

# **Redefining sustainability: Union Properties reveals its quest to achieve carbon neutrality**

EXCLUSIVE Q&A: Amer Khansaheb, Board member & MD of Union Properties PJSC talks about committing to a greener future

In the Middle East, the concept of sustainable construction is emerging as a crucial idea, and developers in the region are recognising the importance of promoting sustainable practices. One such company leading the way in this endeavour is Union Properties PJSC.

With a strong commitment to environmental responsibility, Union Properties has implemented several measures to achieve carbon neutrality and reduce emissions and waste.

In an exclusive interview with Construction Week Middle East, Amer Khansaheb, Board member & MD of Union Properties PJSC gives a comprehensive overview of the company's commitment to a greener future.

## **What specific measures has the company taken to achieve carbon neutrality and reduce emissions and waste?**

We have implemented several actions to reach carbon neutrality and minimise emissions and waste. Union Properties actively promotes the use of renewable energy sources and environmentally friendly raw materials.

This involves completing feasibility studies to validate green energy options, such as incorporating solar energy into its enterprises and managed communities, such as Dubai Autodrome and Motor City. Furthermore, one of its companies, ServeU, has decided to transition to biofuel for transportation-related energy sources.

We further prioritise environmentally friendly practices such as trash management and recycling. Waste management policies and works with local governments have been initiated to ensure proper garbage disposal.

The company is committed to lowering waste-related greenhouse gas emissions and progressively implements new policies to replace single-use products with reusable ones. We strive to improve waste management practices through collaborations with reputable third-party specialists. Furthermore, as part of our attempts to reduce environmental effects, we emphasise energy management, including water saving.

**How does the company integrate renewable energy sources into its operations? Can you provide examples?**

As part of its environmental strategy, we incorporate renewable energy sources into our operations. To validate commercially viable green energy alternatives, feasibility studies are carried out. For example, the organisation has looked into incorporating solar energy into its operations and managed communities. This initiative seeks to utilise clean energy while decreasing dependency on non-renewable sources.

The company's dedication to eco-friendly solutions is demonstrated by its shift from conventional transportation energy sources to biofuel and compressed natural gas (CNG), thus contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy consumption. ServeU, a subsidiary of the company, has also made advancements in adopting renewable energy alternatives. These activities contribute to the company's operations taking a greener, more ecologically friendly approach to energy consumption. Additionally, as part of their efforts to reduce environmental impact and boost energy efficiency, Union Properties switched from conventional lighting to sustainable lighting across all its real estate assets.

In keeping with our environmental goals, our subsidiary Dubai Autodrome, a multipurpose venue for motorsport and entertainment activities, has also installed solar panels to drive energy efficiency. The energy produced from these panels are used for powering the racing competitions held, as well as for the facility's daily operations.

This 2.8 MWp solar power project contributed to the facility's energy needs since September 2022. The panels installed provide 4,751,470.4 kilowatt-hours of energy annually, lowering CO2 emissions

by 2,055 metric tons per year. The reduced emissions are equivalent to annual emissions from 443 gasoline-powered passenger cars and about 250,031,475 fully charged smartphones.

**What role do automation and digitalisation play in the company's efforts to monitor and improve environmentally friendly practices?**

Automation and digitalisation are critical components of the company's efforts to achieve environmental sustainability. We can monitor, implement, enhance, and report on environmentally friendly practices leveraging latest technologies.

The organisation can effectively address significant environmental topics by making data available and improving operations and processes. Automation and digitalisation provide useful insights and allow for the efficient management of environmental measurements and their consequences.

The organization may analyse environmental data, track progress, and find areas for improvement by employing technology. This data-driven approach enables the organisation to make educated decisions and put initiatives in place to improve environmental performance. Automation improves operational efficiency, minimises resource consumption, and streamlines procedures, all of which contribute to environmentally friendly practices.

**How does the company address energy consumption in commercial spaces and other technical aspects, such as PPE quality and maintenance?**

The organisation recognises the importance of energy usage in commercial environments as well as other technological elements. A group-wide internal audit was done to remedy this. This audit focuses on aspects like PPE quality, PPE maintenance, and business space, all of which contribute significantly to energy use.

The company intends to reduce its environmental footprint by reviewing and improving energy consumption practices in several areas. The internal audit allows the organization to detect energy inefficiencies and design focused improvement initiatives. The company intends to improve its total energy efficiency and lessen its environmental effect by optimising energy usage in commercial buildings and addressing technical elements such as PPE quality and maintenance.

**How does the company manage waste and promote recycling? Are there partnerships with third-party experts or recycling facilities?**

As part of its environmental sustainability efforts, we effectively manage waste and promotes recycling. We have adopted waste management policies and works with local governments to ensure proper garbage disposal. By implementing these practices, the corporation hopes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by waste.

To improve waste management practices, we work with trustworthy third-party specialists that provide essential experience and direction. This collaboration enables Union Properties PJSC to implement better waste management plans and practices. In addition, the corporation is gradually implementing regulations that encourage the use of reusable products, with the goal of replacing single-use items. These activities help to reduce waste and promote a more sustainable approach to resource management.

One of the company's subsidiaries, ServeU, regularly participates in recycling activities. ServeU has been successful in implementing several recycling initiatives, which have reduced the amount of waste transported to the landfills by 40%. Dubai Autodrome works with a third-party waste removal company to ensure proper garbage disposal, especially for automotive-related waste and other consumables. Furthermore, an internal policy was effectively executed within Dubai Autodrome to highlight efforts and initiatives that substantially contribute to waste reduction and pave the way for greener operations.

**What plans does the company have for urban forestation and creating green landscapes in its managed communities? Are there specific targets or initiatives planned for the future?**

In its managed communities, Union Properties PJSC has devised strategic plans for urban forestation and the creation of green landscapes. These plans are in line with the company's vision of creating smart integrated communities that mix modern urban development, connectivity and smart infrastructure with an emphasis on preserving the environment.

Natural counters to greenhouse gas emissions include urban forestation and green landscapes. The corporation is considering large-scale landscaping activities across its managed communities in 2023, like Uptown Motor City and Green Community.

These programmes seek to improve the environmental sustainability of these areas by blending urban growth and natural greenery. By introducing green spaces into its managed communities, the firm encourages a more sustainable and environmentally friendly environment for both residents and tourists.

**Can you provide any specific achievements or certifications related to environmental protection that the company has obtained?**

Union Properties PJSC received important certifications and recognition for its environmental efforts.

The Fitout, one of our subsidiaries, has an approved QHSE policy in accordance with the ISO 14001 Environment Management Standard. As part of this, the organisation has appointed a dedicated team to design detailed waste, water, energy, and recycling policies in line with our authorised ISO system. These policies will be linked to our IMS manual, which covers the specifics of the ISO environment standard. This reaffirms the organisation's commitment to upholding environmental responsibility and adhering to various environmental standards.