

# Urban Seclusion – An Al Barari Model

Unique landscapes, botanical gardens and the space to simply breathe it all in characterize Al Barari. CEO **Mohammed Bin Zaal** shares that such value creation is at the heart of his firm's green philosophy.

Amidst the royal enclave of Nad Al Sheba and 10km away from the downtown hustle and bustle lies Dubai's greenest development. Al Barari, the pioneering firm established in 2005 by the Zaal family boasts a generous 18.42 million sq. feet estate, 80% of which has been exclusively devoted to lush landscape and gardens. With its unique selling point as Dubai's lowest density urban development Al Barari's eco-conscious living lavishly blurs the distinction between interior and exterior.

According to the Zaals, the core concept is about bringing people back to the natural environment. Thus Al Barari, the Arabic term for wilderness, is not only a philosophy but a viable model executed through vibrant themed gardens, flowing streams and endless stretches of walking paths. Charmingly planned out, the secluded desert oasis is a conscious effort to offer an environmentally-driven alternative to its peers in the local real estate market.



"I SEE OTHER DEVELOPERS SLOWLY FOLLOWING IN OUR STEPS, AND I WELCOME THAT. THIS IS FANTASTIC. ANYTHING THAT BENEFITS MY HOMETOWN, MY COUNTRY, AND ITS PEOPLE, WHY NOT? I'M HAPPY IF PEOPLE ARE BUILDING GREENER COMMUNITIES."

Over the past ten years Al Barari has grown with a sustainable approach to projects – measuring demand and unveiling grand plans in line with their low density mantra.

"We don't build thousands of units. Instead we go for fewer numbers – less

units and build around the gardens and landscape. We don't need a bigger market in Dubai. The current market can absorb what we are offering," explains Bin Zaal.

At 100% occupancy, phase one is made up of The Residences and The Reserve, totaling 217 villas featuring vast plot sizes and unique features. The Residences' 189 villas sprawl upwards of 12,700 sq. ft. attracting a diverse crowd to whom the AED 15 million price tag is worth the abundance of greenery.

"Giving people more space is at the heart of our plans. There's also demand to introduce more natural elements, the garden – a luxury given that we are in the desert. They want peace of mind, tranquillity, and quiet. A family home essentially."

Another subsequent 28 villas in phase one not only offer generous plots, but an element of bespoke. The Reserve pushes boundaries, offering shell and core units on plots ranging from 14,000 - 75,000 sq. ft. The concept gives homeowners freedom to customize their dream home, with the option to select their contractor of choice. Ultimately 90% of buyers chose to collaborate with Al Barari's sister companies Sustainable Builders and Etcetera Living to complete fit-out.

"By opting for shell and core, we were giving people what they wanted. Before they could be homeowners, but the details that made it their own were not available. With The Reserve every single villa is individually designed – from the layout to the materials. Each has been a personal experience for the residents," comments the CEO.

Al Barari released its preliminary projects for phase two in early 2014 with overwhelming response. Seventh Heaven, a 157 unit collection of sky villas, garden homes, penthouses and duplexes ranging from one to four bedrooms sold out in 48

hours. Equally grandeur Ashjar, scooped up the "Future Residential Project" award at Cityscape 2014. Both projects allude to Al Barari's newest chapter as it prepares to welcome a new kind of homebuyer.

"With this second wave of development, the city is really coming into its own. It's no longer just about attracting people to visit Dubai, but offering something different to its residents. We're not just a commercial hub, but a hub for families. Naturally this affects the quality of home design – they want a home they can live in for many years, which can grow with them and even be passed down to their kids."



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Although Al Barari believes it has redefined luxury in Dubai, the developer has proven that its sprawling estates do not prioritize sustainability alone, but a combination of luxury and sustainability. The company strives to not only minimize its local footprint, but enhance and restore the landscape.

The ambitious wilderness project uses recycled, chemical-free water, utilizing reed beds for natural filtration. The 1,800 species of plants on the property also contributed to creating a micro-climate, as den-



Mohammed Bin Zaal, CEO of Al Barari.

sity packed foliage contributed to shading and reduced evaporation.

"We've actually had to use less water, and have managed to achieve temperatures 2–5 degrees lower than anywhere in Dubai. It's truly been amazing to see how the environment here has flourished. We've even attracted animals and birdlife to the location. It's a system that feeds off itself, and a model that should be implemented more."

With an unmistakable passion for eco-living, the Zaals envision developing more intimate, serene communities. Currently, the future of the site involves building up existing residential projects with community amenities while also expanding into hospitality, retail and F&B.

"I want Al Barari to be a destination, where people who live in the city can come

and enjoy their weekends. Our vision is that they can enjoy shopping, the theatre and so on, surrounded by a beautiful environment, roll out a blanket afterward and have a picnic in the gardens. We're encouraging these kinds of experiences and interactions within the community. It's now time for us to create what we call the heart of Al Barari, and we're putting all of our abilities into creating something special." ●