

ULI DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDIES



The Walk at Jumeirah Beach Residence

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Project Type: **Lifestyle/Entertainment/Specialty Center**

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PROJECT TYPE

The Walk at Jumeirah Beach Residence is a community shopping street along the Dubai marina seafront consisting of two levels that features 311 retail outlets. It is located in the heart of Jumeirah Beach Residence (JBR), a 720,975-square-meter (7.76 million-sq-ft) mixed-use development that comprises 36 residential towers between 39 and 54 stories high, four hotel towers, one corporate tower, and offices. The Walk has a variety of tenants that serve the local community such as restaurants, an art gallery, dry cleaners, cafés, and bookstores situated on both a plaza and ground level. The Walk is one of the first and only retail spaces in Dubai to offer an outdoor, pedestrian-friendly shopping experience along the beachfront that is accentuated by fountains, landscaped shaded courtyards, and alleys.



LOCATION

Inner Suburban

SITE SIZE (JBR)

178 acres/72 hectares

LAND USES

Community Retail Center, Restaurants, Main Street Retail



KEYWORDS/SPECIAL FEATURES

- Community Retail Center
- Pedestrian-Friendly Design
- Main Street Design
- Urban Waterfront Development



- Desert Location

DEVELOPER

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Walk at Jumeirah Beach Residence (JBR) is a 1.7-kilometer (1.1-mi) stretch of outdoor and indoor retail that was designed to meet JBR residents' retail needs. However, the Walk's success exceeded the developer's expectations and it became a retail destination for nearby communities as well, and a stand-alone marketing brand since its opening in 2007.

The Walk caters to different users by generating varying traffic levels throughout the day. It is primarily used for jogging and biking in the morning, business lunches and shopping throughout the day, and dining and entertainment during the evenings. It is also frequented at all times by beachgoers who tend to stroll around after using the nearby public beach.

According to Dubai Retail, the project's post-construction managers, the Walk has changed people's perceptions of car dependence in Dubai, providing an array of retail and dining choices within a pedestrian-friendly and shaded setting. Based on the results of a survey conducted by the management company, the Walk receives about 60,000 visitors on weekends, and every day visitors spend an average of three to four hours at the Walk.

The Walk's tenants and visitors are a mix of locals and expatriates from Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America, reflecting Dubai's cosmopolitan population.

THE SITE

The Walk at JBR is located on the Arabian Gulf waterfront in the manmade Dubai Marina district, situated between Jebel Ali Port and the neighborhood that includes Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City, and the American University in Dubai.

Emaar Properties, a U.A.E. real estate development firm, developed the 4.9 million-square-meter (50 million-sq-ft) district as the largest marina in the world. According to Emaar, the district was inspired by the Concord Pacific Place development along False Creek in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The first phase of Dubai Marina, completed in 2003, covers 9.3 hectares (25 ac) and includes six freehold waterfront apartment towers (Dubai Marina Towers) and 64 luxury villas. The second phase included the JBR, while subsequent phases consist of completing approximately 200 high-rise buildings, many of which are still under construction.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

According to the development team, JBR is the vision of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the prime minister and vice president of the U.A.E. and the ruler of Dubai. Sheikh Mohammed delegated the development of JBR to Estithmar Realty, which became Dubai Properties in 2006.

Dubai Properties is a master developer of large-scale real estate projects, including Business Bay, the Villas at Dubailand, and the Culture Village, in addition to JBR. It is fully owned by Dubai Properties Group, a member of Dubai Holding, established in 2004 by the Dubai government to consolidate its portfolio of assets and projects in Dubai and to identify future opportunities.

Dubai Properties, then called Estithmar Realty, put out the request for proposals for JBR and offered it to several prominent theme architects. The developer chose Wimberley Allison Tong and Goo (WATG), an international design firm specializing in the hospitality, leisure, and entertainment industries.

Once the development team approved the design, it launched another bidding and detailed evaluation process to choose appropriate contractors to develop the site. These ended up being the Arab Technical Construction Company (Arabtec), Saleh Construction, Al Habtoor Engineering, Al Shafar General Contracting Co., Wade Adams, Al Ahmadi Contracting and Trading, and Dubai Civil Engineering.

