

Press release

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Abu Dhabi Central Market to be transformed

Foster + Partners reveals designs to transform Abu Dhabis historic Central Market into a dynamic new quarter with markets, shops, offices, apartments and hotels. One of the oldest sites in the city, Central Market will be a reinterpretation of the traditional market place and a new civic heart for Abu Dhabi. The project comprises a combination of lower-rise, ecologically sensitive levels of retail, roof gardens - forming a new public park - and three towers, with generous underground parking. Pushed to the corners of the site to maximise the ground plane, the cluster of towers creates a striking new urban landmark.

Like a modern version of the souk, the new Central Market will be a city in microcosm. It will unite high end retail and luxury goods shops with individual courtyards and alleys, together with food markets and craft-based trades specific to the region. Avoiding the generic feel of the universal shopping mall, the scheme will fuse the local vernacular with global aspirations.

While the towers relate to distance and skyline, the souk and the lower levels are scaled to the pedestrian. An intimate sequence of streets, alleys, courtyards, balconies and colonnades dissolve barriers between inside and outside, with flexible sliding roofs and walls to enable control of internal environments, and to maximise potential for natural ventilation. Like a patchwork quilt of gridded modules of varying height, the scheme is a highly articulated composition that bridges and unifies two city blocks.

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