects slow down, you carry thousands of people on your payroll with no other outlet. An external contractor also stays specialised and up to date. It is like having a doctor who only treats you; after a while, his knowledge becomes limited.

Have you ever considered becoming a developer yourself?

It is very tempting, and we have almost everything in-house. We know how to select land, develop a concept, secure approvals and build. What we do not have is sales and marketing experience. More importantly, I would be competing with my clients, so strategically it is not the right move. But who knows what the future holds.

How do you tell a strong developer from a risky one?

We are very selective, and we learned that the hard way. The biggest risk is a developer who over-leverages, starting too many projects before completing any and stretching himself thin. Experience is the second factor. Experienced developers know what they want, understand the importance of time, and know that late changes can hurt everyone. The third is spending discipline. Marketing and showrooms are fine when funded from profits already made, but spending ahead of delivery is risky.

After 30 years in construction, how have you evolved as a leader?

When you start as a site engineer, you are a control freak, policing cost, time, manpower and attendance. As you grow, you need leadership, emotional intelligence and vision. Management becomes more an art than a science. Dubai teaches you a lot about vision and how to turn challenging times into opportunities. Today, it is about balance between technical skill and people skills, and between hard work and personal life. I would like to see developers succeed, because their success means continuity for us. The old idea of developers, consultants and contractors sitting on opposite sides of the table has to go. Together, they can overcome any challenge.

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The old idea of developers, consultants and contractors sitting on opposite sides of the table has to go

WHY OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE IS THE NEW COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Marwan Raad, Operations Manager – Property & Development, ENGIE Solutions, explores why the way a property performs after handover is becoming as important as how it was originally designed; with smarter facilities management helping owners control costs, improve sustainability and protect long-term asset value.



For a long time, facilities management was seen as a support function that building owners rarely discussed unless something went wrong. As long as HVAC were repaired, floors were cleaned, contracts were renewed and buildings operated as expected, few people paid much attention to what happened behind the scenes.

Today, owners, developers and asset managers expect facilities teams to do more than maintain buildings and meet compliance requirements. They increasingly expect them to improve asset performance, support sustainability objectives, enhance occupier satisfaction, manage long-term operating costs and help properties remain competitive. As a result, how well a building is managed has become a key factor not only in day-to-day operations, but also in long-term asset value and investment performance.

Why Owner Expectations Are Rising

Several factors are changing what owners expect from their buildings. Rising energy costs are having a greater impact on operating budgets, while regulators and green building standards require stronger sustainability performance. At the same time, tenants and residents expect comfortable, reliable spaces and faster responses when issues arise.

These priorities apply to shopping malls, office towers and residential communities alike that are particularly important in the Middle East. This is because cooling is one of the highest contributing sources of building energy use, and equipment must perform reliably through long periods of extreme environmental conditions. Rapid urban development is also bringing newer, more efficient

> Technology can identify a problem, but expertise determines how it is resolved

properties into the market, raising expectations for existing buildings. For owners, poorly managed buildings can lead to higher utility bills, unreliable equipment, dissatisfied occupants and declining competitiveness. In residential communities, these costs are even more visible because higher energy use and maintenance costs can ultimately affect the service charges residents pay. In commercial properties, they can directly influence tenant retention, operating margins and overall asset attractiveness.

From Reactive Repairs to Predictive Performance

Most buildings are designed to perform efficiently, but keeping them that way once they are occupied is more difficult. Equipment ages, usage patterns change and energy consumption can increase over time. Without a clear view of asset performance, maintenance teams may only identify problems after they begin affecting operations.

Digital monitoring and building management systems are helping to change this by showing how equipment is performing and identifying early signs of deterioration. This allows teams to address potential problems before they become failures. But data on its own is only useful when experienced teams can interpret it, understand the cause of a problem and decide what action to take. Industry experience shows that predictive maintenance and data-driven operational management can typically reduce energy use by between 5% and 15%, while also reducing emergency callouts and unplanned maintenance interventions. At a sustainable city in Abu Dhabi, for example, better operational management contributed to a 32% reduction in electricity and chilled water consumption over five years. The lesson here is that technology can identify a problem, but expertise determines how it is resolved.

Another example of a tower in Downtown, Dubai, where the value of this approach can be seen at Standard Chartered Tower in Dubai, an 18-storey Grade A office building occupied by Grade-A tenants, where the focus is primarily on tenant's comfort and having state-of-the-art facilities, hence rather than reviewing energy performance periodically, the building is monitored continuously. It has maintained a low delta-T cooling profile continuously for six years and achieved year-on-year energy savings since 2015. A retrofit of 10,000 light fittings has also been completed, while around 2,000 assets are monitored against service and performance targets.