FINANCING

With land donated by the government, Dubai Properties relied primarily on proceeds from preselling residential units to finance the initial costs of developing JBR and the Walk. The presales—through which 90 percent of the JBR units were sold—were launched in 2002 and consisted of a 60 percent downpayment of the unit price and a 40 percent handover payment of the unit price.

Moreover, the clarification of freehold ownership in Dubai in 2006 boosted presales of JBR units. Although the ruler of Dubai had issued a decree in May 2002 allowing foreigners to buy and own freehold property in selected areas within Dubai, the Dubai Property Law of 2006 confirmed freehold ownership of land and property by non-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) citizens in certain areas designated by the ruler of Dubai, by establishing a system of property registration at the land department in order to evidence ownership rights.

DESIGN

The design of JBR was altered several times as the project evolved. The end result is a mixed-use development subdivided into six sectors: Shams (sun), Amwaj (waves), Rimal (sand), Bahar (sea), Sadaf (shells), and Murjan (coral). The sectors include four five-star hotel towers and 36 residential towers, comprising 7,500 residential units ranging from studios to one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom apartments, lofts, and penthouses.

The Walk is JBR's retail spine; it was central to JBR's plan to provide retail and neighborhood services in a self-sustaining development. All buildings are integrated along or proximate to the Walk, which is four meters (13 ft) wide and intersected by seven cross streets, several stairways, and lifts leading up to the plaza level and down to the street level on the opposite side. Also, overpasses connect the sectors and provide direct beach access.

The Walk is shaded by the aforementioned residential towers and dotted with food outlets, beauty salons, street cafés and delis, pharmacies, car rental outlets, and fashion and accessories outlets. Retail parking spaces are provided on the beachfront side of the Walk and beneath all residential towers.

The sidewalk and street in front of the main retail area are paved with cobblestone, granite, and sandstone tiles, and lined with trees and fountains. Buildings on the street level are clad with marble and fountains are accentuated with mosaic finishes and special-effects lighting. This pedestrian-friendly site is further enhanced by streetlights, benches, and outdoor café furniture with advertising props adding individuality and interest along the route.

According to the development team, the architecture is contemporary with elements inspired from Islamic and local design, such as pedestrian overpasses, archways, courtyards, and bay windows. Building finishes are uniform

and shops conform to general design guidelines from Dubai Retail. Nevertheless, shop facades are individualistic and enliven the street using an array of exterior finishes including glass, wood, and plaster in different paint colors.

CONSTRUCTION

Dubai Properties obtained all necessary documentation and permits from the city of Dubai in 2004 and construction started shortly thereafter. With 90 cranes moving simultaneously to build JBR's 40 towers, the main challenge facing the development was coordinating the construction schedule to avoid collisions. The project was also the first in the U.A.E. to feature a fully containerized mobile concrete plant to meet construction deadlines and minimize the distance between raw materials and the site.

MARKETING AND TENANTS

The Walk caters to a wide variety of tenants ranging from local businesses to luxury retailers, such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Boutique 1. Several local holding companies, such as the Al Shaya Group and Azadea—which own and operate franchised brands—have opened outlets along the retail street. In addition, the Walk has smaller retailers catering to the local community such as bookstores, tailoring, dry cleaners, banks, beauty parlors, car rental services, party organizers, and money exchanges. As of December 2009, the vacancy rate at the Walk retail outlets is about 15 percent.

Initially—as the Walk was meant for the local community of JBR—Dubai Retail did not have a detailed marketing plan for the Walk. However, as it became an increasingly popular destination receiving positive reviews in the local press, the marketing department at Dubai Retail saw the need to build on that strength and establish the Walk as a retail brand in itself. Thus, the Walk was marketed through a variety of print and audiovisual material awareness campaigns. For example, Dubai Retail developed and used four different cartoon characters—called Unwind, Dine, Indulge, and Relax—to promote the Walk.

Furthermore, Dubai Retail relies on special events throughout the year to promote the Walk. Such events include “Dinner in the Sky,” where a 22-seat platform is suspended at a height of 50 meters (164 ft) in the air; the “Covent Garden Market Dubai,” which takes place between November and April and features over 50 retail stalls; street performance artists and entertainers; “Dubai Shopping Surprises”; a snow/winter sports event; and sand sculpting.

Dubai Retail also launched the Walk Steps loyalty card, which offers a range of community privileges including retail discounts and offers at shops located in the Walk at JBR. Cardholders have access to a loyalty program that features instant redemption of points for use within the Walk.

