

The Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC) explains why and how Capital District will shape the future of the new Abu Dhabi, in Abu Dhabi Week's final instalment on Abu Dhabi Vision 2030.



The plan for Capital District is perhaps the most striking of the blueprints and artist impressions within Abu Dhabi 2030. The circular grid spreads out across a triangular area that makes up Capital District, which will become a city within the city – a modern metropolis that will not only become the seat of power to the UAE government, but also comprise residential, retail, sporting and transport firsts for Abu Dhabi.

It's an exciting project that Jody Andrews, director of the Capital District development with the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council, was keen to get involved with.

"Prior to working with UPC, I worked in Vancouver on a number of projects including the 2010 Olympic Village," Andrews explains.

“Joining UPC and working on this project is probably the most significant part of my career to date. The attraction was simply the strong vision of the leadership; this project will take the city in to the future, and to be a part of that is incredible. It’s a big commitment,” he adds.

Like all sections of the expansive Abu Dhabi Plan 2030, one of the main priorities in developing this project is sustainability. As Andrews explains, the goal is for Abu Dhabi “to become a leading sustainable Arab capital”.

Capital District is being developed from the four pillars of sustainability (the natural environment, economic development, cultural heritage and social cohesion) set out by UPC.

So what does turning this vision into reality entail?

“It’s about envisioning the whole, bigger picture,” says Andrews. Working on this project allows us to help Abu Dhabi and Capital District grow together.”

“This is an intergovernmental project; we’re collaborating. This gives us a fantastic opportunity to work together with government agencies to help formulate this plan and turn it into a reality for the people of Abu Dhabi.

“Capital District is built around the ‘four C’s’ – and all of these interrelate,” explains Andrews.

“Connectivity is one of the keys,” he adds. “We’d like to think that we’re creating a choice to live differently. Capital District is very much transport orientated; soon we hope that the decision maker in mobility won’t just be distance – but time. The reality is that in the future, it could take simply minutes to travel from the heart of the capital, and out into neighbouring Emirates.”

The other three 'C's': Central to business, commitment and community make up the four points behind the concept. Central to business again relating to the importance of connectivity.

“A key organising principle of the CBD is the close integration of land use and transportation networks supported by high quality pedestrian-oriented urban design and vibrant open spaces

to create liveable, easily accessible neighbourhood centres.

“This follows through into community – another of the four C’s,” adds Andrews. “We’ve drawn inspiration from some of the best cities in the world; the difference here is that the plan comes with deep roots.

“Community is an extremely important factor; within Capital District it relates to the new residential districts, including Emirati neighbourhoods.

“Finally, our fourth ‘C’ relates to commitment – and at the centre of this is our commitment to sustainability.”

With these four C’s in mind, UPC and a number of government agencies are helping create a number of key areas that make up the Capital District.

Capital District by area

Federal precinct

The federal precinct will sit at the heart of the Capital District and will serve as the national seat of government for the UAE. It will be centred on a ceremonial public space called National Square.

The precinct will be home to other significant public institutions such as libraries and museums, as well as local, regional and national government departments and ministries.

City Centre precinct

At the heart of the city centre precinct will be a retail led Souk District, which will include a traditional-style Souk Market.

The North Spine District which will run parallel to Airport Road, will comprise high-density housing as well as a hospital and medical campus plus two universities – Zayed University, already under construction, and a new Khalifa University for Science and Advanced Research. “Knowledge and education again play an important role in this mixed use city,” says Andrews.

Emirati neighbourhoods

The Emirati neighbourhoods are an integral part of the Capital District.

“One of the single highest priorities is the Emirati neighbourhoods,” says Andrews. “There are approximately 3,000 individual family plots – almost a third of the Capital District – that will eventually be home to 50,000 people.

“These families have an advantage,” Andrews explains further. They’re inheriting a plot that has been designed differently. These plots of land – and the neighbourhoods that will be built upon them – will have to adhere to Estidama”.

“These areas define an in depth development that is not only cementing the vision of the Emirate, but one that is creating new opportunities – a balancing act of tradition and the future.

“It’s a truly exciting time for Abu Dhabi,” he adds.



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