These results show that better building performance rarely comes from one major intervention, but from continuous monitoring, informed decisions and regular improvements. Over time, these incremental gains can have meaningful impact on operating costs, sustainability outcomes and the long-term value of an asset.

Sustainability Is an Operational Task

The same thinking applies to sustainability. A building may be designed to high environmental standards, but maintaining that performance after people move in depends largely on how it is operated. Cooling, lighting and water systems all need to be managed carefully if the building is to deliver the efficiency expected from its original design.

This makes sustainability an everyday facilities management responsibility. Energy audits, better HVAC scheduling, regular equipment maintenance and digital monitoring help identify where energy is being wasted and where improvements can be made. At DMCC Uptown Tower, a 340-metre LEED Gold-certified mixed-use development in Dubai, ENGIE Solutions committed to reducing energy consumption by 10% while supporting LEED Gold Operations certification. The approach includes energy audits, occupancy-based HVAC optimisation and automated controls to reduce unnecessary energy use.

The Case for Integrated Facilities Management

While commercial and residential properties serve different users, they increasingly face similar operating challenges. Both require reliable maintenance, efficient energy use, comfortable spaces and clear responsibility for performance. Integrated facilities management helps bring these requirements together instead of having different contractors working separately with limited coordination. ENGIE Solutions also manages integrated services for Huawei sites in Abu Dhabi and Dubai covering approximately 181,000 square feet, including offices, villas, a store, industrial kitchens and IT server rooms. Hard, soft and specialised services are managed under one framework, supported by Smart O&M for energy management and digital monitoring. The model demonstrates how integrated service delivery can support operational continuity, workplace comfort, energy efficiency and a consistently high-quality occupier experience across a diverse portfolio of assets.

These examples point to a wider change in real estate, where how a building is managed over time determines how efficiently it operates, how well it manages costs and the experience it provides for occupants.

In a more demanding and competitive market, operational performance is becoming an important contributor to asset value alongside location, design and tenant mix. Smart facilities management is therefore becoming a strategic tool through which owners can protect asset value, strengthen sustainability performance and maintain the long-term competitiveness of their properties.

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THE NEXT MILLION-DIRHAM DECISION WON'T BE ABOUT PRICE ALONE

Dubai buyers are increasingly looking beyond the unit itself, assessing the infrastructure, connectivity and community planning that could shape residential value over the next decade. **Tauseef Khan, Founder and Chairman, Dugasta Properties**, explains why the quality of planning, not price, will define the next phase of Dubai's residential market.

If the previous property cycle in Dubai was defined by location, the next will be defined by the quality of planning behind that location

Not long ago, most conversations about buying property in Dubai began with the numbers: the price, the payment plan, the size of the unit and the expected return. Today, an increasing number of buyers are beginning with a different question: What will this community look and feel like five or ten years from now? I have watched this shift take place in real time. Discussions that once centred almost exclusively on price, payment terms and square footage now increasingly include future transport connectivity, access to schools and healthcare, green spaces, mixed-use facilities and the long-term direction of the wider neighbourhood. This evolution reflects a fundamental change in how residential value is being defined in Dubai. I believe the next million-dirham property decision will not be determined by price alone. It will be determined by planning.

The Smartest Buyers Have Already Changed the Question

Property markets rarely change overnight, but buyer priorities can evolve remarkably quickly.

Over the past several years, people have begun looking beyond the apartment itself and thinking more carefully about how they will actually live. Can they walk to a park? Will their daily commute become easier? Are schools, healthcare and essential services nearby? Will the neighbourhood remain relevant as their family and lifestyle needs change?

Most importantly, will the community be more desirable ten years from now than it is today?

Dubai's long-term vision gives buyers good reason to think this way. The Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan anticipates the emirate's residential population reaching approximately 5.8 million by 2040 and places integrated communities, green spaces, accessibility and quality of life at the centre of the city's future growth.

That clarity is influencing buyer behaviour. People are looking beyond today's most established addresses and paying greater attention to emerging

communities and development corridors such as Dubai South, selected parts of Dubailand and Dubai Creek Harbour.

These locations are attracting interest not simply because they may be more accessible in price today, but because buyers can see the infrastructure, employment centres and community development that may support their future growth.

