

REM[^]TIMES

The Premier Publication for Real Estate Professionals

August 2025

LEOS DEVELOPMENTS

Changing the Game
in Urban Living

Pg 14

Africa Rising: Five
Real Estate Hotspots
to Watch Out For

Pg 24

Inside Metropolitan
Capital's Developer-Centric
Growth Strategy

Pg 42

A Glimpse of Dubai's
Most In-Demand
Communities





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From the Editor

Dear REM TIMES Readers,

Some stories start with numbers, others with blueprints. But the ones that stay with you? They start with people.

In real estate, it's easy to get lost in the metrics. But behind every deal, every design, there's a deeper question: What will this place mean to the people who live here? That's where the real magic and responsibility lie.

It's a thread that runs through every feature in this issue. Our cover story on **LEOS Developments** captures it beautifully. Speaking with **Founder Rui Liu**, I was reminded that great developments are never just about concrete and glass; they are about creating dignity, connection, and joy. From his UK beginnings to his bold projects in the UAE, Rui's vision blends precision with humanity, ambition with integrity. His latest, Hadley Heights 2, redefines wellness living not as a marketing line, but as a lived, daily experience.

That people-first philosophy echoes across our other stories, too, from PropTech solutions that make communities more connected, to reimagining high-density living without losing a sense of belonging, to the African markets poised for transformation. Even our deep dive into Dubai's penthouse market asks a quieter question: beyond the luxury, how do these spaces shape the lives of those inside?

This month's pages are filled with ideas, but more than that, they're filled with intent. Because at the heart of real estate are the people who live, dream, and build within it.

Until then,
Happy Reading!



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Senior Editor
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08

COVER STORY

LEOS DEVELOPMENTS: CHANGING THE GAME IN URBAN LIVING

Founder **Rui Liu** opens up about **LEOS Developments'** rise across the UK and UAE and how the company is reshaping the blueprint for community-first urban living



AFRICA RISING: FIVE REAL ESTATE HOTSPOTS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Africa's real estate sector is experiencing a powerful shift, fueled by rapid urbanization, population growth, and proactive government policies

14

18

HONG KONG'S LUXURY PROPERTY MARKET SOARS WITH THREE-YEAR HIGH IN VILLA SALES

Luxury home sales surge 23% in H1 2025 as wealthy investors target high-end Hong Kong real estate



22

DUBAI'S RAREST REAL ESTATE: THE PENTHOUSE MARKET THAT'S SETTING THE STANDARD

Real estate experts talk to **REM TIMES** on why penthouses are a pinnacle of prestige



BERKELEY SERVICES: THE STRATEGIC PARTNER BEHIND SMARTER, STRONGER ASSETS

As the UAE facilities management landscape evolves, **Berkeley Services** is at the forefront — delivering long-term asset value through digital innovation, ESG integration, and lifecycle-focused operations

30

36

REIMAGINING URBAN FUTURES: INNOVATIONS FOR RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE CITY DEVELOPMENT

Eng. Amer Khansaheb, CEO and Board Member of Union Properties PJSC, shares his insights on building smarter, fairer and future-ready cities



Dubai Land Department, Masdar City Sign Memorandum of Cooperation

The agreement enables free zone companies to own properties in Dubai



Dubai Land Department signed a memorandum of cooperation with Masdar City, aiming to enable companies and establishments operating in the free zones under Masdar City to own land plots and properties under the freehold ownership system in Dubai, within a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework.

This step is part of Dubai Land Department's efforts to enhance the competitiveness of the emirate's real estate market and expand the investor base by creating new opportunities for free zone companies, in line with the objectives of the Dubai Real Estate Strategy 2033.

The MoC was signed by Majid Al Marri, CEO of the Real Estate

Registration Sector at DLD, and Ahmed Baghoum, Chief Executive Officer of Masdar City, during an official ceremony held in Dubai, in the presence of several directors from both sides.

Majid Al Marri said: "We continue to expand access to Dubai's freehold market through collaborative models that enhance the integration of the real estate ecosystem across the UAE. Enabling companies registered in free zones to own property in the emirate aligns with our vision of building a more open investment environment that offers diverse ownership options. We consider this a strategic step that adds significant value to the objectives of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 by diversifying the investor base and stimulating new

investment flows that contribute to market growth and sustainability, all in line with our leadership's vision of making Dubai the best city in the world to live and work."

Ahmed Baghoum said: "This initiative highlights Masdar City's commitment to supporting businesses with innovative solutions that address their needs. By simplifying property registration processes for companies operating within Masdar City's Free Zones, we are enabling them to expand their operations seamlessly while contributing to the UAE's long-term growth. This partnership highlights our shared vision with DLD to create a business-friendly environment and reinforces Masdar City's position as a global hub for innovation and investment."

DLD Recognises 10 Real Estate Firms Surpassing Emiratisation Goals

In a move that reflects Dubai's commitment to promoting professional empowerment and the active participation of Emiratis in key economic sectors, Dubai Land Department (DLD), represented by the Real Estate Regulatory Agency, organised a special ceremony to honour the real estate brokerage firms most dedicated to hiring UAE nationals, as part of the 'Dubai Real Estate Broker Programme.'

The ceremony was held recently at Dubai Land Department's headquarters, in the presence of His Excellency Omar Hamad BuShehab, Director General of DLD, along with several CEOs and representatives from the real estate sector. Ten leading real estate brokerage firms were honoured during the ceremony in recognition of their pioneering role and active contribution in exceeding the programme's key Emiratisation targets. This achievement qualifies them for additional points that enhance their classification with DLD, reflecting a genuine commitment to advancing



Emiratisation in the real estate sector and boosting the participation of national talent across its various fields.

The list of honoured companies included Harbour Real Estate Broker, On Plan Real Estate, Dirham for Real Estate Brokerage, AlRuwad Real Estate, AKN Properties, Exp Real Estate, FAM Real Estate Broker, Real Estate Codes, PSI Real Estate, and D&B Properties. Mohammed Ali Al Badwawi, Acting CEO of the Real Estate Regulatory Agency (RERA), said: "What we are witnessing today is a true example of a conscious partnership between the public and

private sectors. As a result, each honoured company under the 'Dubai Real Estate Broker Programme' has successfully employed more than twenty Emirati men and women. The programme has exceeded its targets in a short period, thanks to the pivotal role of these companies, which have demonstrated that investing in Emirati talent is a strategic choice that reflects institutional maturity and long-term vision. We reaffirm our commitment to expanding this programme and enhancing its impact in building a more balanced and sustainable real estate market."

Dubai Land Department, Emirates NBD Forge Strategic Partnership

Dubai Land Department has signed a memorandum of cooperation with Emirates NBD, a leading banking group in the MENAT (Middle East, North Africa and Turkey) region, to establish a joint framework for conducting regulatory and technical studies. The partnership aims to develop streamlined mechanisms for real estate transaction registration and enhance the efficiency of the broader real estate ecosystem. It will focus on delivering innovative financial solutions that prioritise customer experience and support investors throughout their property journey.

Under this partnership, both parties will collaborate on two forward-looking studies addressing

procedural, and regulatory aspects. The first study will focus on optimising the registration process for real estate transactions concluded outside the UAE, while the second will focus on offering financial services that simplify the registration of real estate sales transactions. This strategic collaboration supports Dubai's efforts to attract international investors by enhancing trust, simplifying processes, and reinforcing confidence in the emirate's dynamic real estate sector.

His Excellency Omar Hamad BuShehab, Director General of Dubai Land Department, said, "This partnership marks a significant step toward establishing a shared knowledge base that opens up new horizons for advancing real estate

registration services, thereby further strengthening Dubai's position as a global destination for real estate investment. These efforts also align with the objectives of the Dubai Real Estate Strategy 2033, which aims to build a resilient, competitive, and innovation-driven sector that reflects the emirate's status as a global leader in real estate."

The partnership serves as an effective model of integration between government entities and financial institutions, supporting Dubai's efforts to build a real estate ecosystem capable of adapting to future shifts in the business environment and driving further progress in digital transformation and service excellence.

LEOS Developments: Changing the Game in Urban Living

Founder **Rui Liu** opens up about **LEOS Developments'** rise across the UK and UAE and how the company is reshaping the blueprint for community-first urban living.

Megha S Anthony

One of the first things you notice about **Rui Liu** is his deep passion for buildings — not just the architectural details, but the emotions, aspirations, and lived experiences they represent. A UK-trained architect who now helms one of the fastest-growing international real estate development companies, Rui has an uncanny ability to blend precision with vision. He speaks of floor plans with the same ease he speaks of legacy — and in doing so, reveals a rare duality: the dreamer and the doer.

Humble, reflective, and quietly persuasive, Rui leads **LEOS Developments** with a distinct sense of responsibility. It's not easy to be an international developer in today's high-stakes real estate landscape, let alone one who's thriving in two competitive markets. Yet Rui and his team make it work — with over 15 projects in the UK and 10 in the UAE, LEOS is redefining what it means to build with integrity, identity, and global relevance.

Their latest launch is a bold statement of that ethos. Hadley Heights 2, located in Dubai Sports City, isn't just another residential development — it's the world's first branded residence in collaboration with Olympic gold medallist Tom

Dean. Designed around the themes of performance, wellness, and innovation, the project features AI-powered gyms, rooftop running tracks, immersive sports simulators, and even solar-integrated louvers — all housed within a dynamic, aerodynamic architectural form.

"As Dubai continues to evolve as a global centre for innovation and wellness, we believe communities should reflect that ambition," Rui shares. "Our partnership with Tom Dean brings a new level of authenticity and inspiration to the project."

In this exclusive **REM TIMES** interview, **Rui Liu** reflects on the LEOS journey — from early architectural roots to leading one of the most forward-thinking development firms in the Middle East.





people evolve, and spaces must respond to those changes. Real estate is not just bricks and concrete. It's about how people live, feel, and grow.

Q. With your latest launch — Hadley Heights 2 — you're merging wellness and elite performance. What makes this project special?

This project is personal. Collaborating with Olympic gold medallist Tom Dean allowed us to bring real authenticity to the wellness concept. It's not marketing — it's mission-driven design. Every inch of Hadley Heights 2 is optimized for performance — whether that's the rooftop CrossFit zone or immersive recovery pods. We wanted to create a residential ecosystem that nurtures both body and mind.

Q. What's your broader strategy for UAE expansion, especially with such a diverse portfolio?

Our focus is always on community and livability. While many developers chase the luxury high-rise market, we've consistently prioritized master-planned communities with green space, amenities, and human-scale architecture. Dubai doesn't need more glass towers — it needs places where families can thrive. That's the gap we're filling.

Q. In such a competitive real estate market, what sets LEOS apart?

Culturally, I think our biggest strength is our people-first leadership style. I believe in building a company

“As Dubai continues to evolve as a global centre for innovation and wellness, we believe communities should reflect that ambition.”

Q. Your developments are often described as “redefining the art of living.” What does that philosophy mean to you?

Every project must have its own soul. I tell my team: treat each project like your child. It may come from the same family, but it should have its own personality. We also take cues from the fashion world — trends change,

Q. LEOS International has grown across borders and cultures — what was the original vision that sparked this journey, and how has it evolved over the years?

Our vision has always been anchored in design excellence. As a UK-trained architect, I wanted to create a development that was not just commercial, but also creative, where the product mattered as much as the profit. At LEOS, we believe that everyone deserves a better lifestyle, and that begins with the homes they live in. That principle still drives everything we do.



where everyone is a leader, not just me. We empower our team to take ownership, make decisions, and challenge the status quo. This agility allows us to move fast, stay focused, and adapt in real-time, which is essential in a market like Dubai.

Q. How does your architectural training influence your decision-making today as a developer?

It's still at the core of what I do. I know every floor plan, every technical spec of our projects. I've often joked — but it's true — that I could draw most of our layouts from memory. That attention to detail isn't just about control. It's about respecting the fact that a home is the biggest investment most people make. That comes with responsibility.

