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APR - JUN 2026

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THE MERAKI STANDARD

BUILDING DUBAI HOMES WITH SOUL, PRECISION AND PURPOSE

Rooted in the UAE since 1991, Meraki Developers has evolved into an award winning real estate developer led by Founder and Chairman, Ajay Rajendran.

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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Dubai's real estate market continues to move with remarkable confidence. With Q1 2026 closing at AED 252 billion in transaction value, a 31 percent year-on-year rise, the sector is no longer defined by growth alone, but by the maturity, strategy and people driving it forward.

In this issue of Real Estate Market Times, our cover story features Ajay Rajendran, Founder and Chairman of Meraki Developers, and explores the journey of a developer built on soul, precision and long-term value. From its UAE roots to its growing residential portfolio, Meraki's story reflects a market that is increasingly focused on thoughtful design, delivery confidence and communities built for real life.

We also look at how the market is being sold today in "Selling Smarter: Dubai's New Real Estate Playbook." As buyers become more informed and channels evolve, Dubai's real estate marketers are rewriting their strategies around trust, data, storytelling and brand credibility.

This issue also celebrates the women shaping the sector through our Power List: "Women Leading UAE Real Estate," spotlighting leaders across development, brokerage, advisory, research, design and people strategy.

Together, these stories point to a market that is becoming more confident in its maturity. Dubai's real estate sector continues to grow, but the deeper transformation lies in how it is growing: with sharper strategies, stronger brands, more informed buyers and a renewed focus on long-term value.

As always, this issue is a tribute to the people building that future, from developers and marketers to researchers, advisors and leaders redefining what progress looks like in one of the world's most ambitious real estate markets.

Until then,
Happy Reading!



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‘PropTech Connect Middle East’ Opens A Regional Office in DIFC

PropTech Connect Middle East has opened a regional office in DIFC, backed by Dubai Land Department, as Dubai cements its position as a global hub for real estate innovation.



Building on the strong momentum of Dubai’s proptech sector, PropTech Connect Middle East has announced the opening of its regional office in Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), with support from Dubai Land Department (DLD). This step reflects the emirate’s growing position as a regional and global hub for real estate innovation. The expansion also reflects the outcome of the ongoing efforts led by Dubai Land Department to develop an integrated proptech ecosystem that fosters innovation, strengthens collaboration among regulators, developers, and technology companies, and creates an attractive environment for global and emerging firms.

The opening of the regional office of PropTech Connect Middle East, which has obtained a commercial licence from the Dubai International Financial Centre,

represents a strategic step that supports the expansion of proptech companies and reinforces Dubai’s position as a hub for innovation within an integrated ecosystem continuously developed by Dubai Land Department.

Mohammed Ali Al Badwawi, CEO of the Real Estate Registration Sector at Dubai Land Department, affirms

that this step reflects growing global confidence in Dubai’s regulatory and investment environment. He says, “Dubai continues to strengthen its global position in proptech by building an integrated ecosystem that brings together innovation, flexible regulatory frameworks, and effective partnerships, enhancing its ability to attract high-quality investments and support the sustainable growth of the sector.”

Matthew Maltzoff, CEO & Co-Founder of PropTech Connect, says, “The

opening of our office in Dubai reflects the level of confidence we place in the emirate’s dynamic environment, which combines a clear vision for development, a supportive regulatory framework, and an integrated ecosystem that enables innovation. We see Dubai as an ideal platform to expand our presence in the region and to work with our partners, foremost among them Dubai Land Department, to push the boundaries of innovation in the real estate sector.”

This direction aligns with the strategic vision led by Dubai Land Department, in line with the objectives of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 and the Dubai Real Estate Strategy 2033. Both place innovation and digital transformation at the core of sector development, further enhancing the emirate’s attractiveness as a leading global hub for real estate investment.

DLD and CDA Launch 2nd Phase of 'Barwa' Program with Interactive Workshops for Senior Citizens

More than 18,599 senior citizens and People of Determination have benefited from the region's first sustainable social and humanitarian real estate programme since its launch.



The Dubai Land Department (DLD), in collaboration with the Community Development Authority (CDA) in Dubai, has launched the second phase of the Barwa Program, the region's first sustainable social and humanitarian real estate program, through a series of interactive workshops for senior citizens and People of Determination.

The first workshop under the second phase was held on 18 June 2026 at Al Barsha Community Centre, with a subsequent session on 24 June at Thukher Club in Al Safa Park, Al Wasl, and a concluding session on 7 July at Thukher Club in Dubai Quranic Park, Al Khawaneej. The sessions are held under the slogan 'Barwa...You are valuable and should always be appreciated' and are designed to familiarise senior citizens with the programme's services

through live presentations, practical demonstrations, and interactive engagement. Since its inception, the Barwa Programme has benefited more than 18,599 senior citizens and People of Determination, including 11,293 men and 7,306 women. Across its various initiatives, 24,844 transactions have been completed through DLD service centres, Real Estate Registration Trustee Centres, and Service Trustee Centres under the Al Barza and Al Karani initiatives. The Al Kaitoob initiative facilitated a further 1,895 transactions through the Dubai REST application, while the Al Mersal initiative handled 3,484 calls through the contact centre and achieved a 94% customer happiness rate.

The programme is built around an integrated ecosystem of services designed to reach beneficiaries

wherever they are. These include the Al Tarash service, which delivers real estate services directly to beneficiaries; Al Karani, which assigns a personal assistant to follow up on transactions; Al Kaitoob, a platform for remote property management; and Al Mersal, which provides instant digital support. The programme also offers dedicated Al Barza lounges, real estate and financial advisory services, educational workshops through Real Estate Katateeb, and the Hasela initiative, which provides property management, maintenance, and consultancy services through private-sector partners. The Barwa Programme is aligned with the objectives of the Dubai Social Agenda 33 and the Dubai Economic Agenda D33, supporting digital trust, smart service accessibility, and the empowerment of priority community groups.

Dubai First-Time Home Buyer Program Surpasses AED 5bn In Sales

Dubai's First-Time Home Buyer Program has helped more than 3,200 residents purchase homes worth over AED 5 billion since launching in July 2025, with nine additional developers joining the initiative.

Dubai's First-Time Home Buyer Program has generated more than AED 5 billion in residential property transactions and enabled over 3,200 residents to purchase their first homes in the emirate since its launch in July 2025, according to the Dubai Land Department (DLD).

The milestone comes as the programme enters its next phase of expansion, with nine new developers joining the initiative through agreements signed with DLD and the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET).

The newly participating developers are 4Direction Developments, Arada, Dubai World Trade Centre, IRTH Group, Manam, Qube Development, Reportage Properties, SAMANA Developers and Sky View Real Estate. Their addition increases the total number of participating developers to 22, expanding the range of residential options available to eligible buyers across different communities, price points and property types.

The programme, which is open to UAE residents aged 18 and above who do not own a freehold residential property in Dubai, was introduced to support homeownership and encourage long-term residency in the emirate. It is also backed by five participating banks, providing eligible buyers with access to financing solutions tailored to first-time purchasers.

The latest figures highlight growing demand from end-users in Dubai's residential market, a segment that policymakers have increasingly sought to strengthen alongside the emirate's strong investor activity. By lowering barriers to homeownership and creating structured pathways for residents



to enter the property market, the programme is contributing to a more balanced mix of owner-occupiers and investors.

The expansion also reflects increasing private-sector participation in government-led housing initiatives. With 22 developers now involved, residents have access to a broader inventory of homes, including both newly launched projects and existing residential stock.

The programme forms part of Dubai's wider economic and urban development agenda. Authorities said the initiative supports the objectives of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33, which aims to double the size of the emirate's economy and reinforce its position as a global destination for talent and investment. It also aligns with the Dubai

Real Estate Strategy 2033, which seeks to increase homeownership rates and expand the sector's contribution to the emirate's GDP. Beyond the transaction figures, the programme provides insight into a structural shift taking place within Dubai's residential market. Historically driven by international investors and second-home buyers, the sector is increasingly attracting long-term residents seeking permanent homeownership, supported by policy initiatives, financing accessibility and a growing range of residential offerings.

Residents who meet the eligibility criteria can register through the Dubai Land Department website or the Dubai REST application. Existing registrants can also update their preferences to access projects from the newly participating developers.

Dubai Land Department Launches Flexi Rent Initiative with 11 Real Estate Partners

The initiative introduces monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual rent payment options for eligible units, backed by cooperation agreements with leading property management and brokerage firms across Dubai.



Dubai Land Department has launched the Flexi Rent initiative and signed cooperation agreements with Wasl Properties, Deyaar Property Management, Dubai World Real Estate, Modern Real Estate, Dubai Investment Real Estate, SBK Real Estate, Rocky Real Estate, SRG Properties, Harbor Real Estate, Driven Properties, and Al Showaib Real Estate to support its implementation.

The initiative focuses on introducing a flexi-rent model that broadens tenants' options through a variety of payment plans, including monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual instalments. It is further supported by incentives and value-added packages offered by participating entities, helping to enhance rental market stability, improve quality of life, and provide housing solutions tailored to the needs of diverse segments of society.

Under the cooperation agreements, the Flexi Rent model will be applied to

vacant or eligible rental units owned or managed by the participating partners, offering flexible payment options and rental incentives, discounts, or promotional packages for new tenants, in accordance with the partners' approved policies and in compliance with the laws and regulations in force in the Emirate of Dubai.

Dubai Land Department will provide the regulatory and coordination framework necessary for the implementation of the initiative, including supplying partners with relevant guidelines, updates, and requirements, supporting technical integration with approved systems, and monitoring the initiative's overall performance. The Department will also support the visibility of partners' participation through its official channels, including the Dubai REST app, the Department's website, and its various digital platforms. Partners will be responsible for implementing the

initiative's model across eligible units, managing related tenancy contracts, payments, and data through approved systems, and raising tenants' awareness of the flexible payment options. Full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations governing rental relationships, data protection, and transparency in dealings with tenants is required. The collaboration includes monitoring the initiative's outcomes during its pilot phase using key performance indicators, covering the number of rental units enrolled, tenancy contracts concluded under the Flexi Rent model, occupancy rates, tenants' payment compliance levels, and feedback related to the programme.

The initiative is closely aligned with the objectives of the Dubai Real Estate Strategy 2033 and the Dubai Economic Agenda D33, reinforcing Dubai's position as a leading global destination for living, working, and investment.

THE MERAKEI STANDARD: Building Dubai Homes With Soul, Precision and Purpose

Rooted in the UAE since 1991, Meraki Developers has grown from a construction-led legacy into an award-winning real estate developer shaped by design discipline, vertical integration and a deeply customer-first philosophy. Under the leadership of **Founder and Chairman, Ajay Rajendran**, the company is building communities that bring together liveability, long-term value and the rare quality that defines its name: soul.



There are names that describe a company. Then there are names that define its way of working. For Meraki Developers, the meaning sits at the very heart of the brand. Meraki is a word often used by modern Greeks to describe doing something with soul, creativity and love. It speaks of putting something of oneself into the work, whether that work is a service, a product, a relationship or, in this case, a home.

In a city where real estate is often measured by height, scale, speed and skyline presence, Meraki Developers has chosen to build its identity around something more intimate: care. Care in design. Care in delivery. Care in the smallest details that shape how people experience a home after the handover ceremony is over.

That idea has become the foundation of Meraki's journey in Dubai's real estate market.

A Legacy Rooted in the UAE

Meraki Developers is part of the wider Meraki Group, a multinational, multiproduct organisation that began operations in the UAE in 1991. Over more than three decades, the group has expanded across real estate, education, construction and MEP contracting, landscaping, structural steel, aluminium and glazing fabrication.

This foundation gives Meraki Developers an advantage that extends far beyond branding. It allows the company to understand real estate from the inside out. It is not only looking at a project from the perspective of design and sales, but also through the lens of construction quality, engineering coordination, materials, infrastructure and long-term performance.

For **Ajay Rajendran, Founder and Chairman of Meraki Developers**, this is central to the company's strength. Meraki's approach is not built on the pursuit of scale alone. It is built on the belief that

meaningful development demands involvement, accountability and detail.

That belief has shaped Meraki Developers into an award-winning real estate company with a strong customer focus and meticulous attention to detail. Its stated mission is to create communities that enhance quality of life, with spaces that integrate natural elements, encourage social interaction and support overall well-being.

The Power of Vertical Integration

In real estate, promises are easy to make at launch. The real test lies in delivery.

Meraki's vertically integrated model gives the company greater control over that journey. Its in-house capabilities include design and engineering, mechanical, electrical and plumbing contracting, civil contracting, aluminium and glazing, allied infrastructure and structural steel. This allows Meraki to protect its design intent and delivery standards across the development cycle.

It also reflects a deeper understanding of what makes a project work. A home is not defined only by its layout or finishes. It is defined by how naturally spaces function, how materials age, how common areas are maintained, how light moves through the interiors, and how residents experience comfort day after day.

With more than 100 construction projects completed as a contractor, Meraki brings to its developments the discipline of a builder and the sensitivity of a design-led developer. Its wider portfolio includes residential towers, commercial buildings, industrial projects and villas, along with recognised names across Dubai's real estate and institutional landscape, including The Cove at Dubai Creek Harbour, Acacia 1 at Dubai Hills Estate, Rochester Institute of Technology in Dubai Silicon Oasis, Al Fattan Crystal Tower, Hyatt Place, Sobha Sapphire, Zulekha Hospital, Belgravia 1 and 2, Meydan Heights Villas, North London Collegiate School, Hartland International School, District One's Show Village and Crystal Lagoon.

From Genesis to The Haven

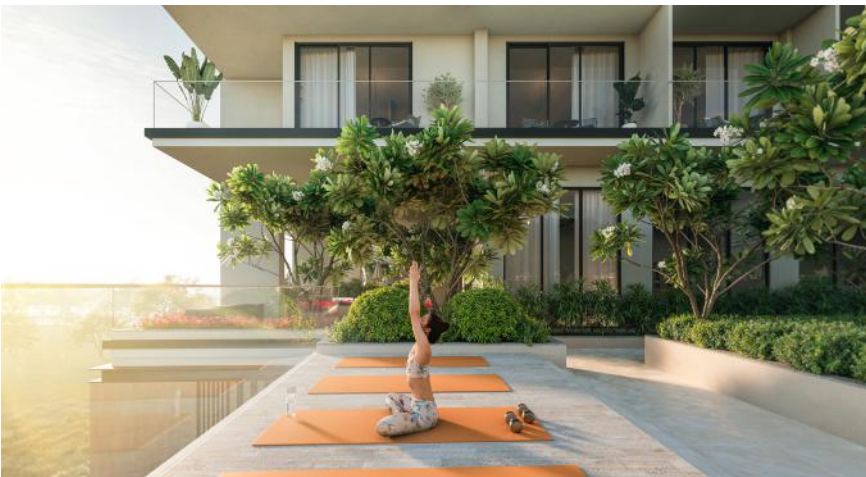
Meraki's own branded development journey began with Meraki Genesis, launched in 2017 and handed over in

At Meraki, we do not see development as a transaction. We see it as a responsibility to create spaces that improve everyday life. Our name reminds us to bring soul, creativity and care into everything we build.

AJAY RAJENDRAN

Founder & Chairman, Meraki Developers





Dubai's next generation of residential communities will be defined by how well they serve people after handover. For us, the real measure of a project is how naturally it becomes part of a resident's daily life



This is where the idea of “Meraki” becomes more than a brand story. It becomes a development philosophy. The company's projects are designed to support daily life, from wellness and family time to social connection, movement, nature and peace of mind.

Nirvana as the Next Expression

Meraki's latest development, Nirvana Residences I, represents the next chapter in that philosophy.