When Value Moves, Buyers Follow

Every successful city reaches a point where yesterday's emerging neighbourhoods become today's premium addresses. Dubai is no different. As mature communities have appreciated, buyers and investors have naturally widened their search. But this is not merely a reaction to rising prices. People are following confidence. They are asking where the next employment centre will emerge, where transport connections will improve, where schools and hospitals will be developed, and where public and private investment will reshape everyday life.

The Dubai Metro Blue Line is a powerful example. Now under construction, the 30-kilometre line will include 14 stations and is scheduled to begin operations in September 2029. It will connect several important residential, academic and commercial districts and integrate with the existing Red and Green Lines.

Infrastructure of this scale can change perceptions long before the first passenger boards a train. It signals that a location has become part of the city's long-term development story. Roads, rail links, schools and healthcare facilities do more than serve communities after they are built. They help create the confidence around which those communities grow.

A Great Community Is Difficult to Replicate

Developers can deliver impressive buildings. Creating a place where people genuinely choose to live, remain and build their lives is far more difficult. That is why the conversation is shifting from individual projects to complete ecosystems. Buyers are paying closer attention to what surrounds their homes because that environment shapes their daily experience. They value neighbourhoods where schools, cafes, parks, healthcare, retail and recreation work together rather than existing as disconnected features on a brochure. The seemingly small details matter.

A shaded pedestrian route during the summer. A local park filled with families in the evening. A cycling path that connects meaningful destinations. A supermarket, cafe or pharmacy within a comfortable walking distance. Safe access for children and convenient routes for residents travelling to work.

These are not simply amenities. They influence how people experience a community every day.

Luxury facilities may help attract attention during a project launch, but they can be replicated in almost any new development. A successful community ecosystem is much harder to reproduce.

Communities that get these fundamentals right are more likely to maintain occupancy, support local businesses and command stronger demand long after the initial sales campaign has ended.

Planning Creates Resilience

The true test of a development is not how much attention it receives at launch. It is how well it performs years after handover and through different market conditions. A genuinely successful community should appeal to more than one type of buyer. It should work for families, professionals, entrepreneurs, tenants, homeowners and investors. It should remain relevant as lifestyles evolve and as the surrounding city continues to develop. This is where planning creates resilience.

A project supported by strong transport connections, employment opportunities, essential services and thoughtful public spaces is less dependent on a temporary trend. Its demand comes from the practical value it delivers every day. That is increasingly important as Dubai's residential market matures. Buyers are becoming more informed and more selective. They are comparing not only one building with another, but one neighbourhood with another and one long-term vision with another.

The Next Winners Are Already Being Planned

The next chapter of Dubai's residential market is being shaped long before many of its future communities are completed. Smart infrastructure, energy-efficient buildings, integrated digital services and sustainable urban planning will increasingly distinguish the communities that continue to perform after handover. Buyers expect their homes to remain relevant as technology, lifestyles and environmental expectations evolve.

The same principle applies at the city level. New transport links, economic centres, employment corridors and infrastructure investment will influence where demand flows over the next decade.

By the time an area becomes fashionable, a significant part of its potential may already have been recognised. The more valuable question is not which neighbourhood is popular today, but which communities are currently being positioned to become tomorrow's residential centres.

If the previous property cycle in Dubai was primarily defined by location, I believe the next will be defined by the quality of planning behind that location.

The strongest opportunities will emerge where infrastructure, community design and long-term vision come together with purpose. The real advantage will not come from chasing what is already popular, but from understanding where Dubai is investing, expanding and building for the future. Those who recognise that direction early are likely to benefit most in the years ahead.

The views expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the editorial position of Real Estate Market Times.

Palm Jebel Ali

From Blueprint to Beachfront



With first villa handovers approaching, more than AED 13 billion in contracts awarded and major private developers now on board, Palm Jebel Ali is entering the most consequential phase of its journey to becoming Dubai's next waterfront address.

~Tripti Mehta

> Palm Jebel Ali is being created at the scale of a destination, but its character will be defined by the experience of each home
>
> **Khalid Al Malik**
> CEO, Dubai Holding Real Estate

Few addresses in Dubai carry the weight of a Palm. Palm Jumeirah turned an engineering landmark into one of the world's most recognisable residential brands, and its larger sibling is now preparing to write a story of its own. Palm Jebel Ali has moved firmly into delivery. Villa construction is advancing across all 12 residential fronds, more than 1,200 villas are moving through build and finishing stages, and the first homes are scheduled for handover from late 2026. For the industry, the significance reaches well beyond a single project. Palm Jebel Ali is anchoring a new coastal growth corridor on Dubai's southern edge, close to Expo City Dubai and Al Maktoum International Airport, at a time when prime waterfront supply in established locations is increasingly scarce. The conversation has shifted from what Palm Jebel Ali will be to who will help shape it.