Q. Is there a project you feel best represents the LEOS brand today?

Two actually: Greenwood and Hadley Heights. Greenwood is a lush, green community built with UK standards in mind. Hadley Heights, which we're delivering ahead of schedule, shows what we can do in the vertical space. What ties them together is our design integrity — there's no disconnect between concept and final delivery. What we promise is what we build.



“Our partnership with Tom Dean brings a new level of authenticity and inspiration to the project.”



growth. And I remind my team: if we wouldn't live in a LEOS home, we shouldn't build it.

Q. What does success mean to you — beyond sales and expansion?

For me, success is peace of mind, staying true to your values, and being proud of what you've created. I'm not interested in flashy cars or over-the-top launches. I believe in minimalism, clarity, and doing things well. If LEOS is remembered a decade from now as a company that built thoughtfully, authentically, and with heart, I'll consider that success.

What's Next for LEOS?

From its UK roots to becoming a Master Developer in Dubai, **LEOS Developments** continues to expand with purpose. With upcoming launches in the GCC, a growing footprint in family-oriented communities, and bold collaborations that merge wellness with architecture, the brand is setting a new global benchmark for what real estate can be — intentional, intelligent, and inspiring.

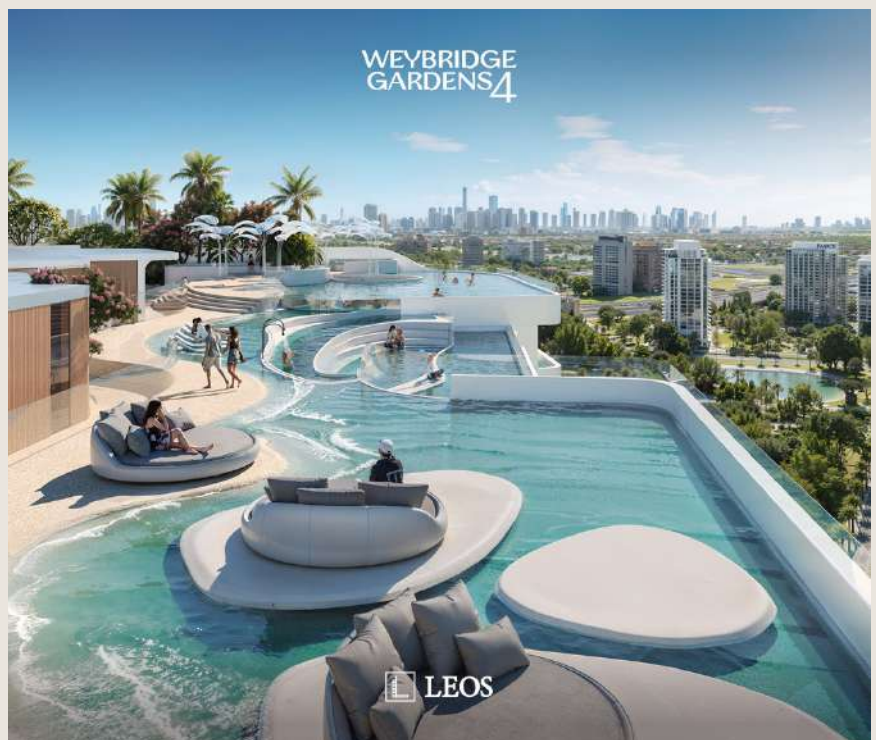
As **Rui Liu** puts it, “We're not just building projects. We're building possibilities.”

Q. You've spoken before about responsible innovation. Can you share a few tech-forward solutions you're introducing?

We're careful not to get caught up in tech for tech's sake. Instead, we focus on suitable innovation. For example, in our Meydan project, we've implemented AI-powered greywater recycling, solar-powered louvers, and sustainable cladding that reduces internal-external temperature gaps. These aren't just buzzwords — they're real-world solutions for extreme environments.

Q. On a personal level, how do you stay grounded as a leader?

I often ask myself: What is the mission? That keeps me centered. I'm driven by the idea that real estate can offer people stability, peace, and dignity. Not just luxury. Not just ROI. But homes. That's what motivates me through the chaos of



Object 1 Unveils VERDAN1A



Object 1 has announced the launch of VERDAN1A — a multi-phase, sustainability-focused residential development comprising 316 units in the heart of this high-potential district. “The project is designed to promote sustainable urban living while contributing to the goals of the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan for inclusive growth and enhanced liveability,” said Tatiana Tonu, CEO at Object 1.

Inspired by the word ‘verde’, meaning green, VERDAN1A reflects Object 1’s commitment to building communities that go beyond function to build connection, vitality, and holistic well-being. VERDAN1A 1 offers 208 units, and VERDAN1A 2 adds another 108 units, with both phases featuring a variety of resort-style amenities. Residents can enjoy a swimming pool, kids’ pool, gym, sauna, clubhouse, and children’s play areas. VERDAN1A 1 also provides a yoga and meditation zone, CrossFit area, cinema, outdoor showers, and open-air lounges. Meanwhile, VERDAN1A 2 features a dedicated BBQ space for relaxed outdoor gatherings.



WHAT'S HOT

- Prices starting at **AED 667000** for **VERDAN1A 1** and **AED 691000** for **VERDAN1A 2**
- Special payment plan of **1%** for **5 years** for both
- Set for completion in **Q3 2027**

Madar Presents 99-Unit Tulip Oasis Branded Homes



UAE-based real estate developer Madar Developments has expanded its legacy brand portfolio, introducing the 11th edition under the Tulip Oasis Collection, in Dubai. Featuring 99 premium apartments, Tulip Oasis 11 Residences is

set for completion in September 2026, offering residents and investors elevated living experiences in the heart of the Majan district.

Thoughtfully created and designed by Madar’s in-house team of designers, architects and construction

experts, Tulip Oasis 11 Residences will encompass expansive signature homes consisting of 48 one-bedroom and 51 two-bedroom apartments that focus on wholesome living in a vibrant community. With a gross development value of AED130 million (\$35.4 million), Tulip Oasis 11 Residences marks the developer’s fourth premium property launch in Majan since 2023, thus showcasing the growing demand for elevated lifestyles in the community.

Younes Al Arab, Managing Director at Madar Developments, said, “Tulip Oasis 11 Residences exemplifies our dedication to quality and innovation, while reflecting our commitment to creating premium developments that offer lasting value and comfort in vibrant communities such as Majan.”

WHAT'S HOT

- Prices starting at **AED 988,000**
- Flexible **40/60** payment plan
- Scheduled for handover in **Q3 2026**

Casagrاند Announces Seafront Residences on Dubai Islands



facilities. Designed by Casagrاند's in-house team of architects and engineers, the residences promise an elevated standard of living rooted in luxury, functionality, and long-term value.

With a long-term vision to develop over 6 million sq. ft of residential space across the UAE, Casagrاند aims to set a strong benchmark for premium living on the city's next big destination island. Eshwar Nagarajan, Chief Marketing Officer at Casagrاند, commented: "Dubai is a global city for visionary real estate. Casagrاند Seafront is our commitment to quality, innovation, and an exceptional lifestyle experience for homebuyers and investors alike."

India's leading real estate developer Casagrاند has officially entered the UAE market with the launch of its first overseas project — Casagrاند Seafront Residences, a premium residential community set along the vibrant coastline of Dubai Islands.

This flagship development brings Casagrاند's hallmark of quality construction and innovative design to

the UAE, with a project envisioned to redefine waterfront living. Strategically located on the emerging Dubai Islands masterplan, Casagrاند Seafront offers a lifestyle that merges resort-style amenities with urban connectivity.

The project will feature a mix of 1- to 4-bedroom sea-facing apartments, each offering sweeping views, high-end finishes, and access to modern leisure

WHAT'S HOT

- Prices starting at **AED 1.8 million**
- Flexible **60/40** payment plan
- Scheduled for handover in **Q1 2028**

Lincoln Rise Launches Wellness-Centric Residential Project



Lincoln Rise Real Estate Development LLC recently announced the official launch of its premium residential project in the UAE, unveiling Lincoln Star Residence II — a wellness-focused community that blends architectural elegance with sustainable urban living in Dubai South.

The project aims to redefine affordable luxury with a unique focus on wellness, design intelligence, and lifestyle accessibility. The development offers a diverse portfolio of homes including studios, 1BHK, 2BHK, and spacious 3BHK duplexes—ranging from 400 sq. ft to nearly 2,100 sq. ft—crafted to cater to families, and global investors alike. Set against the backdrop of Dubai's iconic skyline, Lincoln Star Residence II features elegant amenities, community-friendly design and modern security and convenience.



WHAT'S HOT

- Prices starting at **AED 597,267**
- Payment plan: **20%** down payment, **1%** for **24 months**, **10%** on handover and **46%** post handover for **36 months**
- Scheduled for completion in **Q4 2027**

AFRICA RISING:

Five Real Estate Hotspots to Watch Out For

Africa's real estate sector is experiencing a powerful shift, fueled by rapid urbanization, population growth, and proactive government policies. With the African Development Bank forecasting a steady 4% average GDP growth from

2023 to 2025 and the continent's population expected to double by 2050, the demand for housing, commercial properties, and mixed-use developments is escalating.

Investors are taking note of Africa's rising cities—urban centers that are

not only expanding physically but also innovating to meet the needs of a modern, mobile, and youthful population. Here are five cities that are emerging as key real estate investment destinations this year.





1. NAIROBI, KENYA

Kenya's capital is fast cementing its reputation as East Africa's innovation epicenter. Dubbed the 'Silicon Savannah', Nairobi has become a launchpad for global and local tech firms, with the likes of Google, Microsoft, and Amazon Web Services setting up operations. This digital influx has driven demand for high-quality residential and commercial real estate.

Neighborhoods like Kilimani, Karen, and Westlands have seen sustained growth thanks to their appeal among expatriates and young professionals. Affordable housing projects in satellite towns such as Athi River and Kitengela are gaining traction with middle-income buyers. According to Cytonn Investments, suburban areas have posted 20% year-on-year property value growth.

On the commercial front, Upper Hill and Westlands continue to attract multinationals. Nairobi's retail sector is also expanding, with retail space expected to reach 8.8 million square feet by 2025—fueled by the rise in consumer spending and mall developments.

2. LAGOS, NIGERIA

Lagos is not only Nigeria's commercial nerve center but also one of the most dynamic urban markets in Africa. With over 20 million residents and a thriving ecosystem spanning finance, tech, and entertainment, the city offers vast real estate potential. According to Statista, the Lagos real estate market is projected to hit \$2.25 trillion in volume by the end of 2025.

Prime areas like Ikoyi, Lekki, and Victoria Island cater to high-net-worth individuals, with luxury apartments in demand. Meanwhile, mainland districts like Yaba, Surulere, and Ikeja are hotspots for affordable housing, particularly among the emerging middle class.

The Lekki Free Trade Zone is also garnering attention as a high-potential industrial and commercial zone. With annual property appreciation rates between 5–7%, and consistent rental growth, Lagos presents a solid case for both residential and mixed-use investment.

3. ACCRA, GHANA

Accra continues to gain momentum as a real estate hub, buoyed by Ghana's stable political environment and investor-friendly policies. The city's real estate market is forecast to be worth GHS 533.34 billion by 2025, with residential property making up the bulk of that figure.

High-end neighborhoods such as East Legon, Airport Residential, and Cantonments are favored by expatriates and affluent locals. These areas offer a blend of luxury apartments, townhouses, and gated communities. On the other end of the spectrum, suburbs like Adenta and Spintex are emerging as affordable housing destinations for Accra's growing middle class.

Commercial real estate is seeing strong demand, though supply challenges persist. Grade A office space in the central business district remains limited, and post-pandemic vacancy rates range between 20–30%, according to Knight Frank. Still, Accra's strategic location and upward economic trajectory make it an appealing market.



4. KIGALI, RWANDA

Kigali has quietly emerged as one of Africa's most forward-thinking cities. With a strong emphasis on clean energy, urban planning, and affordable housing, Rwanda's capital is setting new benchmarks. In 2023, Rwanda's GDP grew by 6.7%, with the construction sector playing a pivotal role.

