

## A city built on the love of sport

Not only does sport connect people, but it has the potential to be a multi million dollar driver for the economy, says **Vijay Sajjanhar**, CFO, Dubai Sports City.

Having recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, Dubai Sports City (DSC), the Emirates only sports-inspired mixed-use community, has achieved many milestones over the decade of its existence. CEO Report sat down with Vijay Sajjanhar, CFO, Dubai Sports City, to talk about the intricacies of the creation of a community centered on an active lifestyle.

"I recently remarked that since its inception in 2004, DSC has come up a long way from an undeveloped area -with lots of sand, lizard colonies, and camel farms- to a community that today houses over 15,000 residents" says Sajjanhar, who joined the DSC management team in 2009. "You know that both DSC and Dubai have grown exponentially when upon starting we could see Burj Al Arab from here, but what is visible now is the grand skyline of a booming metropolis of which we are a part."

Vijay Sajjanhar, CFO of Dubai Sports City.



### Solid foundations

With preparations in full swing for the World Expo 2020 taking place around the corner, DSC finds itself located right in the centre of 'new Dubai' and enjoys a 30-minute radius to almost all key destinations in the city, including Downtown Dubai, Dubai South, Jebel Ali, and both international airports.

As an estimated 3.4 million people are expected to make Dubai their home by 2020, DSC aims to target 70,000 residents when completed. In line with these projections, the transport and service infrastructure in DSC has developed in pace to support this growth.

"A major portion of DSC's \$1.5 billion investment went into developing the infrastructure, which is now largely complete," says Sajjanhar. "With around 32 km of road network, over 30 km of water and

sewage pipelines, and enough power for the entire city, DSC has laid solid foundations for a thriving mega-community."



**"We have observed that not only does sport connect people, but the amount of revenue, business and inbound traffic that it generates has the potential to be a multi million dollar driver."**

With connectivity from three major sites - Al Fay road and Hessa street, both of which are being extended by 2020, as well as the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Road, which is the main entrance for the project - the city is accessible from all directions. Add to that its inclusion in the future route of the soon-to-be built Gold Line of the Dubai Metro, DSC is set to speedily integrate itself into the metropolitan network.

### Live life, the ultimate sport

Sporting fixtures and recreational activities continue to be an important driver of traffic for the community. "We have observed that not only does sport connect people, but it is also a significant driver of inbound traffic: a business catalyst. It drives business traffic from beyond the boundaries of the country," Sajjanhar notes.

With around two million square feet of sporting venues, including the 25,000 spectator capacity Dubai International Stadium, DSC has kept its promise to build a sporting lifestyle for its residents. Its most important sports facilities include the Sports Village, home to the Spanish Soccer School and a full-size indoor football pitch, the Rugby Zone with a grandstand for 2,660 fans, and the ICC Academy which features two full-size one-day cricket fields and



holds the accolade of being the only cricket academy in the world to be endorsed by the International Cricket Council. The Sports Village also plays home to the Fit Republic fitness center, which has an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Seasoned golfers get to enjoy rounds at The Els Club golf course, designed by golf champion Ernie Els, while amateurs and enthusiasts alike can hone their skills at the adjacent world-renowned Butch Harmon School of Golf. DSC is also home to the headquarters of the International Cricket Council (ICC), which in its quest for a fresh start chose the community as the most fitting location to relocate.

### Holistic community living

With more young families with school-

aged children moving into the 25 million square feet of villa community at Victory Heights, as well as the surrounding residential developments in DSC, the priority is to increase the capacity of schools and nurseries from the existing 2,000 seats to 5,000 additional places in the near future.

"We also have plans to incorporate more retail units into the community with the development of a promenade area at the Canal Residence West, which is planned for a phased completion in the next three years," adds Sajjanhar. "The first phase of this has already been completed, and features 22 retail outlets of a wide variety, from restaurants and clinics to early learning centers. Al Maya supermarket's opened its 45th outlet in Dubai, which is open 24 hours a day and offers

free home delivery services."

As Sajjanhar explains, "What we really want to convey is that our residents are able to benefit from a holistic community experience where sport becomes a way of life. Like any healthy lifestyle, our mission goes through three stages: planning, delivering, and maintenance. We've successfully planned for a holistic community over the course of the years, and continue delivering with a wide range of sports and lifestyle events for our residents, such as our biannual Pulse Ride off-road cycling challenge. We endeavour to progress by ensuring the quality of all our products is maintained and a full-fledged facilities management company to take care of this project post-development. Like any champion defending their title, that is the true essence of sport." ■