About The Masterplan

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you want to be in love with the place where you spend a lot of your time, whether it is to live, work, or play

Anonymous
We would like to dedicate this thesis to special people who helped us all the way through, who mean the world to us.

To our parents, siblings, friends, and beloved ones. Thank you for always being beside us, thank you for your continuous help and support; we owe thanks to you all for enriching our lives by your love, passion, and wisdom.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A collaboration between Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC), and The American University of Sharjah (AUS) initiated a comprehensive plan project for “Al Ain Civic Center” and its surroundings to be developed by the Master students of Urban Planning (MUP) at AUS. The project area is located next to Oman’s border, split over the “Al Salmi” wadi. This natural divider created a scattered and sprawled urban form. The low density, unoccupied lots, undeveloped lands, and insufficient public transit systems generated a car-oriented city.

After the MUP students visited the project area and made some researches, they were tasked by area enhancement while preserving existing buildings and streets thus, making it vibrant, mixed-use and livable.

All existing structures on site are scattered, with few or no open space in the area. The civic center, according to our visits and research, is dead, inactive and was planned poorly without considering people. In this masterplan, the aim was to consider people, of all ages at all times of the day, to provide a healthy, lively and sustainable environment for them all.

The relationship of buildings to streets and Open space influences the way people experience the civic Centre. A range of planning methods ensures that the streets, buildings, plazas and parks are attractive, pleasant places for people to walk and sit. It is important that new developments in the Civic center continues to provide amenity for pedestrians and users of public open space.

The civic center masterplan will be providing a built environment to cater city needs, with the vision of creating a new place that engages all activities in one destination. The masterplan pursues to accommodate all services for governmental, commercial, institutional and residential uses, to promote local, regional, and global visitors.

The objectives of the masterplan are:
1) Change the economic picture
2) Enhance the access to and within the civic center
3) Design an inclusive and child-friendly center
4) Add value to open space
5) Enhance Public life
6) Promote the importance of heritage
7) Progress in sustainability
8) Celebrate the Emirati culture
9) Provide a seamless integration of built-environment, open spaces and people.

It will be a diverse and mixed use area with a variety of activities, sports and leisure amenities, and community facilities. Within the civic center, a public Souq will be lined with approximately 2 kilometers of promenade which will become vibrant and active in this area, linking the civic center to the surrounding developments, such as the Souq Alzaafarana, Jimi mall, the convention center and the proposed business district.

Throughout the preparation of the Masterplan, the vision statement informed the evolution of the plan. Prominently located in the center of AL Ain city, the civic center is positioned to become the city’s premier hub of visitors and a unique tourist destination. The new civic center will fundamentally be a place of all facilities, associated amenities and lifestyle choices including transportation and accommodation. The Souq in the design is a consideration for the arrangement of connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric and providing an appropriate setting for visitors at any time of the day. The Souq will be divided into four directions, each direction leads to an important facility at the site, and the center of all four directions will be a grand mosque in which is considered a main landmark where all visitors will meet through their shopping journey. Yet, the Souq is not only planned for shoppers, it is a place for that indulges the senses, express creativity, enjoy events and participate in civic life. The new Souq is recognized for its cluster of cultural facilities, that include Civic theatre, town hall, central city library, community mosque and Islamic exhibitions and art galleries.

The area will be a lively place with a distinctive character, where streets and public spaces are safe, accessible, pleasant to use and human in scale. This focus on the public domain combined with architecture of the highest possible quality will create a unique and inspirational place of international stature.
SECTION 1

Project Background

- Introducing AlAin City
- Bio-Physical Conditions
- Socio-Cultural Conditions
- Site Location Map
- Photos of Current Site
- Images of former Student Plan
- Images of Al Ain 2030 Masterplan
Al Ain city is the second largest city in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the fourth largest city in the United Arab Emirates.

Al Ain is developing as a tourist destination. The dry desert air makes it a welcome retreat from the coastal humidity of the larger cities. Many Emirati nationals in Abu Dhabi have holiday houses in the city making it a popular weekend destination for families from the capital city.

**Population**

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<th>Total Population (2012)</th>
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<tr>
<td>% of Emirati Nationals</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
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**Age**

- Male: 77.1 Years
- Female: 78.2 Years
Al Ain Oasis
One of Al Ain city landmarks, sitting in the heart of the city, the Al Ain Oasis has been opened as the UAE’s first curated UNESCO World Heritage site visitor experience. The Oasis introduces visitors to the delicate oasis eco-system and the importance it has played in the development of the Al Ain city.
Bio-Physical and Socio-Cultural Conditions

Wildlife and vegetation
Al Ain Landscapes and ecosystems are very rich with wild life diversity, especially in the Oases, Mountains, and Wadi beds. In the same hand, Al Ain is famous for the region’s biodiversity and ecological system. It is a home for virgin inhabitants, large cultivated farms and plantation, small patches of gardens and open spaces, and the Wadi. The most well-known trees are ‘Ghaf’, ‘Samar’ and ‘Sedr’, and the common flowering plants are: ferns, bryophytes and mosses. In Al Ain there are four main types of open spaces: (a) parks: landscaped or recreational, (b) cultural landscapes, (c) natural landscapes: oasis, and (d) agricultural landscapes: farms, forests and nurseries.