A New Chapter

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum approved the current masterplan in May 2023. It positions Palm Jebel Ali as a mixed-use island destination rather than a residential enclave. The island is twice the size of Palm Jumeirah. It is planned to house approximately 35,000 families and feature



Palm Jebel Ali at a Glance

- Master developer: Nakheel, Dubai Holding Real Estate
- Area: 13.4 sq km, twice the size of Palm Jumeirah
- Layout: 7 islands, 16 fronds, 12 of them residential
- Coastline: 120 km, including 90+ km of beachfront
- Planned community: approximately 35,000 families
- Hospitality: 80+ hotels and resorts planned
- Contracts awarded: AED 13 billion+
- First villa handovers: late 2026, phased through 2027
- Renewable energy: up to 30% of requirements

more than 80 hotels and resorts, and up to 30% of its energy will come from renewables, in line with the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan and the Dubai Economic Agenda D33.

Construction and Delivery

On the ground, the island is visibly taking shape. Nakheel has awarded more than AED 13 billion in construction and infrastructure contracts to date. On Fronds K to P, 728 villas have entered the internal and external finishing stage. That work followed AED 5 billion in contracts awarded in 2024 to Ginco General Contracting, Shapoorji Pallonji Mideast and UNEC. A second wave came in April 2026, when Nakheel awarded more than AED 3.5 billion to Ginco and UNEC for 544 villas across Fronds A to F, with completion targeted for Q4 2028.

Infrastructure is moving in step. DBB Contracting holds three contracts worth over AED 750 million. They cover utility mains, frond connections, and primary and secondary roads across the Spine District and Fronds A to G, with completion scheduled for Q4 2026.

Utilities are being built out alongside. DEWA is delivering two 132/11 kV substations with 400 MVA of capacity, and a Tabreed and Dubai Holding joint venture is building a district cooling network, with first services due in 2027. Dubai Holding Real Estate has confirmed that the island will come to life in phases, with infrastructure, access, public realm and amenities sequenced around each residential release.

From One Developer to Many

The most significant shift for the wider industry is structural. Until mid-2025, every release on Palm Jebel Ali came from Nakheel. In July 2025, Dubai Holding completed its first strategic land sale on the island to a third-party developer: Select Group, together with its joint venture partner Emirates Strategic Investments Company. Select Group will create upscale residential and hospitality offerings, and design and planning are under way.

In February 2026, Aldar and Dubai Holding expanded their joint venture with two Dubai land plots carrying a

Palm Jumeirah vs Palm Jebel Ali

	Palm Jumeirah	Palm Jebel Ali
Status	Established and operational	First handovers from late 2026
Scale	The original benchmark	Twice the size
Product mix	Villas, apartments, hotels	Villas, apartments, townhouses; 80+ hotels planned
Developer model	Nakheel and third-party developers	Nakheel, Select Group, Aldar

combined gross development value of more than AED 38 billion. One of the plots is on Palm Jebel Ali and is earmarked for an ultra-luxury waterfront development with branded and non-branded residences. Aldar is responsible for the full development cycle. Dubai Holding has described these deals as part of a strategy to unlock value from its land bank by working with leading partners. Further partnerships are expected across hospitality, branded residences, wellness, leisure and lifestyle.

The Market Case

Demand has kept pace with construction. Knight Frank data shows Palm Jebel Ali recorded 22 home sales above US$10 million in Q4 2025, second only to Palm Jumeirah, and accounted for 10.4% of the value of all such transactions in the quarter. DLD figures compiled by DXB Interact reportedly put the island's median villa price at AED 21.3 million, against AED 33 million on Palm Jumeirah, which makes it the more accessible entry point into ultra-prime waterfront living. Knight Frank has described the island as a destination to watch, noting that 2025 sales signal strong demand from the wealthiest buyers for prime waterfront property.

Nakheel has also widened the product mix. Palm Central Private Residences launched in October 2025 on the island's central spine and introduced apartments and penthouses. Its June 2026 release of 222 homes added townhouses, with one-bedroom units starting from AED 2.7 million. In August 2026, Nakheel released 44 beachfront villas on Frond F and positioned them as one of the final opportunities to buy a new villa on the fronds.