Rental yields in Kigali are among the highest on the continent: residential properties at 9.3%, office spaces at 10.8%, and retail units at an impressive 12.3%, according to Cytonn. Government-backed projects like Green City Kigali, which aims to deliver 1,000 sustainable homes by 2025, highlight the city's commitment to environmentally conscious development.

The Kigali Convention Centre and surrounding business districts have helped position the city as a hub for regional conferences and investment, maintaining prime office occupancy rates above 80%.

5. JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Despite macroeconomic headwinds, Johannesburg remains one of Africa's most stable and sophisticated real estate markets. As the financial capital of South Africa, the city continues to attract both local and international investors.

Prime business districts like Sandton and Rosebank have witnessed 5% annual property value appreciation over the past three years. Office vacancy rates are gradually declining, with high-demand zones reporting figures as low as 12%.

Industrial real estate is also booming. According to the Q2 2024 Rode Report, rental rates for 1,000 m² industrial properties in Central Witwatersrand and East Rand have grown at 6.2% annually. These regions, including Isando and Germiston, are becoming key nodes for logistics and warehousing.

5 CITIES, 5 FAST FACTS

Nairobi

Tech boom fuels property surge

– Suburban areas like Kilimani and Westlands have seen 20% annual growth in property values.

Lagos

A \$2.25 trillion market by 2025

– One of Africa's most dynamic real estate hubs, driven by urban expansion and middle-class demand.

Accra

Dual-speed housing growth

– High-end enclaves and affordable suburbs alike are pushing the market toward GHS 533.34 billion in value.

Kigali

Top rental yields on the continent

– Retail units offer 12.3% returns, with strong government backing for sustainable housing.

Johannesburg

Industrial real estate on the rise

– Warehousing hubs like Germiston and Isando are seeing 6.2% yearly rental growth.

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HONG KONG'S LUXURY PROPERTY MARKET SOARS WITH THREE-YEAR HIGH IN VILLA SALES

Luxury home sales surge 23% in H1 2025 as wealthy investors target high-end Hong Kong real estate



Hong Kong's luxury residential market has hit a three-year high, as sales of villas and upscale homes surged by 23.3 per cent in the first half of 2025. According to Centaline Property, 286 transactions were registered for homes priced above HK\$50 million, driven by renewed investor confidence, immigration-linked capital inflows, and property market recovery.

However, the overall sales value dropped by 15.3 per cent to HK\$12.34 billion due to a sharp decline in ultra-luxury primary transactions—particularly those over HK\$500 million.

Yeung Ming-ye, Senior Associate Director at Centaline, attributed the momentum to macroeconomic and policy shifts. "Improved sentiment in both the property and stock markets, interest rate cuts, and relaxed investment immigration rules have

boosted demand for premium homes," she said.

The resale market was especially strong. Lived-in luxury homes saw a 27.2 per cent jump in sales, with 257 transactions totalling HK\$7.9 billion—a 30 per cent rise in value. Primary-market transactions lagged, with developers launching fewer new luxury projects amid prior market uncertainty. "There was insufficient supply in the primary market, with just around 30 deals recorded," Yeung added.

Looking ahead, full-year luxury sales are expected to reach a four-year high of 500 units, with the second half poised for further gains.

Jimmy Lee, Director for Hong Kong Island at Midland Realty, noted: "It is anticipated that transactions for new primary residential properties valued over HK\$50 million on Hong Kong Island

could challenge the 100-unit mark in the second half."

Areas like The Peak and the Southside remain top draws for wealthy immigrants, especially those entering under the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme, which received over 1,500 applications and channelled more than HK\$46 billion into the city by June.

"There is a real demand for luxury houses and we see that increasing," said Victoria Allan, Founder and Managing Director of Habitat Property. "The pickup in activity gives buyers confidence that the market prices will go up this year."

With IPO proceeds of US\$13.5 billion raised in the first half, Hong Kong's capital markets are also playing a role in boosting high-end property demand—solidifying the city's position as a magnet for global capital and luxury lifestyle investments.



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FOREIGN BUYERS POUR \$56 BILLION INTO U.S. HOMES

International buyers are returning to the American housing market in force, driving a 33% surge in dollar volume



Foreign investment in U.S. residential real estate has made a sharp comeback, with international buyers purchasing \$56 billion worth of existing homes between April 2024 and March 2025, according to the National Association of Realtors® (NAR). This marks a 33.2% increase over the previous 12-month period and ends a six-year streak of declining foreign purchases.

A total of 78,100 properties were bought by international buyers—up 44% from the prior year—while the median purchase price hit a record \$494,400, according to NAR's 2025 International Transactions in U.S. Residential Real Estate report.

"International interest in buying U.S. real estate increased following the global economic recovery from several years of pandemic-related disruptions," said Lawrence Yun, NAR Chief Economist.

"However, elevated home prices and interest rates continue to dampen overall potential sales activity and remain well below pre-pandemic levels."

Florida held its position as the top destination for foreign home buyers for the 15th consecutive year, followed by California, Texas, New York, and Arizona. Yun noted that Florida's enduring appeal is due in part to rising housing inventory and international lifestyle demand.

The report also revealed that 47% of foreign buyers paid in cash, significantly higher than the 28% share among all U.S. buyers. This reflects both confidence in American real estate and the challenge of accessing U.S. credit markets.

"Foreign buyers are drawn to investing in American real estate, in part, by our country's strong protection of private property rights," Yun added.

Among foreign buyers:

43,700 (56%) were recent immigrants or visa holders living in the U.S., spending \$26.9 billion.

34,400 (44%) lived abroad, accounting for \$29.1 billion.

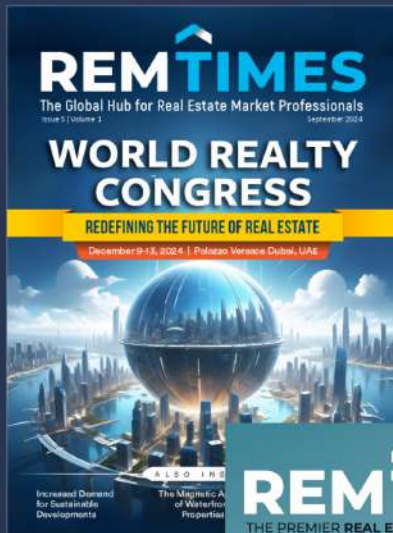
Top buyer countries included China (15%, \$13.7B), Canada (14%, \$6.2B), Mexico (8%, \$4.4B), India (6%, \$2.2B), and the United Kingdom (4%, \$2B).

NAR Global continues to facilitate cross-border deals through partnerships with more than 100 real estate associations in nearly 80 countries. This growing network strengthens international investment and supports local economic development across U.S. markets.

As global economies stabilize and capital seeks safe, appreciating assets, U.S. real estate appears firmly back on the radar for high-net-worth international investors.

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DUBAI'S RAREST REAL ESTATE: THE PENTHOUSE MARKET THAT'S SETTING THE STANDARD

Real estate experts talk to **REM TIMES** on why penthouses are a pinnacle of prestige

Deepa Natarajan Lobo



In a city renowned for pushing the limits of luxury and architecture, it takes something truly exceptional to command attention. And in Dubai's expansive real estate ecosystem, that distinction belongs to one rarefied category: the penthouse.

According to the latest research from eXp Dubai, penthouses account for just 0.8% of all properties currently listed for sale—a figure that underscores both

their exclusivity and enduring appeal. While luxury homes are abundant across the emirate, the penthouse remains the pinnacle of prestige—offering not just spaciousness and skyline views, but also top-floor privacy, architectural distinction, and unparalleled status.

“Less than 0.8% of all properties listed for sale in Dubai are penthouses. That’s not just a statistic, it’s a signal,” says **Samuel Joshua Chelliah, CMCA,**

AMS, PCAM, CPM Candidate, widely known as **SamYourMan**. “In a city overflowing with luxury, penthouses are in a league of their own: rare, in demand, and protected by scarcity. Locations like Palm Jumeirah, The Hills, and Dubai Hills Estate aren’t just premium, they’re proven. These units attract global high-net-worth buyers who aren’t just looking for space, but for status, privacy, and long-term upside.”

The Scarcity Premium

The data also highlights key locations where penthouses are more accessible—though still far from common. Leading the list is The Hills, where penthouses represent 12.9% of homes currently on the market. Dubai Internet City follows with 8.6%, offering a strong mix of luxury and lifestyle for discerning buyers.

Even well-established luxury zones such as Palm Jumeirah—home to some of the most photographed properties in the world—feature only 4.3% penthouse listings. Sheikh Zayed Road offers the same percentage, while Jumeirah (3.9%)



and Dubai Marina (3.0%) round out the moderate availability category.

However, in other prominent communities, penthouses remain nearly invisible. Dubai Hills Estate and Sobha Hartland show just 0.1% availability, while Jumeirah Village Circle and Dubai Sports City offer a mere 0.2%. Areas such as Al Furjan, Majan, and Dubai Silicon Oasis trail behind with even lower availability, often below 0.1%.



SAMUEL JOSHUA CHELLIAH

CMCA, AMS, PCAM, CPM Candidate

But in the world of ultra-luxury, limited supply is a strength—not a shortcoming. As Sam puts it, “Penthouses don’t follow the market—they set the market. With limited supply and strong rental yields, they offer both appreciation and resilience, even during downturns. If you’re serious about building wealth, don’t overlook the top floor. Scarcity creates value. Exclusivity protects it. That’s how legacy is built.”

A Strategic Shift in Buyer Mindset

What’s especially interesting is how buyer preferences are shifting. While heritage hotspots like Palm Jumeirah continue to dominate the luxury narrative, there’s a growing interest in emerging communities that offer more than just lavish design—think modern infrastructure, integrated tech ecosystems, and lifestyle flexibility.

“Indeed, the heightened availability of penthouses in areas such as The Hills and Dubai Internet City signals an elegant recalibration in buyer interest—one that blends exclusivity with emerging urban sophistication,” notes **Dr. Nour ElSerougy, International Real Estate Investment Consultant, also known as The Eagle of Real Estate.**

He adds, “While traditional hotspots like Palm Jumeirah remain iconic, discerning investors are now exploring refined alternatives that offer elevated views, modern infrastructure, and proximity to tech and lifestyle

hubs. This shift is not a dilution of prestige but rather a redefinition of it. As Dubai continues to evolve as a global luxury capital, the penthouse buyer seeks not only status, but also strategic positioning, privacy, and future value appreciation. These emerging zones represent the new frontier of understated opulence.”

Investing at the Summit

Penthouses may comprise a fraction of Dubai’s real estate listings, but they capture an outsized share of market prestige and investor interest. Their unique combination of exclusivity, location, and architectural finesse makes



DR. NOUR ELSEROUGY

International Real Estate Investment Consultant

them a valuable asset—whether as a trophy home or a long-term wealth strategy.

Explaining her company’s research further, **Dounia Fadia, Managing Director at eXp Dubai**, says, “Dubai’s property market continues to thrive with luxury offerings in abundance, but penthouses remain the ultimate prize, offering unparalleled prestige, views and exclusivity. This rarity makes them highly sought after, which is reflected in their limited availability across most areas.”

In a city that is largely crafted on ambition and innovation, the penthouse remains one of the few real estate assets where scarcity is a virtue—and legacy is written above the skyline. “If you’re serious about building wealth, don’t overlook the top floor,” sums up Sam.

Inside Metropolitan Capital's Developer-Centric Growth Strategy

In a conversation with **REM TIMES**, **Abdulhadi Rajab Alalouch** explains how **Metropolitan Capital's Exclusive Sales Department** is offering developers an all-in-one model to fast-track success in Abu Dhabi's dynamic real estate market

Megha S Anthony



In Abu Dhabi's fast-evolving real estate landscape, developers face increasing pressure to move with speed, precision, and agility. Standing at the intersection of innovation and execution is **Metropolitan Capital Real Estate**, which has recently launched its Exclusive Sales Department — a bold new division designed specifically to serve the unique needs of developers across the Emirate.