Soils
The nature of Al Ain soil is Lithic Torriorthents (soft grained) soil. This soil cannot store water because it is very close to the bedrock, that cause the water to runoff without being stored. This soil type is an advantage for urban use and building structures, but poor for agriculture and landscaping use because it reduces the life span of plants, which require large amounts of water to live and survive.

Climate
The climate is usually hot, dry, sunny during summer, and warm during winter with rare rainfalls.

Utilities
The water used in the city comes from desalinated seawater in AL Fujairah and Abu Dhabi. Al Ain lush oasis are fed by ancient irrigation system (Falaj). In the same hand, 95% of the sewage is recycled to be used for plant treatment. On the other hand, “tadweer” (Abu Dhabi waste management center) and other private companies recycle solid wastes.

Education and Health
Al Ain is a home for many universities, schools, hospitals, and specialized clinics since 1960.

Tourism
There are three major malls in Al Ain which are Al Ain Mall, Al-Jimi Mall, and Bawadi Mall. Also, there are many hotels and holiday houses that plays a major role as a weekend destination for families from the capital city. In addition, there are many touristic destinations and activities that can be found in Al Ain such as Jabal Hafeet, museums, parks, the mineral springs, the oases, the zoo, the heritage village and the Wadi Adventure park.
How do these conditions inform the plan?

The UPC and Al Ain 2030 plan were looking for Land use program to enhance and reinforce the city’s cultural identity as an oasis city. In addition, they need to preserve urban agriculture and natural areas, integrate nature and humanity, and Conserve Al Ain’s unique natural location between mountains, dunes, Wadi and gravel plain.

In the MUP’s student comprehensive plan, the students focused on reserving and conserving the natural environment and enhancing it with sustainability. Furthermore, they filled the gaps and empty lands with parks, landscapes and farms and connected them all with a green pedestrian network.

The plan was focusing more on transferring the project area to a livable cultural Emirati housing (Fareej). Although the (Fareej) concept is a part that serves the Emirati families and residents, the other part serves everybody from all districts. UPC and Al Ain 2030 was looking for medium demand for hotels and tourism.

Moreover, two new projects are under construction such as a new five star hotel and expanding of the convention center are considered in the MUP’s student plan. These developments will attract a large number of people to the civic center and the business area.

Al Ain 2030 is also talking about transforming Al Ain to a knowledge center. It shows the need for museums, universities. Al Ain is aiming to be an attractive destination for GCC college students. In addition, their plans is showing the need for more hospital beds and health care infrastructure. After researching and studying the project area, the students did not find the need for more healthcare infrastructures and hospital beds in the project area because there are many hospitals and clinics in this specific area. On the other hand, the students insist to create healthy environment by creating pedestrian and bicycle oriented city, and using the parks and green landscapes for cleaning the air and cooling the weather to make it possible for people to practice outdoor activities. Again, the students focused on the need for knowledge centers and educational infrastructures. The Multi-purpose Bridge planned to contain mental and physical enhancement activities. Also, a museum, a gallery and a library are planned to be part of the bridge.
The unique location of Al Ain gave it a cultural and historical importance. Also, the location between Hafeet Mountain, Al Salmi Wadi, and three large oases improves Al Ain economics and social life. These features made the city livable and vibrant for thousands of years. Al Ain is a home for traditional Emirati families and a pleasant destination for foreigners and tourists. Al Ain 2030 proposed a maintainable urban plan to enhance the area and make it more sustainable for future generations of Emirati Families and locals.
PHOTOS OF CURRENT SITE  Please refer to the key map on page 28 for each image’s location on site.
Images of former Student Plan
Images of AlAin 2030 Masterplan
SECTION 2 General Concept

- Vision
- Objectives
- Current Factors And Responses
People ignore the design that ignores people.

