

Barwa and Qatari Diar develops the first performance-based sustainability rating system in the Middle East

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Barwa Real Estate Company (Barwa) and Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company (Qatari Diar) have announced a groundbreaking partnership with TC Chan Center for Building Simulation and Energy Studies at the University of Pennsylvania (USA) to introduce the Middle East's most comprehensive 'green building design' rating system for all Barwa and Qatari Diar projects.

'Barwa, Qatari Diar and TC Chan Center have developed the first ground-up Performance-Based Sustainability Rating System in the Middle East to be applied in Qatar (QSAS) to create a sustainable built environment that minimizes ecological impact while addressing the specific regional needs and environment of Qatar,' announced Dr. Yousif Al-Horr, Barwa President of Strategy and Investment, Barwa Real Estate Co.

'QSAS will allow Barwa and Qatari Diar to take the lead in addressing critical issues related to regional and national energy efficiency policies, reducing carbon emissions, minimizing ecological impacts, and ensuring high indoor environmental quality. By developing our own system that adheres to international standards and addresses sustainability goals specific to the area, Barwa and Qatari Diar will serve as a premier example for companies in the region and the world,'

added Dr. Yousif Al-Horr.

'Developing QSAS based on local needs while leveraging best practices is a definite advantage, especially for regions where environmental, economic, social, and cultural conditions are unlike other areas in the world, factors such as desertification, scarcity of water, pedestrian connectivity, and cultural heritage/identity are either omitted or unsuitably addressed,' says Eng. Mohamed Al-Hedfa, Deputy CEO Business Development, Qatari Diar.

'Other primary QSAS advantages include learning from established global best practices, all categories, criteria, and measurements are defined to be performance-based and quantifiable, a flexible scoring method which has overcome the limitations of other international rating systems, and complete control over the development, customization, and future modifications or expansion of the QSAS rating system,' added Eng. Al-Hedfa

Barwa and Qatari Diar's announcement came at the start of Global City, a 2-day sustainable urban development forum in Abu Dhabi (UAE), which has attracted more than 1,000 city and political leaders from 43 countries.

'Studying the local situation in Qatar has led to the formulation of value statements that are at the core of QSAS development. Each value statement constitutes a major category in the rating system, subsequently populated by the specific criteria with associated measurements that together quantify the category as a whole. These criteria were weighted according to their environmental impacts. In order to aggregate over different categories, a set of local stakeholders was assembled to assess the relative importance of each value statement, (i.e. the weight of each category).' says, Dr. Ali Malkawi, Director of TC Chan Center, UPenn (USA)

'To derive a rating system that responds to these local priorities, it is important to translate them into a set of value statements. Each statement expresses a particular need of society, such as the need to create a livable urban fabric, the need to conserve water, and the need to safeguard against long-term health risks of the population,' continued Dr. Ali Malkawi

In addition to addressing all locally relevant aspects of sustainability, ecological impact, and green building design criteria, QSAS developed a standalone building energy standard to support Qatar's building energy ratings.

Sustainable, or green, building design focuses on increasing the efficiency of resource use - energy, water, and materials - while reducing building impacts on human health and the environment through better design, construction, operation, and maintenance.

'In the early formulation of QSAS, the project conducted investigations into existing sustainable assessment methods and systems worldwide. Screening strategies were employed to narrow the focus to these frameworks that provide comprehensive building evaluations. The screening process of over 140 systems resulted in over 40 national and international frameworks and rating methods which were further evaluated and narrowed down to six - Bream (UK), Green Globes (Canada), CASBEE (Japan), SBTool (International), CEPAS (Hong Kong) and LEED (USA). These six systems were further analyzed according to their methods and procedures, usability, technical content, measurability and verification, and communicability, then were evaluated on buildings in Qatar. The result was a comparative analysis of the rating systems' achievements and limitations used to inform and set the stage for the initial development of QSAS,' concluded Dr. Ali Malkawi

QSAS allows complete flexibility in future expansions and modifications as well as for the seamless integration between Qatar specific requirements and sustainable goals. The system takes advantage of the best features of the rating systems available worldwide with a focus on the needs and impacts on Qatar and the surrounding regions.

International experts (from USA; Canada; Australia; UK; Netherlands and China) in the area of sustainability rating systems were utilized throughout the development of QSAS to review the system's criteria and provide feedback pertaining to challenging issues. These reviewers were also asked to comment on several specific criteria that informed the decisions made by the core team. This approach allowed QSAS to take advantage of the best factors of earlier established systems while seamlessly integrating the specific requirements and goals of Qatar and the region.

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