



## **Cubellis and Nakheel Shopping Malls: Rethinking retail today for Dubai's tomorrow**

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Can a shopping mall change how customers relate to retail and to each other? Dubai may be about to find out, thanks to the dramatic plans created by the partnership of Nakheel Shopping Malls and design firm Cubellis.

Nakheel Shopping Malls, a division of Nakheel that is itself a division of Dubai World, is undertaking an ambitious plan of mixed-use development that will remake the image of retail in the Emirate. Cubellis, which has designed retail and mixed-use complexes around the globe, is combining its skills and expertise with a local office to create the next wave of retail in Dubai, merging the latest international development trends with a sensibility that is distinctly Emirati.

### **A Vision**

In April, Nakheel Shopping Malls announced plans to build 13 million s/f of new retail space in five projects, comprising \$80 billion under construction over just four years. To design and create a brand for several of these mixed-use complexes, NSM has enlisted U.S.-headquartered Cubellis and its Dubai-based office, Cubellis Costa International (CCI), to design three of its current projects: Phase 2 of Ibn Battuta Mall, which will double the center's size with new themed courts and an expanded retail mix; Dragon Mart, known as the largest trading center for Chinese merchandise outside of mainland China, is slated to undergo a major make-over to accommodate the growing number of visitors annually; and Great Mall Dubai, a "three-in-one" mall concept combining traditional retail, an entertainment zone and a home furnishings project at International City.

### **The Projects**

Located in the southernmost area of Dubai, Ibn Battuta Mall, which opened in 2005, will double in size with the addition of 1.3 million s/f in Phase 2. Its architectural theme of recreating the adventures of 14th century explorer Ibn Battuta will be continued with Turkey, Yemen, Hejaz, and Morocco added to the environments shoppers can visit (currently China, India, Egypt, Tunisia, Persia and Andalusia). The project thus will remain the largest themed shopping center in the world. Ibn Battuta will become the core of a new community and will connect to Dubai's new metro, creating a transit-oriented mixed-use development similar to Bethesda Row (Md.) in suburban Washington, D.C., and developments surrounding train stations in Europe and Asia. The access to public transit will ease commuting for Ibn Battuta's residents, and also link the project to all of Dubai, avoiding the isolation found in some suburban U.S. master-planned communities.

International City, at Emirates Road and the Dubai Bypass, will continue its growth to become a city-within-a-city, in this case dominated by expatriate residents of Dubai yet integrated within the Emirate as a whole. This diverse community, not coincidentally, will boast a variety of mixed uses, including the Great Mall Dubai, which most accurately can be considered three malls in one.

"Despite their architectural differences, all projects share an adherence to basic principles of

mixed-use design with master-planning serving as the key to success," said Len Cubellis, president and founder of Cubellis. "The firm's expertise and growth serve NSM by providing the capacity to both plan an overall project, and then continue through subsequent development stages, from schematics to design development to construction. That comes from a deep understanding of what has made mixed-use projects and communities work, drawn from years of global experience, as well as a variety of in-house skills in residential, hospitality, corporate workplace solutions and retail." "Over the next 10 to 15 years, Nakheel's new master-planned communities will accommodate some 2.5 million to 3 million people. With the help of the teams at Cubellis, the goal is to create the great spaces of Dubai, in a manner similar to, but not like other great world cities.

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