Frank Chimero
VISION

By 2030 Alain’s civic center will be regarded as a center for business, learning, innovation, entertainment, shopping, culture and urban living – all with a distinctly ‘Emirati’ flavor.
OBJECTIVES

1 | Change the economic picture
2 | Enhance the access to and within the civic center
3 | Design an inclusive and child-friendly center
4 | Add Value to open space
5 | Enhance the public life
6 | Promote the importance of heritage
7 | Progress in sustainability
8 | Celebrate Emirati culture
9 | Provide a seamless integration of built-environment, open spaces and people.
CURRENT FACTORS AND RESPONSES

1. **High car dependency**
   
   As part of regional public transport system, the city rail link is proposed as a way to dramatically improving regional rail access and journey times to civic centre. A significantly more effective bus network is proposed. Connections to civic centre for pedestrians and cyclists will also be improved, while an appropriate level of access for private vehicles is maintained.

2. **Limited demand on office space**
   
   A positive planning framework is promoted to support high-end commercial investment in the civic center. Several strategic sites for new commercial office buildings are identified.
Loss of Emirati Cultural Spirit

there has been significant loss of heritage in the city over the years, and a number of some buildings in civic center continue to suffer from neglect, decay, under-use or insensitive new design.

Lack of open space

there are only few open space in civic center, in which these spaces are not planned for public life and they are not connected through pedestrian links. And that would be the focus of the master plan.
CURRENT FACTORS AND RESPONSES [CONTINUED]

5  Inadequate public transport

A large-scale streets network layout in Al Ain accommodating a high number of cars dominates the city centre. For pedestrians, this means poor-quality walking environments, inconvenient routes and inefficient travel time.

6  Absence of public life

The overall pedestrian environment is of poor quality and does not encourage people to visit and stay in civic center. As a destination, the civic centre lacks depth and coherence, and as a result fails to hold visitors for extended periods.
Poorly connected to surroundings

The existing civic center is planned separately from all other parts of the city. The new plan must insure connecting the center to surroundings. All buildings in civic center are scattered and poor-quality streets and buildings discourage people from walking between them.

An incomplete pedestrian and open space network.

The open space and pedestrian network are not planned accordingly, in which this is the main concern of the new master plan.
SECTION 3

The Masterplan

- Regional Connections
- Concept Development
- Masterplan
REGIONAL CONNECTIONS
The civic centre has a cluster of distinct areas, each with its own characteristics and uses. These areas will continue to be reinforced and promoted. Additionally, finer grained precincts within the areas have their own unique character and uses that complement each other while contributing to the whole.

The Master plan has a goal of transforming the civic center...

FROM 4 EXISTING INACTIVE AREAS

1. Dead civic center
2. Low-density residential area
3. Medium-density residential area
4. Inactive commercial area
TO 9 PRIORITY REVITALIZATION AREAS.

1. Active civic center
2. Low-density residential area
3. Vital commercial area
4. Medium-density residential area
5. Hospitality Center
6. Active Business District
7. Mixed-use Area
8. Retail and Shopping center
9. Learning Destination
Concept Development

1. Fully understanding existing land uses, study of challenges and current conditions

2. Propose new land uses, after studying the context and what’s happening around the site and In al Ain in general.

3. Adding a landmark to the site that serves the site and work a green link between the areas, the chosen landmark was a traditional souq [Planned linearly] and serving multi uses with an aim of bringing more people to the civic center as well as linking the civic center to other uses.

4. Link the landmark with existing and proposed land uses, in way in which this Souq is fully integrated with surroundings.
THE SOUQ AS A CATALYST FOR DEVELOPMENT

The master plan proposes about 2km of Souq, as a place that meets many activities within, not only for shopping, but also for entertainment at all times of the day. The reasons behind choosing the souq as an important element in the civic center is for bringing back the traditional [Emirati] heritage and culture, and the old way of shopping. And to create a new destination that attracts more people and visitors to Civic center, the souq will also stitch surroundings together through creating this green link and it will open up an opportunity of employment for small businesses.
SOUQ DIRECTIONS
ILLUSTRATION
Souq extends to ALZafara mall

Existing Convention center

The New Business District

Souq extends outside the site to connect to surroundings

Souq Ends at Jimi Mall
SECTION 4

Plans

- Existing Landuse
- Proposed Landuse
- Transportation Plans
- Open/Public Space Plan
- Urban Form
- Figure Ground
- Birdseye View
- 3D Views
EXISTING LANDUSE
EXISTING LANDUSE PLAN [BY BLOCK]

Legend:
- Hospitality
- Governmental
- Commercial
- Empty Lands
- Health Care
- Parking Lots
- Residential
- Utilities
PROPOSED LANDUSE

The new place for civic, cultural, art, entertainment, and business. A vibrant destination that indulge the senses, express creativity, enjoy events and participate in civic life. The Civic center is recognized for its cluster of cultural facilities, that include Civic theatre, town hall, central city library, community mosque and Islamic exhibitions and art galleries. These are some of the most iconic heritage buildings and spaces in the civic center. The gravitational pull of surroundings will require the civic center to energize itself around its cultural, entertainment and arts, to grow a closer relationship with governmental buildings. All existing buildings will be maintained as is. An easily accessible, distinct and vibrant civic center is critical to Alain future prosperity including the ability to attract and retain public. It will help the region to become internationally competitive economy. The aim is to build on the livable fabric and fantastic attributes of the city to create and promote a civic center where government, innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity are nurtured, the business environment promotes investment, infrastructure needs are met, and leadership is evident.