Located in Dubai Production City, the project reflects Meraki's belief in choosing communities with long-term fundamentals. The district is positioned between established residential hubs and emerging growth corridors, offering a balance of affordability, connectivity and rental demand.

For Meraki, this makes the location a strategic fit. It attracts end-users and long-term residents, supports rental demand from professionals and families, and gives a design-led project the opportunity to stand out through quality rather than price alone.

Nirvana Residences I is planned as a residential development set on a 52,085.92 sq. ft. plot, with two

2019 in Arjan. The project became an important marker in the company's evolution, later earning recognition among the Top 10 Projects of 2020 for Speed of Construction by Dubai Land Department. That recognition reinforced Meraki's growing credibility as a developer with both design intent and execution capability. The momentum continued with The Haven project series in Majan. The Haven was launched in 2022, followed by The Haven II in 2024 and The Haven III in 2025. Together, the series reflects Meraki's commitment to residential communities that balance functionality, comfort and lifestyle.

It also reveals a pattern in the company's growth strategy. Meraki identifies practical, connected and value-driven residential communities, then elevates the offering through design, amenities and build quality.

The company's recent recognitions, including the Construction Innovation Awards 2025 and Smart Built Environment Awards 2025, further underline this progression. For Meraki, awards are not positioned as the destination, but as evidence of a larger journey built on consistency.

Designing for the Way People Live

What makes Meraki's story relevant today is the way it aligns with the changing expectations of Dubai's residential market.

The city's property landscape has matured. While iconic luxury projects continue to shape global perception, a growing segment of buyers is looking for something more grounded: homes that are well connected, thoughtfully designed, community-oriented and built for long-term liveability.

At a Glance

UAE roots: Operations began in the UAE in 1991 through the Meraki Group

Business strength: Real estate, education, construction, MEP contracting, landscaping, structural steel, aluminium and glazing fabrication

Development model: Vertically integrated, with in-house design, engineering, civil, MEP, glazing and structural capabilities

Track record: 100+ construction projects completed

Project journey: Meraki Genesis, The Haven, The Haven II, The Haven III and Nirvana Residences I

Recognitions: Dubai Land Department Top 10 Projects of 2020 for Speed of Construction for Genesis by Meraki, Construction Innovation Awards 2025 and Smart Built Environment Awards

basements, a ground floor, two podiums, 19 floors and a rooftop. The project includes 392 apartments, with 127 studios, 178 one-bedroom apartments, 84 two-bedroom apartments and 3 three-bedroom apartments.

Yet the importance of Nirvana is not only in its numbers. It is in how the project reflects Meraki's wider direction.

The name Nirvana refers to a state of ultimate peace and liberation, representing freedom and complete inner harmony. In residential terms, Meraki translates this idea through biophilic design, natural elements and more than 20 lifestyle amenities.

The amenities include an infinity baja pool with views, a 100-metre running track, indoor and outdoor yoga studios, a calisthenics zone, kids' pool area, dedicated changing rooms, padel court, lounging deck and a full-suite indoor gym. Family-focused features include indoor and outdoor play spaces for children, a parents' lounge, community barbecue areas, an outdoor cinema with lawnscape, indoor gaming area, shaded seating and pockets of green spaces known as Nirvana Groves.

A Standard, Not Just a Name

The story of Meraki Developers is ultimately a story of convergence. It brings together the legacy of a UAE-rooted group, the discipline of a construction-led organisation, the ambition of a real estate developer and the sensitivity of a brand built around soul.

From Meraki Genesis to The Haven series and now Nirvana Residences I, the company's journey has been steady, deliberate and increasingly confident. Each project adds another layer to its identity, but the principle remains consistent: homes should be planned with care, delivered with precision and designed to improve how people live.

For Ajay Rajendran and the team behind Meraki Developers, the future is not only about adding more buildings to Dubai's skyline. It is about building communities that carry the company's name honestly.

Because Meraki is not simply what the company is called.

It is the standard it continues to build toward, one project, one community and one homeowner at a time.



Emaar To Unveil AED 200 Billion Masterplan In Dubai, Its Largest Ever, Housing Nearly 150,000 Residents

Emaar Properties is preparing to unveil what it describes as its most ambitious masterplan to date, an AED 200 billion mixed-use development in central Dubai with a built-up area exceeding 4.5 million square metres and a planned population of nearly 150,000 residents. The scale of the announcement, if delivered as outlined, places the project among the largest single master-planned developments ever conceived in the UAE, and the most significant statement of long-term confidence in Dubai's property market issued by any developer in 2026.

The Scale, In Context

Emaar's pre-announcement positions the development as a fully self-sustaining urban district, structured as a city within a city. The total development value of AED 200 billion is, by a clear margin, the largest single masterplan figure Emaar has ever attached to a project.

The programme spans landmark residential towers, signature villas and mansions, Grade A commercial offices, retail destinations, luxury hospitality, and civic and cultural amenities. A gated villa enclave at the top of the masterplan will offer five- and six-bedroom residences and large-format mansions, positioned at the highest tier of the development's residential mix.

Five Character Zones

According to the pre-announcement, the masterplan will be structured across five distinct character zones, a Business Hub designed as a commercial environment, an Urban District positioned as the high-density mixed-use core, a Young Families Cluster, a Family Living Zone, and the gated villa enclave at the development's peak.

The 20-Minute City Framing

Strategically, the most significant element of the pre-announcement is Emaar's commitment to designing the development around the principles of the 20-minute city, meaning daily essentials including schools, healthcare, retail, and cultural venues are intended to be



accessible on foot within 20 minutes of any residence.

Anchored by proposed metro connectivity, integrated smart mobility infrastructure, soft mobility networks, EV-friendly pathways, and app-integrated community management, the project positions itself at the intersection of large-scale master development and smart-city implementation.

Mohamed Alabbar, Founder of Emaar Properties,

framed the pre-announcement as a statement of confidence in the UAE's long-term future, positioning the development as Emaar's most ambitious dream and Dubai at its most inspiring.

Implications For The Wider Industry

For UAE real estate professionals, developers, brokers, community management firms, FM operators, the Emaar pre-announcement carries three immediate implications. For developers, the scale signals continued tier-one developer conviction in Dubai's long-cycle growth even as recent monthly

transaction data has shown moderation.

For community management and FM operators, a 4.5 million sqm built-up community housing 150,000 residents represents one of the largest single master-community FM and OA management briefs in UAE history. The operational pipeline implications begin with whichever firms win the asset management, community management, and FM contracts, and extend across at least a decade of delivery.

For brokers, the pricing tiers within a single five-zone development will likely span ultra-luxury (mansion enclave) to mid-market (family clusters), creating an unusually broad brokerage opportunity within a single project's sales cycle.

WHAT'S Hot

- AED 200 billion of total development value
- 4.5 million square metres of built-up area
- 150,000 residents' capacity planned
- 5 character zones
- 20 minutes on foot to daily essentials

BEYOND Developments Unveils AED 4 Billion 'The Yards' Masterplan in City of Arabia

BEYOND Developments has unveiled The Yards, an AED 4 billion master-planned destination in City of Arabia, marking the developer's first inland masterplan in Dubai. Alongside the announcement, BEYOND simultaneously launched Arancia, the project's first residential cluster. Spanning 2.3 million square feet of gross floor area, The Yards will comprise 1,560 residential units across one- to three-bedroom apartments. The Mediterranean-inspired masterplan is designed around a one-kilometre green spine, with 70 per cent of its total area committed to open landscape. The development sits within City of Arabia, a 185-hectare master community in Dubailand, with access to Dubai International Airport within 25 minutes and to Al Maktoum International Airport in under 40 minutes.

Adil Taqi, CEO of BEYOND Developments, said, "The Yards is an AED 4 billion commitment to a district where scale, connectivity, and a genuine scarcity of quality supply are converging to create one of the most compelling long-term investment cases in Dubai. At BEYOND, we anticipate demand rather than follow it, and every masterplan we bring to market is an expression of that conviction." Arancia offers 272 residences across three low-rise buildings spanning one-, two-, and three-bedroom typologies. Prices start from AED 1 million for one-bedroom units, AED 1.7 million for two-bedroom units, and AED 3 million for three-bedroom and above, on a 40/60 payment plan with a 10% down payment. Handover is scheduled for Q4 2029. **Ramzi Rahal, Chief Development Officer of BEYOND Developments**, said, "Arancia

is the first expression of The Yards vision, introducing a low-rise, nature-led community designed around wellbeing, connectivity, and everyday quality of life. It establishes the character of the wider masterplan and reflects our belief that the most enduring communities are those that place people and nature at the centre of the living experience."

The Yards adds a significant inland Dubai destination to BEYOND's existing portfolio, which spans Palm Jumeirah, Dubai Islands, Dubai Maritime City, and Ras Al Khaimah.

WHAT'S Hot

- Prices starting from AED 1 million
- Payment plan: 40/60 (40% during construction, 60% upon handover)
- Handover scheduled for Q1-Q4 2029 (Phased)



Alef Launches AED 4 Billion Waterfront Masterplan In Sharjah



Alef has launched Linar, an AED 4 billion waterfront masterplan in Sharjah, marking the developer's first large-scale coastal community and expanding its portfolio of thematic residential developments.

The project, which occupies one of the final waterfront plots in the emirate, represents Alef's entry into premium coastal living and aligns with Sharjah's broader urban development ambitions focused on enhancing residential quality and creating destination-led communities. According to **Raed Kajoor Al Nuaimi, Chief Executive Officer of Alef Group**, investor response to the project has exceeded initial expectations, prompting the expansion of the first release from Tower A to include Towers B and C. As a result, all 1,572 residential units across the first phase have been fully reserved.

The strong uptake highlights continued demand for waterfront residential developments in the UAE, particularly in Sharjah, where developers have increasingly focused on lifestyle-led communities as the emirate attracts both end-users and investors seeking alternatives to more mature markets.

Positioned as Alef's first comprehensive waterfront masterplan, Linar has been designed with sustainability integrated throughout the development lifecycle. The project will incorporate low-carbon concrete produced from recycled materials, rubberised asphalt for internal road networks, and solar energy systems aimed at improving operational efficiency and reducing environmental impact.

As part of its sustainability strategy, Alef has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with BEEAH Group to facilitate knowledge exchange and explore opportunities to advance climate-positive urban development within Sharjah. The collaboration will leverage BEEAH's environmental management expertise to support the project's sustainability objectives.

Al Nuaimi said the development reflects the company's strategy of creating distinct residential destinations centred around specific lifestyle concepts.

Linar joins Alef's growing portfolio of master-planned communities, which includes Al Mamsha, focused on walkable urban living; Hayyan, centred on natural landscapes and outdoor experiences;

and Olfa, inspired by an urban forest concept. Together, the projects form part of the developer's broader approach to creating integrated communities tailored to evolving resident preferences.

The launch comes amid continued growth in Sharjah's residential market, with developers increasingly introducing large-scale masterplans that combine lifestyle amenities, sustainability features and long-term community infrastructure. Waterfront developments in particular have emerged as a key segment, supported by rising demand for premium residential offerings outside Dubai.

With Phase-I fully reserved and construction expected to progress in line with the masterplan rollout, Linar adds another significant project to Sharjah's expanding development pipeline and reinforces Alef's position as one of the emirate's most active master developers.

WHAT'S Hot

- Prices starting from AED 860,000
- Payment plan: 30/70 (30% during construction, 70% upon handover)
- Handover scheduled for 2029-30

ANAX Developments Breaks Ground On ELLE Residences Dubai Islands

ANAX Developments has begun construction on ELLE Residences Dubai Islands, a waterfront branded residence on Dubai's emerging Dubai Islands destination. The groundbreaking was paired with the unveiling of ANAX 2.0, the developer's refreshed corporate strategy positioning the group for a wider portfolio of experience-led luxury developments in the UAE.

Combining the groundbreaking with the strategy unveiling at a single event positioned construction commencement not just as the start of a project, but as the start of a new phase for ANAX itself.

The project comprises 91 apartments and seven townhouses, with completion now scheduled for Q4 2027, a slight refinement from the originally announced Q3 2027 timeline. ELLE Residences Dubai Islands marks ELLE's first residential development in the Middle East and only its second globally, following its earlier residential tower in Miami. The branded residence

is developed in partnership with the global ELLE brand, owned by France's Lagardère Group, whose expansion into Dubai follows the success of its Miami project and represents the brand's first foothold in the Middle East. The development is positioned at the upper-luxury tier, with its mix of apartments and townhouses giving it both a vertical residence offering and a horizontal estate offering on the same site.

Raja Alameddine, CEO of ANAX Developments, framed the strategic positioning around expanding the company's UAE portfolio with experience-led, luxury lifestyle developments. The framing connects ANAX to a wider 2026 trend across UAE real estate, the shift from product-led launches to experience-led branded developments, visible across Sweid One, the AHS Properties and Shangri-La acquisition, and Omniyat's BEYOND brand expansion. For **Satish Sanpal, Founder and Chairman of ANAX Holding**, the construction commencement is framed as evidence

of the group's delivery discipline, a positioning increasingly emphasised across the wider UAE developer community as Dubai's market matures and the gap widens between launch announcements and confirmed delivery.

The Dubai Islands location matters strategically. The waterfront destination, developed by Nakheel under Dubai Holding Real Estate, has been positioning itself as one of the most distinctive new mixed-use coastal destinations in Dubai, attracting branded residence projects from multiple developers and reshaping a cluster of waterfront development that had previously concentrated almost entirely on Palm Jumeirah, JBR, and Bluewaters.

WHAT'S Hot

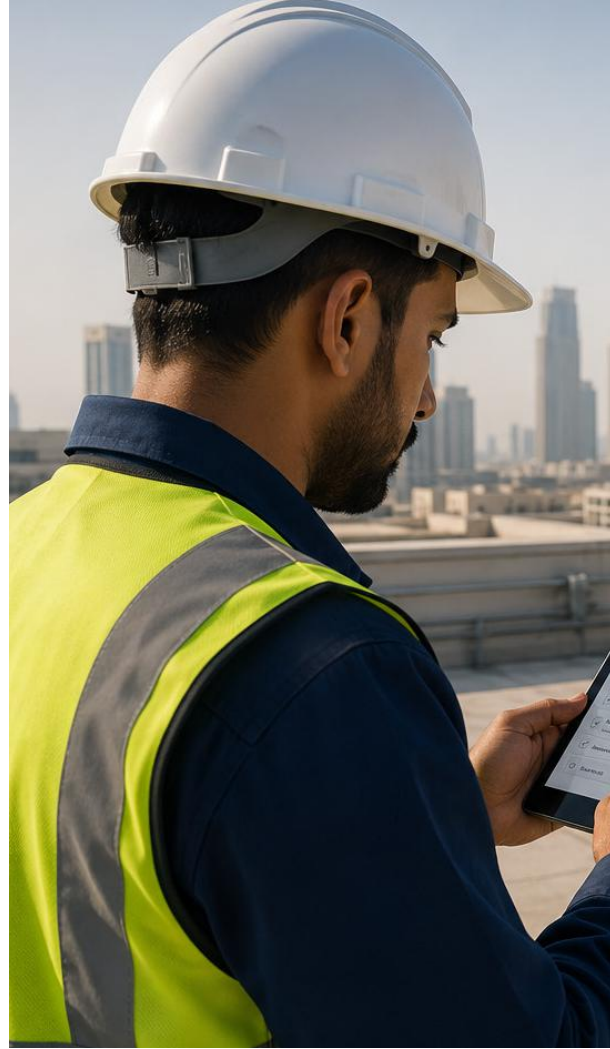
- Prices starting from AED 2.15 million
- Payment plan: 30/70 (30% during construction, 70% upon handover)
- Handover scheduled for Q4 2027



*Prices, availability, and purchase terms are subject to change. Please contact the developer for the most up-to-date information.

