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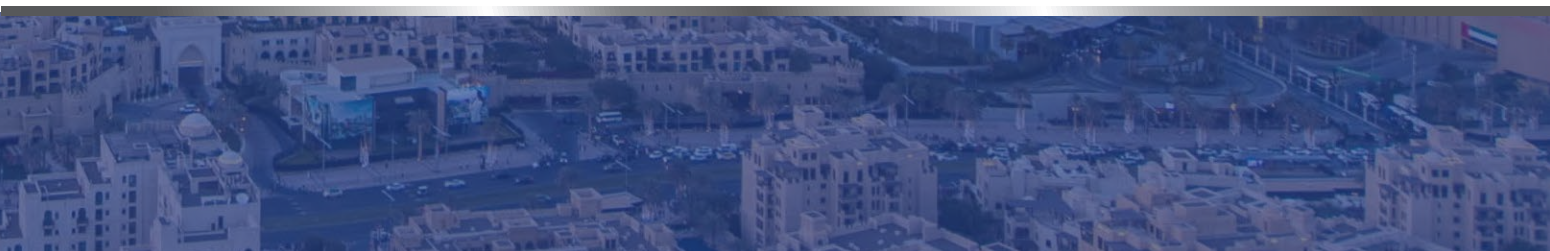
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Forbes Middle East held its fourth annual real estate event in November, under the patronage of H.E. Eng. Marwan Ahmed bin Ghalita, CEO of RERA, Dubai Land Department providing a platform for some fascinating discussions around current pressing topics and opportunities in the industry.

The day was kicked off with a keynote speech by His Excellency Marwan and presentation from Nadimeh Mehra, Vice President of District 2020. These were followed by three insightful panels discussing affordable housing, sustainability and smart cities, and the legal framework around creative investments. The event concluded with a spectacular awards ceremony honoring the leaders who are transforming the Middle East's real estate sector.

Over 150 senior executives from the real estate sector across the region attended the event.

Feedback collected from the audience and speakers was very positive and encouraging. The audience especially praised the networking opportunity among senior executives and the high caliber of speakers.

The day was hosted in collaboration with Danube Properties as Title Partner, Memaar Al Morshedy as Platinum Partner, Schneider Electric as Sustainability Partner, and Patchi as Preferred Chocolate Partner.

Keynote Speech By H.E. Marwan Ahmed Bin Ghalita, CEO Of RERA, Dubai Land Department And District 2020 Presentation by Nadimeh Mehra, VP Of District 2020

Addressing the captivated audience, His Excellency Marwan Ahmed Bin Ghalita thanked the developers, real estate agents, property managers, and investors for their contribution to Dubai's real estate market. His Excellency emphasized that the sector is transforming hope into opportunities and creating new possibilities.

His Excellency revealed how Dubai Land Department has adopted technology to help improve customer experience and to ease the buying, selling and renting processes.

His Excellency ended his speech with a very inspiring message: "In any project you do, deal you finish or building you maintain, always think about the win, win, win that will lead to happiness. You need to win, the investor and person you are serving needs to win. But Dubai also needs to win. The third win is very important to us. If Dubai is winning, everyone else will be happy."



Eng. Marwan Ahmed bin Ghalita

CEO of RERA, Dubai Land Department



Nadimeh Mehra

Vice President, District 2020, Legacy Development and Impact, Expo 2020, Dubai

Nadimeh Mehra, Vice President of District 2020 also delivered a presentation named "District 2020: The Journey to Designing and Delivering a Smart City." In her presentation Nadimeh spoke about the responsibility of taking the Expo 2020 site and building a meaningful legacy. After the expo, 80% of the assets and existing infrastructures will be repurposed to create District 2020. The community will bring together businesses, education, social and cultural platforms as well as entertainment.

"District 2020 will develop into an exemplary, humancentric, smart and sustainable city. A place to connect, create and innovate," said Mehra.

Affordable Housing In The Middle East: Are We Doing Enough?

"When we talk about affordable housing being a global issue, I think it is a global opportunity. The affordable housing segment is the backbone of the real estate industry," said Atif Rahman, CEO of Danube Properties in opening comments.

This is a trending topic across the globe but what is affordable housing really? "It's a global issue and there are several definitions from 30% to 40% of household income," said Dr. Martin Berlin, Partner and Global Deals Real Estate Leader at PwC. Is it that simple? This definition outlines the budget for consumers, but where does that leave developers? Keep the above definition in mind then consider what affordable looks like for a laborer in comparison to an executive. 30% of a laborer's salary is vastly different from that of an executive.

