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Water features
are across the
entire
development.

FAMILY VISION FOR A GREENER DUBAI

Nick Ames
visits Al Barari
residential
development and
meets the team
behind the project

Pictures by
Aasiya Jagadeesh

Designing an interconnected community, which fuses architecture, interiors, water features and flora from around the world was the aim of the Zaal family, the driving force, behind Dubai's Al Barari residential development.

The latest phase of Al Barari is Seventh Heaven, a building which consists of 157 apartments comprising one, two, three and four bedroom flats, a number of duplexes and four penthouses.

Construction commenced in September 2014 and the project is due for completion in 2017 Q3. Future phases include a hotel, while a local cafe called The Farm is currently being completely renovated.

Godwin Austen Johnson worked on the original concept with Woods Bagot taking on the masterplan. Hong Kong-based architect firm 10design then collaborated with the Zaal family on the final concept. Wife of developer Zaal Mohammad Zaal, Lesley, worked on the interiors, while their daughter Kamelia undertook landscaping work.

After travelling the world, the couple



FOR ME THE LARGE TERRACES ARE AN ADDED BONUS TO GIVE THE APARTMENTS THE FEEL OF A HOUSE.” – LESLEY ZAAL

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Seventh Heaven has a total of 157 apartments ranging in size with views across the waterways and wooded areas.

wanted to find a somewhere in Dubai which had the feel of a real community, which reflected Emirati heritage, to put down their roots – but they couldn't find any such place.

Lesley says: “We were a family looking for somewhere to live and we wanted it to be sustainable, and we wanted to have greenery. So the first thing we did was set up a plant nursery.

“Some people thought this was crazy, but it was the best thing we could possibly have done as all the development grew from it.”

With a strong emphasis on combining outdoor and indoor spaces, the end result is what Lesley describes as a “botanical garden encompassing luxury villas”. She says: “The overall concept fuses exteriors and interiors with the natural environment. The Seventh Heaven project is now 64% completed, and we are currently commencing internal finishes.



“The brief was to produce a unique building to set it apart from all the high-rises available throughout Dubai. We wanted something different that still blends in with the greenery Al Barari is known for.

“The key design features are the use of the natural light, shape of the building and terraces. Residents can have the ease and convenience of an apartment with the added luxury of a terrace, which can be developed into an outdoor living space.

“For me, the design is spectacular, and many of the apartments have uninterrupted views of Dubai’s skyline. The building itself will have two entire



THE ORIGINAL VISION

Zaal Mohammad Zaal says: ‘I always thought Dubai had no real place you can call home – it was just buildings on lots of lands. Two cars would come out of garages, yet their owners would never meet. There were roads at both the front and back so nowhere for children to play. “I thought ‘I can’t live like this’. But I had a vision. I was looking for a big piece of land, and I wanted to create a community which focused on quality of life. I wanted to build a place where people could live, learn, educate their children, eat healthy food and interact. “You come into this world naked, and you go out of it naked. But what matters is your legacy. And I want to make people feel fulfilled.”



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Original texture is another feature of the interiors and exteriors.



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Founder Zaal
Mohammad Zaal.





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Walkways
connect the homes.

floors dedicated to retail spaces with restaurants, cafes and shops, with the added plus of having access to the landscaped waterways and gardens.”

There is currently a show apartment for Seventh Heaven, designed by Lesley. With a palette of neutral colours and abundant texture, Lesley aims to add both a touch of refinement and warmth in the home.

She said: “Regarding the interiors, we have used the wall space to create display areas and additional storage.

“For me, the large terraces are an added bonus to give the apartments the feel of a house rather than a flat with plenty of space to create another living area with outdoor furniture, plants and wall features.

“In this particular show apartment, we used a basic white paint as the blank canvas then added features such as wallpaper, mirrored walls and statement headboards. The sitting area has a colour scheme of white, purple and grey-lilac to create a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere.



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Al Barari means “wilderness”
in Arabic.

“The tiles throughout this apartment are sourced locally while the wooden floors are from Europe. The kitchen units are by Siematic and the kitchen appliances from Miele.”

Al Barari, literally meaning “wilderness” in Arabic, consists of 80% green space that envelopes its 217 villas. Themed gardens, with more than 16km of landscaped lakes, freshwater

streams, cascades and waterways make it the lowest density urban development in the UAE.

A large number of plants, bought in from around the world, mean the development has a micro-climate up to five degrees cooler than the surrounding area by providing shade, reflecting back the sun’s rays and naturally cooling the air through a process called evapotran-



GREENERY

After plant specimens arrive in Dubai, they are passed through an inspection and those chosen are grown and nurtured in a complex of greenhouses on the site and then transplanted. Horticulturalist Bruce Pedersen explains: “Over the last eight years we have examined 1,806 plant species and narrowed this down to 544, plants, trees, shrubs, cacti and succulents and there are two main flowering periods, spring and autumn. “The greenery has attracted in animals and birds; we have seen green parrots, falcons, bats and hedgehogs. There is abundant insect life, which is food for the birds and fish in the water-courses.”



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Muted and subtle shades are an interiors feature.

spirations which turns water into vapour. Landscape designer Kamelia Zaal, the couple's daughter, adds: “Everywhere people with influence created green spaces – Hyde Park in London and New York's Central Park for example. We feel this is the green heart of Dubai.

“You can walk across Al Barari through all the greenery without having to use any of the streets or roads.”

Al Barari was designed in accordance with the Environment Impact Assessment, introduced by Dubai Municipality to promote sustainability.

Each residence supports its own energy-efficient home system. Homeowners are encouraged to recycle domestic waste through an underground collection system that enables different products to be separated.

Architect, Chris Jones of 10design, explains how the project is irrigated.

He says: “The watercourses on-site use treated irrigation water which comes from Dubai Municipality.

“This serves all the channels, streams and ponds. It is gravity fed from the top of the site to the lowest point and then recirculated with submersible pumps. Water levels are monitored



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Lesley Zaal is the interior designer for the project.

daily and topped up when required. The water bodies are rich with wildlife, insects, fish and birds, which enrich the flourishing ecosystem.”

Aquatic plants have also been introduced to add oxygen to the watercourses and provide habitat. The streams are stocked with Arabian Kilifish – a species which was on the verge of becoming extinct before being introduced to Al Barari. ●