FIT-FOR-PURPOSE FM IN DUBAI'S MID-MARKET

Abdullah Showaib, Operations & Contracts Lead at SnapFixNow FMC, a Dubai-based technical FM company specialising in SLA-driven maintenance contracts, makes the case for a more structured approach to facility management for mid-market property owners.



A single HVAC failure during a Dubai summer can cost a property operator more than a full year of scheduled maintenance when you factor in emergency call-out rates, urgent parts procurement, and the operational downtime that follows. Cooling systems in the UAE run for up to 8-10 months a year. That is not a system under occasional stress. It is a system under permanent load. Yet the majority of mid-market properties in Dubai - residential towers, retail units, warehouses - still operate on a fix-when-broken model. Not because their owners don't know better, but because the FM industry has never properly served them.

A Market Built for Two Extremes

The UAE facility management sector is forecast to reach USD 42.27 billion by 2031. The market is expanding. The service gap within it is also expanding. At one end are large FM providers with enterprise technology platforms

and contracts built around airports, government assets, and branded hotel groups. At the other are informal contractors who compete on day-rate pricing, offer no documented service agreement, and carry no accountability structure beyond a phone number. The mid-market property owner — the landlord of a 40-unit residential tower, the operator of a retail strip, the investor managing a warehouse portfolio — fits neither profile. They are too small to be prioritised by enterprise FM, and too sophisticated to accept undocumented, unaccountable service. They need the discipline and documentation standards of the top tier, without the enterprise overhead and minimum contract sizes that come with it.

The Gap No One Is Talking About

The structural problem is not maintenance. Most buildings have someone doing maintenance. The problem is verification. In a properly managed building, every



Abdullah Showaib

Most buildings don't fail because of equipment, they fail because no one verifies the maintenance





What the Data Shows

In a mid-market residential building in Al Barsha, a landlord operating on a reactive model was experiencing recurring HVAC failures, escalating tenant complaints, and no documented maintenance history. After transitioning to a structured 12-month AMC with monthly PPM visits, photo-documented job cards, and an asset register built from the first site survey, the results within 90 days were measurable:

- 40% Reduction in emergency call-outs
- 100% Job card completion from day one
- Zero Tenant MEP complaints in 90 days

No new equipment was installed. No staff were added. The only change was structure: scheduled visits, documented outcomes, and a single accountable contact who knew the building's asset history from day one.

A New Category, Not Just Another Provider

Dubai's FM industry is not short of providers. What it has lacked, for mid-market property operators specifically, is a category of service that combines the documentation standards and engineering discipline of the enterprise tier with the responsiveness, named accountability, and flexible contract structure that smaller portfolios require. The SLA-driven AMC model, built around photo-documented job cards, asset registers, and a named operations lead on every engagement, is not built around dashboards or enterprise reporting platforms. It is built around one principle: that a property owner should always be able to answer the question 'what maintenance was done on my building this month' with evidence. For Dubai's mid-market property operators, that answer has, for too long, been unavailable. That is the gap the market is now beginning to fill.

(The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not represent the editorial position of Real Estate Market Times)

maintenance visit produces a job card recording what was inspected, what was found, what was corrected, and what requires follow-up. An asset register tracks the condition and service history of every piece of equipment. Together, these documents give the property owner proof, not a promise, that their asset is being managed.

In the majority of mid-market properties in Dubai, none of this exists. This is an accountability gap. And it is costing mid-market property owners money, assets, and tenants. Reactive maintenance drains 30-50% more OPEX over a 24-month period compared to structured preventive programmes. A poorly maintained HVAC system consumes 15-30% more energy to achieve the same output.

What Accountable FM Actually Looks Like

The FM contract model emerging in response is the SLA-driven Annual Maintenance Contract with documented

PPM schedules, photo job cards, and a named accountable contact. It is not new in concept, it is new in availability to the mid-market segment.

For property operators evaluating their options, a credible FM partner delivers five things:

- Engineering-led scheduling against asset condition
- Photo-documented evidence at every visit
- SLA-backed response commitments defined in the contract
- A named person who answers, not a call centre
- Documentation built to satisfy both insurance requirements and UAE regulatory inspection standards

These are not premium add-ons. They are the baseline standards that define whether an FM relationship is actually protecting a building.

The Power List: Women Leading UAE Real Estate in 2026

BEHIND EVERY BUILDING THAT GOES UP IN THE UAE, THERE IS A DECISION SOMEONE MADE. TO ACQUIRE LAND OTHERS OVERLOOKED. TO BACK A CONCEPT BEFORE THE MARKET CAUGHT UP. TO WALK AWAY FROM A COMFORTABLE POSITION AND BUILD SOMETHING FROM SCRATCH. THESE ARE NOT ABSTRACT STRATEGIC MOVES BUT PERSONAL ONES SHAPED BY CONVICTION, RISK APPETITE, AND A PARTICULAR WAY OF SEEING OPPORTUNITY WHERE OTHERS SEE UNCERTAINTY.

The women on this list have made those decisions, many times over. Some lead firms they founded themselves. Others have carved out specialisations within large organisations, becoming the person others turn to when a deal gets complicated or a project needs rescuing. What they share is not a single path but a common characteristic: they build things that last.

The UAE has always attracted people who think at scale and act with intent. The sector they are helping shape is more considered, more creative, and more globally connected than it has ever been. This Power List recognises the women doing exactly that in 2026, on their own terms.

Real estate is a long-cycle business. Decisions made today reveal themselves only over years, and sometimes decades. The work demands a certain kind of patience that does not always show up in quarterly results or annual rankings. It calls for an ability to hold position when the market turns nervous, and an instinct for when to move before the consensus arrives. The women recognised here have demonstrated this temperament across cycles, not just in the recent moments of momentum, but in the harder periods that test whether conviction is durable.

HALA MATAR CHOUFANY

President - Middle East, Africa and South Asia, HVS

Hala Matar Choufany serves as **President for the Middle East, Africa and South Asia at HVS**, a global consulting firm focused exclusively on the hospitality sector. Over two decades, she has advised on more than 5,000 hospitality and mixed-use projects across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, covering valuations, acquisitions, asset management, strategic investments, contract negotiations, and real estate advisory. Her work spans the full investment lifecycle, from feasibility and valuation through to asset management and strategic repositioning, across markets at varying stages of development.

She is a board member of HVS Global and sits on the boards of the Harvard Business School

Club of the GCC and the Hotel Investment Advisory Board. A regular speaker at investment and hospitality conferences, she addresses topics ranging from asset valuation and management contracts to women in leadership. She has authored more than 50 industry publications and her commentary has featured on Bloomberg, CNN, Forbes, Al Arabiya, and Abu Dhabi TV.

Choufany holds an MBA in Finance and Strategy from IMHI (Essec-Cornell) in Paris and completed Executive Education at Harvard Business School. She is fluent in English, French, and Arabic. Earlier in her career she held roles at PwC, Arthur Andersen, Hard Rock International, and the Al Kharafi Group, across London, Bahrain, Beirut, and Kuwait.



DOUNIA FADI

Managing Director, eXp Realty Dubai

Dounia Fadi's entry into Dubai real estate in 2005 was the beginning of a career that would span more than two decades in one of the world's most demanding property markets. Today, as **Managing Director of eXp Realty Dubai**, one of the world's largest independent real estate brokerages, she leads an operation built on the principles that have defined her career from the outset: trust, rigour, and relationships that outlast any single transaction.

Known for her leadership and market influence, Fadi has built her reputation across luxury property, investment advisory, brokerage leadership, PropTech, and agent development. Her track record includes multimillion-dirham transactions, but her peers and clients are equally likely to cite her ability

to navigate complex deal structures, build high-performing teams, and create environments where agents are genuinely equipped to grow.

As an international speaker and global executive with deep UAE market knowledge, Fadi is a visible advocate for future-ready real estate strategy and for raising professional standards across the brokerage sector. She is known for her client-first instincts, her command of market dynamics, and an approach to leadership that combines commercial sharpness with a genuine investment in the people around her.

Her belief is straightforward: lasting success in real estate is built beyond the transaction, through knowledge, integrity, and relationships with a longer horizon than the deal.





TATIANA TONU

Chief Executive Officer, Object1

Tatiana Tonu brings over 20 years of expertise spanning banking, marketing, and real estate development to her role as **CEO of Object1**. She joined the company as its sole sales manager and advanced through Head of Sales and Managing Director before taking the top role, a trajectory that mirrors the company's own growth from a 10-person startup to an organisation of more than 500 employees.

As Managing Director and Head of Sales, Tonu led her team to a 200% increase in sales within a single year, working closely with CEO and Founder Egor Maslennikov. She played a central role in the organisational restructuring that supported Object1's scale-up, working with the HR department

to establish a management structure capable of sustaining that growth.

In her current role, Tonu oversees key business divisions, develops and launches new residential projects, and manages the company's marketing and sales strategies. Her academic background, a Master's and PhD in Economics alongside certification in Business Development, combined with a foundation in mathematics and cybernetics, informs a distinctly analytical approach to leadership. She describes this grounding as central to her decision-making, enabling data-driven choices in strategic and investment areas while helping the company navigate risk with confidence.

SVETLANA POLITOVA

Chief Executive Officer, Whitewill Real Estate Abu Dhabi and Oman

Svetlana Politova began her career in Gulf real estate in 2008, during the global financial crisis, at a moment when the region's property sector was being fundamentally redefined. Where others saw uncertainty, she saw the foundations of something larger being laid. In 2010, she founded her own real estate company in the UAE, growing it through a period of rapid market development into a business with a strong reputation among local and international clientele. She subsequently sold the company and during this period also worked closely with British entrants to the UAE market, helping them establish and navigate the region's fast-evolving investment

landscape. Today, as **CEO of Whitewill Real Estate Abu Dhabi and Oman**, Politova leads the company's expansion across two of the Gulf's most actively developing markets. Under her leadership, Whitewill has built a reputation as a trusted partner for international investors, with teams recognised through multiple industry awards. Her approach combines strategic market knowledge with a practical understanding of investor needs and regional development cycles, shaped by more than fifteen years at the forefront of Gulf real estate.

Beyond her commercial record, Politova is known for developing future leaders and championing women in a sector that has historically been male-dominated.



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PRATHYUSHA GURRAPU

Director and Head of Research, Cushman & Wakefield Core UAE

Prathyusha Gurrapu is one of the UAE's most recognised real estate research leaders and serves as **Director and Head of Research at Cushman & Wakefield Core**, where she oversees market intelligence, strategic advisory, and thought leadership across the country's major asset classes.

With 17 years of experience spanning real estate consulting, urban planning, and architecture, she advises developers, government entities, sovereign wealth funds, institutional investors, and family offices on investment decisions, development strategy, and market positioning.

She joined Cushman & Wakefield Core in 2015 and established the firm's Strategic Consulting team before moving into research leadership, having previously worked with JLL, Dar Al-Handasah, and CDM Smith.

At the core of her work is a conviction that data must translate into decisions. Where others saw momentum, she was among the first to call the shift, noting that Dubai's residential market was "transitioning into a more balanced phase" and forecasting price growth moderating to mid-single-digit levels in 2026. Clear-eyed about cycles and resistant to market noise, she consistently focuses on what the fundamentals actually say.

A professional member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, she holds a Master of City Planning from IIT Kharagpur in India and a Bachelor of Architecture with Honours. She has authored more than 100 industry reports and is a regular commentator across regional and international media on capital flows, occupier trends, and the future of UAE cities.

NOOR AL MUHAIDEB

Founding Partner, Opaal Interiors

Noor Al Muhaideb is the **Founding Partner of Opaal Interiors**, a Dubai-based design studio known for its contemporary, culturally rooted approach to residential and hospitality spaces. An Emirati entrepreneur, she established Opaal to bring her vision of timeless design, artisanal craftsmanship, and innovative functionality to the region's most ambitious projects.

As the lead creative behind Opaal, Al Muhaideb combines a deep appreciation of Emirati heritage with a global design sensibility, delivering spaces that balance modernity with meaning. Under her direction, Opaal has been entrusted with the interior design of Amaal's debut project, Mansory Residences, a premium

residential development that exemplifies understated luxury and considered living. Her aesthetic philosophy centres on spaces that feel authentic, refined, and deeply personal, a sensibility that has contributed to redefining high-end interiors across the UAE. Al Muhaideb holds a Bachelor's degree in Interior Design from the American University of Sharjah and brings over 22 years of professional experience to her practice. Passionate about empowering women in design and entrepreneurship, she is an active advocate for greater Emirati representation in the creative industries, and through her leadership at Opaal continues to set a benchmark for excellence in the region's design landscape.



OLGA SUKHANOVA

Founder, COLABB

Olga Sukhanova is an international entrepreneur and the **Founder of COLABB**, a Dubai-based commercial real estate investment and creative development firm that integrates acquisition, interior design, and digital strategy under one roof. Before launching COLABB, she spent over a decade in leadership at Solvers Estate, where she closed more than 300 million dollars in real estate transactions, including deals in Moscow City, Russia's largest business district. She then stepped away from a senior executive role, took a deliberate sabbatical, and re-entered the market as a founder.

Her move to Dubai led to one of her most defining investments: the acquisition of commercial property in DIFC ahead of the market's

significant appreciation. That decision gave rise to CODE, a premium corporate coworking space in DIFC where she serves as Development Partner and Managing Director. CODE has delivered rental yields of 16.3% annually and capital appreciation of 63.5% over 18 months.

Through COLABB, Sukhanova works with private and institutional investors to acquire, design, and activate high-potential commercial and hospitality properties across Dubai and Abu Dhabi. She also leads COLABB's hospitality division, currently developing a tech-driven hotel concept she describes as the world's first performance hotel. Her philosophy is rooted in the belief that real estate is not simply a financial instrument, but a platform for ideas, culture, and lasting impact.



ALESSIA SHEGLOVA

Chief Executive Officer, Dacha Real Estate

Alessia Sheglova is the **Chief Executive Officer of Dacha Real Estate** and one of Dubai's most visible real estate voices. With over 18 years of experience in the city's property market, she has built a career across brokerage leadership, client advisory, business growth and digital real estate communication. At Dacha Real Estate, an established Dubai agency founded in 2004, Alessia has played a central role in strengthening the company's market presence in one of the region's most competitive brokerage landscapes. Her work spans sales, leasing, property management, business development and agent mentorship, giving her a strong understanding of how Dubai's real estate ecosystem operates across market cycles. What makes Alessia's profile

especially relevant today is her ability to bridge traditional brokerage leadership with modern digital influence. With over 310,000 followers on Instagram, she has become a recognisable public voice for buyers, investors, agents and Dubai residents seeking accessible insight into the property market. Her content often simplifies real estate trends, lifestyle considerations and investment conversations for a wider audience, making property discussions more engaging and easier to understand. As the industry becomes increasingly shaped by trust, visibility and education, Alessia represents a new generation of real estate leadership: commercially grounded, market-aware and digitally fluent.





GEMMA MORRIS

Senior HR Business Partner, Savills Middle East

Gemma Morris brings more than 20 years of HR experience to her role as **Senior HR Business Partner at Savills Middle East**, including over a decade building her practice in the UAE. At Savills, she partners with business leaders on the people decisions that underpin sustainable growth, balancing commercial priorities with fairness, integrity, and a genuine commitment to workplace culture. She is recognised for influencing through credibility and sound judgement rather than authority alone, helping leaders build high-performing, people-focused organisations where strong commercial outcomes and exceptional employee experience are treated as complementary rather than competing goals. Beyond her corporate role, Morris is a vocal advocate for inclusive

leadership and neurodiversity in the workplace. Through speaking engagements and leadership podcasts, she contributes to wider industry conversations on accessibility, employee experience, and the future of work. She holds certifications as both a Neurodiversity Champion and Accessibility Ambassador, and her advocacy reflects a consistent belief that workplaces perform at their best when people are able to perform as themselves.