According to Richard Paul, Head of Professional Services and Consultancy at Savills, affordable housing is diverse across every country and city around the world. And everyone has a slightly different target and focus on how to rectify the affordability issues. The important thing is for organizations to first consider what a city is trying to achieve and then determine what income group they want to target. Affordable housing remains a global opportunity and the backbone of the real estate industry. There is and will always be room for improvement in this sector, but one thing is certain—the Middle East, especially Dubai, is moving in the right direction.

Key workers in our communities—including nurses, bus drivers and teachers—make up a large part of the population that affordable housing is catering for. "How can you make affordable housing a good investment opportunity for the people who are buying it, how can you make it sustainable and how can you add design aesthetics to it? I think there's lots of space where we can grow and develop," said Hassan Morshedy, CEO of Memaar Al Morshedy Group. He believes that addressing these points can help change the mindset of potential buyers and challenge any negative perceptions surrounding affordable housing.

"If we are not empowering the consumer to acquire real estate, it conflicts with the affordable housing segment."

- Atif Rahman

The panelists agreed that the U.A.E.'s transient nature is coming to an end and more people are looking to settle down in the country, which is creating a thriving market for realtors. With new laws in place, owning a property is becoming closer to reality for many, but there are still a couple of obstacles. The biggest challenges are the price of real estate and financing. The cost of the actual property, design, construction and profits all contribute to hiking up property prices. Managing these will help bring down the cost of real estate.

Financing is also not available to everyone. And not everyone who receives financing can afford a down payment. There is currently an oversupply of property in Dubai, but with some households earning an income of between Dh10,000 to Dh15,000 per month, many still cannot afford to pay for a property. "If we are not empowering the consumer to acquire real estate, it conflicts with the affordable housing segment," said Atif Rahman, CEO of Danube Properties.

Long-term loans might be an option to offering more affordable housing. Matthew Gregory, Director of Properties at Dubizzle, described how the company worked with Savills on a project in Abu Dhabi where the payment plan was spread across 18 years. This opportunity meant people could realistically consider owning their own home.

Moving forward, the government will need to continue playing an active role in the further development of affordable housing. Rules and regulations need to be put into place to ensure that developers don't buy up all the available properties or hold on to land waiting for prices to increase. Governments need to be aware of how new policies can be manipulated further down the line to avoid the market and policies being exploited.

In conclusion, panelists agreed that providing affordable housing is the responsibility of everyone, whether directly or indirectly, involved in the real estate sector. Stakeholders need to be imaginative and think of all parties involved when creating solutions for affordable housing.



DR. MARTIN BERLIN
Partner & Global Deals Real Estate Leader PwC



ATIF RAHMAN
Director & Partner Danube Properties



HASSAN MORSHEDY
CEO Memaar Al Morshedy Group



MATTHEW GREGORY
Director of Properties & Motors dubizzle



RICHARD PAUL
Head of Professional Services and Consultancy Savills



MARWAN ABOUDIB
CEO & Founder
Tekuma Frenchman



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FADI SHAANAH
Senior Director, Head of
Construction Infrastructure
& Hospitality
Etisalat



KHALIFA ALSUWAIDI
CEO and Board Member
of ERES
Dubai Land Department

Creating A Better Tomorrow: Can We Embrace Sustainability Through Smart Cities?

"Two million people move to cities every week. That's building a city for two million. We must change how we build them. They must be smarter, more intelligent, but most importantly sustainable," said Marwan Aboudib, CEO and founder of Tekuma Frenchman, as he began the day's second panel.

So how do sustainability and smart cities overlap to create a better future for generations to come? According to Steve Severance, Head of Program and Marketing at Masdar, just because a city is sustainable, doesn't mean that it is smart. "We start with smart as the icing on the cake, not the cake itself," Severance said. "We started with the master plan and said how would we build this city if there were no air-conditioning?"

The panel discussed how sustainability needs to start with the design of a city, such as building thicker walls or smaller windows to help manage the temperature. Once the foundation is oriented towards being sustainable, then technology can be added to create a smart city.

This might work for new developments, but what about existing cities? Technology can play a key role in turning these older buildings into sustainable ones, but as with most new things, educating residents is important. "Engineers are not often good at communicating to the general public what a kilowatt-hour is, or what their consumption looks like, or how they can be involved in the sustainability journey. That's the next step that we need to take with our partners to engage the community digitally as well as in the physical way that we are doing it now," said Severance.

As society shifts towards becoming more sustainable, smart cities are becoming more common. According to Caspar Herzberg, President of the Middle East and Africa for Schneider Electric, sensor prices are also coming down, meaning it is more available to more people and easier to add more sensors into a single room. "One of the revolutions of the last year, one we will be

accelerating in the next couple of years, are micro-sensors," said Herzberg. "The fact is that you don't have two, three, four sensors in a room but 50, 100, 200, and the price of these sensors are coming down to the point that you can put them into affordable housing."