MANAGEMENT

JBR and the Walk are managed by Salwan Property Management, Dubai Asset Management Company (Idama), and Dubai Retail—all of which are subsidiaries of the Dubai Properties Group. Salwan and Idama work on all engineering maintenance and the day-to-day management of all facilities and utility systems in JBR, while Dubai Retail is responsible for managing and leasing the Walk and also acting as an intermediary between community residents and Salwan and retail outlets, addressing any complaints, needs, and requirements residents may have regarding retail.

Salwan manages relations with internal stakeholders—including individual homeowners, corporate tower owners, and hotel owners and operators—in addition to external stakeholders, such as the Dubai Municipality, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, Empower (district cooling company), and private security companies.

All owners sign a master community declaration binding them to community rules and regulations in addition to an annual service charge payable to Salwan. To manage the service charges, a freehold owner association was established, encompassing representatives from the four different stakeholder groups: residents, retail owners,

hotels owners, and office space occupants. Accordingly, the association acts as a facilitator between Salwan and property owners and occupants to increase accountability in managing the service charge fund.

EXPERIENCE GAINED

Dubai Retail is currently working on addressing two challenges facing the Walk. The first is the lack of sufficient parking. Due to its unexpected popularity, the venue experiences heavy traffic—especially during weekends and public holidays. Thus, parking spaces are insufficient to accommodate traffic generated by both residents and visitors.

The second is the inaccessibility—both visual and physical—of the upper plaza level. When the Walk was designed there was not enough retail space on the ground floor, and consequently, some residential units on the upper plaza level were converted into stores. However, retail stores on the upper level are not clearly visible from the ground level and, as a result, get limited foot traffic.

To address this issue, Dubai Retail is following a number of strategies, including replacing upper plaza shops with service-oriented outlets such as pharmacies, offices, and nurseries, enhancing vertical connections between the ground level and the first level, and improving signage to divert users to the upper level.

To date, the Walk is the only outdoor retail street on Dubai’s beachfront. It challenges the local bias for indoor shopping malls and proves that, with sensitive design, outdoor shopping in Dubai is possible and popular even during the hot summer months.

PROJECT DATA		
LAND USE INFORMATION (JBR)		
Site area (hectares/acres): 72/178		
Gross leasable retail area (square meters/square feet): 69,064/743,403		
Number of levels: 2		
Number of parking spaces: 10,790		
LAND USE PLAN (JBR)		
Use	Area (Hectares/Acres)	Percentage of Site
Buildings	10.6/26.2	15
Paved areas	9.9/24.4	14
Landscaped areas	21.2/52.4	29
Dedicated space	30.3/75	42
Total	72/178	100
RETAIL TENANT INFORMATION (The Walk)		
Classification	Number of Stores	Total Gross Leasable Area (Square Meters/Square Feet)
Food and beverage	84	24,608/264,881
Clothing and accessories	67	11,916/128,273
High tech and electronics	4	2,545/27,395
Neighborhood retail	15	3,579/38,525
Home furnishings	16	4,543/48,901
Hobby/special interest	28	6,295/67,766
Gifts/specialty	29	2,717/29,247
Personal services	68	13,143/141,473
Total	311	69,348/746,461

MAJOR TENANTS (The Walk)	
Tenant Name	Space Occupied (Square Meters/Square Feet)
Virgin Megastore	1,617/17,416
Saks Fifth Avenue	1,510/16,264
Boutique 1	1,354/14,585
Singways and Driade	916/9,870
Al Maya Supermarket	750/8,073
DEVELOPMENT COST INFORMATION (JBR)	
Total Development Cost: \$1,902,173,913	
DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE (JBR)	
Site acquisition: July 2003 Planning started: 2004 Approvals obtained: 2004 Construction started: 2004 Leasing started: 2005 Project opened: 2008	

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

From Dubai Airport: Take Sheikh Zayed Road E11—the main airport road—heading south toward the city center. After traveling 29 kilometers (17.7 mi), take exit 29 (Marina Mall). Stay in the left lane of the exit, which will connect to a bridge leading to Jumeirah Beach Residence and the Walk, traveling around 0.6 kilometer (0.3 mi).

Driving time: 30 minutes in nonpeak traffic.

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Illustrated site plan.