The civic center will continue to develop with a mix of business, educational, cultural, governmental and residential activities, it will be a place with affordable and free activities, where everyone will feel welcome and comfortable, and the physical and social environment will reflect the city's cultural mix.
PROPOSED LANDUSE PLAN [BY BLOCK]

- Business
- Governmental
- Commercial
- Health Care
- Mixed Use
- Residential [Low Density]
- Residential [Medium Density]
The Souq

Al Ain heritage directly influences how people perceive and use the city center as a place to live, work, play and visit. Emirati unique history and character should be reflected in the civic center. The civic center must have a seductive environment, which celebrates and makes the most of Emirati historical heritage. The souq reflect this iconic heritage and is perceived as the landmark of the area, in which it includes more than 150 small one-hall buildings, for shopping, galleries, public life, museums, public library, coffee shops and eateries.
PROPOSED LANDUSE PLAN [BY BUILDING]
TRANSPORTATION

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
The civic center will need a comprehensive, high-quality public transport system. Bus routes across the region will be streamlined to improve network efficiency and accessibility, resulting in fewer buses in the city but greater numbers of passengers carried. Later, where the bus network is unable to serve higher passenger demand, the system could be complemented by a high-quality light rail system to connect the civic center, Al Ain and ultimately the wider region.

The civic center bus Link will provide greater network efficiency, capacity and access, and will be implemented in a way that encourages civic center development in the right place at the right time.

The restructure of civic center bus routes to create a more effective, reliable and legible bus network will help to relieve pressure on car dependency and support a higher-quality pedestrian environment. The network improvements will require investment in infrastructure, such as more bus lanes and higher-quality bus stops, especially in corridors with the highest bus volumes, as well as provision for terminating buses in locations where civic center amenities will not be unduly compromised.
TRANSPORTATION

VEHICLE NETWORK
VEHICLE NETWORK

Arterial Road
Collector Road
Local Road
TRANSPORTATION

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

Upgraded street environments will offer higher pedestrian amenity and safety. This will support public transport routes and interchanges. The walking experience will be complemented by business and retail areas adjacent to public transport interchanges. Pedestrian safety and amenity will be enhanced by greater use of shared space, improved intersections, lower speed limits within the civic center, and improvements to the gateways.
OPEN/PUBLIC SPACE

As the civic center population and employment numbers continue to grow, so must the quantity, accessibility and quality of open spaces. The main challenge over the is to accommodate growth and proportionally provide a diverse range of high-quality and highly accessible public spaces. Critical to the future of the civic Centre’s quality of life and economic prosperity is the creation of a network of accessible, safe and attractive urban spaces, centered on the civic Centre’s primary green spaces or green plazas, including the main Plaza sitting in the center of civic center. The city center will have a linked network of green spaces. Linear parks along the Souq and between the major parks will enable safe, efficient and attractive walking and running connections. Smaller parks will be linked by quality pedestrian routes.

The civic center will have a strong network of urban spaces, including plazas, squares, pedestrian souq, shared spaces and laneways. Events, activities, shops and cafés can enliven these spaces. Large numbers of pedestrians, high-quality urban environments and places to sit or play will be features of these areas day and night.
OPEN SPACE PLAN

- Green Link/Souq
- Farm
- Plazas
- Urban Space
- Wadi
URBAN FORM

The relationship of buildings to streets and open space influences the way people experience the civic Centre. A range of planning methods ensures that the streets, buildings, plazas and parks are attractive, pleasant places for people to walk and sit. It is important that new developments in the civic center continue to provide amenity for pedestrians and users of public open space.

Identity
the plan must recognize and respond to the context, with development enriching character, quality and legibility and thereby a sense of place.

Diversity
the plan accommodates a rich mix of uses, activities, urban form and architecture, which supports variety, vibrancy, chance exchange, safety and choice.

Integration
The plan ensures that development supports existing and creates integrated urban form to facilitate well-being, movement and access.

Efficiency
the plan ensures that development Focuses on benefits and positive effects, optimizing the full potential of a site’s intrinsic qualities. This includes site shape, relationship to the wadi, street, landform, and proximity to services, amenities and infrastructure.
BLOCK STRUCTURE PLAN
FIGURE GROUND

EXISTING
PROPOSED
BIRDS-EYE VIEW
THE GRAND MOSQUE
THE SOUQ