

# Report of the Introduction to Urbanism I course for Al Ain Municipality

October and November 2014 || February/April 2015



The assignment with Al Ain municipality was a result of previous successful trainings that were organized by ISOCARP – International Society of City and Regional Planners – for Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council in 2011 and subsequently in 2013/2014. These trainings were conducted by many different ISOCARP tutors and various formats were tested. In result, the modified structure was developed which also was discussed with Al Ain Municipality officials. In result, the final proposal was put together and accepted by Al Ain Municipality Department of Municipal Affairs.

## **Modules that were delivered and follow-up assignment**

This program was intended for the group of professionals who have not been undergoing the training yet. Its scope and content was based on the previously offered model, with the necessary modifications emerging from the assessment of the already completed courses. The objective of it was to provide the Emirati Professionals with an understanding of the principles and practices of effective contemporary urbanism and to enable each participant to use theoretical knowledge in their professional practice.

The training program was composed of two types of teaching activities: lectures and practical assignments (in a form of short design exercises strongly associated with the lecture topics). All of these are organized within the 10 teaching modules, and each of these will be offered over one day. It was also agreed to include an additional, final assignment, to be developed AFTER COMPLETION OF THE THEORETICAL PART OF THE COURSE. The final guidelines for this were developed and introduced to the course participants in early 2015.

The **topics of the theoretical modules** included:

**Evolution of urban form – from past to present** – with analysis of factors stimulating the growth of human settlements and shaping the particular forms of urban development

**Contemporary concepts in urban development** – including key contemporary urban development paradigms with a special focus on sustainable development and “attractive city” philosophy

**Shaping regional and local development policies** – with a special focus on the consequences of uncontrolled urbanization, sprawl and challenging issues for the redevelopment of cities and regions

**Planning and Regulatory Methods** – including the analysis of the types of contemporary planning documents, their scope and role in shaping the city

**Urban Economics and Land-use integration** – allowing the cities to reach a balance between profit-making and provision for complete sustainable communities

**Importance of urban design** – with extensive discussion of the key concepts and models of contemporary urban design and their role in securing a high quality urban environment

**Place-making and public spaces development** – focused on the art of creating lively and exciting community places

**Implementation strategies** – including a discussion of possible development models, tools and instruments which are used in the contemporary urban development practice.

**Elements of a Successful City in Abu Dhabi’s Plans** – including the exploration of urban/social/economic and environmental elements that contribute to a successful implementation of the Abu Dhabi 2030 plan vision.

**Focus on transportation and urban mobility** – underlining the importance of the variety of modes of transport and availability to potential users in a city context and discussing new ways of moving through the city and encouraging people to walk at the same time.

Each module was delivered over the intensive course of four hours, which included 2 hours of lectures as well as 2 hours of workshop assignment. The exact timing and subdivision of contents was decided by the lecturer in coordination with the group of the training participants. The theoretical part took place in October and November 2014 and the works on the practical assignment were conducted in February/April 2015.

### **Final remarks**

The course was attended by 44 Emirati planners. Many of them decided also to take the second stage of this which was the practical assignment on the topic pre-selected by Al Ain Town Planning Sector managers. Therefore, the course brought not only better understanding of the planning issues among the participants but also a couple of the practical ideas and solutions regarding local planning problems which can be implemented in Al Ain planning policies and documents.

The results of the course proved it was worth to get this organized and offered for the Al Ain planners. Many of them had a chance to get acquainted with the entire scope of planning issues which shall effect in making them more efficient and successful in their further work. Also, discussions held with the course participants proved that there is a need for further training, including – besides repetition of the modules already offered – the workshop-based, “charrette-type” intensive program focused on solving the design case within the city. Besides this, there may

be also the need of developing other types of courses including advanced lectures in urbanism as well as others.

ISOCARP along with its partners (both from practice and from academia) would be happy to help in developing any of these courses and programs in future. We would be very happy to assist UAE planning community in developing modern planning design and policy-making abilities as well as with advancing the development of UAE-based planning theory and practice.