



Al Maryah Central breaks ground

Scheduled to open in 2018, the super-regional mall, which features the first international Macy's department store outside the US and the first Bloomingdale's department store in Abu Dhabi, will strengthen the capital's position as a cultural, commercial and tourism leader, **Dennis Daniel** reports





Al Maryah Island, an integral component of Abu Dhabi's long-term development vision, took another step in establishing itself as a best-in-class urban lifestyle destination with the launching of construction of Al Maryah Central, a 2.3 million sqft super-regional shopping centre that will be connected by a bridge to The Galleria, a 550,000 sqft premier shopping and dining development with a stunning waterfront promenade in Sowwah Square. Combined, the two developments represent a 2.9 million sqft waterfront-shopping destination with over 500 retail, leisure, dining and entertainment options.

Al Maryah Island (formally known as Sowwah Island) is a 114-hectare mixed-use development planned as Abu Dhabi's new Central Business District (CBD), with commercial, leisure and entertainment components comprising premium office structures, unique residential neighbourhoods, luxury business hotels, pedestrian friendly transport infrastructure and connectivity, diverse retail and F&B choices, community facilities and public amenities, parks and open spaces.

Located midpoint between Abu Dhabi's existing downtown district, the upcoming developments at Al Reem Island and Mina Zayed and the cultural district on Sadiyaat Island, the new urban hub has been declared a financial free zone. Master-planned and developed in phases by Mubadala Real Estate & Infrastructure (MREI), it includes Sowwah Square (comprising four international grade 'A' office towers), the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, The Galleria, Rosewood Abu Dhabi and Four Seasons Hotel Abu Dhabi, the new headquarter office towers of the National Bank of Abu Dhabi and Al Hilal Bank, Maryah Plaza's luxury residential towers and Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi.

Al Maryah Central is a fully financed \$1 billion project of UAE-based real estate development company Gulf Related. It forms part of a 3.1 million sqft mixed-use development that will include two 400,000 sqft towers, one with a five-star hotel and serviced apartments and the other housing luxury residences. Designed by US architecture firm Elkus Manfredi, it will provide a fully climate controlled, multi-level vertical retail experience organised