At the helm of this initiative is **Abdulhadi Rajab Alalouch, Director of Development Sales**, whose deep understanding of market cycles, investor expectations, and development dynamics makes him a key voice in reshaping how real estate is transacted and supported in Abu Dhabi.

In this exclusive interview with **REM TIMES**, Abdulhadi shares the thinking behind this strategic move, outlines the division's core services, and offers advice to both seasoned and new developers navigating the capital's ambitious growth curve.

What inspired Metropolitan Capital Real Estate to launch a dedicated division for developers in Abu Dhabi, and how does it align with your overall strategic vision for the market?

Abu Dhabi's real estate landscape is evolving rapidly, and developers are under increasing pressure to move fast, differentiate, and deliver. In response, we launched the Exclusive Sales Department — a specialized division that supports developers across the full project lifecycle, from concept to handover.

This aligns with our broader vision of becoming a turnkey partner. Our role goes beyond sales — we provide advisory, branding, marketing, and compliance support. With over AED One billion in exclusive project sales in 2025 year to date, we've seen how centralizing strategy, marketing, and execution under one team delivers real results.

Can you walk us through the core services this new division offers and how they are tailored to meet the unique needs of developers in today's fast-evolving real estate landscape?

We built the department around four strategic pillars:

- **Development Advisory:** From project concept, JV structuring, to unit mix and pricing strategy
- **Marketing & Branding:** Campaign planning, creative production, media outreach
- **Sales Execution:** Mobilizing local and global brokerage networks, CRM-based tracking, roadshows
- **Sales Administration & Compliance:** SPA execution, payment collection, KYC/AML, handover coordination
- This 360° model allows us to move quickly, adapt to market shifts, and offer developers insight-driven execution. Projects like Ohana by the Sea and Elie Saab Waterfront Residences sold out in record time because of this approach.

With growing competition and evolving investor expectations, what do you see as the most critical challenges developers face in Abu Dhabi today, and how is Metropolitan helping them overcome these hurdles?

The speed-to-market is a major challenge. Developers need to launch quickly without

“Don’t treat sales as a late-stage activity. In this market, sales strategy must start at the design table. Align your concept, pricing, and branding from day one. Work with partners who understand both the local market and the investor mindset.”

compromising quality or positioning. Secondly, many face difficulties aligning product design with market demand, especially in pricing and unit mix.

Lastly, the sales landscape is more competitive and fragmented than ever — visibility, access to both local and global investors, and structured rollout are critical.

We help by bringing everything under one roof — strategy, marketing, sales, and admin — so developers can stay focused on delivery while we ensure fast and efficient absorption. Collaboration and local knowledge are often game-changers.

How does your team leverage market insights, regulatory expertise, and investor trends to add value across a project’s lifecycle?

Everything we do starts with data. Our advisory approach is rooted in real-time transaction trends, buyer behaviour patterns, and precise pricing analytics. But we don’t stop at just tracking the market — we’ve also developed in-house AI models that help us forecast pricing movements and understand shifting client behaviours before they appear in the market.

That said, the numbers only tell part of the story. What truly gives us an edge is that we’re fully embedded in the ecosystem — we’re in daily contact with developers, brokers, and serious investors. That proximity allows us to sense market shifts early, validate what the data is telling us, and then act fast. It’s that combination — smart data, predictive tools, and real-world immersion — that enables us to add real value across a project’s lifecycle.

In what ways do you see this division playing a role in shaping the future of Abu Dhabi’s property development landscape, particularly in terms of innovation, sustainability, or investment inflows?

We see ourselves as an enabler of smarter, more agile development. Our approach supports:

- Faster absorption through strategic launch planning
- Better returns by aligning product design with investor appetite
- Greater transparency in admin, reporting, and compliance

As Abu Dhabi evolves into a global investment hub, we believe our model will help developers scale quickly, tap new capital, and build sustainably.

Lastly, what advice would you give to both new and seasoned developers looking to launch or expand their projects in Abu Dhabi in the next 12–18 months?

Don’t treat sales as a late-stage activity. In this market, sales strategy must start at the design table. Align your concept, pricing, and branding from day one. Work with partners who understand both the local market and the investor mindset.

Also, invest in structured sales administration — clean payment flows, and organized handovers are now expected by buyers.



*Abdulhadi
Rajab Alalouch*

FARNEK'S HITEK AI LAUNCHES ROBOT AS A SERVICE

The service merges robotics with smart facilities management for enhanced efficiency



HITEK AI, a leading provider of AI-driven solutions in the Middle East, and part of the Farnek group of companies, has launched its Robot as a Service (RaaS) offering in partnership with SoftBank Robotics UK (SBR).

The service integrates SoftBank's advanced robotic cleaning solutions with HITEK AI's CAFMTEK platform, providing a comprehensive, automated facilities management (FM) solution designed to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and improve operational performance across industries.

The new RaaS solution is aimed at providing businesses in the UAE and Saudi Arabia with cutting-edge robotic technologies that can be seamlessly integrated into their existing FM operations. Through this collaboration, HITEK AI combines SoftBank Robotics' state-of-the-art robots with its CAFMTEK platform to offer a unified service that includes both robotic automation and traditional FM, all managed through a single, intuitive interface.

"Our partnership with SoftBank Robotics aims to bring the future of automated FM to businesses across the

UAE and Saudi Arabia," said Javeria Aijaz, Managing Director of HITEK AI. "This integration will empower organisations to operate more efficiently, reduce operational costs, and ensure high standards of service, all while contributing to government goals for digital transformation and innovation."

When Robotics Meets Real-Time Data

SoftBank will be providing two robot types. Whiz, is a commercial collaborative robot vacuum, powered by BrainOS, the advanced commercial operating system from robotics industry leader Brain Corp. This determines the best route given the surrounding environment, continuous operation for up to three hours and can cover up to 1,500 sqm. Whiz is also equipped with sensors and mechanisms that enable obstacle detection, fall prevention and anomaly impact detection.

Another robot, Phantas, is a powerful tool that helps human teams clean better, faster, and more cost-effectively, vacuuming, sweeping, scrubbing, and dust mopping, up to 5,000 sqm per hour.

Once integrated with HITEK AI's CAFMTEK platform, facility managers will be able to schedule and monitor routine and ad-hoc cleaning tasks performed by SoftBank's robots. Using this platform, clients can track performance metrics such as square meters cleaned, ensuring high standards of cleanliness with minimal human intervention.

The robots are activated for each new project site with a unique ID and mapped to the specific zones and locations in the facility. They are also capable of handling maintenance tasks such as water replenishment and dust bag replacement, reducing operational disruption and increasing efficiency.

"By combining SoftBank Robotics' cutting-edge robotic solutions with HITEK AI's advanced CAFMTEK platform, this launch marks a significant step forward in the digital transformation of facilities management. With a focus on efficiency, automation, and data-driven decision-making, HITEK AI's Robot as a Service offering is poised to redefine the facilities management landscape in the UAE," added Aijaz.



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How to Enhance Resident Communication and Satisfaction with PropTech

When paired with thoughtful communication, PropTech can become a powerful tool to boost resident satisfaction, build community, and elevate the property experience, writes **Niall Sallam, CEO of Elevison**

In today's fast-paced, digitally connected world, resident satisfaction is no longer just about having a clean building and prompt maintenance. It is about how well property managers communicate, how residents feel about the space they live in, and how technology is used to create a sense of belonging.

PropTech, short for property technology, has emerged as a powerful tool to enhance resident experiences.

However, simply deploying technology is not enough. To truly build happy, engaged communities, we need to pair PropTech with thoughtful, strategic communication that places residents at the center.

Why Communication Matters in Community Management?

Effective communication plays a vital role in resident satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately, property value. Residents who feel heard and informed are more likely to renew their leases, recommend the property to others, and take better care of shared spaces. This has direct financial implications for landlords and management teams.

In premium buildings especially, expectations are higher. Residents want to feel like they are part of a managed, intentional community, not just an occupant of a unit.

Yet communication is often treated as an afterthought. Many buildings still rely on outdated, impersonal methods such as:

- Lengthy notices typed in Times New Roman and pinned to a lobby wall
- Vague reminders sent without context

- Or worse, silence during service disruptions or construction

These missteps create friction and can erode trust over time.

A poorly formatted notice suggests disorganization. A generic update about elevator downtime, with no explanation or apology, leaves residents feeling frustrated. When events are only promoted at the last minute or through a single channel, turnout suffers, along with the sense of connection between residents and management.



Niall Sallam

The Common Mistakes We See

- **Unreadable formats:** Long paragraphs with no visual hierarchy. If residents cannot or will not read it, the message fails.
- **No context:** Telling people what is happening without explaining why leads to distrust and frustration.
- **Lack of community building:** Communication should do more than inform. It should create a sense of connection. Celebrate moments, acknowledge cultural events, and spotlight resident interests and stories.

Key Principles of Effective Resident Communication

To move from reactive updates to meaningful community dialogue, property teams should focus on three foundational principles:

Creative Clarity

Design matters. Use clean layouts, legible fonts, and short headlines. Residents should be able to understand the message within three seconds, whether it is delivered via screen, app, or poster. A clear visual hierarchy ensures that important details stand out.

Multichannel Consistency

People consume information differently. Some prefer WhatsApp groups, others rely on building emails, and many engage with onsite digital displays. A successful communication strategy meets residents where they are by using a combination of:

- Digital signage
- App notifications
- Email
- Physical posters

Storytelling with Purpose

Do not just share facts. Add context and meaning. Turn service disruptions into moments of transparency and consideration. Frame events as part of a broader wellness or lifestyle initiative. Use storytelling to help residents see themselves as part of a larger narrative within the building or the living community.



How PropTech Can Help: Elevator Screens as a Case Study

The digital media screen in the elevators is one of the many powerful PropTech solutions that modernize communication and support stronger resident engagement. It offers several key advantages:

Engaging Media Format

- Supports animation, video, and branded content
- More digestible and visually appealing than printed memos or plain-text emails
- Ideal for storytelling, campaigns, and high-visibility announcements

Built-in Content Management System – Elevison’s CommConnect

- Allows property teams to schedule and update messages efficiently
- Reduces manual work and enables consistent communication across multiple properties
- Makes it easy to tailor content by location or audience segment

Performance Analytics

- Tracks which messages are most viewed and engaged with
- Helps optimize posting times and content types
- Provides data to support resident experience strategies

Advanced Technology Integration Possibilities

- AI-powered tools assist in quickly drafting notices

- Presence sensors link screen exposure to app notifications, enhancing recall and encouraging further interaction

Community Activation and Brand Storytelling

- Promotes seasonal events, wellness initiatives, and community spotlights
- Helps reinforce a property’s identity and values
- Encourages participation and builds stronger resident-property manager relationships

Ultimately, elevator screens illustrate how PropTech can help property and community managers deliver smarter, more engaging communication. When used with intention, these tools enhance visibility, improve relevance, and create more meaningful interactions with residents. The real value of PropTech lies in its ability to strengthen relationships and foster a sense of community across every touchpoint.

Conclusion

Resident satisfaction is not achieved through technology alone. It results from thoughtful, consistent communication that fosters trust and a genuine sense of community. PropTech provides the infrastructure, but it is the content, tone, and intent behind each message that make the experience memorable. By combining smart tools with clear messaging and human understanding, property and community managers can turn everyday communication into a competitive advantage. Done right, it not only improves retention and satisfaction but also builds communities that people are proud to be part of.



BERKELEY SERVICES: THE STRATEGIC PARTNER BEHIND SMARTER, STRONGER ASSETS

As the UAE facilities management landscape evolves, **Berkeley Services** is at the forefront — delivering long-term asset value through digital innovation, ESG integration, and lifecycle-focused operations



In a built environment evolving faster than ever, the role of facilities management has shifted from behind-the-scenes support to a front-and-centre driver of value, performance, and sustainability. At the heart of this transformation is **Berkeley Services** — a legacy name in the UAE's Integrated Facilities Management (IFM) sector that has spent four decades not just maintaining buildings, but actively enhancing their long-term worth.

