

## EXCITING CITIES

# The changing face of ABU DHABI

The United Arab Emirates' capital is planning a facelift to rival Dubai

Abu Dhabi is the wealthiest emirate and the second most populous city in the United Arab Emirates, as well as being the UAE's seat of government. This will surprise many who believe Dubai dominates the seven emirates which joined together as a federation in 1971.

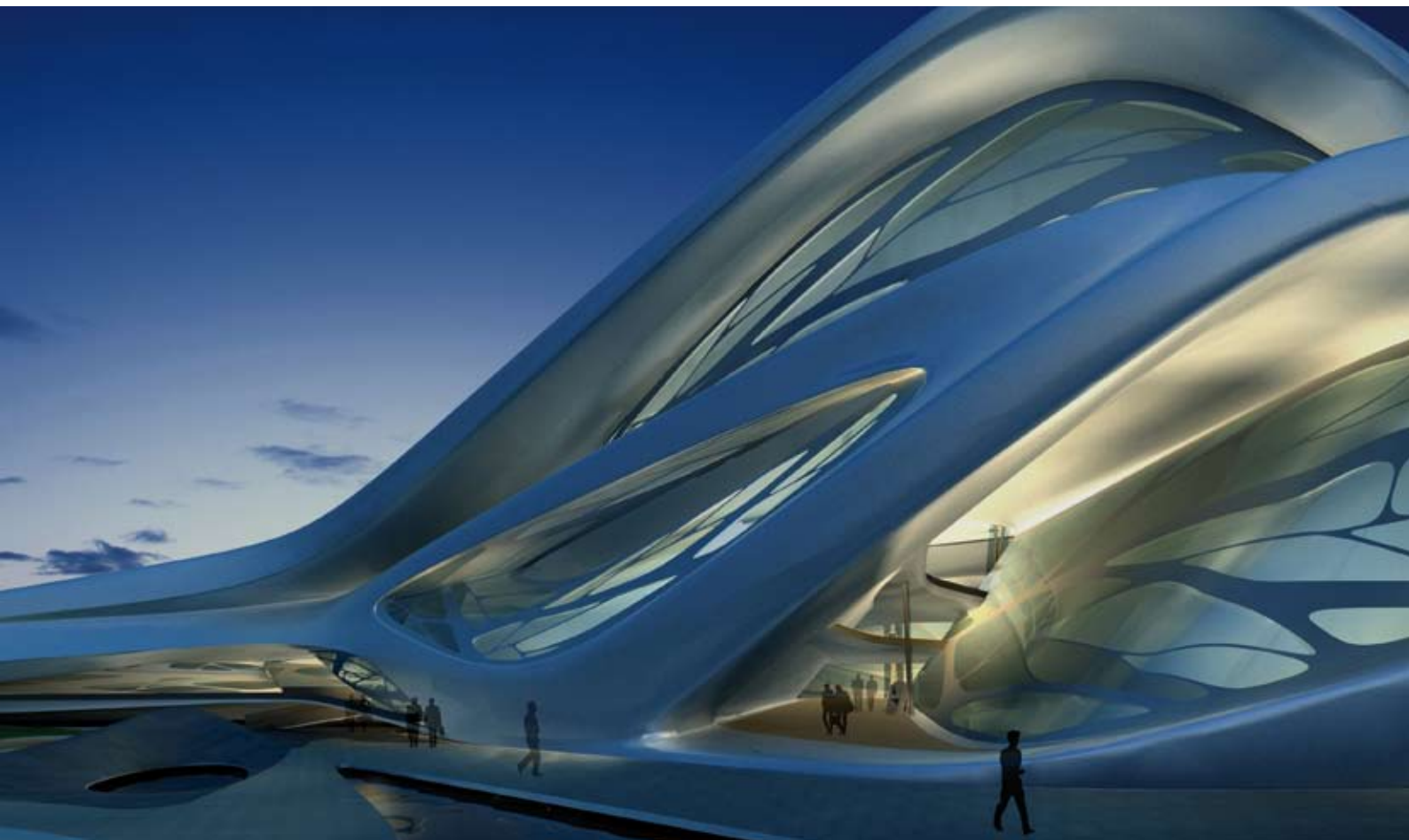
Dubai's fame is due to its early and spectacular development,

shrewd marketing and a desire to make the most of its oil reserves while they last. It has succeeded brilliantly.

Abu Dhabi, on the other hand, has been in no hurry to emulate its neighbouring emirate. After all, its oil and gas resources – believed to be nine per cent of the world's reserves – are one hundred times greater than Dubai's.

Its rulers were also happy to learn from Dubai's experiences, one suspects, as they developed their own ambitious £300 billion "Abu Dhabi 2030" masterplan. It is a very different vision to Dubai's and one that many believe will transform Abu Dhabi into the world's most exciting city, with culture, tradition, hospitality and respect as its core values.

G4S, with its UAE headquarters →



in Abu Dhabi, is already playing an important role in that transformation.

Its professionalism and quality of service has seen G4S UAE grow from very small beginnings in 1994 to an impressive operation today, employing 10,500 personnel and providing a wide range of services throughout the federation. Following the introduction of regulation of the security industry in 2004 G4S became the first security company in Abu Dhabi to be awarded a police licence to operate both manned security and cash services.