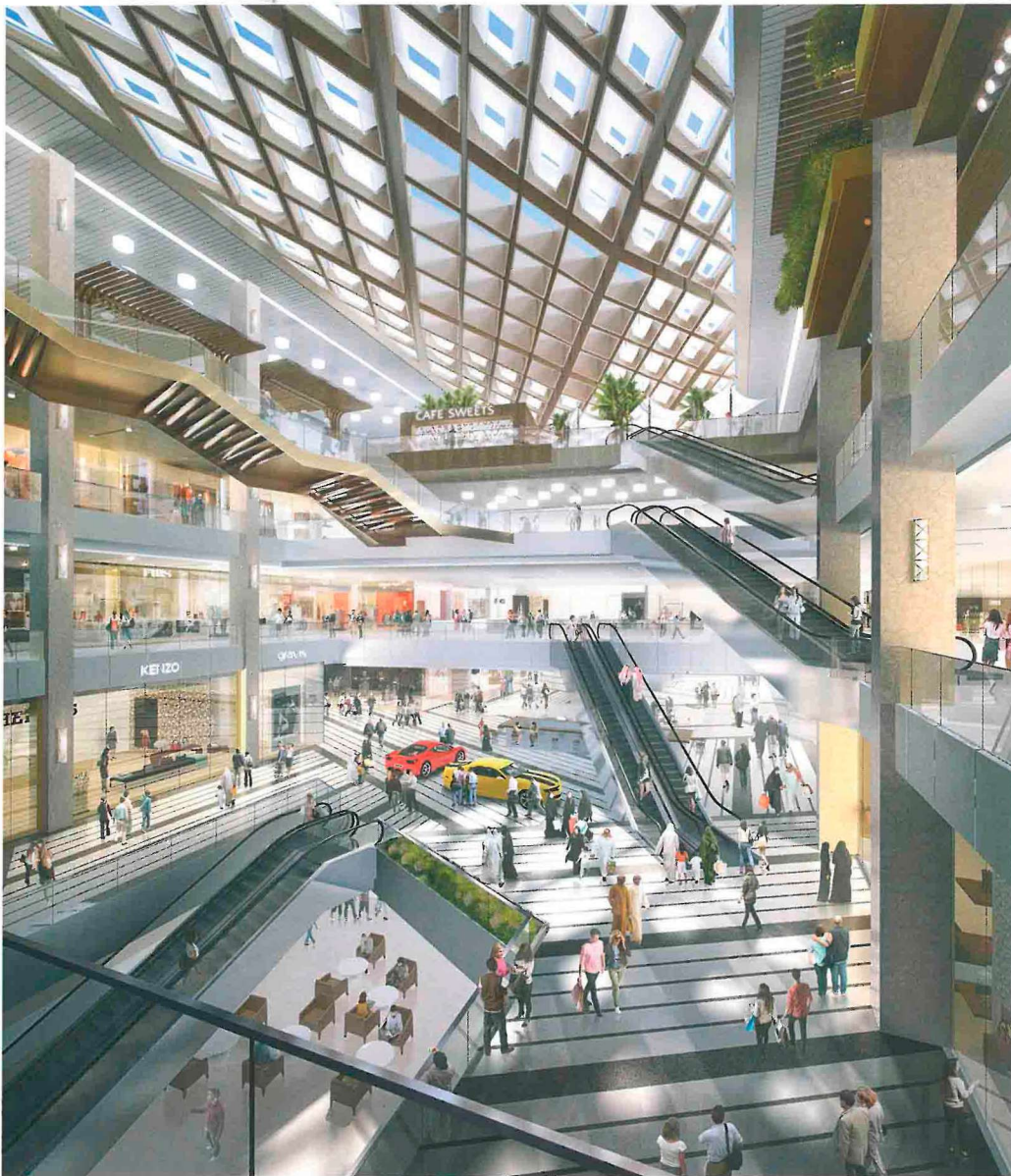


around a central grand atrium, with gently curving galleries extending to the north and south. Each retail gallery opens up into a four-level atrium housing the anchor stores, with upper level bridges connecting to over 15.7 million sqft of completed and occupied properties on Al Maryah Island, including Sowwah Square and The Galleria.

Scheduled for completion in March 2018, the mega mall has already leased space to Macy's (205,000 sqft) and Bloomingdale's (230,000 sqft), two of the biggest department stores in the US, through an agreement signed with UAE-based conglomerate Al Tayer Group. This marks the first time Macy's is opening a store outside of the US, while the Bloomingdale's store is the second in the UAE, bigger than the first at The Dubai Mall. The flagship department stores will occupy the four-level atriums as anchor stores.

Khalid Al Tayer, CEO - retail, Al Tayer Group, points out that sales in the Dubai Bloomingdale's have been overwhelming over the past five years and is confident that Macy's will have an equally strong appeal in the Middle East region. "We'll be launching the first Macy's outside of the US, as well as our second Bloomingdale's, in Abu Dhabi. Both are market leaders in department store retailing in the US, and we look forward to delivering the same unrivalled shopping experience to customers in the capital. Al Maryah Central is the ideal home for these landmark introductions. It forms one of many significant developments underway in Abu Dhabi over the coming years that serve to strengthen the capital's position as a cultural, commercial and tourism leader," he observes.

Terry Lundgren, chairman and CEO of



a cinema and a health club. The retail and F&B mix will comprise over 350 outlets, with 90 dining options that include al fresco cafés, bistros and fine dining restaurants situated in a landscaped outdoor space along a waterfront promenade; a 50,000 sqft gourmet food market instead of a hypermarket; F&B food hall; 20-screen cinema; health-club; children's entertainment; and rooftop parks with an outdoor amphitheatre for film screenings and events.

"Al Maryah Central offers a world-class lifestyle destination that has evolved out of the remarkable response of the retail community to The Galleria on Al Maryah Island. The mall's accessible location and its proximity to Dubai and Abu Dhabi international airports provides a core catchment area with a compelling demographic unsurpassed in the emirate. The successful opening of The Galleria last year marked our initial venture into the market and we are committed to providing best-in-class retail, hotel and residential experiences as we expand our retail footprint in the region, drawing upon our experience in the US," says Himmel.

"Al Tayer Group's endorsement through anchors Macy's and Bloomingdale's and a diverse array of in-line stores, cafes and restaurants covering a third of our retail composition makes us confident that Al Maryah Central will achieve our vision of becoming the greatest shopping experience in the region, opening up a new world of retail, entertainment and dining to Abu Dhabi residents and catalysing the development of Al Maryah Island," he adds.

Gulf Related, a partnership between Gulf Capital, one of the Middle East's leading alternative asset management firms, and Related Companies, one of the largest private real estate development and investment firms in the US, pursues marquee large-scale mixed-use real estate development opportunities in Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia. In addition to developing The Galleria on Al Maryah Island and Al Maryah Central, the company is developing a 550-unit expatriate residential compound in Riyadh, KSA. Al Maryah Central is owned by a limited partnership comprising investors from around the GCC, with Gulf Related, Gulf Capital and Related Companies being direct investors in the project. ■

Macy's Inc, draws attention to the fact that the two department store chains are destinations for international tourists in the US and play an important role in popular culture, both domestically and globally. "Al Maryah Central is a spectacular new world-class shopping destination that provides an outstanding opportunity to introduce Macy's to customers who live and work in the booming UAE market, as well as to visitors who come from around the world for events, business and holidays," he elaborates.

In addition to Macy's and Bloomingdale's, Al Tayer Group will

operate over 20 other inline stores covering fashion, cafés and restaurants, bringing its total anchoring commitment to over 520,000 sqft, which represents around one-third of Al Maryah Central's total leasable space of 1.6 million sqft.

Kenneth A Himmel, president and CEO of Related Urban and co-managing partner of Gulf Related, points out that Al Maryah Central will feature a comprehensive merchandise mix of best-in-class retail - offering a combination of luxury and contemporary brands, extensive F&B selections, family entertainment options,