For Berkeley, the move from cost-based operations to value-focused asset stewardship isn't a trend—it's a philosophy. The company views every building as a long-term investment, deserving of strategic care, foresight, and intelligent management.

"In our role as a strategic real estate partner, we take ownership of our clients' investments. Beyond discussions around opex and capex lifecycle costs, we are committed to creating sustainable value from an asset management perspective. This is not just a support function; it's a fundamental part of the value stream. In many ways, it marks a critical shift—from being perceived merely as a cost centre to being recognised as a true profit centre," says **Karl-Heinz Otto Mair, CEO, Berkeley Services UAE**.

This philosophy is embedded in the way Berkeley structures its day-to-day operations. Facilities management is no longer viewed as a reactive task, but as a proactive partnership built around lifecycle planning, predictive

technology, and performance optimisation. At the heart of this model is Berkeley's **SmartOps Hub**, a 24/7 control centre located at their Dubai headquarters. From energy consumption and asset health to manpower and safety compliance, every operational touchpoint is monitored in real time. This dynamic visibility enables the team to anticipate issues before they occur, reduce unnecessary costs, and extend the lifespan of critical infrastructure—delivering tangible returns to clients.

Berkeley's approach to managing the full lifecycle of a building is deliberate and data-driven. From operational expenditure (opex) to long-term capital planning (capex),

the company supports clients at every stage of an asset's journey. Leveraging advanced analytics, Berkeley can forecast maintenance needs and provide timely recommendations—ensuring compliance, minimising disruptions, and protecting investment outcomes.

Strong Digital Backbone

Supporting this ecosystem is a robust digital foundation. As part of Klüh Multiservices—a multinational facilities services provider headquartered in Germany, with operations across Poland, the Netherlands, Turkey, India, the UAE, and China—Berkeley Services benefits from the strength of over 59,000 employees and global revenues exceeding €1 billion. This backing provides access to the **Centre of Digital Excellence (CoDE)**, an innovation hub that seamlessly integrates automation, AI, and smart building technologies into everyday facilities management operations. Together with SmartOps, this digital backbone allows Berkeley to deliver services with speed, precision, and consistency. Whether it's triggering performance alerts, managing SLAs, or optimising resource use, data intelligence lies at the core of their ability to scale effectively.

But Berkeley's excellence extends beyond operational efficiency. In today's world, delivering value also means embracing responsibility. Sustainability is woven into the company's practices—from energy audits and green retrofits to the use of eco-conscious cleaning agents and nationwide ESG initiatives. Their active collaborations with Emirates Environmental Group, partnerships in recycling and biofuels, and consecutive

“While rapid technological evolution and rising expectations present challenges, Berkeley is ready—backed by a strong digital infrastructure, a skilled and adaptable workforce, and a deep-rooted commitment to innovation.”



EcoVadis Bronze Medals for the year 2024 & 2025 for sustainability performance stand as proof of their unwavering commitment.

Rather than treating ESG as a compliance exercise, Berkeley helps clients integrate these principles into the very core of their operations—supporting the UAE's wider Net Zero ambitions in the process.

To drive this transformation, Berkeley invests heavily in its people. Workforce development is a cornerstone of the company's strategy, with continuous upskilling programs focused on digital platforms, IoT workflows, predictive maintenance, and ESG best practices. This blend of technical excellence and ethical awareness ensures that teams are equipped not just for today's needs, but for the challenges and innovations ahead.

The results speak for themselves. One standout example is Berkeley's work with a major university campus, where predictive maintenance models led to **zero system downtime, an 18% reduction in energy consumption**, and a noticeable improvement in overall asset lifespan—all while supporting the client's internal sustainability objectives. This project is not a one-off, but a reflection of Berkeley's wider approach: measurable impact, sustainable growth, and lasting value.

Looking ahead, Berkeley sees opportunity amidst change. As buildings

grow smarter and urban environments become more connected, IFM will shift further toward predictive ecosystems. Clients are seeking alignment with their ESG goals, faster response times, and greater transparency. While rapid technological evolution and rising expectations present challenges, Berkeley is ready—backed by a strong digital infrastructure, a skilled and adaptable workforce, and a deep-rooted commitment to innovation.

At its core, Berkeley Services stands for more than four decades of operational excellence. It represents a future-focused mindset—one that treats buildings not as liabilities to be maintained, but as assets to be nurtured. And in doing so, it continues to redefine what's possible in the world of strategic facilities management.



Dubai's Holiday Homes: Booming Yields, Smarter Strategies

REM TIMES steps into the world of Dubai's booming vacation rentals market, where tourism and strategy fuel standout returns

Deepa Natarajan Lobo



Silvia Eldawi



M. Hassan Masood

Dubai's holiday home market has evolved from a niche choice for seasoned landlords into one of the city's most dynamic real estate trends. With high occupancy rates, premium nightly tariffs in hotspots like Marina and Downtown, and investor-friendly regulations, short-term rentals are emerging as a strong alternative to traditional leasing.

The surge has been powered by a steady stream of visitors — 17.2 million in 2023 alone (Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism – Annual Tourism Performance Report 2024) — a number forecast to exceed 20 million by 2026 (Arabian Travel Market 2025 – DET forecast). In this thriving landscape, **REM TIMES** takes a closer look at how prime locations, smart pricing, and a steady tourist influx are shaping one of Dubai's most lucrative property plays.

Why Investors Are Hooked

"Dubai's holiday home sector is rapidly establishing itself as a high-performing asset class, offering investors superior returns compared to traditional long-term rentals and other global short-stay markets," says **M. Hassan Masood, General Manager Dubai, Propr**, which offers full-service short-term rental and Airbnb management in Dubai.

Masood points to average yields of 7% to 10% in prime areas (Engel & Völkers UAE Q1 2025 Market Report; Holiday Homes in Dubai Investor Guide 2025), buoyed by robust occupancy and the absence of property or income taxes. Flexible nightly pricing enables landlords to optimise returns during peak demand periods, such as New Year's Eve, international sporting events, and major exhibitions. "Investors



"Dubai's holiday home sector is rapidly establishing itself as a high-performing asset class, offering investors superior returns compared to traditional long-term rentals and other global short-stay markets."

M. Hassan Masood
General Manager Dubai, Propr

are capitalising on strong occupancy rates driven by year-round tourism, international events, and a growing population of digital nomads and business travellers. The absence of property and income taxes further enhances net returns, while flexible nightly pricing allows for maximised revenue during peak periods,” he notes.

The city’s robust regulatory framework — streamlined licensing through the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism — coupled with a growing network of professional property managers, is also giving international investors’ confidence.

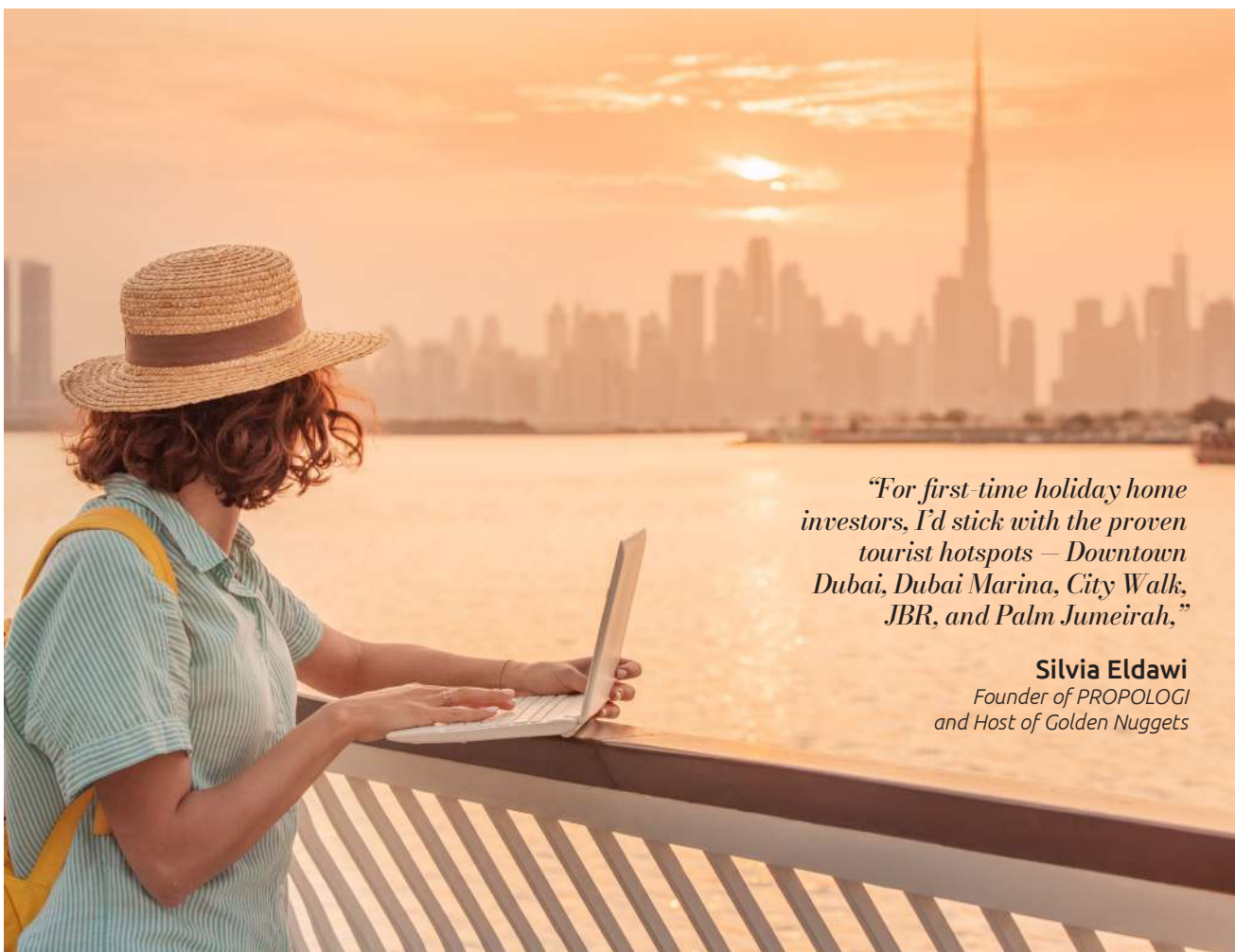
At a Glance

- **Average Yield:** 7%–10% in prime areas like Marina, Downtown & JBR
- **Occupancy Rate:** 71% average; top operators reach 90%
- **Tourism Numbers:** 17.2M visitors in 2023; projected 20M+ by 2026
- **Listing Growth:** From 14,459 in 2022 to 43,884 by December 2024
- **Tax Regime:** No property or income tax for investors
- **Regulation:** Streamlined licensing via Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism

Tried-and-Tested Locations Rule

For those stepping into the market in 2025–26, veteran advice leans toward the tried-and-tested. “For first-time holiday home investors, I’d stick with the proven tourist hotspots — Downtown Dubai, Dubai Marina, City Walk, JBR, and Palm Jumeirah,” says **Silvia Eldawi, Founder of real estate consultancy PROPOLOGI, and host of the podcast Golden Nuggets.** “These areas aren’t just iconic; they deliver consistent short-term rental demand and premium nightly rates,” she adds.





“For first-time holiday home investors, I’d stick with the proven tourist hotspots – Downtown Dubai, Dubai Marina, City Walk, JBR, and Palm Jumeirah.”

Silvia Eldawi
 Founder of PROPOLOGI
 and Host of Golden Nuggets

These neighbourhoods combine easy access to attractions with a steady influx of both leisure and business travellers — a formula that has kept them top of the charts for returns, she observes.

The Airbnb Effect — and Investor Reality

Dubai’s holiday home sector is also becoming increasingly polished, with Airbnb-style listings showcasing professionally staged interiors and high-quality photography. This shift has even started influencing the city’s long-term rental market. “Most one-bedroom listings used to be unfurnished, but now there’s a noticeable rise in furnished apartments with Airbnb-style photos,” notes Eldawi.

