



Al Wasl Plaza

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

ADRIAN SMITH + GORDON GILL
ARCHITECTURE

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Al Wasl Plaza was the heart, and identity, of Expo 2020 Dubai and is now the soul of the Legacy Development, District 2020. It serves as the central public space conceived to convene conversation, unite visitors, and provide orientation around a single spatial experience.

SERVICES

Architecture
Master Planning
Urban Design

CLIENT

Expo 2020 Dubai

FUNCTION

Cultural

FACTS

150-meter diameter
65-meter height

Completed for the opening of Expo 2020 Dubai in October 2021, Al Wasl is the historical name for Dubai, meaning “connection” in Arabic. Fitting for the exposition’s theme, “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future,” the space represents Dubai’s history and symbolism through its geometry while introducing the balanced dialogue between nature and technology as a symbol of Dubai’s future. The trellis’ distinctive geometry is based on a recently discovered 4000-year-old Bronze-Age ring found in the Emirates, linking the history of Dubai with the Expo.

Al Wasl’s design intent was to create a “Room-for-Living” as a spatial and experiential platform for unity through gatherings, conversation, and events. The sloped configuration of the garden offers landscaped “rooms” for relaxation, activity, and performances of varied types and scales. At night the structure transforms into an art display as the world’s largest 360-degree immersive projection experience educating, stimulating, and entertaining audiences of all ages, from all walks of life both locally and globally, to create unity, dialogue, and memories.

Designed as a comfortable microclimate, the unique form and materials extend the usable life of the garden year-round. Even during the warmest months, the shaded space, in combination with water features and landscape, provides comfort and a place of respite, quiet, and reflection connecting people to each other, the earth, and the sky.

Since the end of the Expo March 2022, the plaza is continuing to lay a central role—literally and metaphorically—in the exposition’s legacy. The surrounding 10-13 story buildings are being converted into hotels and other commercial uses, complementing the entire mixed-use legacy of the Expo site. The location will further strengthen Dubai’s thriving events scene, having been designed to be adapted to host experiences of all sizes and purposes, whether it be a small, intimate event or a large gathering of up to 10,000 people, such as National Day celebrations.

Al Wasl Plaza will reopen to the public in October 2022.

















