

The Man Behind Al Maryah Central

The master planner explains his vision for the Abu Dhabi island

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Kenneth A. Himmel has spent the last 35 years working on some of America's most prestigious projects. His list of achievements include New York's Time Warner Center, CityPlace in Palm Beach Florida, and is currently the driving force behind the Hudson Yards development — the largest private real estate project in US history. Yet the project he says he is most proud of is a little closer to home. As President and CEO of Related Urban and Co-Managing Partner of Gulf Related — a joint venture between [American retail giant] Related Companies and the UAE alternative asset management and investment firm, Gulf Capital; — Himmel is masterplanning Abu Dhabi's Al Maryah Central. It is, he says over the phone from New York, "a phenomenal project that is tremendously underrated. By the time the next phase of the Al Maryah is done, I believe it will be one of the top five projects in the world.

It's a bold statement to make, especially in a country that has seen the development of the world's tallest building, monumental manmade islands and the development of the planet's most modern airports, ports and energy installations. Nevertheless, it's not a claim without substance. The 15 million sqft of the centrally based Al Maryah Island already includes The Galleria luxury mall, Rosewood Abu Dhabi hotel and a 500-bed Cleveland Clinic, which in itself is a game-changer for healthcare in the region.

The impressive next phase that Himmel is currently working on will see the development of another shopping and entertainment complex — Al Maryah Central — and two 400,000 sqft integrated towers (set for completion