Rising Supply, Resilient Demand

The sector’s supply has surged, with listings climbing from 14,459 in 2022 to

nearly 43,900 by late 2024 (AGBI – UAE Holiday Homes Market Analysis, July 2025). Ordinarily, such an influx might lead to price pressure, but demand has held strong.

Between June 2024 and May 2025, average short-let occupancy reached 71% citywide (Airbtics – Annual Airbnb Revenue & Occupancy Report, 2025), with top-performing property managers achieving up to 90% occupancy (AirDXB Short-Let Market Report, Q2 2025). By contrast, Dubai’s long-term rental market saw a 6.3% year-on-year drop in new contracts and a 20.4% quarter-on-quarter fall in renewals in Q2 2025 — a sign that some landlords are actively switching to the holiday home model.

Dubai vs. the World

Globally, Dubai’s short-let market compares favourably with other tourist magnets. In London, yields often

hover between **3% and 5%** (haus & haus – Global Short-Let Hotspots Report, 2025); in New York, tightening regulations have dented profitability for many hosts (AirDNA – STR Legislation Tracker, 2025). Dubai’s combination of high yields, no taxes, and pro-investor policy stands out as a rare blend in the international arena.

The Road Ahead

Dubai’s holiday home story is still one of expansion, but it is also maturing. Investors are learning that location selection, cost control, and professional management can make or break returns. The sector’s potential remains bright — provided entrants match ambition with strategy. “As the demand for luxury, fully serviced accommodations continues to rise, the emirate stands out as one of the world’s most attractive and future-proof markets for holiday home investment,” sums up Masood.

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REIMAGINING URBAN FUTURES: INNOVATIONS FOR RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE CITY DEVELOPMENT

Eng. Amer Khansaheb, CEO and Board Member of Union Properties PJSC,
shares his insights on building smarter, fairer and future-ready cities

As the world's urban population continues to surge, the challenges of creating resilient cities and sustainable real estate are now more severe than ever. Building cities that are not only economically feasible, but also environmentally and socially viable is what defines the future of urbanisation. This necessitates an understanding

of evolving urban management strategies, particularly those that incorporate innovative approaches, state-of-the-art technology, and a holistic vision for the future.

Urban cities must be designed with a long-term, strategic perspective that strikes a balance between the three crucial pillars of economic growth, environmental

sustainability, and social equity. These components need to work together harmoniously to shape cities that will prosper for many generations to come. Stakeholders must also recognise that growth is required to be inclusive, with all residents having access to affordable housing, quality healthcare, education, and green spaces.



This is even more significant as this approach fits with the UAE's Green Agenda 2030, which aims to accomplish sustainable development goals and create a more environmentally friendly economy. Similar efforts have helped Dubai become the first city in the Middle East to receive Platinum certification from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Cities programme (LEED), with nearly 400 LEED-certified projects.

Alongside authorities, developers also serve as strategic partners in urban management, ensuring that development is in line with the broader goals of sustainability and social equity. A growing number of forward-thinking developers are concentrating on designing projects that include affordable housing options, energy-efficient designs, and sustainable practices. Developers play a key role in building liveable, sustainable, and versatile cities, from smart buildings that make use of cutting-edge technologies to the incorporation of green spaces that improve quality of life.

More importantly, developers also have the responsibility to promote inclusive growth. This entails providing housing options for a wide range of income brackets in addition to concentrating on luxury developments. By doing so, they can effectively address the increasing demand for inclusive communities and affordable housing, while simultaneously reducing environmental issues like resource depletion and climate change by embracing innovative design and sustainable building practices.

Today, technology is another critical pillar of urban resilience and sustainability, with significant potential to revolutionise urban management. With the aid of technology, stakeholders can make data-driven decisions, maximise resources, and prevent challenges before they become crises. The harmony of technology, infrastructure, green spaces, and transport systems must be given top priority in urban planning to ensure cities are resilient and sustainable for the long term.



This holistic strategy, which emphasises maximising wellness and developing a sustainable urban environment, is best illustrated by the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan. It reaffirms that a cohesive approach to wellness and convenience – supported by a holistic planning framework, empowered by technology, and led by our visionary leadership – is key to creating resilient, equitable, and sustainable cities for the future.



Redefining the Future of FM with Innovation, Talent, and Smart ROI

Tarek Al Assil, Executive Director, iFM Facilities Management, spotlights how facilities management is shaping intelligent environments through purpose-led innovation, empowered people, and scalable systems that redefine ROI in the built world.



As someone who has led integrated facilities management (IFM) across some of the world's most iconic developments, I've witnessed a remarkable shift in the industry. Facilities management today is no longer about routine maintenance or keeping the lights on. It's about creating intelligent environments that support how people live, work, and interact.

The industry is being pushed beyond traditional service models. We are being asked to rethink how buildings behave, how teams operate, and how

value is defined. This isn't just about adopting new tools, it's about purposeful leadership that ensures innovation delivers tangible, sustainable outcomes.

Start With Purpose, Not Just Technology

In FM, innovation often gets reduced to shiny gadgets, robotics, dashboards, sensors. But in my experience, that's not where transformation begins.

True innovation starts with intent. We need to ask purpose-focused questions:

- How can we enhance the experience for tenants and visitors?
- How do we create more resilient, leaner operations without sacrificing safety?
- How can we achieve sustainability without losing sight of targeted ROIs?

At iFM, every investment in technology is evaluated through a single lens: purposeful ROI. If a solution doesn't improve performance, reduce risk, enable sustainability, or empower people, it doesn't belong in our ecosystem.

"I believe the future belongs to those who can blend operational excellence with human intelligence."

People and Technology: A Collaborative Model

Let's be clear, technology isn't here to replace people. It's here to elevate them.

We've deployed robotics in high-traffic concourses and secure facilities, not to reduce headcount, but to reallocate human effort. Robots now handle repetitive cleaning, surveillance patrols, and data collection. This allows our frontline teams to focus on what matters most: safety, customer experience, and quick decision-making in dynamic situations.

The same is true for AI. In our control rooms, systems monitor data in real time, flag anomalies, and support decision-making. But the final judgment, especially in critical situations, still rests with the human operator. We're not automating people out of work. We're automating toward smarter work.

Innovation Starts at the Ground Level

One of the most overlooked truths in FM is that innovation doesn't always come from the board room, it often starts on the ground.

Some of our most effective ideas have come from engineers and technicians in the field. These are the people who spot inefficiencies in real time, who build practical workarounds, and who often challenge "the way things have always been done."

Our job as leaders is to make space for these voices. We've built internal platforms that allow ideas from the field to be tested in pilots, evaluated for impact, and then scaled across our portfolio. This is how we turned

predictive maintenance from a theory into a standard. It's how we transformed energy dashboards from passive reports into real-time decision tools.

Digital Transformation That Serves People

When we introduced cloud-based CAFM platforms and IoT sensor integrations, the goal wasn't just process automation, it was clarity.

Now, our teams work with real-time data. They respond faster, allocate resources more efficiently, and create safer, more transparent environments. But the impact goes beyond internal operations. Clients and tenants expect facilities that are responsive, intuitive, and personalized. A digitally enabled FM model can meet those expectations, but only when it's built around people.

Technology must adapt to human needs, not the other way around. That's the principle behind every system we deploy.

Sustainability: A Strategic Imperative

Sustainability in FM is no longer an optional layer, it is central to how we operate.

Our industry is uniquely positioned to impact energy usage, waste reduction, and long-term asset value. Whether it's extending the life of critical systems or optimizing HVAC consumption through AI, every operational decision has environmental and financial implications.

But sustainability isn't just about smart meters or carbon dashboards. It's about mindset. It's about leadership that embeds green practices into everyday workflows, not just annual reports. At iFM, we see sustainability as a business strategy, not a compliance checkbox.

Scaling Innovation with Discipline

Innovation in a single building is interesting. Innovation across a portfolio is transformational.

For that to happen, we must

design systems that scale. That means aligning data models, building governance frameworks, training teams, and setting consistent KPIs. Without the ability to scale and replicate, even the best innovation becomes a one-off success story instead of a competitive advantage.

If it can't scale, it's not a solution, it's a pilot.

Final Thoughts: The Human Edge in a Smart Future

We're entering a new era of FM, one where buildings can sense, respond, and even anticipate needs. But no matter how smart the infrastructure becomes, human development will remain the most critical differentiator.

I believe the future belongs to those who can blend operational excellence with human intelligence. Those who are bold enough to challenge assumptions, humble enough to listen to frontline voices, and focused enough to apply technology with intent.

Innovation is not a trend or a product. It's a discipline, a way of thinking, operating, and leading. And if we want to shape the future of FM, that discipline must start with purpose-driven leadership.



With over 15 years of expertise, Tarek Al Assil leads with strategic vision, driving performance in assets and facilities management.

Creating a Sense of Belonging: Building Community Spirit in High-Density Developments

Hani El Baz, ARM, CMCA, Community Manager at Better Communities Owner Association Management, shares practical insights on fostering connection and belonging in Dubai's fast-paced, multicultural residential hubs



Hani El Baz

Dubai's skyline is filled with towering residential buildings and vibrant mixed-use communities. While this model offers convenience and modern living, it also brings a unique challenge: How do we create a genuine sense of connection in spaces where residents may not stay long, and where cultures and backgrounds vary widely? As a community manager in the UAE, my role is not just operational — it's about helping build stronger, more connected communities, even in the busiest environments.

Challenges of Living in High-Rise Communities

High-density developments present several barriers to building neighborhood spirit, such as:

- **Frequent turnover of tenants and expatriates**, especially the challenge of short-term stays via holiday homes or Airbnb.
- **Limited personal interaction** between neighbors and a need to better understand cultural differences.

- **Diverse cultures, languages, and lifestyles** that don't always naturally integrate.
- **A traditional focus on operational KPIs**, often at the cost of resident well-being. In some cases, this is further affected by **nonpayment of service charges**, which limits community engagement and services.

How a Community Manager Can Make an Impact?

Here are some practical ways I've found to help address these challenges:

1. Host Events That Bring People Together

Organizing events—from festive celebrations to casual get-togethers—creates opportunities for residents to meet, connect, and interact with each other and the community staff.

2. Turn Digital Portals into Social Platforms

Community portals like **ANACITY** are often seen only as tools for maintenance requests, billing, or notices. But they can also be used to share community updates, spotlight residents, and promote local activities. By using features like polls and discussion threads, we can create a virtual hub that encourages interaction and feedback.

3. Give the Community a Sense of Identity

This includes branded signage, welcome kits for new residents, and storytelling around shared community milestones. Creating a unique info pack with house rules and community highlights helps new residents settle in and feel part of something larger.

4. Get Residents Involved

As per **RERA** guidelines, encouraging the formation of **owners committees** or volunteer groups helps build ownership and inclusion. These platforms ensure that community decisions reflect the interests and voices of residents.



5. Make It Inclusive for Everyone

It's essential to create communal spaces and events that cater to all—children, seniors, and people of determination. Everyone should feel welcome, heard, and able to connect with their neighbors.

6. Use Technology to Build Trust

By automating routine tasks like work orders, visitor access, notices, and security procedures, community managers can focus more on meaningful engagement and

creating a productive, people-first environment.

Adapting with RERA Regulations and Guidelines

Community managers must stay up to date with:

- **RERA and Jointly Owned Property Law**
- **Fit-out guidelines, health and safety rules, and municipal regulations**
- **Ongoing coordination with developers and service providers**

Keeping up with legal updates, compliance, and conflict resolution is critical to ensuring smooth operations and adapting industry best practices for effective, responsive management.

Final Thought

Community spirit doesn't happen by chance—it's created intentionally through inclusive planning, resident engagement, and consistent communication. Even in the most fast-paced, diverse environments, a sense of belonging can thrive when we make space for connection.



A Glimpse of Dubai's Most In-Demand Communities

Discover the communities driving Dubai's property boom and what's fueling the demand behind soaring prices

Megha S Anthony

Dubai's real estate market has always mirrored the city's spirit — bold, fast-evolving, and unapologetically aspirational. In a city built on ambition, its real estate market has always been a barometer of change. The latest Property Finder Community Insights for the month of July offers more than just figures. They

reveal where demand is heating up, where buyers are parking their wealth, and how resident preferences are quietly reshaping the city's map.

