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Oman sets sail with mega waterfront project

With a design theme anchored in Omani heritage, Omagine will be developed over a five year plus time frame

- By Manoj Nair, Associate Editor
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• Image Credit: Atiq ur Rehman/Gulf News

- Sam Hamdan, President of Omagine, Inc and Frank J. Drohan, Chairman of Omagine Inc during the interview with Gulf News at Ritz Carlton DIFC.

Dubai: The design elements for Oman's new waterfront development — and in scale its most ambitious to date — are starting to take shape. Located in the Al Seeb locality and close to the international airport, the \$2.3 billion "Omagine" master-development will feature seven pearl-shaped buildings, each of which will have a theme centred on Oman's varied history and culture.

There will be three signature hotels and 2,164 residences in what will be a low-density build-up. But there is land aplenty — 1 million square metres — for the developer to come up with a creation that will "certainly not be just another waterfront project", according to a senior official.

The stakes are high — the operating company Oimage llc has Oman's Royal Court Affairs — representing the personal interests of His Majesty the Sultan of Oman — holding 25 per cent, New York headquartered Oimage, Inc. holding 60 per cent and Oman's \$5 billion Consolidated Contractors International Co. with 15 per cent.

"The concept master plan was finalised on October 2, and which allows for an 18-22 month time frame in which the entire set of details related to the final master plan, the architecture, engineering and project financing requirements will have to be done," said Sam Hamdan, President of Oimage, Inc. "The project's overall time frame will be five to six years.

"For sure, the project will be a low-density one given Oman's strict requirements of a 1:1 split between hotel units (which also includes serviced apartments and chalets) and the residences."

According to Frank J. Drohan, Chairman of Oimage, Inc., "Talks have been initiated with Gulf based entities who wish to come on board as full-fledged investors in this prestige development, and there is also a parallel track with the banks on the financing requirements."

Based on the initial concept designs, how the pearl-shaped building have been conceived are stunning. They will be set at vantage points across the shoreline, itself is shaped in a way that gives the project its distinctive design ethos in the form of the 'Fibonacci Spiral'. "Apart from mathematics, Fibonacci also has roots in Islamic planning processes," Hamdan added.

In effect, the overall development's build-up will be split into two "zones", with the first comprising the "pearls", the hotels and the entertainment component.

But the developer made a point of stating that the project will not end up creating a marina for "hundreds of boats to moor". "What we are planning is an intensely creative and elegant construction, and that's to be maintained right through," Hamdan said.