Her approach to HR leadership is grounded in empathy, authenticity and purpose, qualities she brings equally to the boardroom conversation and to the broader industry platforms where she continues to shape thinking on what inclusive, high-performance organisations can look like in practice.

SEVIL RYSHATOVA

Human Resources Director, Livrichy Real Estate

Sevil Ryshatova has built her career in Dubai's real estate sector on a straightforward conviction: exceptional teams are intentionally developed, not accidentally formed. Her entry into real estate was driven by a genuine curiosity about people, their motivations, ambitions, and the conditions that enable them to succeed. That curiosity evolved into a career centred on impact.

Throughout her professional journey, Ryshatova has led key HR functions including recruitment, training, employee engagement, performance management, and operational strategy, contributing to the development of high-performing teams across leading real estate firms in one of the region's most competitive markets. Her approach balances strategic execution with human understanding, grounded

in the belief that sustainable business growth is driven by individuals who are motivated, supported, and empowered to deliver their best. She operates at the intersection of leadership, sales performance, negotiation psychology, and organisational development, supporting real estate professionals in translating potential into measurable results.

She has been recognised among the Top 100 HR Leaders in the MENA region, named L&D Champion of the Year, and honoured as the 2026 Women Leader in HR and Learning Excellence.

A strong advocate for continuous learning, she develops training programmes, workshops, and educational initiatives focused on leadership, emotional intelligence, and real estate excellence.



THEY BUILT BEFORE OTHERS LOOKED

The profiles in this feature do not follow a single arc. Some of the women recognised here built their own firms from scratch. Others rose through large organisations to lead functions, practices, and markets at the highest level. Some arrived in the UAE and made it their base. Others have been part of the region's real estate story since the beginning. What connects them is not background or sector or career path. It is a particular quality of conviction, the kind that shows up in decisions made before the outcome is clear.

That is what the UAE's real estate market has always rewarded; not caution or consensus, but the sheer ability to read a moment correctly and act on it before the rest of the market catches up. The women featured here have done that, repeatedly, across investment, research, brokerage, hospitality consultancy, interior design, and development. They have done it in a market that moves fast and has little patience for anything that does not perform.

In fact, the nature of leadership itself has shifted across these profiles. The sector's most visible work, including the transactions, the launches and the groundbreakings, is only one part of the story. The other part is the quieter, more sustained work of building organisations, raising professional standards, mentoring the next generation, and bringing intellectual rigour to a market that can sometimes mistake momentum for strategy. That work is represented here too. The UAE real estate sector in 2026 is more globally connected, more analytically sophisticated, and more diverse in its leadership than at any previous point in its history. These profiles are a reflection of that. Not a complete picture, they never could be, but an honest one. Practitioners whose work speaks for itself, across disciplines, across markets, and across the full arc of a sector that continues to define what ambitious, considered development looks like on a world stage.



Designing for Wellbeing: How Psychology Should Shape the Communities We Build

Dr. Rita Figueiredo, Licensed Psychologist and Managing Director of Peninsula Psychology, says that as more residents choose to call the UAE home long-term, the next competitive advantage for developers will not be location or luxury, but psychology, and the design choices that help a community feel less like an address and more like a place to belong.



Dubai has become exceptionally good at building properties. The next challenge is building belonging. For years, the success of master-planned communities was measured by scale, luxury, and striking architecture. But as more residents choose to stay in the UAE long-term, priorities are changing. Buyers and renters no longer want just a prestigious address; they want an environment that supports their quality of life, their families, and their wellbeing. For developers and master planners, this means psychology needs a seat at the table.

As a psychologist, I know that mental health is not shaped solely by what happens inside individuals; it is also shaped by the environments in which people live. The design of a community influences how much we move, how connected we feel, how much time we spend with family, whether we experience chronic stress, and whether we feel a sense of belonging. This is particularly relevant in Dubai, where many residents are expatriates living far from extended family, rebuilding social networks, and navigating life transitions without the support systems they may have relied upon in their home countries.

One of the most common complaints I hear from clients is the amount of time spent commuting. Many residents face a difficult choice: live close to work and sacrifice community living, or live in a desirable community and spend hours each week in traffic. Research consistently shows that long commutes are associated with higher stress, lower life satisfaction, poorer work-life balance, and less time available for

DR. RITA FIGUEIREDO
Licensed Psychologist & MD
Peninsula Psychology

relationships, exercise, leisure, and rest. Every hour spent in traffic is an hour unavailable for the activities that support wellbeing. This raises an important question for future developments: should residential communities and business hubs continue to exist separately, or should we integrate them more intentionally? The question is not whether a community has amenities. Most communities in Dubai already do. The question is whether residents can realistically access them without getting in a car. Schools, supermarkets, pharmacies, healthcare services, gyms, restaurants, playgrounds, green spaces, and leisure facilities should ideally be accessible within walking distance. Mixed-use communities that integrate residential, commercial, educational, and healthcare services reduce commuting, encourage movement, and give residents something increasingly valuable: time.

People do not build community while sitting in traffic. They build community while walking. Environmental psychology has repeatedly shown that walkable neighbourhoods are associated with stronger social cohesion, greater physical activity, and higher levels of wellbeing. Walking creates opportunities for spontaneous social interactions, movement, and engagement with the local environment. These seemingly small experiences accumulate over time and contribute to a stronger sense of belonging. Of course, Dubai presents a unique challenge: the climate. During significant parts of the year, outdoor activity becomes difficult due to the heat. This makes it even more important to think creatively about how communities support movement and social interaction. Shaded walkways, tree-lined streets, bicycle tracks, running paths, stroller-friendly routes, drinking water stations, and indoor recreation facilities should become standard features rather than optional extras.

Another lesson from environmental psychology concerns our relationship with nature. Decades of research show that exposure to green spaces is associated with lower stress, improved mood, better cognitive functioning, and improved overall wellbeing. Even viewing natural elements from homes,

Human beings evolved in natural environments, not among endless expanses of glass and concrete



offices, or public spaces appears to have measurable benefits. In a city where summer temperatures often drive people indoors, biophilic design becomes particularly important. Green atriums, indoor gardens, vertical planting, rooftop green spaces, shaded courtyards, and visible natural elements can help maintain residents' connection to nature throughout the year.

At the same time, developers should treat air and noise pollution as wellbeing issues, not simply environmental concerns. Chronic exposure to traffic noise, construction, and overstimulation can contribute to stress, poorer sleep, irritability, and reduced quality of life. Green buffers, protected courtyards, thoughtful building placement, and calming soundscapes can all contribute to healthier environments.

Perhaps the most important consideration, however, is social connection. Psychological research consistently shows that strong social relationships are among the greatest predictors of wellbeing. Yet connection rarely emerges because people schedule it. More often, it develops through repeated, everyday encounters. This raises another question for developers

and planners: how many opportunities does a resident have to encounter the same people every week without planning it? Community cafés, sports facilities, cultural venues, playgrounds, public plazas, event spaces, and other “third places” create opportunities for neighbours to become familiar faces and, eventually, part of a meaningful social network. As Dubai continues to grow, perhaps developers and planners should ask themselves a different set of questions:

- Can residents meet most of their daily needs without spending hours in traffic?
- Does the community encourage walking, movement, and social interaction?
- Are there opportunities to connect with nature every day, even during summer?
- Does the environment reduce stress or contribute to it?
- And perhaps most importantly: does this community help people feel that they belong?

For years, developers competed on location, luxury, and amenities. The next competitive advantage may be something far less visible: understanding how human beings actually live, connect, move, and recover from stress. The communities that succeed in the future will not simply offer homes. They will offer belonging.

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

QUALITY IS THE ONLY PACE WORTH KEEPING

Madhav Dhar, Co-founder and CEO of ZāZEN Properties, speaks on AI's real role in operations, the pressure of a fast-moving market, and why 20% of his buyers keep coming back.



MADHAV DHAR
Co-founder & CEO, ZāZEN Properties

Madhav Dhar has built ZāZEN Properties around a philosophy that is quietly countercultural in Dubai's current market: stay disciplined on delivery rather than chase volume. With around 80% of ZāZEN's buyers being end users and a repeat buyer rate of 15 to 20% across projects, that philosophy appears to be working.

With the market moving at pace, how do you keep quality consistent under that pressure?

High demand cannot come at the expense of quality. In real estate, it takes years to build trust and only one project to damage it. At ZāZEN, around 80% of our buyers are end users, so quality and timely delivery are extremely important because many are balancing rent and mortgage commitments at the same time. For us, consistency comes from staying disciplined on delivery rather than chasing volume for the sake of growth.

In real estate, it takes years to build trust and only one project to damage it



And when most of what is being sold is off-plan, what does managing that pipeline actually require?

Managing an off-plan pipeline successfully comes down to planning, discipline, and execution. Cash flow management is critical, especially in a market where construction costs, sourcing timelines, and supply chain conditions can shift quickly. Equally important is having the right partners involved early in the process. Ultimately, buyers are placing trust in a developer long before a project is physically complete. Managing that responsibility properly requires transparency, operational consistency, and the ability to deliver what was promised from the very beginning.

Within that, how do you make the case for sustainability and wellness features that add cost to a project?

Most buyers may not walk into a project specifically asking for sustainability

certifications or wellness infrastructure, but they absolutely respond to the benefits these features create in everyday life. Better air quality, greener spaces, lower service charges, natural light, and energy efficiency all improve how people experience a home over time. For us, sustainability and wellness are not treated as optional add-ons. They are built into the product because they create long-term value for both residents and the wider community.

With a repeat buyer rate of 15 to 20%, what do those buyers say actually kept them coming back?

What they consistently talk about goes beyond finishes or amenities alone. They talk about the overall living experience. Our philosophy has always been to design homes for people to genuinely live and grow in, rather than simply creating products that are easy to market or sell quickly.

The sense of community, quality of life, and overall feel of a project are often the things that stay with residents most, and ultimately what brings buyers back to ZāZEN again.

Looking ahead, where does AI fit into how a developer like ZāZEN actually operates?

Right now, AI is making the biggest difference in operational efficiency rather than replacing the human side of real estate. It is helping automate customer service processes, improve response times, support internal planning, and analyse project data more effectively.

That said, there is still a tendency to overstate what AI can do in this industry today. Buying a home is deeply personal, especially for first-time buyers or investors. Human interaction, trust, and transparency still matter enormously.



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THE NEW GEOGRAPHY OF WEALTH: WHY BRANDED RESIDENCES ARE REWRITING DUBAI'S INVESTMENT STORY

While market sentiment continues to be shaped by global uncertainty, a growing segment of investors is taking a longer-term view of Dubai real estate. According to **Abhishek Jalan, CEO of Grovy Developers**, branded residences and emerging destinations are becoming central to a new phase of value creation, asset preservation and strategic investment.



ABHISHEK JALAN
CEO, Grovy Developers

The notion that geopolitical uncertainty is diminishing Dubai's appeal among investors is one that **Abhishek Jalan** firmly challenges. In his view, the market is witnessing the emergence of a more sophisticated investor profile, one that recognises opportunity during periods of recalibration rather than waiting for complete stability to return.

While transaction volumes have softened compared to the peak activity witnessed in October 2022, Jalan notes that market activity has begun to recover. He points to improving volumes through April and a notable rise in buyer confidence over recent months.

According to Jalan, this shift reflects a more mature investment mindset. Rather than reacting to short-term market sentiment, investors are increasingly evaluating fundamentals and entering the market when pricing and conditions offer stronger long-term value.

Why Branded Residences Matter

For Jalan, the appeal of branded residences extends beyond luxury positioning. He believes their greatest strength lies in asset protection and value preservation.

Unlike conventional residential buildings, which may experience a gradual decline in service standards and maintenance quality over time, branded residences benefit from the oversight of established hospitality operators. Through professional management, operational consistency and ongoing maintenance standards, these assets are designed to retain quality and value across market cycles.



More sophisticated investors are not waiting to see signs of stabilisation; they're coming in when the terms are more advantageous, and upside speculative risk is lower.



“Dubai has always rewarded those who read the cycle correctly. The investors entering now are not reacting to headlines, they are studying the fundamentals,” he says.

In his view, branded residences represent one of the strongest examples of those fundamentals at work. Professionally managed, internationally recognised and designed to preserve value over time, they reflect the changing priorities of investors seeking stability alongside growth.

Rather than losing momentum, Jalan believes Dubai's real estate story is evolving. And for investors focused on long-term fundamentals, the next chapter may already be underway.

Key Takeaways

- Investor confidence in Dubai real estate is strengthening despite market recalibration.
- Branded residences are increasingly viewed as vehicles for long-term asset preservation.
- Grovy Developers' partnership with Wyndham marks a major milestone in the company's UAE growth journey.
- Dubai Islands remains one of the most competitively priced island destinations in Dubai.
- Investors are focusing more on long-term capital appreciation than short-term gains.

“Branded residences serve a single purpose: asset protection and preservation,” Jalan says.

He explains that when a globally recognised hospitality brand manages a property, owners benefit from hotel-grade property management, premium services and infrastructure standards that help maintain the asset's long-term desirability. As a result, investors are purchasing more than a residence; they are acquiring a professionally managed, revenue-generating asset backed by an international brand.

A Strategic Growth Milestone

The partnership between Grovy Developers and Wyndham represents a significant milestone in the company's UAE journey.

Since entering the UAE market in 2015, Grovy has established its presence through a series of completed projects in Jumeirah Village Circle, including Alcove, Aria and Aura. More recently, the company launched RIVO at Dubai Land Residential Complex, with construction progressing according to schedule.

The launch of Ramada Residences by Wyndham at Dubai Islands marks Grovy's entry into the branded residences segment, supported by Wyndham's global expertise in hospitality operations and asset management.

For Jalan, the timing of this move is deliberate. He believes periods of market adjustment often present the strongest

opportunities to establish projects positioned for future growth.

Dubai Islands and the Next Appreciation Curve

Among all segments of Dubai's real estate market, Jalan expresses his strongest conviction in Dubai Islands.

He notes that the destination currently remains the most competitively priced island community in Dubai when compared with established luxury waterfront locations such as Palm Jumeirah, Pearl Jumeirah, Maritime City and Mina Rashid.

According to Jalan, this pricing gap should not be viewed as a discount but rather as an indication that Dubai Islands is still in the early stages of its growth trajectory.

With planning aligned to the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan and approvals already in place for short-term rental operations, he believes the district is uniquely positioned for long-term capital appreciation.

The market's response appears to support that outlook. Since the signing of the Wyndham partnership, Grovy has recorded a significant increase in inquiry levels, alongside growing interest from investors focused on long-term value creation rather than short-term yields.

A New Chapter for Dubai Real Estate

For Jalan, Dubai's success has always been built on investors who understand market cycles and act accordingly.



INFRASTRUCTURE CONVERTS GEOGRAPHY INTO OPPORTUNITY

With Dubai's Blue Line under construction and the AED 34 billion Gold Line recently announced, **Abdulla Lahej, Chairman of Amaal**, talks about why developers who read transport-led demand early will capture both occupancy and yield.

Dubai's real estate market has always moved in parallel with infrastructure, but metro expansion is set to influence the sector more structurally than before. While capital values often reflect long-term investor sentiment, future growth is increasingly tied to connectivity, mobility, and integrated urban planning. With Dubai's population surpassing 4 million in 2026, and continuing to grow, pressure on housing demand is increasing across established and emerging communities. In that environment, connectivity is becoming one of the clearest differentiators in where people choose to live.