So, where's the money flowing — and more importantly, why? Let's unpack the data behind Dubai's most in-demand communities.



Bluewaters: Luxury with a Waterfront Pulse

It's official — Bluewaters is Dubai's most expensive address for a one-bedroom apartment, with annual rents hitting AED 299,000 and sale prices averaging AED 3.7 million.

But the numbers only tell part of the story. This man-made island is more of a lifestyle destination than a residential district. Think: beach access, designer boutiques, curated dining, and, of course, Ain Dubai watching over it all. For residents, it's a private oasis. For investors, it's premium real estate with long-term global appeal.



Arabian Ranches: The Villa Life Still Reigns

While much of Dubai is reaching for the sky, Arabian Ranches remain a haven for those who want land beneath their feet and space to breathe. With two-bedroom villas renting for AED 180,000 and selling for AED 3.6 million, this community is still one of the most desirable family zones in the emirate.

Its charm lies in its predictability — quiet streets, great schools, green space, and a community feel that's increasingly rare in fast-paced urban living. A solid 4.2/5 resident rating reflects just that.



DIFC: Polished, Powerful and Always in Demand

There's a reason DIFC continues to hold its ground. One-bedroom units here fetch an average of AED 2.65 million, with rental prices around AED 145,000 — and that's before you factor in the location advantage.

Home to global banks, Michelin-starred restaurants, art galleries, and luxury residences, DIFC blends business and lifestyle like few places can. It's where Dubai's elite work and live — and where property value rarely dips.

Business Bay: Downtown's Savvier Sibling

For investors watching the yield curve, Business Bay offers one of the best equations: lower entry point, healthy returns. With average rents at AED 109,000 and sale prices at AED 1.73 million, it remains a smart play for those eyeing the mid-luxury market.

Its location — a stone's throw from Downtown and the Dubai Canal — makes it attractive to both end-users and the booming short-term rental market.



Deira: The Underdog With Staying Power

Deira isn't often in the spotlight, but its numbers are nudging investors to pay attention. While annual rents remain modest at AED 65,000, sale prices for one-bedroom units are averaging AED 2 million — a surprising figure for an area long seen as “old Dubai.”

But as infrastructure projects ramp up and connectivity improves, Deira's value proposition is quietly gaining ground. It's not flashy, but it's strategic — and smart money is starting to notice.



The Real Story? Lifestyle Is Driving Price

What links all these communities isn't just price — it's purpose. Whether it's the waterfront appeal of Bluewaters, the family-first layout of Arabian Ranches, or the prestige of DIFC, buyers and renters are no longer chasing square footage alone. They're investing in how they want to live.

And that, more than anything, is what's driving Dubai's property market forward — a city where real estate isn't just about assets, but aspirations.

Source: Property Finder

‘Abu Dhabi is Entering a Promising Period’

With its unique mix of cultural capital, long-term incentives, and controlled supply, Abu Dhabi is drawing serious investor attention. Industry leaders weigh in on what’s driving the capital’s evolving real estate story

Deepa Natarajan Lobo



In a market often overshadowed by Dubai's fast-paced momentum, Abu Dhabi is steadily and strategically emerging as the UAE's most promising destination for long-term real estate investment.

In the first half of 2025 alone, the emirate recorded AED 51.72 billion in real estate transactions, marking a 39% year-on-year increase, according to the latest data from the Abu Dhabi Real Estate Centre (ADREC). With more than 14,000 property deals, including AED 32.69 billion in sales and AED 19 billion in mortgage activity, the capital

is emerging as one of the most resilient and rewarding property markets in the region.

What's driving this unprecedented growth? A strategic shift towards community-based developments, streamlined digital services, and a marked increase in foreign direct investment — over 85 nationalities have invested in the market this year, with FDI surpassing AED 3.38 billion.

REM TIMES speaks to leading industry experts to uncover what's driving Abu Dhabi's real estate momentum in 2025 — and what lies ahead.

History Museum is creating many job opportunities and boosting confidence in the local economy," he says.

He further points out that government reforms such as the Golden Visa residency program and 100% foreign ownership rights have made property investment more accessible and appealing to global buyers. "The arrival of world-class luxury brands, including the Ritz-Carlton and Nobu, is raising the standard for waterfront living. Limited prime supply is helping to secure strong rental yields and steady increases in property value. Ongoing upgrades to



Sunnny Kumar Tyagi



Dr. Hussain Harhara



Ben Crompton



Ali Ishaq

A Lifestyle-Focused Urban Vision

Sunnny Kumar Tyagi, CEO of Under One Roof Real Estate, paints a confident picture of the capital's emerging waterfront and lifestyle communities. "Abu Dhabi is entering a promising period. The arrival of global names like the Guggenheim, Disney, and the Natural

infrastructure, smart city innovations, and sustainable development are improving accessibility and liveability. As a result, these areas are becoming attractive to both international and regional buyers," Tyagi adds.

The result: growing demand, steady capital appreciation, and strong rental performance, especially in luxury-segment areas like Saadiyat and Yas Islands.

Investor Magnet – Top Drivers in 2025

- **Golden Visas and 100% foreign ownership** continue to be major incentives
- **Cultural and hospitality mega-projects** such as Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Natural History Museum, and Disney drive global visibility
- **High rental yields (6–8%)**, with zero property tax and improved transparency, enhance long-term appeal

A Strategic, Stable Investment Hub

Even as its neighbouring Dubai is known for quick real estate cycles and high-volume launches, Abu Dhabi is consciously positioning itself as a long-term, low-volatility investment hub. **Dr. Hussain Harhara, General Manager of East West International Group**, points to Abu Dhabi's maturing economic strategy.

"While emirates like Dubai and Sharjah thrive on rapid real estate cycles, Abu Dhabi is steadily establishing itself as a stable, long-term investment hub. In 2024, real estate contributed approximately 6.4% to Abu Dhabi's 54.7% non-oil GDP—underscoring its expanding role in the emirate's diversification strategy under Vision 2030, which emphasizes sustainability, technology, and innovation," he says.

Dr. Harhara also points to the role of government-backed platforms like DARI and ADREC, which have significantly improved transparency and digital access for investors. "Key legal reforms from 2019 allow foreigners to buy freehold property in designated zones such as Yas and Saadiyat Islands. Investors also benefit from zero property taxes, 10-year Golden Visas, and high rental yields (6–8%)."

He further adds, "Infrastructure developments such as Masdar City, Yas Bay, and the expansion of Abu Dhabi Global Market further enhance demand and capital growth."

With a controlled supply pipeline, premium lifestyle offerings, and a clear pro-investor stance, Abu Dhabi is now widely seen as the UAE's most resilient and rewarding real estate market for long-term capital investment.

Key Freehold Investment Zones

Zone	Investment Appeal
Saadiyat Island	Cultural institutions, luxury properties, limited supply
Yas Island	High tourism footfall, entertainment and retail
Reem Island	Proximity to CBD, strong rental yields
Maryah Island	Financial free zone, commercial growth hub
Masdar City	Green tech, smart city credentials

A Design-Led Future

According to **Ben Crompton, Managing Partner of Crompton Partners**, 2025 has seen a shift in how major developers approach residential communities.

"This year, we've seen several new launches—mostly single towers by sub-developers—with a few larger community-based projects like Solea by Taraf. Aldar, however, has pivoted from earlier high-rise projects such as Nouran and the Manarat towers (2024) to more holistic communities like Mamsha Gardens, Mamsha Palm, Waldorf Astoria, and Fahid Island. These developments prioritize aesthetics, user experience, and lifestyle—focusing on value creation, liveability, and emotional connection."

He highlights luxury offerings that include amenities such as meditation zones, co-working spaces, pet sitting, and concierge services. "Yes, they come with a premium service charge—but the market response suggests buyers are more than willing to pay for emotional connection and quality of life," he says.

What Buyers Want in 2025

- **Experience-first design:** Community interaction, wellness amenities, aesthetic value
- **Smart homes:** Energy-efficient tech, automated controls, security systems
- **Location + Livability:** Proximity to schools, retail, transport, and nature



Where the Smart Money Is Going

Ali Ishaq, Head of Residential Agency – Abu Dhabi at Savills Middle East,

confirms that investor appetite is diversifying across established zones and emerging sustainable districts. “Abu Dhabi’s most promising micro-markets for long-term investment include Reem Island, Yas Island, Saadiyat Island, and Maryah Island. Reem offers strong rental yields and proximity to the city

centre, while Yas Island benefits from ongoing tourism and entertainment development, making it attractive for long-term, short-term, and lifestyle-focused investments,” he says.

“Emerging areas like Masdar City and Khalifa City also show strong potential, especially for sustainable and affordable housing aligned with Abu Dhabi’s strategic growth. These micro-markets are well positioned due to infrastructure upgrades, freehold ownership zones, and

government support for diversification and innovation across real estate, tourism, and finance.”

Building a Legacy

Abu Dhabi’s real estate sector is aligning more closely with UAE Vision 2030 — promoting innovation, sustainability, and global competitiveness. From the rise of digital transaction platforms to an investor-friendly legal framework, the capital is offering not just premium property but a compelling future-proof investment environment.

As real estate experts weigh in, it’s clear: Abu Dhabi is not chasing trends—it’s building a legacy. This is a place for serious, strategic investors who understand value over time. “With controlled supply, a premium lifestyle offering, and a clear pro-investor stance, Abu Dhabi stands out as the UAE’s most resilient and rewarding real estate market for long-term capital,” sums up Dr. Harhara.



‘Clients Are Looking For Spaces That Reflect Who They Are’

Sherif Nagy, Chief Executive Officer of ME Fitout, speaks about redefining fit-out excellence through innovation, sustainability, and client-focused design in the UAE

Deepa Natarajan Lobo

With over 25 years of global experience across three continents, Sherif Nagy, Chief Executive Officer of ME Fitout, is widely regarded as one of the most transformative figures in the interior solutions industry. As the visionary leader of a company known for delivering high-end, turnkey interior fit-out projects across the Middle East, Nagy has been instrumental in elevating ME Fitout's reputation through operational excellence, cutting-edge facilities, and a deep commitment to client satisfaction.

UAE specifically and how is ME FITOUT adapting to meet that demand?

The UAE has always had an ambitious vision when it comes to infrastructure, urban development, and world-class design. That ambition is now accelerating. Regionally, we see that the UAE's interior fit-out market is expected to reach a valuation of USD 4.13 billion by 2023, due to ongoing urban development, mega infrastructure projects, as well as a renewed focus

next-generation European machinery and advanced systems. Moreover, our ability to synergise automation with traditional craftsmanship sets us apart, enabling us to handle complex, high-profile, and bespoke projects efficiently.

In 2025, we're seeing design trends tilt toward hyper-personalisation, smart tech integration, and wellness-driven layouts. What are the top client preferences shaping your projects today?

With people spending more time indoors due to remote work or lifestyle changes, the demand for aesthetically designed spaces that cater to comfort, and functionality has surged. Aligning with this, designers are increasingly opting for neutral colour palettes complemented by bold, statement pieces, to create spaces that exude sophistication while maintaining simplicity. Moreover, design trends are also being shaped by client demands for personalisation as well as the rise of wellness real estate.

We've noticed more of our clients looking for spaces that are not only functional but deeply personal — spaces that reflect who they are. Whether it's a home, an office, or a retail environment, the demand is for spaces that feel authentic, not generic. A key trend is customization — from bespoke joinery to distinctive material choices that tell each client's unique story.

We're also seeing a growing emphasis on integrated smart technology — but designed thoughtfully, so it enhances everyday living without

"Our high-tech, sustainability-driven facility is well organised and has an environmentally responsible waste management system, in line with Dubai Municipality regulations."

In this exclusive conversation with REM TIMES, Sherif Nagy shares his insights on the evolving demands of the UAE's booming fit-out market, the growing emphasis on personalization and sustainability, and how ME Fitout is strategically positioned to meet the future of interior design with precision, innovation, and purpose.