What This Means for the Industry

Palm Jebel Ali is less a single project than the anchor of a new coastal corridor. Dubai Holding Real Estate has highlighted its connection to Expo City Dubai and Al Maktoum International Airport, the same southern growth axis now reshaping Dubai South. As



Delivery Timeline

- Q4 2026: Spine District and frond infrastructure works complete
- Late 2026: Phased villa handovers begin
- 2027: Handovers continue; first district cooling services due
- 2027: Aldar's Palm Jebel Ali homes scheduled to launch for sale
- Q4 2028: Completion targeted for 544 villas on Fronds A to F

Who's Building Palm Jebel Ali

- Master developer: Nakheel, Dubai Holding Real Estate
- Third-party developers: Select Group with ESIC; Aldar, in joint venture with Dubai Holding
- Villa contractors: Ginco General Contracting, UNEC, Shapoorji Pallonji Mideast
- Infrastructure: DBB Contracting
- Marine works: Jan De Nul Dredging
- Utilities: DEWA; Tabreed and Dubai Holding district cooling joint venture
- Architects: NAGA, SAOTA, LW Design Group, LOCI, WATG, Whitespace; SOM for the Friday Mosque

handovers begin, the island will shift from a purely off-plan market to a living community, and the opportunity widens for every part of the industry:

• **Developers:** Land partnerships with Dubai Holding are now an established route in, spanning residential, branded and hospitality product.

• **Contractors:** More than AED 13 billion has been awarded so far, with hospitality, retail, civic and future residential phases to follow.

• **Brokers:** A widening price ladder, from AED 2.7 million apartments to ultra-prime villas, broadens the buyer pool. A resale and leasing market will emerge as owners take possession, adding a second layer of activity to a destination that has so far traded almost entirely off-plan.

• **FM and community management:** More than 1,200 villas and 400+ Palm Central homes are in the current pipeline, creating demand for services across retail, wellness, learning, maintenance and community management.

• **Hospitality operators:** The masterplan includes more than 80 hotels and resorts, and the master developer is openly signalling further partnerships. On those terms, the hospitality and branded residence pipeline alone is one of the most substantial single-destination opportunities in the region.

Palm Jebel Ali's progress is now measured in fronds, contracts and handover dates. As the first residents arrive, the island's identity will be shaped as much by its partners as by its master developer. For developers, contractors, operators and advisors, the window to position early is open, and it will narrow with every phase that delivers. The second Palm is becoming Dubai's next defining waterfront address.

Sources: Nakheel, Dubai Holding, Dubai Media Office, WAM, DEWA, Knight Frank, Dubai Land Department



BERKELEY SERVICES WINS GOLD FOR COMMUNITY IMPACT AT EHA 2026

Berkeley Services has been awarded Gold in the Best Community Impact Initiative of the Year category at the Employee Happiness Awards 2026, recognising its focus on employee wellbeing, environmental responsibility and community engagement.



For Berkeley Services, the role of an integrated facilities management provider extends well beyond service delivery. With a workforce of more than 10,000 employees supporting clients across the UAE, the company places people and their wellbeing at the centre of its approach to creating meaningful social impact. That commitment to employee wellbeing, community engagement and responsible business practices has now earned Berkeley Gold in the Best Community Impact Initiative of the Year category at the Employee Happiness Awards (EHA) 2026.

Turning Commitment into Action

Guided by a 12-month CSR calendar, Berkeley conducts initiatives throughout the year to encourage employee participation, raise awareness of important social and environmental causes, and strengthen community engagement. Its partnership with the Emirates Environmental Group (EEG) supports its commitment to environmental responsibility and collective action. Regular health screenings and wellbeing activities across staff accommodation facilities further demonstrate Berkeley's focus on supporting its workforce, including the frontline employees who play a vital role in the UAE's built environment. These efforts form part of a broader commitment to responsible business. Berkeley is committed to aligning its practices with the principles of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and strengthening its environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance. In 2026, Berkeley was awarded the EcoVadis Silver Medal, ranking in the 91st percentile globally and among the top 15% of companies assessed. The company also achieved the highest maturity level under the Dubai Chamber of Commerce ESG Label 2026, reflecting its progress in embedding responsible business practices into its operations. Together, these initiatives reflect Berkeley's approach to connecting employee wellbeing, environmentalresponsibility and community engagement with its wider business objectives. Commenting on the recognition, **Karl-Heinz Otto Mair, CEO of Berkeley Services and CEO International of Klüh Multiservices**, said, "At Berkeley, we believe that the true measure of our success lies not only in the services we deliver, but also in the difference we make to people's lives. Our people are at the heart of our business, and our responsibility extends to the communities we serve and the environments we help shape every day. This recognition reflects the collective efforts of our teams and the value of working closely with our clients and strategic partners to create meaningful impact. We remain committed to building a business where care for people, responsible practices and operational excellence go hand in hand, because progress is most meaningful when it benefits people and communities alike."