For buyers, investors, and occupiers, transport access reduces time, increases convenience, and strengthens long-term livability. A shorter commute, lower fuel spend, and easier access to commercial hubs all strengthen the appeal of metro-linked communities. This preference is already visible in market performance. According to industry estimates, properties within 500 meters of a Dubai Metro station sell for 8-15% more than comparable units without metro access. What was once considered an amenity is now increasingly priced into value.

Connectivity Is Becoming a Value Multiplier

As Dubai expands outward, metro access will increasingly determine which districts mature faster and attract sustained demand. Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority has reported that the Metro carried around 295 million riders in 2025 alone, underlining how deeply integrated the network has become in daily life. That scale of usage reinforces how significantly transport infrastructure already shapes citywide movement and investment confidence. Metro expansion also changes the viability of outer districts. Communities once viewed as too distant from employment centres become realistic options once journey times are reduced. That widens the development map of Dubai.

Buyers and occupiers may trade centrality for larger homes, better amenities, or better pricing if transport links remain efficient. For developers, this creates fresh opportunities to activate land banks in growth corridors that previously lacked sufficient demand depth. In effect, infrastructure converts geography into opportunity.

At the same time, metro-driven demand can create sharper competition for ageing properties in less connected areas. Where two similar units are priced closely, buyers increasingly favour the one with easier access to transit. This may force older landlords to compete through refurbishment, incentives, or more flexible pricing. As the market matures, real estate growth is likely to become more selective rather than uniform across all communities.

What This Means for Developers

For developers, metro expansion should now be viewed as a core commercial variable rather than a secondary planning factor. Project design, unit mix, launch timing, and pricing strategy all become stronger when aligned with transport infrastructure. Smaller units, co-living formats, and mixed-use concepts may perform particularly well near future stations where demand is strongest. Developers who understand transport-led demand early are better positioned to capture both occupancy and yield.

The broader message is clear: Dubai's real estate future is being reshaped not only by population growth and supply cycles, but by mobility.

Metro-linked communities are likely to command stronger values, stronger demand, and more resilient demand over time. For investors and developers alike, accessibility is no longer an added benefit. It is becoming a primary driver of real estate value.

(The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not represent the editorial position of Real Estate Market Times)

Accessibility is no longer an added benefit. It is becoming a primary driver of real estate value

ABDULLA LAHEJ
Chairman, Amaal



FROM LOCATION TO LIVEABILITY: THE NEW DRIVERS OF RESIDENTIAL VALUE

Milos Antic, Executive Vice Chairman of DHG Group and CEO of DHG Properties, highlights how evolving buyer expectations are placing greater emphasis on everyday living within communities.

For years, the value of any estate has been tied to where it sits on the map. Proximity to landmarks, business districts, or waterfronts shaped how developments were perceived. Today, that definition is extending. As Dubai's property market continues to record strong activity, with AED 22.01 billion in transactions and 9,507 sales in May 2026 alone, demand remains concentrated across established communities and emerging growth corridors supported by strong connectivity, quality infrastructure, and long-term development planning. At the same time, buyers continue to place greater emphasis on how a home supports daily life.

The focus is shifting toward "livability", where convenience, accessibility, and overall quality of living are becoming

central to decision-making. This is natural progression, as choices increase and the market becomes more diverse. Emphasis is moving toward how well a development fits into everyday life and how consistently it performs over time.

A Shift Toward Practical Living

Real estate markets tend to evolve alongside buyer expectations, and as activity stabilises, priorities become more practical. In Dubai, this is increasingly shaped by hybrid models of working and the city's continued appeal as a global tourism hub, both of which place greater emphasis on convenience and accessibility in daily living. This is reflected in the growing importance placed on having essential services and amenities within close reach, including retail, dining, wellness facilities, and green spaces that support daily routines.

This direction is reinforced by long-term planning at a city level as under the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan. More than 60% of land is being allocated to green and recreational areas, as an increased reflection into a broader focus on accessibility and quality of life. Global research further shows that proximity to green can increase property values by up to 20%, while also contributing to improved physical and mental wellbeing.

Designing for How People Live Today

There has been a shift in expectations and on how developers approach projects from the outset. Liveability today is defined by how different elements come together, with a greater emphasis on integrating thoughtful design into the planning process, as more buyers look for a seamless connection between indoor and outdoor living.

At DHG Properties, this perspective is reflected in how projects are positioned

Buyers are expecting the city living experience as well as the focus on wellbeing, both fully integrated



across different types of communities. Helvetia Verde has been designed as part of a broader ecosystem that brings together a full suite of lifestyle amenities, including gyms, a yoga area, jogging track, etc., all set within landscaped greenery that supports both relaxation and day-to-day functionality. This aligns with broader market trends, where recent industry insights indicate that over 63% of homebuyers in the UAE prioritise access to amenities and green spaces when making residential decisions.

A Holistic Approach to Residential Development

The relationship between a development and its surrounding environment continues to play a key role in how value is experienced and sustained over time. Buyers are expecting the city living experience as well as the focus on wellbeing, both fully integrated. While for developers, this reinforces the importance of planning at both the micro and macro level, ensuring that projects are aligned with the wider communities they are part of.

(The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not represent the editorial position of Real Estate Market Times)



MILOS ANTIC
Executive Vice Chairman of DHG Group
and CEO, DHG Properties



THE MERIVA COLLECTION



BEACHFRONT LIVING,
a lifestyle within

A Collection of 1 to 5-Bedroom Residences and Penthouses



ELLINGTON
PROPERTIES



SELLING SMARTER: DUBAI'S NEW REAL ESTATE PLAYBOOK

Record transaction values, a maturing buyer base, and a market shaped as much by geopolitics as by algorithm, Dubai's developer marketing teams are rewriting their strategies in real time. The CMOs and brand directors leading that shift share what is actually working.



The Market in Numbers

- Dubai recorded AED 252 billion in real estate transactions in Q1 2026, up 31% year-on-year.
- Annual price growth has moderated from double-digit highs to a steady 3% to 6%.
- The active delivery pipeline stands at between 80,000 and 90,000 units through 2026.
- Dubai Metro carried 294.7 million riders across its Red and Green Lines in 2025, a 7% increase year-on-year.
- Properties within a 15-minute walk of a Metro station can command a premium of up to 15% over comparable units without transit access.

Source: Dubai Land Department, Roads and Transport Authority, Dubai Media Office, ValuStrat

Dubai's real estate market closed Q1 2026 at AED 252 billion in transaction value, a 31% jump year-on-year. The marketers behind that number will be the first to say that the campaigns which delivered it look almost nothing like the ones that worked 18 months ago. The channels have shifted, the buyer has changed, and the assumptions that underpinned a decade of developer marketing are being quietly retired.

The Investor Monolith No Longer Exists

The idea of the international investor as a single, addressable audience no longer holds. In its place are several distinct buyer communities, each arriving with different motivations and different expectations of how they want to be engaged. UK capital is repositioning away from tax uncertainty. GCC investors are seeking stability closer to home. Indian and Chinese buyers are recalibrating around currency and policy shifts. And a fast-growing base of Golden

Visa-anchored residents is buying not as investors but as long-term inhabitants, with a resident's standards for trust and after-sales accountability. Reaching all of them with the same message, on the same channel, at the same moment in their decision journey, is no longer a strategic shortcut. It has become a liability.

When Hype No Longer Closes Deals

With annual price growth moderating from double-digit highs to a disciplined 3% to 6%, and a delivery pipeline of 80,000 to 90,000 units tilting leverage toward buyers, the conditions that once allowed hype to substitute for substance no longer exist. Buyers today are more deliberate, beginning their journey not at a property portal but with a question typed into an AI search tool, cross-checking developer track records before floor plans, and expecting the brand they encounter on a billboard to meet them with equal coherence on WhatsApp. They are not just more cautious, they are more capable.

The Channel Map Has Been Redrawn

WhatsApp has quietly become the channel where deals are closed, not just initiated. Broker enablement has overtaken mass media as the spend that moves transactions. Earned media and third-party validation now carry the trust load that brochures once did. And AI-driven search has inserted itself at the very start of the buyer journey, rewarding consistency and penalising exaggeration before a single form is filled. The marketers navigating this shift are not simply adapting their tools; they are rethinking what marketing in this category is actually for. This feature asks the CMOs, marketing heads, and brand directors navigating that reality what the new playbook actually looks like.

Less Brochure Language, More Verifiable Data

As Dubai's real estate market closes Q1 2026 at a record AED 252 billion in transaction value, the pressure on developer marketing teams has never been more visible.

Simranjeet Singh, Head of Marketing at Meraki Developers, has a clear-eyed view of what is working, what is not, and where the industry is quietly getting it wrong. To begin with, Singh is unconvinced by the case for rapid-response marketing. "People do not buy a home because a developer reacted cleverly to a headline. They buy because they trust the developer can deliver, and that trust is built over months and years," he says. The work that actually matters, he explains, happens out of sight. "The marketing function that adds value is not the one pushing a press release out. It is the one feeding the sales team and the broker network with clear, current talking points," Singh adds. Most of that editorial work, he notes, never appears in public. "It lives in a broker WhatsApp group, in a sales toolkit, in a buyer call," he says.

The AI Search Shift

Singh also believes the industry is underestimating how quickly AI-driven search has reshaped the buyer journey. "A noticeable share of our international enquiries now arrive with pre-formed views that did not come from our website or from a portal," he shares. "AI surfaces what is consistent across sources, not what is loudest in any single channel. A developer that has been overstating in brochures, soft on facts in PR, and inconsistent across regulatory filings now has that inconsistency exposed at the start of the buyer journey," Singh explains. His response has been straightforward: less brochure language, more verifiable data.

On Billboards and Budgets

Singh is measured but direct when it comes to out-of-home spending. He argues that the Sheikh Zayed Road billboard war is a visibility play that is frequently mistaken for brand strategy,

and that the cost per qualified enquiry, when tracked properly, is meaningfully worse than what the same budget delivers in targeted digital or broker enablement. "Most agencies will not tell you that, because they earn on the placement," he says.

For those stepping into a developer marketing role for the first time, his counsel is equally direct. "The biggest thing to unlearn is funnel orthodoxy from B2C tech, retail, or DTC," he says. "A Dubai property purchase is a months-long, multi-stakeholder, often cross-border decision. Last-click attribution will lie to you in this market," he warns, adding that the teams which recognise this early will be the ones with a meaningful advantage over the next twelve to eighteen months.

Buyers arrive already aware of who delivers on time



SIMRANJEET SINGH
Head of Marketing
Meraki Developers



The Broker Is the Client, Everything Else Follows

Marian de Guzman has spent the past 18 months watching the Dubai property market test the instincts of every marketing team operating in it. As **Head of Marketing at Grovy Developers**, she has had to make deliberate choices about what to hold onto, what to rebuild, and what to walk away from entirely. Her solutions are less about trends and more about discipline, and they challenge some of the most persistent habits in developer marketing today.

On Geopolitics and Campaign Planning

For de Guzman, the turbulence of the past months has fundamentally changed how her team approaches timing and tone. “When there is uncertainty elsewhere, Dubai’s stability story becomes our greatest asset; however, it needs to be managed credibly, not opportunistically,” she says. The shift has been from aspiration alone to aspiration backed by evidence. “Buyers want assurance that their money will continue to be well protected in a credible jurisdiction. We have delivered this assurance by marrying the emotional portion of the sale with tangible proof: volumes of transactions, regulatory framework, and incentives tied to residency,” she adds. Earned media has become central to that effort. “Press and editorial positioning allow us to tell the brand’s story with a level of credibility that no amount of paid advertising can produce,” she notes.

On the Research-Driven Buyer

De Guzman is direct about how the modern buyer has changed the rules of upper funnel marketing. “The modern consumer comes to the table armed with much more information than we give them credit for,” she says. Rather than leading with projects, Grovy leads with people, prioritising the Founder and CEO journey and brand legacy before any project conversation. Longer-form editorial, industry commentary, and thought leadership placements have, in her view, built more



MARIAN DE GUZMAN
Head of Marketing, Grovy Developers

authority than any marketing material could match.

On What No Longer Works

De Guzman is unsparing about tactics that have lost their relevance. “The use of generic hurry methods, such as countdown timers, fake scarcity language and blanket ‘last units’ messages, has become irrelevant to today’s buyers,” she says. Her sharpest observation is reserved for the broker relationship. “Our most important clients are our channel partners,” she notes. “If we invest in the brokers and communicate constantly and respectfully, they will deliver appropriate customers to us. Pursuing end-user customers through excessive digital noise while failing to leverage the intermediary network are some of the most expensive and persistent errors in our segment,” she concludes.

If we invest in the brokers and communicate respectfully, they will deliver appropriate customers to us



Trust Is Built on Proof, Not Promises

Wissal Bouhaddou has watched Dubai's investor base widen considerably over the past year, and with it, the rules for how developers need to communicate. As **Brand Communications Manager at Ellington Properties**, her view of 2026 is shaped less by what buyers want to hear and more by what they have already come to expect.

A Wider Market Needs a Narrower Message

For Bouhaddou, the easing of residency requirements and the broader movement of regional capital has changed who developers are speaking to, and how. "The expansion of the investor base is encouraging developers to communicate in a far more segmented and intentional way," she says. What has changed, she explains, is the nature of the conversation itself. "A first-time international investor is often looking for trust, transparency, and accessibility, while a more experienced buyer may be evaluating design quality, long-term value, and lifestyle integration," she adds. Five years ago, broad messaging worked. "Today, relevance matters more than reach," she notes. At Ellington, that has meant moving beyond price points and payment plans to communicate the full ownership experience.

Delivery Has Become the Message

With more than 80,000 units scheduled for delivery in 2026, Bouhaddou believes credibility has become one of the strongest differentiators in real estate marketing. "Buyers are paying much closer attention to who is behind a project, what they have delivered previously, and whether the promise being marketed is supported by proven execution," she says. The shift she has observed is structural. "Buyers no longer separate marketing from delivery. The strongest campaigns today are built on proof rather than promises," she explains. "Credibility itself has become a marketing asset. The brands that will stand out are those capable of

Buyers no longer separate marketing from delivery. The strongest campaigns today are built on proof rather than promise



consistently connecting marketing with trust, quality, and long-term value," she adds.

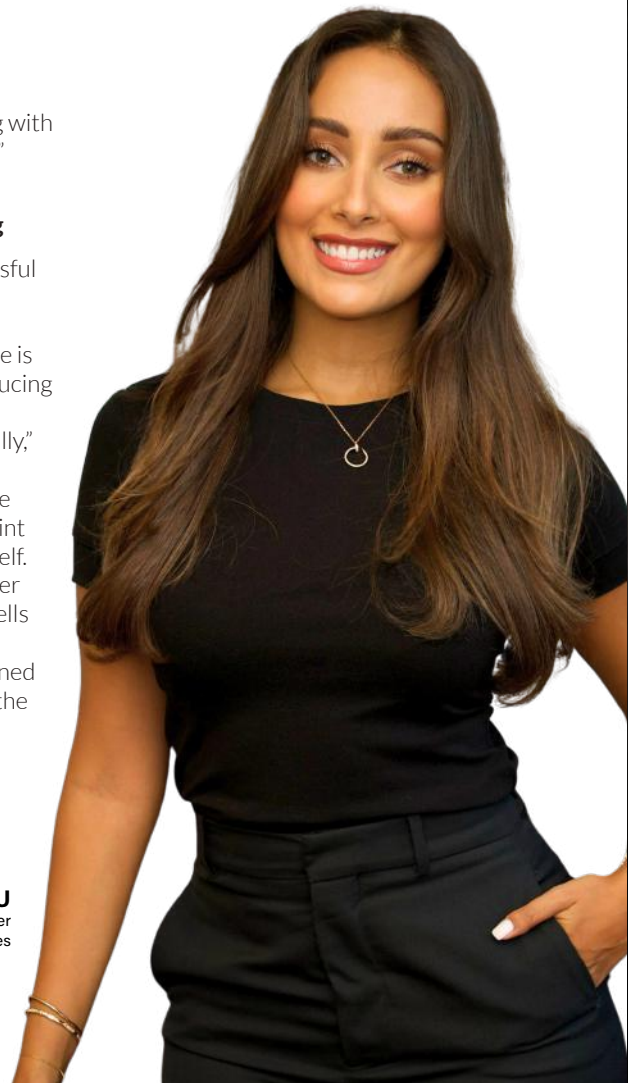
The Launch Is Just the Beginning

Bouhaddou points out that successful launches today are built around emotional connection rather than short-term hype. "The teaser phase is about creating intrigue and introducing a lifestyle, a feeling, or a story that people can connect with emotionally," she says. As more details emerge, the focus shifts as buyers today are highly informed, so every touchpoint needs to align with the product itself. "Successful sell-through is no longer defined by how quickly a project sells on day one, but by how effectively trust and engagement are maintained throughout the entire lifecycle of the development," she believes.