The global interior fit-out market is projected to hit USD 89.15 billion by 2029, growing at a CAGR of 5.41%. What's driving this momentum in the

on hospitality, healthcare, education, and commercial spaces. Furthermore, visionary frameworks like the 'Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan' and 'Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030', as well as ambitious projects like the upcoming 'Trump Tower Dubai' are stimulating demand for world-class interiors.

We cater to this rising demand by delivering multiple projects simultaneously with consistent quality control, leveraging the expertise of our dedicated team and our 100,000 sq. ft facility in Dubai Investment Park, one of the UAE's largest and most advanced manufacturing facilities equipped with

compromising the warmth or character of the space.

Another major focus is well-being. Clients are asking for layouts that maximize natural light, improve air quality, and create a stronger connection to nature — all while maintaining a refined, high-end finish. Alongside this, sustainability is becoming non-negotiable.

Reports show that sustainability is now a top priority in over 60% of new fit-out requests globally. How is ME FITOUT incorporating green materials or circular economy thinking into its workflow?

Sustainability is no longer a trend; it is a core expectation and responsibility. At ME Fitout, we've made deliberate investments to ensure that our operations align with both environmental regulations and our own commitment to responsible manufacturing. Our high-tech, sustainability-driven facility is well organised and has an environmentally responsible waste management system, in line with Dubai Municipality regulations. This includes meticulous material segregation, wherein our housekeeping teams sort and store offcuts for reuse or proper disposal as well as sawdust collection using integrated vacuum lines to keep production areas clean and move the dust into a central unit for disposal.

We also implement daily site cleanup, during which all leftover materials from site work are bagged and handed over to our waste management team. Reusable

materials, on the other hand, are repurposed where possible, minimising waste, improving material efficiency, and driving sustainable operations. Furthermore, we leverage software-driven optimisation systems that reduce excess usage, highlighting our commitment to advancing sustainability and circular economy principles without compromising on quality or precision.

Luxury is second nature in the UAE, and clients today expect a flawless finish and distinct brand storytelling. How do you balance high expectations with realistic budgets and timelines?

In a market like the UAE, where luxury is the standard and every space is expected to tell a unique story, there's no room for compromise on quality. However, luxury also demands efficiency. Our approach is built on delivering high-end outcomes while managing time and budgets

smartly through our integrated, in-house manufacturing, advanced technology

and project delivery model. We seamlessly control the full production cycle from consultation to design and joinery to upholstery and finishing, reducing dependency on external suppliers, minimising coordination delays, and maintaining stringent quality control.

Furthermore, early collaboration with clients enables us to match client ambitions with budget realities, ensuring transparent costing and value engineering. In addition, our agile project management framework, structured around Critical Path Methodology, allows teams to monitor progress and adapt quickly to any changes without compromising quality. This unique synergy of craftsmanship, technology, and disciplined management enables us to create sophisticated brand stories and luxurious environments.

Looking at the next five years, what's your outlook for the UAE and global fit-out industry?

We believe that, in the coming years, there will be a rise in local manufacturing accompanied by reduced reliance on imports, led by government initiatives like the 'Make it in the Emirates' event

and 'Vision 2030', which highlight the nation's broader economic diversification strategies.

Moreover, as advanced technologies like AI and automated systems continue to grow, the industry workforce will require upskilling to blend craftsmanship with digital tools, creating a hybrid skillset essential for next-gen fit-outs. Sustainability will also continue to be a major growth enabler, with circular economy models, waste reduction, and eco-friendly materials emerging as industry standards.

Sherif Nagy

‘Real Estate Professionals Should Be Part of Estate Planning Conversation’

In an interview with **REM TIMES**, financial expert **Nazneen Abbas** shares how **Ma’an**, a legacy planning platform she founded, helps families preserve wealth, values, and dignity through tailored, empathetic, intergenerational solutions

Deepa Natarajan Lobo

With over four decades in financial advisory, **Nazneen Abbas** has long operated at the intersection of wealth, legacy, and family dynamics. But it was her own experience as a young widow, raising two children alone, that gave her work deeper personal meaning and led her to found **Ma’an**—an intergenerational financial planning platform built on empathy, clarity, and continuity.

Today, **Ma’an** serves families and businesses across the Gulf helping them structure their wealth across generations with empathy, clarity, and continuity at the core and Nazneen continues to lead estate and succession initiatives as Vice President at the Continental Group.

In this conversation with **REM TIMES**, she shares the personal story behind **Ma’an**, the evolving role of women in wealth planning, and why estate conversations are extremely crucial.

What inspired you to launch **Ma’an**, and how does your personal journey continue to shape its mission today?

Ma’an was born totally out of my own life experiences. I was widowed at a very young age and left behind with two small children. That’s when I realized that money has its own legs - it moves, it travels, and it speaks a different language altogether, especially when it has to be passed on to the right inheritors.

Over the years, as a financial planner, I was approached by so many other widows who either

felt they hadn't received what was rightfully theirs or didn't know how to claim it. They would come to me asking, "Do you have any solutions for us? Can you help us out?" At the time, I felt helpless. But when I found a real opportunity to help and offer something meaningful, I knew I had to act. That's how **Ma’an** was born.

In Arabic, ‘**Ma’an**’ means together and in Hindi and Urdu, ‘**maan**’ and ‘**samman**’ translates to respect. Bringing both cultures together, **Ma’an** stands for living together with respect.



Nazneen Abbas

How involved should real estate advisors and brokers be in the estate planning conversation?

Unfortunately, most real estate professionals stop at the sale. I've seen joint property owners misled into thinking the surviving spouse automatically inherits. That's not how it works here. In the UAE, survivorship rules don't apply like they do in some other jurisdictions.

And many advisors themselves aren't aware of this. They need to be aware of the laws first. If they want to give proper, holistic service, they need to offer the right solutions. This is one of the most important ones: estate planning. It may just be a simple will but it makes a difference. So, yes, real estate professionals should absolutely be part of this conversation. But they must be willing to understand the law fully and provide holistic advice.

As a woman who has built a career in financial advisory and legacy planning, what unique challenges or opportunities do you see for women in managing and passing on wealth?

Traditionally, people point to Islamic inheritance law and say, "A wife gets only 12%." But that's not the full picture. Historically, a woman could inherit from her husband, her father, her son, and her brother. The intent was for her needs to be met from multiple sources.

And the UAE has evolved with the times. Now, you make your own will, write what you want, make your own foundations, pass on your wealth the way you want.

I wouldn't say there are many limitations now. But most of the time, women hold themselves back from engaging in these decisions. It's time we see ourselves as equal contributors, with equal rights to shape the future.

How do you envision Ma'an evolving over the next few years? Are there new services, technologies, or markets you're looking to explore?

What I want to manifest is that Ma'an becomes a household name. Not in



terms of being a vast business house but in terms of people having this conversation: "Have you made sure that, after you, your family can continue living with respect and dignity?"

I want conversations like that to be the norm. That's where Ma'an comes in, to help people live with respect and dignity. And we give genuine, clear solutions to clients, very transparently.

We already offer a service that evolves with your life. We don't do "cut-paste" wills. Each situation is different. A 50-50 split on paper doesn't always reflect what's fair in real life. We help families think that through.

We've also created something called the 'Peace of Mind' booklet, it's a practical guide that we give to all our clients. And we stay in touch each year to update it. Because a will isn't something you write once and forget. Life changes. Families change. Hence, your plan should too.

What are some misconceptions people have about wills and succession planning—especially in fast-growing markets like the UAE?

One big misconception is that this kind of planning is only for the very wealthy. Whether you have a single child or multiple heirs, a single apartment or several investments - if you care about

where it goes, you need a plan.

Some people say, "My children will understand each other." But emotions run high when assets are involved. Others say, "I'm still buying and selling; I'll wait until things settle." But there's never a perfect time.

The other confusion comes from terminology. Estate planning, inheritance planning, legacy planning, succession planning - it all sounds intimidating. But the principle is simple: decide what happens to what you own. That's it.

Looking ahead, what's next for Ma'an? Are there plans to expand services, deepen your presence in the Gulf, or tap into new markets?

We will evolve alongside the UAE and the Gulf. About 15-20 years ago, we would never have imagined that expats could write wills here. Then came civil law and common law options through DIFC and ADGM. Now even expat Muslims can write wills. New options are still evolving.

We want to stay aligned with these changes and expand our services accordingly because jurisdictions like DIFC and ADGM are becoming globally important for wealth protection. As the government evolves, so will we. As the region grows more sophisticated, our role within it will deepen.

SAUDI ARABIA'S COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE TO REACH \$90.9B BY 2033

Vision 2030, urban expansion, and logistics growth are driving Saudi Arabia's commercial property boom



Saudi Arabia's commercial real estate sector is poised for significant growth, with market size expected to surge from USD 67.5 billion in 2024 to USD 90.9 billion by 2033. Backed by government-led transformation programs, robust urbanisation, and demand across logistics, hospitality, and office segments, the market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 3.35% during 2025–2033, according to a new report by IMARC Group.

Vision 2030 and Government Initiatives Drive Investment

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is playing a pivotal role in reshaping the real estate landscape. Strategic initiatives like the Regional Headquarters program are attracting global companies to Riyadh, where Grade-A office spaces now report a 98% occupancy rate and average rents of USD 472 per square meter. Major infrastructure projects, including the 176.7-km Riyadh Metro, are improving connectivity and enhancing the value of commercial zones.

Government-backed mortgage schemes such as Sakani and the Real Estate Development Fund have also contributed to a 5.3% growth in mortgage lending in the first half of 2024, further supporting commercial development.

Urbanisation Fuels Demand in Key Cities

With over 85% of the population residing in cities like Riyadh and Jeddah, there is rising demand for office spaces, retail centres, and mixed-use developments. Riyadh's office rental rates alone saw a 36% jump in early 2024, reflecting the rapid influx of businesses and population growth. The country's young, urban demographic continues to shape consumer habits and infrastructure needs.

Projects like Jeddah Central, a USD 20 billion waterfront initiative, aim to integrate tourism and business functions—delivering premium office, retail, and residential environments in one hub.

Logistics Boom Powers E-Commerce Infrastructure

E-commerce is revolutionising Saudi Arabia's commercial real estate, particularly in the logistics and industrial segments. Developers are converting older industrial buildings into high-tech fulfilment centres to meet soaring demand. Tax incentives and 100% foreign ownership opportunities at zones like the Integrated Logistics Bonded Zone have attracted global players such as DB Schenker.

Industrial rents in eastern Riyadh have climbed to USD 215 per square

meter annually, while logistics demand continues to rise, aided by a USD 4.5 billion maritime investment at King Abdullah Economic City.

Mixed-Use Developments and Sustainability Trends

The rise of mixed-use spaces is reshaping urban living. Flagship projects like the King Abdullah Financial District and The Avenues Mall in Khobar combine luxury retail, office, and residential spaces. Riyadh alone is set to see 5.2 million square meters of new office space in 2024.

Sustainability is also taking center stage, with many developments adopting green building standards, energy-efficient designs, and eco-friendly materials to align with global ESG benchmarks.

Hospitality and Smart Cities Define the Future

Saudi Arabia's ambition to host 70 million tourists by 2030 is driving exponential growth in hospitality-led real estate. Projects such as NEOM and The Red Sea Development are setting new standards in integrated tourism infrastructure, while Makkah and Medina saw a 15% increase in revenue per available hotel room in 2024.

Simultaneously, the adoption of smart city technologies—AI-based planning, IoT-enabled buildings, and blockchain for transparency—is positioning the Kingdom as a leader in futuristic, tech-enabled urban real estate.

Bright Outlook

With mega-events like Expo 2030 and the FIFA World Cup 2034 on the horizon, Saudi Arabia's commercial real estate sector is expected to remain dynamic, resilient, and increasingly attractive to global investors. Despite rising construction costs and the risk of oversupply in select areas, the country's transformation agenda is laying a solid foundation for long-term growth.

The logo consists of three vertical bars of increasing height from left to right, rendered in a gold color. To the right of the bars, the words "WORLD REALTY CONGRESS" are stacked vertically in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

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