The Gold award reinforces Berkeley's commitment to creating positive change through employee engagement, strategic partnerships and responsible business practices, contributing to the wellbeing of its people and the communities it serves across the UAE.

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WHY SMARTER SERVICES MATTER AS MUCH AS SMARTER METERS

Accurate data and transparent billing are becoming as important to residents as the cooling itself. Georg Frank and Nouha Kedous, Business Development Team at Logic Utilities, explain how smart metering and customer-focused services are raising the standard for chilled water management.





Georg Frank and Nouha Kedous, Business Development Team, Logic Utilities

In today's competitive real estate market, the quality of a property is no longer measured solely by its location, design, or amenities. Residents and property owners increasingly expect transparency, efficiency, and reliability in every aspect of building operations, including how utilities are measured, managed, and billed.

Across the UAE, chilled water services represent an essential component of residential and commercial building operations. Yet, while considerable attention is given to cooling system performance and energy efficiency, the importance of accurate consumption measurement and transparent billing is often overlooked.

For residents, a monthly utility invoice is more than a payment request. It represents their confidence in the fairness of the system, the accuracy of their consumption records, and the professionalism of the service provider. Unexplained charges, estimated consumption, or delays in resolving billing inquiries can quickly undermine that confidence. This is where modern utility management is making a difference. Smart BTU meters, Automated Meter Reading (AMR), and digital billing platforms are transforming conventional processes into more accurate, transparent, and efficient operations. By enabling automated data collection, consumption monitoring, and timely billing, these technologies reduce reliance on manual intervention while improving visibility for both property managers and end users.

Beyond the Meter

However, effective utility management extends beyond technology. Accurate meters must be supported by reliable data validation, regular maintenance, structured collection processes, and responsive customer service. A well-managed system should not only generate accurate invoices but also make consumption information understandable and payment processes convenient.

For developers and property managers, these improvements contribute to stronger financial oversight, more efficient collections, fewer billing disputes, and a better resident experience. For occupants, they create greater confidence in the services supporting their homes and workplaces.

> The future of utility management lies not only in smarter meters, but in smarter services

Recognizing this shift, Logic Utilities delivers integrated chilled water metering, billing, collection, and customer management solutions across the UAE. By combining smart metering infrastructure with digital services and dedicated customer support, the company focuses on making utility management more reliable, accessible, and transparent.

As real estate developments become increasingly sophisticated, expectations for the services operating behind the scenes will continue to rise. Utility management is no longer simply about recording consumption and collecting payments; it is about creating accountability, strengthening trust, and supporting the overall quality of property operations.

Ultimately, the future of utility management lies not only in smarter meters, but in smarter services that deliver transparency, confidence, and lasting value to the communities they serve.

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INDIAN CAPITAL TURNS TO DUBAI'S COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Indian investors are looking beyond Dubai homes towards offices, retail and logistics. **Aayush Puri, CEO, ANAROCK, Middle East,** explains what's driving the shift and where the strongest opportunities now lie.



In the near term, the Indian investor's Dubai playbook will shift from property ownership to property exposure

Indian investors have long been a familiar presence in Dubai's residential market. Increasingly, though, that capital is also moving into offices, retail and industrial-logistics assets, which are segments with a different set of rules. In this interview, **Aayush Puri, CEO, ANAROCK, Middle East,** talks about what is behind the shift, which segments and micro-markets stand out, and how the Indian investor's approach to Dubai is changing.

What is drawing Indian investors to commercial assets now? Is it more about yield or building a business footprint?

