

EmiratesGBC 2024 Congress Briefing

Beyond COP28: The Role of the Built Environment to Deliver on the UAE Consensus.

Under the Patronage of the Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure.

Panel 4.1: Beyond the Blueprint: Developers of the UAE Leading Change

“Beyond the Blueprint: Developers of the UAE Leading Change” panel highlighted the innovative practices of leading UAE developers who are not only raising the bar for sustainable development but also working to exceed standard market expectations. The session provided insights into how top developers are aligning with the UAE’s ambitious climate goals, exploring challenges and success stories in their journey towards sustainable growth.

Speakers

Chris Wan, Former Associate Director, Sustainability and CSR, Masdar City

Haithem Ibrahim, Vice President of Operations, Brookfield Properties

Nazly Asadollahpour, Director of Sustainability, Majid Al Futtaim

Yusef Abbas, Senior Specialist Sustainability, Engineering and Technical Services, AD Ports Group, as Moderator

The session opened with a discussion on the evolving role of developers in driving sustainability within the UAE. **Masdar City** emphasized the importance of early integration of sustainable practices into the design and development stages. By engaging clients from the start, **Masdar City** has successfully delivered projects like the Siemens building, a net-zero energy building and one of their most profitable assets. This project set a benchmark for sustainable development, demonstrating that green buildings are not only environmentally beneficial but also economically viable. **Masdar City** is now working on their third net-zero energy building, using insights and strategies from previous projects to push the limits of sustainable design further.

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Majid Al Futtaim shared the company's transformation from a traditional developer to a sustainability leader. **Majid Al Futtaim** has made significant strides, including a commitment to net-positive water usage and the adoption of green certifications across all assets. They've implemented a range of projects, from water conservation to renewable material sourcing, with a minimum requirement of 25% renewable materials at their sites. **Majid Al Futtaim** emphasized that this commitment to sustainability is not limited to project design but extends to engaging tenants and communities, who participate in campaigns and initiatives that raise awareness about sustainable practices. Their internal policies are structured to ensure sustainability goals are integrated at every level, creating a consistent approach to environmental responsibility across the company.

Brookfield Properties shared the company's data-driven approach to sustainability. With a vast portfolio, **Brookfield Properties** uses data to track waste, energy consumption, and emissions across all assets. This comprehensive approach enables **Brookfield Properties** to make informed decisions, optimize operations and engaging tenants in sustainability efforts, highlighting the importance of setting clear benchmarks and collecting detailed data from day one, which has allowed them to refine their sustainability practices and meet their net-zero commitment by 2050. **Brookfield Properties** strategy is to integrate sustainability metrics across the business, ensuring that each property, regardless of location, is aligned with broader environmental goals.

The panel also discussed how these developers are working to influence industry standards and policies. They noted that regulatory alignment is essential for the success of sustainable projects, with policies needing to support long-term sustainability goals like the UAE's 2050 targets. For example, **Majid Al Futtaim's** partnerships with sustainable finance initiatives have been instrumental in advancing their agenda, while **Masdar City's** Blueprint program, which sets a minimum requirement of 40% energy savings for developers has been instrumental in ensuring advancements in sustainability. This approach encourages industry-wide change by demonstrating that high sustainability standards are achievable.

Brookfield Properties discussed the critical role of data, especially in terms of waste management and emissions reduction. They noted that without precise data and quality management plans, making impactful decisions becomes challenging. By sharing data insights and best practices with other developers and stakeholders, **Brookfield Properties** aims to support the industry's collective progress toward sustainability.

The session underscored that achieving sustainability in the built environment requires a multifaceted approach, with developers, regulators, and communities all playing vital roles. The panellists emphasized that by setting clear sustainability goals, investing in data-driven decision-making, and fostering collaboration across the industry, developers can create a more resilient and sustainable built environment in the UAE. The insights shared by **Masdar City**, **Majid Al Futtaim**, and **Brookfield Properties** highlight the power of innovative practices and partnerships in transforming industry standards and making substantial progress toward net-zero emissions.