

Sustainability to be woven into new buildings

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Abu Dhabi: Upcoming buildings in the capital will need to have a minimum level of sustainability woven into their design plan in order to enable developers to secure the approval of the authorities for any project, officials told Gulf News.

Moving a step ahead of the Estidama (sustainability in Arabic) initiative launched in 2008 by the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC), the council has unveiled a new development benchmark called Estidama Integrative Design Process (EIDP).

"EIDP defines a set of criteria that developers need to follow to secure approval for their projects," Salem Al Qasimi, associate planner at Estidama, told Gulf News at the Environment 2009 conference at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre.

"Developers will need to embrace sustainability measures. However, our aim is not to force it on them. For this educating developers, consultants as well as different government bodies and members of the public are important and that is our main role at the exhibition", he said.

"By having Estidama prerequisites incorporated into the approval mechanism, hopefully from next month we are taking the 4 first steps towards sustainability," Al Qasimi noted, adding that the requirements are very basic to make sure minimum level of sustainability in all future projects.

With EIDP taking effect, sustainability practices will be ingrained into the conceptual phases of construction, tourism, educational, civic, commercial and residential and infrastructure projects planned across the emirate. "Sustainable technologies and designs are the norms rather than a nice-to-have. Incorporating light monitors in buildings to reduce energy consumption, creating shade with external structures, using better insulation and relying upon renewable energy sources such as solar power should become standard practice.

"Since the changes are made from the conceptual phase, the entire process will be cost effective too," Al Qasimi said.

In a statement, Falah Mohammad Al Ahbabi, general manager of the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council, said: "The foresight to plan for infrastructure ahead of time is the trademark of Vision 2030.

"This initiative clearly demonstrates our commitment to put emphasis on sustainable development and concretely asserts Plan Abu Dhabi 2030's sustainable vision that is in essence 100 percent responsible urban planning."

Estidama is the first initiative of its kind and will transform the capital "into an internationally acknowledged model of sustainable urbanisation".

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