

Section:	Abu Dhabi 2030
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## Abu Dhabi 2030: The blueprint

Abu Dhabi's Vision 2030 is a government-backed development plan for the emirate that sets guidelines for key infrastructure, real estate, tourism and financial targets for the next 20 years, as the city aims to assert its place as a global hub and capital of the UAE federation. The initiatives are planned to



It has been developed using international best practices from key world cities, mixing these with its specific cultural and environmental heritage, with sustainability playing a key part in the planning.

The plan also focuses on the logistical growth of Abu Dhabi, as it aims to accommodate estimates of 3.1 million residents by 2030. New public transport infrastructure is being planned and implemented, as are provisions for affordable housing for UAE nationals and low and mid income groups.

### Key guidelines

The development sections of the plan are overseen by the emirate's Urban Planning Council (UPC), which has been specifically created for the purpose, and is chaired by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, crown prince of Abu Dhabi, chairman of the Executive Council and deputy supreme commander of the UAE Armed Forces - highlighting the importance placed on the initiative.

The UPC has issued key guidelines specifying land uses, including the preservation and enlargement of conservation areas, building heights and specific cultural, financial and residential zones.

It states that Abu Dhabi will be a 'contemporary expression of an Arab city' and will continue its practice of measured growth, reflecting a sustainable economy.

'This urban plan provides a strong and comprehensive foundation for the development of the city of Abu Dhabi, in a strategic and coordinated way. It will ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy and be inspired by ongoing access to the desert, sea and natural assets that are integral to our national identity, while building a global capital with its own rich cultural heritage,' Sheikh Mohamed said.

The UPC's remit means that it has to coordinate with the public and private sectors, including placing quotas on the amount of land that developers must devote to affordable housing as part of larger projects. The end goal is to ensure that the emirate's projected growth does not exceed its projected demand.

A total of \$200bn was set aside in 2008 for infrastructure development over the next five years, with the government providing 40% of the funds and the rest coming from private sector partnerships. This represents an increase of \$37bn on the figure originally accounted for the entire duration of the project.

### **Specific development zones**

Part of the vision aims to diversify the economy away from its reliance on the oil sector, down from the 60% of GDP that it accounted for in 2007 to approximately 35% by 2030, through the expansion of pipelines of non-oil revenue, with growth for each sector targeted at 7.5%.

Key to this is an enormous focus on Abu Dhabi's cultural and recreational offerings, with the intent of attracting globally recognized brands to set up in the city.

Saadiyat Island is the keystone of this initiative, with total developments on the island valued at \$38bn. The Louvre and Guggenheim have already announced their commitment, with each creating the first 'offshoots' of their museums in the Arab world on Saadiyat, with promises that exhibitions will figure art from their principal collections.

Construction of the museums is scheduled to start this year and the aim is for them to open to the public by early 2014. The government predictions are for the island to attract 1.5 million visitors a year once fully completed by 2018, with this being tied into the expansion of national carrier Etihad.

The Vision 2030 also places great emphasis on the need to continue expanding Abu Dhabi's existing transport infrastructure. As well as proposals to develop a UAE-wide rail network, perhaps as part of a GCC-wide mass transit project, the government has begun work on plans to upgrade its public transport system with the creation of a 131km intra-city metro system.

The city's road networks are also undergoing huge upgrades, with new routes being put in place to cut down on the current almost gridlock congestion levels within the city centre, and to link all the development projects on outlying islands via the new Al Shahama highway.

### **Financial viability**

The financial plans for the 2030 have had to be revisited following the sharp downturn in oil prices (from \$147 per barrel in mid-2008 to approximately \$47 per barrel at time of writing), with the Abu Dhabi government now budgeting for pricing in the mid \$40 range - although officials have denied that this will delay projects or cause them to be downgraded.

'The Abu Dhabi Government believes that the growth targets set by the Vision are achievable. If at all the Emirate misses the annual growth target in an adverse year, it will not impact the ultimate achievement of the long-term growth and diversification targets. In any year of good growth, Abu Dhabi will easily exceed the set annual growth target,' the Chairman of Abu Dhabi Department of Planning and Economy Nasser Ahmed Al Suwaidi said in a recent interview.

'The long-term nature of the Economic Vision 2030 ensures that the transformation of Abu Dhabi's economy will be unaffected by short-term economic events.

Successfully implementing the Economic Vision 2030 will ensure that the Emirate remains in a strong position to withstand global economic challenges such as those the world is currently facing.'

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