The Hardest Hire in the Room

Asked what marketing capability

has been hardest to find this year, Bouhaddou points to a specific combination. "One of the most difficult capabilities to find today is the ability to combine creativity, commercial understanding, and data-driven decision-making within a single role," she says. "The strongest marketers are no longer specialists in just one area. They need to be equally comfortable developing a creative campaign, interpreting performance data, understanding customer behaviour, and translating business objectives into meaningful communication," she explains. "Achieving that balance is not easy, which is exactly why it has become one of the most valuable skill sets in the industry today," asserts Bouhaddou.



WISSAL BOUHADDOU
Brand Communications Manager
Ellington Properties

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Luxury Buyers Want Identity, Not Inventory

In a market where buyer journeys are longer and scrutiny is sharper, **Nadezhda Kirienok, Marketing Director at MERED**, has a precise view of what luxury real estate marketing demands in 2026. Her answers point to a fundamental reorientation, away from volume and toward depth, credibility, and relationships built long before a transaction takes place.

Stability as a Marketing Proposition

For Kirienok, Dubai's institutional stability is the starting point of every investor conversation, but not something developers need to argue. "Investors do not need developers to tell them that Dubai is stable. They can see it in the city's sustained population growth, continued influx of global talent, ongoing infrastructure investment, and record transaction volumes," she says. Increasingly, the conversation goes beyond financial metrics. "Buyers are placing greater value on quality, legacy, and trust," she notes. For MERED, that is substantiated through the calibre of its partners.

Content That Moves Buyers

Kirienok is clear about what content actually works in the luxury segment. "The most effective content today is content that helps buyers understand the character of a project rather than simply showcasing the product itself," she says. "These conversations go beyond floorplans and amenities. Buyers want to understand the identity of a development and the experience it will deliver five or even 20 years from now. The developers who succeed are those who provide meaningful insights throughout that journey," she explains.

On Broker Enablement and Metrics

The shift in broker strategy, Kirienok says, has been the move from transactional engagement to relationship-driven partnerships. MERED responded by hosting an exclusive padel tournament bringing together senior brokers from 32 leading



NADEZHDA KIRIENOK
Marketing Director, MERED

brokerage firms across the UAE. "The objective was not simply networking. It was about creating an environment where relationships could develop organically and where industry leaders could exchange perspectives outside traditional business settings," she explains. The same thinking applies to how success is measured. "Two years ago, the industry was still heavily focused on lead volume," she says. "Today, the conversation is increasingly centred on buyer intent and engagement quality," she adds. The most telling indicators, according to her, are qualified lead rates, engagement depth, and the quality of conversations generated through campaigns. "With HNWIs, purchases are rarely impulsive. Buyers may engage with a project over several months while evaluating design, location, lifestyle, and long-term value. Success is increasingly measured by the strength of the relationship being built long before a transaction takes place," she concludes.

Buyers want to understand the identity of a development and the experience it will deliver



Demonstrate Stability, Don't Promote It

Ritesh Lamba, Marketing Director at Dugasta Properties, does not spend much time on the stability conversation. Not because it does not matter, but because he believes the market has moved past the point where stating it carries any weight. What interests him more is what comes after, how developers prove it, how buyers now evaluate it, and what the next phase of Dubai's real estate market will actually be defined by.

Prove It, Don't Say It

For Lamba, the stability narrative has run its course as a differentiator. "The conversation around Dubai's stability has matured," he says. "What was once a key differentiator is now largely expected, so the most effective developers demonstrate stability rather than promote it," he adds. Buyers, he explains, are no longer moved by broad claims. "They respond to tangible indicators such as strong infrastructure, well-established communities, transparent regulation, consistent project delivery, and long-term urban planning," he notes. The shift in tone is deliberate. "Marketing is shifting from promotion to reassurance, focusing on proven performance, trust, and community outcomes. Stability is most credible when buyers experience it for themselves rather than being told about it," he adds.

The Question Has Changed

The rise of the end-user buyer has fundamentally changed how Lamba's team communicates. "Golden Visa holders, entrepreneurs, professionals, and international families are increasingly purchasing homes to live in alongside their investment purpose," he says. That shift has made marketing more human in its orientation, with lifestyle, family needs, and long-term aspirations becoming central to the conversation. "Buyers are increasingly asking not just 'What's the return on investment?' but 'What's the return on living here?'" he shares. "The most successful developers understand that creating desirable

communities strengthens both resident satisfaction and long-term asset value," he adds.

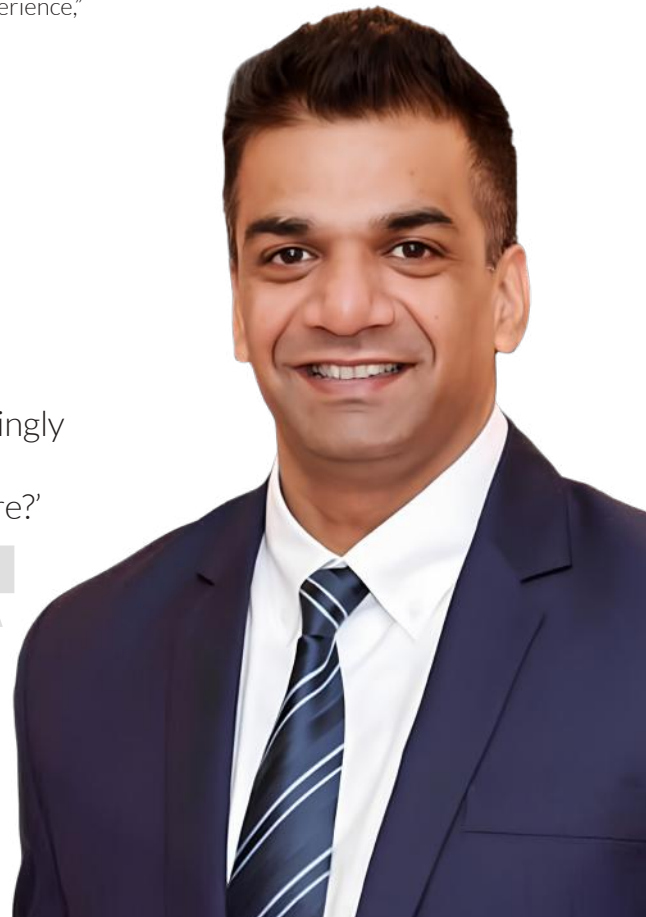
What the Market Has Not Caught Up With Yet

Lamba believes the most significant shift ahead is behavioural rather than regulatory or geopolitical. "Dubai is increasingly seen as a destination for residency rather than purely investment capital," he says. Tools like WhatsApp and CRM platforms have, in his view, evolved into something more strategic. "They have evolved into strategic engagement platforms that enable faster, more relevant, and highly personalised interactions," he notes. His outlook for the remainder of 2026 and beyond is focused on transparency and consistency. "Buyer sophistication has increased significantly, supported by AI tools and global access to information," he says. "The next phase of Dubai's real estate market will be defined by the ability to deliver a complete, credible, and long-term residential experience," he concludes.

Buyers are increasingly asking, 'What's the return on living here?'



RITESH LAMBA
Marketing Director
Dugasta Properties



Intent Matters More Than Nationality Now

Tania Moubadder Mills has watched Dubai's buyer base transform considerably over the past few years. As **Chief Sales and Marketing Officer at Union Properties**, she has had to rethink not just who the market is speaking to, but how and why the old frameworks for doing so no longer hold.

Sensitivity Over Speed

For Mills, the question of whether campaigns have been paused in 2026 misses the more nuanced reality. "While we have not necessarily paused campaigns, there have been instances where we had to refine our messaging, timing, and tone to align with the market shifts," she says. The lesson, she explains, goes beyond reputation management. "Brand sensitivity today extends beyond reputation management; it requires demonstrating awareness, empathy, and relevance," she notes. Her team's response to uncertainty has been consistent. "During uncertainty, communication must prioritise what matters most to our customers and stakeholders," she adds.

Behaviour Over Birthplace

The evolution of Dubai's buyer base is well documented, but Mills' read on it is more precise than most. While the market draws capital from India, the UK, China, the GCC, and emerging Asian economies, she argues that nationality is no longer the most useful lens. "We have observed a significant shift from nationality-based marketing to intent-based marketing," she says. The motivations driving decisions have changed. "Investment and purchase decisions are driven by lifestyle aspirations, wealth preservation, business opportunities, and long-term residency plans," she explains.

At Union Properties, that has meant focusing communication on established master-planned communities such as Motor City, prioritising long-term value,



TANIA MOUBADDER MILLS
Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, Union Properties

connectivity, and quality of life over broad demographic targeting.

Quality Over Volume

Mills is clear about where the industry's measurement of success has shifted. "There is a decisive shift in the industry from lead generation to lead qualification," she says, driven by advanced CRM platforms, predictive analytics, and AI-enabled tools. The metric that matters has changed. "Success is no longer measured by the number of enquiries generated, but by conversion rates," she notes. Acquisition costs have risen across the market, but she believes the developers who stay focused on qualification will outperform. Looking ahead, she sees AI-powered personalisation combined with trust-based storytelling as the defining capability of the next phase. "Technology alone will not suffice," she says. "Brands that balance data-driven marketing with credibility, transparency, and community value will stand out. The future of real estate marketing belongs to brands that balance innovation with human connection," she concludes.

Investment and purchase decisions are driven by lifestyle aspirations, business opportunities, and long-term residency plans



Investors Are Looking for Evidence, Not Promises

Dr. Majid Jack Hsiung, General Manager, Source of Fate, approaches the 2026 marketing conversation with data in hand. His responses draw on market reports rather than instinct alone, and his conclusions reflect a market that has grown too sophisticated for broad strokes and blanket messaging.

Recalibrate, Don't Retreat

For Dr. Hsiung, the question of pausing campaigns in 2026 misrepresents what the moment actually required. "The primary focus is on recalibrating campaigns rather than halting or withdrawing them," he says. The market's resilience, he notes, does not remove the need for sensitivity. "During periods of uncertainty, messaging must remain relevant, responsible and reassuring," he explains. At Source of Fate, that has meant going beyond promotions. "Our communications extend beyond just promotions, offering guidance, support and confidence through transparent messaging and reliable information," he adds.

Segmented, Advisory, Evidence-Led

Dr. Hsiung is precise about how the buyer base has evolved. Dubai's foreign real estate investments reached AED 148.35 billion in Q1 2026, according to the Dubai Land Department, with GCC nationals contributing a further AED 12.23 billion. But the more important shift, he argues, is in how those buyers need to be spoken to. "Marketers can no longer rely on one broad message to target diverse buyer segments," he says. The differences are meaningful. "Indian and UK buyers respond to investment fundamentals, rental potential, payment flexibility and long-term ownership value, while GCC buyers emphasise lifestyle, privacy, family living and proximity," he explains. "Chinese, European and other international buyers expect digital-first journeys, multilingual support, transparent documentation and evidence of developer credibility," he adds.

"Campaigns are therefore becoming more segmented, advisory and evidence-led," he concludes on this point.

Intelligence Over Volume

The data on lead behaviour, Dr. Hsiung says, tells its own story. Betterhomes' Q1 2026 report showed buyer enquiries declined 18% year-on-year, even as total residential transaction value rose 21% to AED 139.2 billion. "Current buyers tend to research communities, pricing, payment plans, amenities, rental prospects and developer track record, even before first enquiry," he notes. Looking ahead, he believes the next phase will be defined by credibility above all else. "AI and data analytics will continue to enhance personalisation, response speed and customer engagement, but they cannot replace credibility," he says. "Investors are no longer only responding to promises; they are looking for evidence of execution, long-term value and timely delivery," he concludes.

Investors are looking for evidence of execution, long-term value and timely delivery



DR. MAJID JACK HSIUNG
General Manager, Source of Fate

The Playbook Has Changed, The Fundamentals Have Not

What emerges across these conversations is not a single unified theory of what works in Dubai’s real estate marketing in 2026. It is something more useful: a set of convictions, independently arrived at, that point in the same direction. Trust has overtaken hype. Data has overtaken instinct. The broker has moved from a channel to a relationship. And the buyer has arrived at every conversation better informed than at any point in the market’s history.

The Buyer Has Already Done the Research

The marketer’s role in Dubai’s property sector was once to create desire. It is now, increasingly, to earn credibility. The buyer who begins their journey on an AI search tool, who cross-checks delivery records before floor plans, who expects the brand on the billboard to

answer them coherently on WhatsApp at midnight, that buyer is not more difficult to reach. They are more rewarding to reach. When they commit, they do so on the basis of evidence rather than enthusiasm. The conversion is harder to win and harder to lose.

For the industry, the implication is straightforward even if the execution is not. The tools have changed, the channels have changed, and the measurement has changed. But the underlying question that every marketing decision has to answer remains the same: does this build or erode trust with the specific buyer we are trying to reach? The strategies that answer yes consistently, earned media over paid noise, broker relationships over broadcast campaigns and verifiable data over aspirational language, are the ones

showing up across every conversation in this feature.

The Teams That Get This Early Will Define What Comes Next

The marketers who will shape the next phase of Dubai’s real estate sector are those who treat this moment not as a correction to navigate but as a structural upgrade to embrace. A market that rewards consistency, quality of engagement, and long-term relationship-building over short-term volume is a market that is maturing in ways that benefit everyone operating within it, from developers and brokers to buyers and the industry at large. The playbook has been rewritten. The question now is which teams have actually internalised it, and which are still running the old plays with new branding.

THE EVOLUTION OF A DUBAI REAL ESTATE BUYER

From Investor Mindset to Lifestyle Mindset

2023 BUYER	2026 BUYER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Predominantly international, often speculative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">End-users, Golden Visa holders, long-term residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Driven by capital appreciation and launch pricing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Driven by lifestyle, liveability, and delivery track record
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Starts at a property portal or broker referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Starts with an AI search tool and third-party validation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fast, impulse-driven decision at launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deliberate, months-long, multi-stakeholder decision
<ul style="list-style-type: none">First question: What is the ROI?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">First question: What is the return on living here?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Trust built by brand name and launch event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Trust built by consistency across every touchpoint

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Behind the Gates: How LOAMS Manages 150,000+ Residents Across Dubai

Ziad Haddad, Senior Vice President of Facility Management at LOAMS, speaks to Property Pulse on running a 150,000-resident operation and why the work that matters most is the work residents never see.



