



The Corniche area is being planned as the **Capital City Precinct**, serving as a gateway to the city

# FUTURE FORWARD

**i**n 2010, for the first time in history, more than 50% of humanity is living in cities and this is expected to rise to 70% in only a few decades. Qatar, which has a population close to 1.7 million has around 1.5 million living in ‘metropolitan Doha’, nearly 90% of the total population.

And that is not so bad, says Ian Lyne, Project Manager of Qatar National Master Plan (QNMP), debunking planning theories which stresses on distribution of population evenly across territories.

“High population densities in cities reduce transaction costs, make public spending on infrastructure and services cheaper, and make the generation and diffusion of knowledge easier. In turn, these factors attract the fast growing sectors of an economy into cities,” quotes Lyne from the UN Habitat.

So it is with these factors in mind that the National Plan of Qatar has been formulated. In short, Qatar will soon have a framework that dictates how the country will look.

“The QNMP is intended to guide the physical development of Qatar through to 2032. It was commissioned by the Urban Planning and Development sector of the

*Humanity thrives in cities but only if they learn to live sustainably. Cities will be the focus of the new Master Plan of Qatar. Ian Lyne, the Master Planner in conversation with **Sindhu Nair***



***“Sustainable cities with high liveable indices have a 60:40 ratio of private to public transport. Here, sadly, the ratio is only 90:10”***



**Ian Lyne,**  
Project Manager of Qatar National Master Plan (QNMP)

Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning,” says Lyne.

Lyne is with the QNMP consultant, Oriental Consultants of Japan and works in close collaboration and under the direction of the Ministry.

He is on an exciting mission, as the team is in the final stages of completion of the Master Plan (MP) of the country. “It is anticipated that the MP will be implemented next year subject to the approval of His Highness, the Emir,” he says.

In two words, he tries to describe the MP and comes up with ‘practical’ and ‘visionary’.

“Basically, we have focused on developing new centres, core cities, with higher densities that use a public transit mode for transportation and a competent infrastructure in place with emphasis on public spaces, parks and green buildings.”

### Liveable City

Planners around the world now believe that cities have to be compact. But what is the reasoning behind this new theory? Lyne says that compact cities are the best

sustainable solution, particularly in arid environments, like the one we are in, which is much more fragile.

Higher densities also mean a more robust real estate market he says.

But what makes cities liveable?

“There are liveable city indexes which measure the quality of life. This is measured through various factors like the availability of job opportunities, access to education, healthcare, the quality of the air, environment, access to facilities and amenities, employment rates, crime rates and also a good public transport system, low cost of living and artistic and cultural opportunities.”

At the moment, says Lyne, the evidence is that cities with higher density of population have a higher quality of life and hence a higher liveability index.

So places like London, Singapore, Geneva, which have a higher density (much higher than figures in Doha) also have a high index level.

“There are parts of Doha where the density is incredibly low, where you are putting too much infrastructure to serve a limited population. And this is not sustainable,” he says.

But the new MP does not envision building another Hong Kong (with very high density of population in a small area), but to manage the population for the next 30 years and even out the population distribution.

“After the population has been grouped evenly, the government and the private

sector can supply amenities to service the grouped entities or cities.”

### A city in transit

Analysing the movement of population of the city, Lyne says that most of the economic activity is centred on the downtown area including West Bay. People drive in and drive out of this centre every day and that is not sustainable.

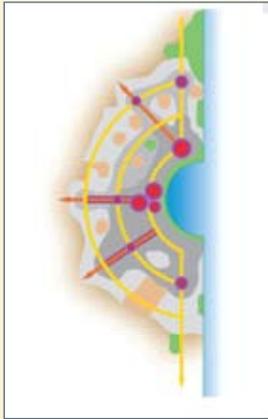
“This is one of the core purposes of the MP, to make people use mass transit networks and to avoid using their cars to drive in and out of cities. The government is committed and a transit system is soon being implemented.”

And will that be difficult to implement? “Difficult but not impossible,” answers Lyne, citing the Dubai Metro System example which reportedly already carries over 100,000 people per day, though “it is not even connected to all parts of the city”.

Moreover Doha is “not so developed” that this move be termed “impossible” and the “main roads are wide enough at most places to accommodate transit systems.”

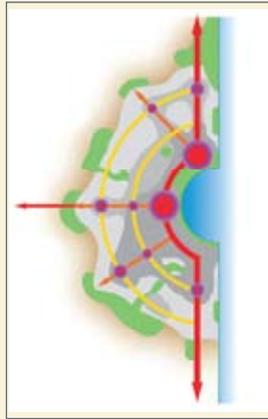
“It is more of a cultural issue and people get attached to their cars,” says Lyne, “but that can be altered over time.”

