

Urban Structure Framework Plan, 2030



Facing rapid population growth and with massive developments looming, the island city of Abu Dhabi recognized the need to formulate a comprehensive strategy to ensure that the city evolves in ways that reflect Abu Dhabi's position as capital of the United Arab Emirates. To do this, the Executive Affairs Authority, a branch of the Abu Dhabi government, gathered together a multidisciplinary expert team for two four-day charrettes in February and March 2007 to create a comprehensive Urban Structure Framework Plan that would create guidelines and checks on new developments, outline necessary infrastructure improvements, and recommend adoption of policies commensurate with the city's vision.

The EAA asked two Nelson\Nygaard staff to lead the transportation concepts portion of the project. Despite dense population, the city's transit system is in flux. Many people walk, a result of Abu Dhabi's mixed-use environment, but long blocks and wide roadways often make the pedestrian environment unsafe and unpleasant. Parking dominates downtown, provided free along the outside and inside of blocks.

To address these issues, Nelson\Nygaard created a transportation concept at the regional level including regional highways, high-speed rail, freight rail, and metro service. At the local level, our design included a network of metro service, ferries, streetcars, and buses. One of our main points was the need to create a finer grid of urban streets to break up the city's large superblocks to disperse traffic, improve connectivity, and reduce the freeway nature of Abu Dhabi's

streets. Building many local streets connecting to nearby islands reduces bottlenecks, and access within and between superblocks eases pedestrian circulation. Another important component of our plan included streetscape design to maximize pedestrian safety and comfort, including air-conditioned transit stops, shaded streets, and reduced crossing distances.

Our plans emphasized mobility and accessibility, two characteristics that are essential to any urban environment. As next steps, our recommendations included a short-range bus plan and long-range system-wide transit plan, modernization of city agencies, a parking study, and pilot projects applying transportation concepts at street level, such as a reorganization of one superblock with less parking and more public space.

Project Duration: 2007

Total Budget: \$500,000

Nelson\Nygaard Budget: \$48,000

For more information:

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