Smart cities also generate data and data provides insight into how we can improve in the future. The new technology that smart cities are made up of also requires some form of connectivity to be able to communicate with each other.

The common thread in all the definitions of smart cities according to Fadi Shaanah, Senior Director, Head of Construction Infrastructure and Hospitality at Etisalat are sensing, connecting sensors, transferring data to do something useful with it and eventually make decisions with this data. "Connectivity is at the core of smart cities. There is no smart city if there is no connectivity. With that, telecoms have a huge role to play in this sector," said Shaanah.

While some telecom operators limit their role to just providing connectivity, others have evolved to provide platforms that enable smart city solutions like cloud computing, operations platforms, analytics, and big data. Although this is a step in the right direction, smart cities are only viable if they are part of an ecosystem of partners.

"Dubai Real Estate Blockchain is a solution that has the ownership data and the title deeds where I can allow each partner, whether it is coming from the private sector or the government sector, to utilize the right data so that they can conduct their services in an easy way," explained Khalifa Alsuwaidi, CEO and Board Member of ERES, Dubai Land Department.

"If there is one area where Dubai is really pioneering globally, it is the way the city is able to react very quickly to technological advances and quantify that into fairly easy followable instructions for people who want to do business here. That is why it is doing so well," said Herzberg.

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- Fadi Shaanah

How Are New Legal Frameworks Empowering Creative Investing?

Innovation is the driving force that keeps markets moving forward. Some of these new innovations allow individuals to invest in real estate without the hefty price tag associated with buying property, such as REITs, crowd funding and fractional partnerships.

"There is an emergence of REITs in the region, especially in Saudi Arabia," said Racha Alkhwaja, CDO of Equitativa Group. "There is definitely an appetite from investors to look at alternative investment products and target other sectors in the real estate market besides the conventional sectors in order to benefit from better yield."

REITs are gaining traction, not just amongst local investors, but also international ones. With changing laws and regulations and new opportunities, the Middle East wants to attract new investors into the region. "Dubai originally attracted high value investors. Investors that bought high value plots and high value real estate. I think what the FDI is going to do is reach a wider range of consumers; people who are looking for a second home, people who are looking for an alternative investment, or people who want to retire in this part of the world," said Abdulla Galadari, Senior Partner at Galadari Advocates and Legal Consultants. "The FDI initiative is an excellent initiative. It will attract a lot of new investors and I think it will create a lot of stability and stop fluctuation in the valuation of the real estate market."

The uptake of new funding initiatives from the government might seem like a slow process, but they want to see results and ensure it is safe for investors before jumping head-first into something, explained Dr. Mahmoud Alburai, Senior advisor in RERA. They want to

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- Abdulla Galadari



LOUISE VUN
Local Partner
White & Case



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SIDDIQ FARID
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Smart Crowd



DR. MAHMOUD ALBURAI
Senior Advisor in RERA
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ABDULLA GALADARI
Senior Partner
Galadari Advocates
& Legal Consultants



**ENG. SAMI ABDULAZIZ
AL MAKHDUB**
CEO
Knowledge Economic City

make it not only easier for people to invest but more secure as well.

Saudi Arabia is a particularly appealing market at the moment. With all the changes that the Kingdom has undergone in the last couple of years there are ample opportunities, not just in real estate, but across industries. Makkah and Medina offer a unique opportunity for Muslims to invest. According to Eng. Sami Abdulaziz Al Makhdoub, CEO of Knowledge Economic City there are currently only eight million visas being issued per year for tourists to visit Makkah and Medina. This number is expected to increase to 30 million visas in 10 years from now.

Inflation is making it difficult for multiple middle and low-income families to purchase their first property. According to Siddiq Farid, CEO of Smart Crowd, homeownership will continue to deteriorate across the world because of affordability and negative experiences.

Introducing blockchain into the real estate market makes it more transparent and secure for all parties involved. Having the government regulate creative investments adds an extra layer of security. While there will always be some form of risk involved in any investment, some are safer than others. They are each unique in their own way and investors need to find something that suits them. The most important thing is to educate yourself on the options available before making any decisions.



