



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Jebel Hafeet is a powerful presence in Al Ain and is one of the three macro-landscape features that defines its context

The City of Al Ain is an ancient crossroads. For at least 5,000 years it has offered a pleasant, cool respite from the heat of the surrounding desert. Located at the nexus of the Hajar Mountains, the flowing dunes of the Empty Quarter and an alluvial gravel plain, it is a garden city of lush oases fed by an ancient irrigation system known as *falaj*. It is also the Royal City, the ancestral home of Abu Dhabi's ruling Al Nahyan clan.

In modern times Al Ain has grown rapidly within a firm planning framework. In 1986, the earlier, in-house plans were superseded by the *Al Ain Master Plan to the Year 2000* (Shankland Cox, 1986), and this plan has effectively guided the government land release and housing program to the present day. It was then intended that the 1986 plan be replaced by the *Master Plan, Traffic and Transport Study for Al Ain and its Region to the Year 2015* (Maunsell 2007). While this is a major work, well researched and extensive in its coverage, events have overtaken it.

Al Ain has reached a crucial turning point. A rapidly expanding Emirati population and a policy of very large lot sizes have combined to fill out the available land. The city must now decide when, where and how to develop in order to preserve the relaxed, agricultural character and pleasant way of life that its inhabitants rightfully enjoy.

This Urban Structure Framework Plan, "Plan Al Ain 2030", presents a coherent picture for the future of the city of Al Ain as a modern city with an ancient foundation – environmentally, socially and economically sustainable – and an example to desert communities around the globe. It proposes a way to grow and leverage the economic opportunities at hand without sacrificing the agricultural character of the city and while adding new elements to make it a dynamic hub of knowledge in the modern global economy.

## Introduction

Plan Al Ain 2030  
Urban Structure Framework Plan

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF INTENT

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Al Ain is known for its beautiful mosques

In order to deliver upon the vision of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, Ruler of Abu Dhabi for the continued fulfillment of the grand design envisaged by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and the ongoing evolution of Al Ain as a model desert community, Al Ain now requires a long-term Comprehensive Plan and overall development regulations to be prepared to guide future growth and to enable detailed plans for various areas and overall development regulations.

The completion of a full Comprehensive Plan will take several years of complex technical work. In advance of that Comprehensive Plan, this Urban Structure Framework Plan provides a vision for use by all agencies with an interest in the future development of Al Ain.

The Urban Structure Framework Plan articulates a clear direction and description of growth for Al Ain. It has been made available in a short timeframe because it does not go into extensive detail about that growth. It sets an environmental context, confirms an urban structure of land use, transportation, open space, and built form. It outlines key “building blocks” through which the urban structure will come together logically and organically over time. It starts with a road map of principles and culminates in a comprehensive set of policies for the important elements of community development.

This Urban Structure Framework Plan is targeted to the year 2030 and an expected population of up to 1 million people. It is not geographically contained by existing administrative boundaries but, instead, encompasses the whole urban area of the city of Al Ain within its natural boundaries.

The Urban Structure Framework Plan must be conceptual enough to be completed quickly but detailed enough to be of both immediate and ongoing utility in responding to proposals for urban change in Al Ain. It is designed to be used for the following purposes:

- The Plan will be the guide to diagnose new developments to ensure they will be consistent with the needs and wants of the people of Al Ain and will come together as a coherent, viable urban whole. The Plan will play this role until the Comprehensive Plan is prepared and approved.
- The Plan will suggest a detailed work program for the further planning of Al Ain, resulting in both a Comprehensive Plan and an array of area plans. It will also set the direction for regulatory guidelines and zoning. (The resulting Comprehensive Plan will generally conform to this plan departing from it only where detailed investigations reveal more appropriate ways of achieving the desired outcomes. This plan will continue to be relevant as a high-level policy document).
- The Plan will offer interim input into other initiatives in Al Ain that shape the city, such as infrastructure schemes, transportation improvements, housing allocation programs, and economic development projects such as tourism.



Colourful doorways are a traditional feature

## Introduction

Plan Al Ain 2030  
Urban Structure Framework Plan



H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan



H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, H.H. Sheikh Tahnoon bin Mohammed Al Nahyan and H.E. Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak



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## 1.3 PROJECT PROCESS

This Urban Structure Framework Plan is the result of a collaboration between the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council and the Al Ain Municipality, Town Planning Sector. In order to meet the ambitious sustainable urban development goals set out by the Abu Dhabi Leadership, an integrated design process to produce the Urban Structure Framework Plan was conceived and implemented.

This integrated design process included a 5 day urban design charrette, that was held in Al Ain November 20-25, 2007. A team of multi-disciplinary experts from Abu Dhabi Emirate and from around the world, participated in the charrette by conducting site visits, generating a preferred urban structural framework, and framing recommendations to guide future development in the city.

Subsequent design sessions were held in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain in early 2008 involving members of the UPC, Al Ain Town Planning representatives and the Management and Production Team. These follow-on sessions were held to refine, test, and finalize the findings and conclusions of the charrette.

The result of this process is the Urban Structure Framework Plan.



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