Ziad Haddad, SVP - Facility Management at LOAMS, DAMAC, with Jatin Deepchandani, CEO of Eventyst Global

What does it really take to manage a community? Beyond the gates and the landscaping, there's technology, security, emergency preparedness, and the weight of responsibility that comes with shaping thousands of residents' daily lives. In a conversation on Property Pulse, hosted by **Jatin Deepchandani, CEO of Eventyst Global,** Ziad Haddad pulls back the curtain on what that responsibility actually looks like. As Senior Vice President of Facility Management at LOAMS, DAMAC's community and facilities management arm, Haddad oversees more than 150,000 residents across Dubai and unpacks the technology, training, and human effort behind one of the region's largest residential management operations, and what it actually takes to turn a property into a place people call home.

Without digitalisation, we cannot grow. By 2027, we will be fully paperless



You're managing around 50,000 units. How important is technology and digitalisation at that scale, and what has LOAMS done to enhance the resident experience?

Today, we are managing approximately 50,000 units, with approximately 150,000 residents. In the next three years, our pipeline is to double in size. Without digitalisation, we cannot grow, we cannot maintain the same service and standards we provide our customers. In 2025, we started digitalising our processes. Throughout 2026, our initiative is to digitalise all processes so that by the beginning of 2027, we have a fully paperless operation. This will help us standardise and be able to accommodate any volume we face.

LOAMS is known for strong emergency preparedness. What does that look like in practice, and how often does it happen?

We do live trainings not only on paper or in classrooms, but physically on-site. We evacuate towers, 80-floor towers, and we make sure the authorities are with us: the ambulance is there, Dubai Police is on standby. We do a real, full-scale demonstration. This happens a minimum of twice a year across the entire portfolio. We have a dedicated HSE team, and I'd like to thank them

for their dedication and coordination with the authorities to make sure this is consistently implemented.

What, in your experience, transforms a property into a connected, thriving community?

There are mainly three factors. First - the amenities the project offers. Second - events. In 2025, we held more than 4,500 events across our portfolio, engaging more than 600,000 residents, friends, and families. And third - customer engagement. Our events spanned different age groups, interests, and talents, from academic to sports, which created engagement not just for our residents, but for the people around them.

On amenities, DAMAC Hills 1 and 2 are known for having an exceptional range. Can you tell us about that?

I think we have the highest number of amenities for any community in the region. In our developments, we have fishing ponds, horse riding, an animal zoo, and petting farms. In DAMAC Hills 1 and 2, we have Malibu Beach, and DAMAC Hills 2 also has a water park with surfing and a wave park. The engagement, loyalty, and hard work of the entire LOAMS team is what allows us to deliver a five-star hospitality experience. Last year alone, more than 8,400 individual staff training sessions were conducted. And for five consecutive years, I'm proud to say we have been winning the MEFMA award, as well as being recognised as the safest and happiest community at last year's WRC (World Realty Congress).



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Dubai Creek Harbour

From Vision to Value

Five years ago it was an emerging masterplan in the early stages of delivery. In 2026, Dubai Creek Harbour is one of the city's most actively evolving real estate districts, with the world's tallest metro station, a mega-mall under construction, a revived tower tender, and over 10,000 completed homes already delivered.



With 25% price appreciation since 2023 and major infrastructure pieces now in active development, the investment case for Creek Harbour has never been more concrete



Dubai Creek Harbour has spent several years being described in the future tense. The masterplan was ambitious, the location was strategic, and the anchor tower was iconic. For much of its early evolution, the development was focused on establishing the foundations of its long-term vision. In 2026, that has changed materially. The district now has residents, hotels, delivered residential towers, a revived landmark project, a mega-mall under construction, and a metro station that is set to become the world's tallest. The story of Creek Harbour today is one of vision being translated into a rapidly expanding urban destination.

Then and Now: Creek Harbour in 2020 vs 2026

In 2020, Dubai Creek Harbour existed primarily on paper and in aspirational renders. Construction of the Creek Tower had been paused. The district had a handful of residential towers, limited retail, no operational hotel, and no metro connection on the horizon. Properties in early launch phases were priced at approximately AED 1,600 to 1,900 per square foot. The broader real estate community recognised the masterplan's ambition while anticipating the next phases of infrastructure delivery.

By 2026, the picture is fundamentally different. Emaar had delivered 10,582 completed units by September 2025, with an additional 7,217 homes expected



Dubai Creek Harbour at a Glance

Total masterplan area: 11 million sqm, 3 times the size of Downtown Dubai

Total development value: AED 180 billion

Completed residential units by September 2025: 10,500+

Additional units expected by 2029: 7,200+

Transactions recorded in 2025: 3,900+

Average sale price in 2025: AED 2,410-2,470 per sqft

Gross rental yields: 6.5%-7.5%

Planned residents at full build-out: 150,000+

Distance from Downtown Dubai and DIFC: 10-15 minutes

Distance from Dubai International Airport: 10-15 minutes

to complete by 2029, and property transactions in the area rose year-on-year, supported by DLD data showing 4,280 sales at an average AED 2,470 per square foot.

- **Palace Dubai Creek Harbour is operational**
- **Address Harbour Point and Vida Creek Harbour have added branded hospitality to the district**
- **The waterfront promenade is active**
- **Creek Beach has become one of the district's most recognised lifestyle assets**
- **The metro station, Dubai Square, and the renewed Creek Tower tender process have all advanced materially within the past 12 months.**

What Has Been Delivered

The residential delivery story at Creek Harbour is one of consistent progress across a large and complex masterplan. Palace Dubai Creek

Harbour, Address Harbour Point, and Vida Creek Harbour together form a hospitality spine that brings footfall, services, and a sense of activation to the district beyond its residential base. Creek Beach has become a genuine lifestyle destination, with its beach club, dining, and waterfront promenade drawing visitors from across Dubai. The broader community is now home to approximately 40,000 residents, a meaningful population base that supports the retail and service infrastructure still being built out around it.

What Is Coming: The Residential Pipeline

The delivery pipeline into 2026 and 2027 is active across multiple projects. Notable 2026 handover projects include Creek Beach Cedar, Mangrove by Emaar, and Savanna, alongside upcoming projects Valia Tower and Serro 2. Cove II is also scheduled for handover in Q4 2026. These deliveries are expected to bring the district's total completed unit count to nearly 18,000 by 2029, progressively increasing the density

that transforms a masterplan into a functioning urban neighbourhood.

The Connectivity Shift: Blue Line Metro

The single most significant infrastructure development affecting Creek Harbour’s long-term value proposition is the Dubai Metro Blue Line, and specifically the station being built within the district. The Emaar Properties Station will rise to an extraordinary 74 metres along the upcoming Blue Line of the Dubai Metro in Dubai Creek Harbour, covering an area of 11,000 square metres and designed to handle up to 160,000 passengers daily.

The station’s bold and sculptural design comes from the globally acclaimed architectural firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, inspired by a crossing gateway concept with expansive interiors featuring limestone finishes, bronze-toned metal panels, and granite flooring.

The Blue Line will provide direct metro access to nine major districts, including Dubai Creek Harbour, Dubai Festival

	2020	2026
Completed residential units	Limited	10,582
Average price per sq ft	AED 1,600-1,900	AED 2,410-2,470
Operational hotels	None	Palace, Address Harbour Point, Vida
Creek Tower status	On hold	Tendering resumed in early 2026
Metro connectivity	None planned	Blue Line under construction
Retail anchor	None	Dubai Square under construction
Annual transactions	Minimal	3,900+ in 2025
Resident population	Negligible	Approximately 40,000



City, Ras Al Khor Industrial Area, International City, Dubai Silicon Oasis, Academic City, Al Warqa, Mirdif, and Al Rashidiya, significantly reducing travel times and linking residential, commercial, and academic centres. The Blue Line marks the first Dubai Metro line to cross Dubai Creek on a 1,300-metre-long viaduct. For Creek Harbour specifically, the metro connection further strengthens one of the district's most important long-term value drivers for investors. Properties within proximity of metro stations have historically commanded meaningful premiums in Dubai, and the arrival of the Blue Line is expected to be one of the primary catalysts for price appreciation across the district over the coming years.

The Creek Tower Revival

For years, Dubai Creek Tower remained one of the most anticipated components of the wider masterplan. In January 2026, that changed. Emaar Chairman Mohamed Alabbar confirmed at the Dubai International Project Management Forum in early 2026 that the project had re-entered the tendering phase. Designed by Santiago Calatrava and inspired by the minarets of mosques and the lily flower, the planned observation decks will offer panoramic 360-degree views and will be directly connected to Dubai Square Mall. Originally designed to surpass the Burj Khalifa, the revised concept shifts the focus from height records to architectural beauty, with Alabbar stating that "after the Burj Khalifa, altitude alone is no longer enough." The exact height of the revised design has not yet been officially confirmed.

Dubai Square: The Retail Anchor

Dubai Square will span 2.6 million sqm of retail, hospitality and commercial space and will anchor the wider Dubai Creek Harbour masterplan, which spans more than 11 million sqm and is approximately three times the size of Downtown Dubai. Designed as the world's first drive-through mall, it will feature breakthrough technologies and innovative concepts in retail, dining and entertainment, and will be connected to Dubai Creek Tower. Construction is underway with completion targeted within three years from its December 2025 announcement. For the district's

long-term value case, Dubai Square is the missing piece that transforms Creek Harbour from a primarily residential waterfront community into a full-scale urban destination with the retail, entertainment, and hospitality infrastructure to sustain and attract a population at scale.

The Investment Case in 2026

Creek Harbour is running at a 15% to 20% price discount to Downtown Dubai, at AED 2,470 per square foot versus Downtown's AED 2,500 to 3,500 per square foot range, with gross rental yields running 6.5% to 7.5%, above the average for prime Dubai waterfront developments. Price per square foot rose approximately 25% between early 2023 and late 2025 in delivered phases. Investors who entered Creek Harbour in 2022 or 2023 at around AED 1,950 per square foot have seen approximately 28% appreciation through Q3 2025. The investment thesis in 2026 is straightforward: The Blue Line, Dubai Square and Dubai Creek Tower are all now in active development. The current pricing differential to Downtown reflects the district's position within its ongoing development cycle. As each piece delivers, the case for that discount narrowing becomes more concrete.

What This Means for the Industry

For developers, Creek Harbour represents one of the few remaining large-scale live masterplans in Dubai with active delivery momentum and an anchor project returning to construction. For FM and community management firms, a planned population of 150,000 residents across 11 million square metres represents one of the largest long-term community management briefs in the city. For brokers, the district offers multiple price points within a single masterplan, from mid-premium apartments to luxury waterfront villas, across a sales cycle that will extend for the better part of a decade.

Creek Harbour's most important transition in 2026 is not any single project. It is the evolution from a visionary masterplan to a district increasingly defined by delivered assets, expanding infrastructure, and growing community activity. The narrative is increasingly being shaped by what has already been delivered.

The Infrastructure Pipeline

Emaar Properties Station: Blue Line Metro

Height: 74 metres; set to become the world's tallest metro station
Area: 11,000 square metres
Capacity: 160,000 passengers per day
Projected daily ridership by 2040: 70,000+
Status: Under construction

Dubai Square Mall

Area: 2.6 million square metres
Feature: World's first drive-through mall, EV-friendly, AI-integrated design
Status: Under construction, targeted completion within 3 years from December 2025
Connection: Directly linked to Dubai Creek Tower

Dubai Creek Tower

Design: Santiago Calatrava
Status: Tendering resumed in early 2026
Feature: 10 observation decks, sky gardens

Note: Originally designed to surpass the Burj Khalifa, the revised design is expected to be shorter than Dubai's 828-metre landmark, with the exact height yet to be officially confirmed

Sources: Emaar Properties, Dubai Land Department, Roads and Transport Authority, Black Ridge Research.

BERKELEY SERVICES UAE EARNS INTERNATIONAL SAFETY AWARD 2026

Berkeley Services UAE has been recognised with a Merit at the International Safety Awards 2026, presented by the British Safety Council, in recognition of its commitment to workplace health, safety, and employee wellbeing throughout 2025.

Now in their 68th year, the International Safety Awards celebrate organisations worldwide that demonstrate excellence in preventing workplace injuries and work-related ill health while fostering a culture of wellbeing and safety. This year, 851 organisations from 51 countries were honoured, representing industries ranging from construction and manufacturing to energy, utilities, and professional services.

Berkeley Services UAE was among 428 organisations to receive the Merit distinction, reflecting the company's ongoing efforts to maintain high safety standards across its operations and reinforce a culture where employee wellbeing remains a top priority.

Commenting on the achievement, **Karl-Heinz Otto Mair, CEO of Berkeley Services**, said the recognition reflects the dedication and commitment of the entire Berkeley team.

“Creating safe and resilient workplaces has always been more than a compliance requirement for Berkeley; it is a core value embedded within our culture and the way we operate. As we continue to grow, we remain focused on strengthening our safety standards through innovation, continuous training, and proactive risk management.”

The British Safety Council noted that award recipients demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting and improving the health, safety, and wellbeing of their workforce, highlighting the important

role effective safety management plays in organisational success and long-term business sustainability. This achievement adds to Berkeley Services UAE's growing portfolio of industry recognitions and reflects the organisation's continued investment in

people, processes, and best practices. The award further reinforces the company's position as a responsible facilities management provider committed to maintaining safe working environments while delivering high-quality services across the UAE.





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6 CONSTRUCTION CHOICES THAT MAKE UAE BUILDINGS MORE HEAT-RESILIENT

Access Consult outlines six construction choices that can make UAE buildings more heat-resilient, from building orientation and façade design to HVAC coordination and insulation.



As the summer months approach, heat resilience is becoming a key priority for the UAE's built environment. In the region, cooling can account for up to 80 per cent of a building's total electricity consumption, making design and construction choices critical not only for occupant comfort, but for long-term operational efficiency and sustainability.

The UAE Energy Strategy 2050 targets a 40 per cent reduction in energy demand across key sectors. This means buildings can no longer depend solely on mechanical cooling after completion. The decisions made during planning, design, material selection, and construction directly shape how liveable a building will be for future residents and tenants.

1. Building Orientation

One of the most effective ways to reduce heat gain is to study how the building sits on its plot. Research conducted in the UAE shows that north-facing windows consume 36 per cent less annual cooling energy compared to windows facing other directions. This is one of the

lowest-cost interventions available, yet it remains under-prioritised in the early planning stages of many UAE projects.

2. Façade Design

The façade is the building's first line of defence against solar radiation, heat transfer, glare, and outdoor temperature extremes. High-performance glazing, shading devices, insulated panels, balcony projections, façade fins, and carefully selected cladding systems can all help reduce heat gain. This integration challenge should be solved at concept stage, not retrofitted later.

3. Thermal Performance Materials

Choosing appropriate insulation, wall systems, roofing materials, and external finishes can significantly improve a building's performance during summer. Light-coloured external materials help reflect sunlight, while insulated walls and roofs reduce heat transfer into the building.

4. Wall Insulation and Airflow

Double-wall construction, cavity walls, and insulated blocks can help reduce

the amount of heat entering a building. Cross ventilation should also be planned early; windows on opposite walls, open layouts, and ventilation shafts can support natural air movement, reducing both energy consumption and equipment wear over time.

5. Roofs and Outdoor Areas

Standard dark bitumen roofs in the UAE absorb up to 90 per cent of solar radiation, reaching surface temperatures of 70°C to 80°C during peak summer. Strong roof insulation, reflective finishes, and shaded outdoor areas can improve performance significantly.