Executive speech by **H.E. Marwan Ahmed Bin Ghalita**, CEO of RERA, Dubai Land Department



Speech by **Nadimeh Mehra**, Vice President of District 2020



Second panelists (L-R): **Marwan Aboudib**, CEO & Founder at Tekuma Frenchman; **Khalifa Al Suwaidi**, CEO and Board Member of ERES at Dubai Land Department; **Caspar Herzberg**, President Middle East and Africa at Schneider Electric; **Steve Severance**, Head of Program Management & Marketing at Masdar and **Fadi Shaanah**, Senior Director, Head of Construction Infrastructure & Hospitality at Etisalat



First panelists (L-R): **Dr. Martin Berlin**, Partner & Global Deals Real Estate Leader at PwC; **Atif Rahman**, Director & Partner at Danube Properties; **Hassan Morshedy**, CEO at Memaar Al Morshedy Group; **Matthew Gregory**, Director of Properties & Motors at dubizzle and **Richard Paul**, Head of Professional Services and Consultancy at Savills



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Third panelists (L-R): **Louise Vun**, Local Partner at White & Case; **Dr. Mahmoud Alburai**, Senior Advisor in RERA at Dubai Land Department; **Racha Alkhwaja**, CDO at Equitativa Group; **Eng. Sami Abdulaziz Al Makhdoub**, CEO at Knowledge Economic City; **Abdulla Galadari**, Senior Partner at Galadari Advocates & Legal Consultants and **Siddiq Farid**, CEO at Smart Crowd





Real Estate 100 Awards Ceremony

Forbes Middle East is renowned for identifying and honoring industry leaders. At the “Building The Future” event, we worked in collaboration with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) to recognize those making a difference in the region’s real estate sector.

Nominated companies were carefully considered by a panel of experts from Forbes Middle East and RERA who chose the winners.

Closing Thoughts

As in all industries, the real estate sector is facing some challenges, but it also has its own unique opportunities. With many collaborations already in existence between different stakeholders, organizations are uniting and working together to build a better future for the next generation.

The Forbes Middle East team would like to extend its gratitude to all the speakers, moderators, awardees and guests that helped make this event such a success.

We would also like to extend special thanks to our sponsors. Danube Properties as Title Partner, Memaar Almorshedy, Platinum Partner, Schneider Electric, Sustainability Partner and Patchi, Preferred Chocolate Partner for making the event possible, and to H.E. Marwan Ahmed Bin Ghalita, CEO RERA, Dubai Land Department and the entire team at Dubai Land Department for the support and guidance.

2019 Real Estate Awardees

- Best Developer: **Aldar Properties**
- Best Master Developer: **Jabal Omar Development Company**
- Best Sustainable Developer: **Masdar City**
- Best Commercial Developer: **Mabaneer**
- Best Integrated Development: **Emaar, The Economic City**
- Best Hospitality Developer: **RAK Properties**
- Best Residential Developer: **Memaar Al Morshedy**
- Best Affordable Housing Developer: **Danube Properties**
- Best Luxury Developer: **Sobha Realty**
- Best Waterfront Development: **GFH Properties**
- Best Retail Developer: **Alandalus Property Company**
- Best Mixed-Use Developer: **Knowledge Economic City**
- Best Sports and Lifestyle Developer: **Dubai Sports City**
- Bets Real Estate Agency: **fām Properties**
- Best Property Portal: **Bayut**
- Best Technology in Real Estate: **Bloom Holding**
- Best Contractor: **Naresco Contracting**
- Best Design Consultant: **National Engineering Bureau**

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Daniyal Baig and H.E. Marwan Ahmed Bin Ghalita during the revealing of Forbes Middle East November English edition



Danube Properties’ Director and Partner **Atif Rahman**, delivering a speech for receiving an award as Best Affordable Housing Developer



H.E. Marwan Ahmed Bin Ghalita; **Haider Ali Khan** CEO, Bayut - Best Property Portal; and **Daniyal Baig**, Head of Finance and Conference Director at Forbes Middle East



Best Residential Developer, **Memaar Al Morshedy**, from left, **Hasan Sidky**, Chairman at Memaar Al Morshedy; **H.E. Marwan Ahmed Bin Ghalita**; **Hassan Morshedy**, Owner & CEO; Vice Chairman **Ramy Morshedy**; and **Daniyal Baig**



Best Integrated Development, **Emaar, The Economic City**



Best Affordable Housing Developer, **Danube Properties**



Best Retail Developer, **Alandalus Property Company**



Best Sustainable Developer **Masdar City**



Best Hospitality Developer **RAK Properties**



Best Technology in Real Estate, **Bloom Holding**



Best Waterfront Development, **GFH Properties**



Bets Real Estate Agency, **fām Properties**



Best Mixed-Use Developer, **Knowledge Economic City**



Best Luxury Developer, **Sobha Realty**



Best Commercial Developer, **Mabane**



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Best Sports and Lifestyle Developer, **Dubai Sports City**



Tahir Shahzad, CEO, Shahid Technical Contracting Company LLC



Best Developer, **Aldar Properties**



Best Contractor, **Naresco Contracting**



Best Design Consultant, **National Engineering Bureau**



Best Master Developer, **Jabal Omar Development Company**



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From Schneider Electric, **Caspar Herzberg**, President Middle East and Africa and **Firdaus Shariff**, VP, Marketing, Communications & Digital Customer Experience – MEA Global Marketing