Higher rental yields are not the sole reason why Indian investors are looking at commercial real estate alongside residential property. Recurring income and longer leases, along with the opportunity for international portfolio diversification, also play a role. Dubai's business-friendly environment and the quality of life it offers further strengthen this proposition, especially for those who eventually want to relocate here and leverage Dubai's access to regional and global markets to establish or expand their business. By the end of H1 2026, The Dubai Chamber of Commerce had 85,841 Indian companies as active members, up 15% YoY, which shows the depth of the presence of Indian businesses in the city. This business presence is also relevant in the context of demand for commercial space. According to ANAROCK, office transaction volumes in Dubai increased 38% YoY in H1 2026, and retail transaction volumes rose 56%.

Which commercial segments are attracting the most interest, and which offer the strongest case over the next three to five years?

Indian investors are considering offices, retail, and industrial-logistics, but the investment case differs across these segments. The demand for quality workspace and tight availability in established business districts is driving office demand. Retail is also seeing strong transaction activity, although its performance remains closely tied to location, catchment, and tenant mix. Given Dubai's role as a regional trade, manufacturing and distribution hub, and the consequent demand for warehousing and supply-chain infrastructure, industrial and logistics have considerable potential over the longer term.

Hospitality presents a mixed picture as of now. The sector entered 2026 on a strong footing, but regional geopolitical tensions and disruptions to international air travel affected its performance. However, occupancy has recovered sharply. In August 2026, Dubai hotel occupancy rose to 66% from just 36% in March 2026. So, that makes it a sector that isn't a top investment pick right now, but whose investment prospects are expected to improve further as the geopolitical situation gradually settles. Over the next three to five years, I would particularly watch Grade A offices and industrial-logistics. Both offer exposure to business activity that extends beyond the property cycle. In addition, the diversity of occupiers and use cases can create opportunities across different ticket sizes and asset formats.

Beyond the established business districts, which emerging micro-markets could Indian investors be watching?

In my view, the Dubai South–Expo corridor and the Jebel Ali–DIP industrial belt are the areas with good prospects. Dubai South and Expo are emerging office submarkets, particularly for larger occupier requirements.

In industrial and logistics, Dubai South recorded the strongest rental growth among Dubai's industrial submarkets in H1 2026, with rents rising 22% YoY. JAFZA, within the Jebel Ali industrial and logistics hub, attracted AED 854 million in new investments in the first four months of 2026, across sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, and healthcare. Infrastructure, connectivity, occupier demand, supply pipeline, and asset quality are a few factors that shape the attractiveness of these locations.

How prepared is the typical Indian investor for the shift to commercial property?

Preparedness depends on the investor profile. Those with a business background, HNIs, and family offices tend to have a better understanding of commercial asset underwriting. However, for investors moving into commercial real estate from a residential mindset, there is a learning curve.

In Dubai, vacancy, tenant profile, management quality, service charges, and resale liquidity can vary from one building to another. This makes commercial decision-making capability as important as the availability of capital. Therefore, advisory becomes important for investors entering the commercial real estate market in Dubai, as they need to assess not just the asset, but the tenant, lease, micro-market, competing supply, and exit potential together to minimise risks and ensure that the asset aligns with their operational and business objectives.

Is this shift being led mainly by HNIs and family offices, and how has the Indian buyer profile changed over the past two years?

Because of higher ticket sizes and longer holding periods, commercial assets require greater financial capacity on the investor's end. That is why HNIs and family offices naturally have a more prominent role in Dubai's commercial real estate. However, many senior professionals, entrepreneurs, and mid-sized business owners are also eyeing commercial properties in Dubai for investment and portfolio diversification. Also, a notable change that I have observed in the last two years is increasing buyer sophistication.

Location and capital appreciation are no longer the only factors buyers consider when leasing/buying commercial property. Rental logic, asset quality, the business ecosystem, and exit visibility are now being assessed more closely. Overall, I see two parallel trends in the market. First, larger, professionally managed capital is moving towards commercial assets. Second, a broader Indian investor base is building Dubai exposure through smaller-ticket, yield-led opportunities.

As new formats lower entry points, what should developers and regulators do, and what comes next?

Strata offices, REITs, and fractional ownership have made commercial real estate accessible to a wider investor base. Going forward, developers will need to focus on smaller, efficiently managed commercial units, flexible floorplates, transparent leasing economics, and professional asset management to channel Indian capital into this segment. Savills' Q1 2026 data shows that 97% of office deals were for spaces of 3,000 sq ft or less, reinforcing the demand for smaller formats.

Simultaneously, regulators should prioritise transparency, governance and liquidity. The Dubai Land Department took a step in this direction in February 2026 by enabling secondary-market resale for tokenised real estate.