6. HVAC Coordination

HVAC efficiency is critical. Consultants should coordinate cooling systems early with architectural, structural, and MEP teams to ensure cooling loads are calculated accurately and systems remain accessible for maintenance throughout the building's life. Each of these has direct cost implications for the building owner over the operational life of the asset, meaning HVAC decisions made at construction stage are effectively decisions about future tenant comfort and future operating margins.

(The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not represent the editorial position of Real Estate Market Times)

Cooling can account for up to 80% of a building's total electricity consumption, making design and construction choices critical



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EXPERIENCE IS THE ASSET

Christopher Knable, Chief Executive Officer - Districts & Community Services at Asteco, describes what best-in-class community management actually looks like and why experience & yield are the same conversation.



CHRISTOPHER KNABLE
CEO - Districts & Community Services
Asteco

Neglect is cheaper month-on-month, yet far more expensive over the asset's life through churn, complaints, value depreciation and reputational drag



Christopher Knable has a straightforward way of measuring what good community management actually means: residents rarely notice it when it is working, and they notice immediately when it is not. As **CEO of Districts & Community Services at Asteco**, Knable brings a perspective shaped as much by resident sentiment as by operational compliance, and an assessment that the two are far more connected than the industry has historically treated them.

Community management has evolved significantly. What does best-in-class look like today, and what has Asteco done to get there?

Best-in-class has shifted from maintaining assets to curating experiences. A decade ago, this was measured by whether the lifts worked and the landscaping was trimmed. Today, it is about whether residents feel the community is genuinely well-run, and whether that feeling holds its value over time. At Asteco, we measure ourselves through resident sentiment alongside operational compliance, as we believe the experience of being part of a community is the product. We have

therefore enriched our services around two key priorities: quality that can be experienced across the public realm and at home, while ensuring transparency and responsiveness for residents and owners through a digital-first operating model.

And from the resident's perspective, what should a well-managed community actually feel like, and how do you design for that from the ground up?

It should feel seamless and effortless: facilities operate as they should through regular maintenance, issues are resolved before they escalate, communication is clear and the spaces invite you outdoors. Residents rarely notice good management; they notice its absence. Designing for that starts well before handover, setting the stage for smoother operations from the start.

We work with the development and design teams on how a community will actually operate and be lived in: the walkability, the shade, the maintenance access and the service standards, to name a few. The experience is built into the asset, then sustained operationally.

Experience-led management has a cost. How do you make the business case to an asset owner focused on yield?

Experience and yield are interconnected and part of the same conversation. We frame experience as the key mechanism that protects and grows the owner's capital, ensuring their assets outperform. The discipline is proving it with data: resident satisfaction trends, retention and the value of the community relative to comparable assets. A well-run community sustains higher occupancy, stronger renewals, better resale values and a premium that owners take into account to drive greater yield. Neglect is cheaper month-on-month, yet far more expensive over the asset's life through churn, complaints, value depreciation and reputational drag.

Resident satisfaction and long-term value are often described as aligned. But are there situations where they genuinely are not, and how do you navigate that tension?

The clearest tension is between immediate convenience and what preserves the community over time. Residents may want a quick fix, a relaxed rule or an amenity that is popular now but costly to maintain. As a result, long-term value sometimes requires the less popular decision to maintain a standard, enforce it consistently and invest in solutions that are beneficial and sustainable over time. We believe that

genuine satisfaction is durable when it rests on an asset that has been properly protected through transparency, showcasing the data-led reasoning and potential impact behind the decisions we make.

Looking at the broader sector, what has the UAE's community management industry got right and where is the biggest opportunity still to be unlocked?

The sector has evolved swiftly and significantly. According to a report by Grand View Research, industry forecasts put the UAE property and community management market on a strong 12 per cent year-on-year growth trajectory through 2030, as regulations and standards continue to mature. This progression could elevate the community management function into a central driver of asset value, rather than a back-office operation.

The biggest opportunities lie in data insights and digital tools to drive smarter decision-making, personalisation and foresight. Leveraging vast insights from community performance and resident behaviour has the potential to truly redefine the future of community management to operate as genuine prop-tech businesses: predicting issues before they arise, personalising the resident experience and giving owners real-time insight into the value of their asset. The companies that make that shift will define the next decade.

Residents rarely notice good management; they notice its absence



DUBAI'S PROPERTY MARKET AT A CROSSROADS

Volume, Price, and What Comes Next



Dubai's residential real estate market entered 2026 on strong footing. GDP growth, record tourism, sustained foreign capital inflows, and a development pipeline that had been firing at full pace for three consecutive years gave the market its most confident opening in a decade. By May 2026, the picture had evolved. Transaction volumes had pulled back from their 2025 peaks, new launches had recalibrated, and the secondary market was finding its footing in a more selective environment. A supply wave of historic scale was building in the background, not yet arrived but firmly committed.

Reading three of the market's most closely tracked research sources, Cavendish Maxwell, JLL, and DXB Interact, a coherent picture emerges. It is a picture of transition, shaped by an external shift in regional conditions and by structural forces that were already evolving before the wider environment changed.

The Volume Story

The most immediate data point across all three sources is the moderation in transaction activity. DXB Interact records 10,280 sales in May 2026, reflecting a year-on-year adjustment of 44.9% as the market recalibrated from its record 2025 pace. Cavendish Maxwell's Q1 data shows



the shift building earlier, with March recording a 10.6% year-on-year change in total transaction volumes, while secondary market sales adopted a more measured rhythm in the same period. JLL's analysis adds context: at the height of the shift in regional conditions, weekly transaction values moderated by nearly 50% compared to pre-shift weekly averages, before stabilising.

The cause reflects a convergence of factors. The change in regional conditions in early 2026 was the immediate influence, landing on a market that was already transitioning from its peak cycle. New project launches had recalibrated in Q1, adjusting to approximately 22,900 units across 90 projects, according to Cavendish Maxwell, as developers took a more considered approach to timing.

The monthly volume trend from DXB Interact reflects this transition

clearly. From a peak of around 20,000 transactions per month in mid-2025, volumes moved progressively through late 2025 and into 2026, settling at approximately 10,000 by May, a market recalibrating, not retreating.

The Price Resilience Story

One of the most notable features of the current market is that prices have remained broadly supported even as volumes have adjusted. DXB Interact shows May 2026 price per sqft at AED 1,650, up 3% year-on-year, the highest nominal level since the current growth cycle began. Cavendish Maxwell records Q1 residential sales prices at AED 1,683 per sqft, up 9.6% year-on-year, a moderation from previous double-digit rates, but still firmly positive. JLL notes that average villa and apartment prices remained broadly stable in March, with villa prices seeing only marginal movement in the most affected period.

May 2026: The Market in Numbers

- Sales Volume: 10,280 transactions
- Price Per Sqft: AED 1,650
- Sales Value: AED 28.9 billion
- Primary Vs. Resale Split: 74% primary, 26% resale by volume
- Cash Vs. Mortgage (Resale Market): 70% cash, 30% mortgage
- Apartment Rental: AED 70,000 per annum
- Villa Rental: AED 175,000 per annum

Source: DXB Interact, May 2026

Several factors support this price stability. The cash-dominated nature of Dubai's resale buyer base provides a strong foundation. DXB Interact records a 70/30 cash-to-mortgage split in the resale market in May 2026, meaning the vast majority of secondary market buyers are well-positioned regardless of financing conditions. The off-plan market, which leads activity, also carries a natural lag between market sentiment and price movement; developers are responding by adjusting payment structures rather than headline prices, a considered approach that Cavendish Maxwell confirms is already underway.

The data also shows meaningful segmentation. Cavendish Maxwell notes that owner-occupier-focused stock has continued to perform well, while investor-oriented inventory is seeing more active price negotiation. DXB Interact's resale data shows villa prices

broadly stable at 0.5% below 2025 levels, and apartment resale prices up 3.6%, compared to primary market villa prices up a strong 21.1% year-on-year. The two markets are moving at different paces, reflecting the diversity of buyer motivation across Dubai's residential landscape.

The primary and secondary markets are moving at different rhythms, reflecting the breadth and diversity of Dubai's residential buyer base. Primary market villa prices up 21.1% year-on-year underscore the continued strength of off-plan demand, while the resale market

reflects a more measured, buyer-driven environment.

The Supply Pipeline Building Toward Delivery

Behind the immediate volume and price story, a significant supply pipeline is taking shape. Cavendish Maxwell projects approximately 77,500 residential units for delivery in 2026, followed by 146,400 in 2027 and 120,100 in 2028. Q1 2026 completions reached 12,900 units, the highest quarterly total in three years, though the full projected 30,300 units are expected

The Off-Plan Picture

- 73%: Off-plan share of all Q1 2026 transactions
- 74%: Primary market share of May 2026 sales volume
- 56.9%: Year-on-year recalibration in new project launches, Q1 2026
- 91.7%: Share of off-plan activity from initial developer sales
- AED 105.5 billion: Off-plan transaction value in Q1 2026, up 34.6% YoY

Off-plan continues to anchor the market's transaction activity. As launch volumes adjust, the relationship between new inventory and monthly transaction momentum becomes an increasingly important dynamic to monitor.

Source: Cavendish Maxwell Q1 2026, DXB Interact May 2026



Primary vs. Secondary Market in Motion

	Primary Market	Resale Market
Apartment Price Per Sqft	AED 1,654	AED 1,577
Change Vs. 2025	-8.8%	+3.6%
Villa Price Per Sqft	AED 1,820	AED 1,490
Change Vs. 2025	+21.1%	-0.5%
Share of Volume	74%	26%
Share of Value	64%	36%

Source: DXB Interact, May 2026



to phase through the remainder of the year, reflecting a materialisation rate of 42.3% for the quarter.

The phased nature of delivery provides the market with a measured supply cadence. Projects under construction represent committed inventory that will progressively complete across the next three years, creating a steady flow of new homes into a market that continues to attract residents and investors from across the globe. JLL notes that the scale of the future pipeline reinforces the importance of sustained demand momentum, with developers and market participants well placed to manage the pace of delivery strategically.

The top five performing areas by volume in May 2026 per DXB Interact, Dubai South, Wadi Al Safa 3, Wadi Al Safa 5, Al Barsha South Fourth and Jabal Ali First, are predominantly mid-market communities with active development pipelines. The alignment of buyer activity and future supply in these sub-markets reflects the depth of demand across Dubai's evolving residential geography.

For developers, the environment supports a thoughtful approach to new launches, calibrating timing and product to the evolving buyer profile. For brokers, the distinction between primary and secondary market dynamics creates a richer advisory opportunity. For FM operators and community management firms, the delivery pipeline ahead represents one of the most significant operational opportunities the sector has seen, with a decade of community management and asset management work taking shape as each new development is handed over.

The market that emerges from this period of transition will be more nuanced, more segmented by location, product quality, and delivery credibility. That is not a step back but a step forward.

Sources: Cavendish Maxwell Dubai Residential Market Performance Q1 2026; JLL UAE Living Market Dynamics Q1 2026; DXB Interact Dubai Housing Market May 2026

FORECAST INTELLIGENCE: THE NEW COMPETITIVE EDGE FOR UAE DEVELOPERS

As the UAE's real estate sector continues to post record-breaking growth, developers are increasingly turning to advanced forecasting and AI-driven analytics to make smarter decisions.

Sabya Sen, Vice President and Head of IMEA & APAC at Alteryx, shares his thoughts on how the future of successful development will depend not only on understanding market conditions but on anticipating them.

The UAE's real estate sector continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience and growth. Dubai recorded AED 252 billion in real estate transactions during the first quarter of 2026, representing a 31% year-on-year increase, while Abu Dhabi reached AED 66 billion, marking a record-breaking 160.7% rise.

Much of this momentum is being driven by large-scale master-planned communities and branded residential developments, which have become defining features of the current market cycle. However, as development pipelines expand and project launches accelerate, the challenge for developers is no longer simply identifying opportunities, it is accurately predicting how markets will respond.

Why Forecasting Has Become a Strategic Priority

As projects become larger and more complex, decisions around pricing, inventory releases, construction sequencing and cash flow management increasingly depend on future demand rather than historical performance. This is particularly relevant in the UAE's thriving off-plan market, where developers often secure sales months or even years before project completion. In such an environment, forecasting accuracy can directly influence a project's overall success. "Because sales are secured well before completion, developers must make



SABYA SEN
VP and Head of IMEA & APAC
Alteryx

Continued on next page

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decisions based on projected demand and absorption rates months or even years in advance,” Sen explains. The quality of those forecasts affects everything from launch timing and pricing strategies to construction schedules and financial planning.

From Data Collection to Forecast Intelligence

Advances in artificial intelligence and analytics are transforming how developers approach forecasting. According to research cited by Sen, AI-enabled forecasting can reduce forecasting errors by between 20 and 50 percent while significantly accelerating decision-making.

Additional studies suggest that digital transformation initiatives in construction and infrastructure can improve productivity by approximately 14 to 15 percent while reducing costs by up to 6 percent.

“Forecasts that are based on older data can become inaccurate, leading to the wrong pricing, too many or too few units being launched, and slower reactions to what is actually happening in the market.” As a result, developers are moving away from fragmented reporting systems toward integrated intelligence platforms capable of consolidating information from multiple sources.

Turning Fragmented Data into Actionable Insights

Traditionally, critical datasets have been spread across CRM systems, broker networks, market intelligence platforms, construction schedules and financial management tools. Bringing these datasets together has often been a challenge. Sen believes the industry is now entering a new phase where integrated analytics platforms are helping developers transform disconnected information into real-time business intelligence. The result is a more comprehensive understanding of project performance and potential risks throughout the development lifecycle. “Developers will increasingly rely on real-time data and scenario modelling to test multiple outcomes rather than depend on a single forecast.”

The Rise of Real-Time Decision Making

In a market characterised by multiple overlapping project launches, identifying changes in buyer behaviour early is becoming increasingly important. Integrated forecasting tools can help developers detect emerging market trends before they become visible in headline transaction data. This allows for faster adjustments to pricing, inventory strategies and project delivery schedules while improving

alignment between sales performance and financial planning. For Sen, this ability to interpret and act on real-time signals is becoming a defining characteristic of successful developers. As investor expectations continue to rise and projects become increasingly sophisticated, decisions informed by integrated, real-time intelligence are gradually replacing those based primarily on historical precedent or instinct. In the UAE’s evolving real estate landscape, forecast intelligence is no longer simply a technological advantage, it is becoming a fundamental requirement for long-term competitiveness.

Key Takeaways

- UAE developers are increasingly relying on forecasting to guide project decisions.
- AI-powered analytics help improve accuracy and speed of decision-making.
- Integrated data platforms provide deeper market and operational insights.
- Real-time intelligence is becoming a key competitive differentiator.
- Forecast-driven strategies can help reduce risk and improve project performance.

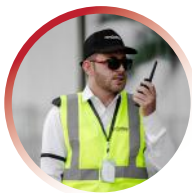
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THE BROKER'S HONEST MOMENT

There is always a choice. Every broker who has sat across a table from a serious client knows this. The pitch is going well, the slides are sharp, the client is engaged. And then comes the question that changes the room, not a hostile one, just an honest one. What does this actually yield? Not the brochure number. The real one. In that moment, two answers exist. One keeps the momentum going. The other



tells the truth. The brokers who have been in this market long enough will tell you that the second answer, the harder one, is almost always the right call. Not because it feels good to deliver, but because clients remember it. A buyer who hears a conservative yield figure explained clearly, with service charges and vacancy periods factored in, does not feel let down. They

feel respected. And a client who feels respected tends to come back.

Dubai's real estate market moves fast, and there is no shortage of pitches, presentations, or promises. What is genuinely scarce is the broker who will slow down, give you the honest number, and let you decide.



That kind of conversation does not always close the deal on the day. But it almost always opens the door to something better.

The best client relationships in this market were built in exactly that moment.

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