“You cannot just tell the people to start using the transit system without a proper system in place. When the congestion gets bad and people have to wait for hours in their vehicles, and then you give them the choice of shifting to clean, air



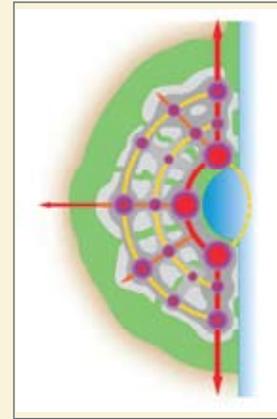
**Doha in 2010**

- Capital City not yet defined
- Other centres lack identity
- Limited public space
- City limits not sustained
- Unsustainable density distribution
- Often congested private transport
- Significant vacant or underused land
- Environmental degradation
- Reducing quality of life



**Doha in 2017**

- Capital City Precinct with two distinctive centres
- Emerging secondary centres
- Increasing public space and parks
- City identity evolving
- City limit defined by agri-eco belt
- Density managed to support centers
- Key transit in place with complete streets
- Vacant land utilised
- Environmental management and support
- Improving quality of life



**Doha in 2030 or earlier**

- Capital City Precinct and three centres
- Developed secondary centres
- Extensive public space and parks
- Distinctive City identity
- City limit contained by agri-eco belt
- Density, land use and transport synched
- Extensive transit system and public realm
- All land utilised efficiently
- High quality environmental resources
- High quality of life

conditioned mass transit that is efficient and saves time, it makes the choice easier for everyone”.

“Take the case of London, there has been a huge shift since they introduced the congestion charges where the tax levied from this was used to provide better public transports and it shows. The buses that run through the city are efficient and are now in great demand,” says Lyne.

A metro system is being planned by Qatari Diar and Germany’s DB International, but it will take some time to be

functional says Lyne.

“That is a long-term plan; it will take at least 20 years to be fully developed. But a rapid bus transit system is also being planned. That means buses that run in dedicated lanes. This is faster, almost the same speed as the metro, and easier to put in place as it is programmed and runs on existing roads and could be in place in two to three years.”

Mowasalat is a rapidly developing transit company and is keen to see the results of investing in the bus rapid transit sys-

tem and this will visibly reduce the air pollution, if used right. This system will first go through a feasibility study on one of the routes before it gets implemented. “And if the study works we will use it first on major radial routes.”

“If we can get this working, we want more and more people to use the transit on those routes than the journey on the C and D Ring roads can continue to be on private vehicles while the centres are made self-sufficient and all amenities are provided within walking distances.”

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAFFIC

According to Lyne there is the need for advanced traffic management and he suggests some key strategies:

**1 Sequencing traffic lights:** Using advanced and efficient traffic management systems, getting better use out of the existing road space. Avoiding the platooning of traffic,

congestions near the signals and unused road space in between. The secret is to keep the traffic moving at a safe and consistent speed.

**2 Congestion charging or parking restrictions:** You have to make it more difficult to take your car out but then this has to be after a fairly

good alternate mass transit system is in place. This has to happen in parallel.

**3 Rapid bus transit:** This is being planned and will be implemented after feasibility studies. Mowasalat is willing to invest in this mass transportation system and already provides efficient bus services.

## MASTER PLAN IN POINTS

- 1 Develop new centres and provide amenities in each of them to match their population.
- 2 Develop a Capital City Precinct, a gateway to the city. The Corniche area could serve as a 'front door' of sorts where all the important buildings are situated and heads of state could be invited for meetings.
- 3 Another major factor is environmental management. Areas identified as fragile areas should be kept protected. These areas are usually demarcated by the Ministry of Environment and it includes, almost the whole of the west coast, QP managed areas, the north of Doha where there is ground water which needs to be protected, the coastal zones, etc.
- 4 Getting more public spaces. More parks in and around the city. Access to parks to be made easier from every part of the city.
- 5 Create more spaces that have cultural significance, like the Souq Waqif, which is immensely popular.
- 6 Planning guidelines and standards to be made which is to be followed by anyone who is going to build in those areas.
- 7 Repair the not-so-good buildings and emulate the good ones. Try to avoid large scale demolition but manage the renewal in a phased way.
- 8 MP is expected to go for review by April 2011 and will be adopted, hopefully, in six months.

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“Sustainable cities with high liveable indices have a 60:40 ratio of private to public transport. Here, sadly the ratio is only 90:10,” says Lyne and the MP will try to change that.

The plan envisaged is to have new metropolitan centres along the fringes, so that these cities become self-sufficient in terms of amenities provided and even jobs within the various municipalities.

These centres will have shops, hospitals and business areas located within close proximity to the people they serve.

“This pattern of polycentric cities has been proved successful in mature cities,” he says, “with people shifting jobs to centres where they live reducing the cost of living and their impacts considerably.”

But isn't the country too small to cater to such polycentric cities?

“According to figures from GSDP, Qatar is expected to have a population of at least 2.3 million in 2032, with close to 1.6 million staying in Doha, and this figure is close to the population in Frankfurt or downtown Singapore, and

both of these cities have been following the same pattern, of densely populated cities with an efficient transit system between the centres,” argues Lyne.

“There is not going to be massive development for the centres but it will be a progressive change. They are already being put in place but it is consolidating what is happening and to put the land use and transport system coordinated to put the MP in action”.

“When you make a long range plan, it is normal to have a Strategic Plan, this has to be planned for 30 years. Transportation or the Metro system is a part of the Strategic Plan. We also have Spatial Development Plans which are detailed plans for the first five years, under this comes the centre developments. We have also envisioned a ‘Moving beyond Carbon’ in 2030 as stipulated by the National Vision,” says Lyne.

It is going to be a long process, a strenuous effort for Lyne and his team, but the MP will ensure that Qatar is on the map of liveable cities and a great place to live and work. ■