In the near term, the Indian investor's Dubai playbook will shift from property ownership to property exposure. In other words, investors will not only decide what to buy, but also which structure to use to gain exposure to Dubai commercial real estate.

> Commercial decision making capability is as important as the availability of capital

DUBAI PROPERTY SALES REACH AED 92.9 BILLION IN Q3 2026

Dubai's property market recorded strong sales and rental activity in Q3 2026, with developer-led transactions maintaining momentum and rental registrations approaching another potential annual record.

Dubai's primary property market continued to lead sales activity in the third quarter of 2026, while rising rental registrations kept the emirate on course for another potential annual record, according to fäm Properties.

Dubai recorded 37,429 property sales transactions worth AED92.9 billion in Q3 2026. Analysis by fäm Properties showed that developers accounted for 25,441 primary-market sales valued at AED52.6 billion, compared with 11,988 resale transactions worth AED40.3 billion. More than 67% of secondary-market transactions were completed in cash.



Primary Sales Lead Market Activity

September recorded increases across several property categories. Plot sales rose 28.8% month-on-month to 237 transactions worth AED3.8 billion, while commercial transactions increased 27.7% to 539 deals valued at AED2.2 billion. Villa sales climbed 3.9% to 1,428 transactions worth AED8.6 billion, alongside 9,055 apartment sales valued at AED14.8 billion.

Dubai South led primary-market sales volume for the seventh consecutive month, registering 737 off-plan transactions worth AED980.5 million. Wadi Al Safa 3 followed with 560 transactions, while Al Barsha South Fourth recorded 442.

Rental Demand Maintains Momentum

DXBinteract data showed 48,639 rental contracts registered across Dubai's freehold areas in September, up 22.6% month-on-month. New contracts increased 25.6% year-on-year to 25,345, while renewals rose 7.6% to 23,294.

During the first nine months of 2026, rental registrations reached 298,984, representing 6.8% growth compared with the corresponding period in 2025. The previous year recorded 377,926 contracts, setting a full-year benchmark.

Al Warsan First led rental registrations with 28,825 contracts, while one-bedroom apartments accounted for 124,113 registrations, representing 42% of the nine-month total.

A Market Moving at Different Speeds

The report also highlighted contrasting activity across price segments. Properties below AED1 million represented 34.1% of sales, followed by homes priced between AED1 million and AED2 million at 32.4%. Properties exceeding AED5 million accounted for 8.3%.

Firas Al Msaddi, CEO of fäm Properties, noted that primary sales remained the market's principal driver, while substantial cash investment continued in the resale segment.

Overall, the findings indicate sustained activity across Dubai's sales and rental markets, with developers leading transactions and rental demand supporting the possibility of another record year.

Dubai Real Estate Market at a Glance

Key findings from fäm Properties' Q3 2026 market analysis:

- **AED92.9 billion** in property sales across 37,429 transactions in Q3 2026.
- **25,441 primary-market sales** worth AED52.6 billion, outpacing resale transactions.
- **67%+ of secondary-market sales** completed in cash during Q3.
- **298,984 rental contracts** registered in Dubai's freehold areas during the first nine months of 2026, up 6.8% year-on-year.
- **Dubai South led off-plan sales** for the seventh consecutive month, recording 737 transactions worth AED980.5 million in September.

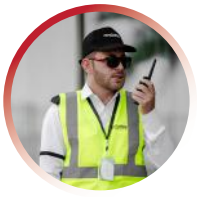
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AND THEN IT CLICKED

Few property markets offer buyers as many ways to own a home as Dubai. Developers now present a wide range of payment structures, from construction-linked instalments to post-handover plans that spread payments over several years. For first-time buyers in particular, that choice opens doors that once felt out of reach.

Each structure suits a different kind of buyer. Some prefer to pay more during





construction and settle the balance at handover, while others favour smaller monthly instalments that fit comfortably alongside their salary. Investors, meanwhile, often look for plans that align payments with expected rental income once the keys are handed over.

This is where good advice makes the difference. A knowledgeable broker can turn a page of percentages into a simple picture, showing exactly what is due, when it is due and how each plan fits a buyer's goals. Clarity, rather than the number of options, is what gives buyers the confidence to commit.



The result is a market where homeownership is planned rather than



rushed. With the right structure in place, buyers can step onto the property ladder at their own pace, knowing precisely how their journey to the keys will unfold. In Dubai, the smartest plan is simply the one that fits.

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