So what does the Abu Dhabi 2030 plan contain and how is G4S helping that dream become a reality?

Described as an "astonishing, meticulous document", it sets the framework for development, outlining tens of thousands of hectares of new buildings as well as clever exploitation of coastline and island formations, with a heavy emphasis on pedestrianisation and the environment.

It will result in iconic, jaw-dropping buildings designed by some of the world's top architects.

Saadiyat Island is set to become Abu Dhabi's new cultural centre.

A \$30 billion project is under way to develop the island, which is 500 metres off the coast, and link it to the mainland by two 10-lane causeways. The transformation will include 29 hotels, three marinas, two golf courses and housing for 150,000 people.

Al Reem Island will be a similar mixed-use development with a budget to match. This project has gained international interest as one of the first free zones in Abu Dhabi, where foreign nationals can buy property as leasehold. The first residential buildings will be completed this year.

Yas Island is attracting attention for very different reasons. A Formula One racing circuit is being created that will host the first Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in November this year, featuring a Monaco-style harbour front section using public roads.

"G4S UAE has more than 700 personnel deployed throughout the 'island developments'," says Rory Mallon, G4S regional managing director, Inner Gulf, adding: "This is a rapidly growing sector for us and we have learnt that securing island development projects can be quite complex."

Other exciting projects being thrown into the cultural melting pot on reclaimed Saadiyat Island are:

- World's largest Guggenheim Museum in association with the Guggenheim Foundation.
- Louvre Abu Dhabi, through a deal with the French government.
- Maritime museum.
- Centre for the Performing Arts.
- An expansion of New York University (NYU) whose 2,000 students will require the same admission qualifications and will graduate with the same liberal arts degrees as their American counterparts.

As well as establishing links with the US and European arts institutions, Abu Dhabi's rulers are committed to preserving the identity and culture of the people of the United Arab Emirates. Supporting this endeavour is the Cultural Foundation, whose strategy is managed by the Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority. The foundation hosts a variety of events, including art exhibitions, lectures, concerts and movies, and arts workshop classes, at its centre.

G4S Facility Services deploys front office personnel at the centre,

Two computer-generated images of the Performing Arts Centre being built on Saadiyat Island (by kind permission of Zaha Hadid Architects). A G4S security officer in front of the Emirates Palace Hotel, while a cash crew makes a collection, and a supervisor heads to a construction site.



including receptionists, office assistants and librarians. G4S is also currently in discussions with representatives of the NYU for the supply of manned security and systems installation.

It is not only the architecture of new Abu Dhabi developments that is adventurous. The creation of Masdar City will push back the boundaries in other ways by becoming the world's first zero-carbon, zero-waste city, powered entirely by renewable energy sources.

A \$20 billion seven-year development based on a long-term strategic commitment of the government, Masdar City will be built in seven carefully designed phases, at the heart Abu Dhabi's transport infrastructure. G4S has won the first of a number of tenders for the supply of systems equipment in the new city.

Masdar City is expected to attract high tech companies, including pioneers and innovators who will help it become the UAE's "silicon valley". It will also benefit from being built alongside the rapidly expanding Abu Dhabi International Airport, where an ambitious multi-billion dollar plan is

already having an impact.

A new runway was recently completed and another passenger terminal is under construction. After all, Abu Dhabi's population of 861,000 is expected to double by 2010 and, since most will be expatriates from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines, the UK and various Arab countries, a modern airport is essential.

"We provide a wide range of security systems in the airport and have just completed negotiations on a manned security and facility services contract at the newly-built Terminal 3," Rory Mallon adds.

The airport is also the main gateway for a growing number of business tourists attending the hundreds of conferences and exhibitions staged at the emirate's state-of-the-art venues, including the Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company's centre, which G4S protects.

And, of course, visitors to Abu Dhabi needing somewhere to stay are spoilt for choice. They are likely to encounter G4S at many of the high-class hotels on offer, including the world's most expensive – the \$3 billion seven-star Emirates Palace

Hotel that boasts 1,002 Swarovski crystal chandeliers and a gold-leaf dome that is larger than London's St Paul's Cathedral. G4S provides a wide range of security services to Emirates Palace, including manned security, systems installation and monitoring, event and conference security as well as VIP protection.

First Select, G4S's recruitment arm in the region, has had a presence in Abu Dhabi for the last 25 years offering executive search services, contract staffing, temporary staffing and overseas recruitment services mainly to the oil and gas, telecommunications and healthcare industries, as well as government and multinational companies.

G4S Cash Services processes and transports cash for the leading UAE banks and financial institutions. It also assists another Group company, G4S International, whose customers often require deliveries – from banknotes to jewellery – to be made to Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

It is the scale and speed of the city's transformation that is truly breathtaking, with extensive areas being no more than building sites at present. These present major challenges and opportunities for G4S, as Rory Mallon observes:

"Development and implementation of health and safety regulations, traffic planning and management, and controlling access are of paramount importance to our customers. Tens of thousands of workers enter and leave the projects daily, as well as a multitude of construction vehicles. As these projects evolve, so must our security services.

"Taking these Abu Dhabi projects from inception through to iconic buildings in a world-class city requires G4S to be flexible and equally visionary in its approach." ■

