



Navigating Opportunity. Mastering Compliance.

The UAE Real Estate Investor's Playbook

Created and Presented by RE/MAX Smart Concept
Human-led intelligence supported by AI precision.



The Investor's Playbook: A Structured Approach



- 1. The Regulatory Bedrock: AML/KYC & Penalties**
- 2. Investor Due Diligence: A Practical Checklist**
- 3. Developer Intelligence: Classification & Key Players**
- 4. The Transaction Lifecycle: Exit Strategies & Resale**
- 5. Verification In Practice: A How-To Guide**
- 6. Synthesis: The Strategic Value of Compliance**

01

The Regulatory The Regulatory Bedrock

Understanding AML/KYC Obligations &
The Cost of Non-Compliance

Core Obligations for Real Estate Transactions

Scope & Mandates

Applies to Developers, Brokers, Conveyancers, Trust-Service Providers (DNFBPs).

Legal Basis: Federal Decree-Law 20/2018 & Cabinet Decision 10/2019.

Key Duties: Register on goAML, perform KYC, report STR/SARs, maintain records for ≥ 5 years.

UBO & Digital Assets

UBO Transparency: Enforced by Cabinet Resolutions 109/2023 & 132/2023 for beneficial owner disclosure.

Virtual Assets Rule: Transactions must be handled by licensed VARA (Dubai) or FSRA (ADGM) entities. Property settlement must flow through regulated channels.

Penalties for Non-Compliance

Up to **AED 5 million** fine and license suspension.

Risk of banks rejecting funds lacking a clear Source of Funds (SOF) / Source of Wealth (SOW) trail.

02

Investor Due Diligence

A Practical Checklist for Securing
Your Investment

The Essential Checklist for Foreign Investors

Section 1: Identity & Financials

- Passport, Visa, and Proof of Address
- Bank Statements / Proof of Income for SOF/SOW
- For Entities: Memorandum of Association (MOA) & UBO Declaration

Section 2: Project Verification

- Dubai (#D71F30)**: Check Dubai REST (Mashrooi) for developer license, escrow account, and completion %.
- Abu Dhabi (#D71F30)**: Confirm registration and escrow via ADREC / DARI platforms.

Section 3: Contracts & Fees

- Review SPA, Oqood/DARI forms, and assignment rules.
- Verify Fees: Transfer (4% **Dubai (#D71F30)** / 2% **Abu Dhabi (#D71F30)**), Mortgage (0.25% / 0.1%).

Section 4: Operational Checks

- Dubai (#D71F30)**: Use DLD's Mollak index to check approved service charge budgets.
- Confirm Broker License validity on DLD or ADREC portals.

03

Developer Intelligence

Understanding the Market
Landscape & Key Players

The Ecosystem of Government & Semi-Government Developers

Abu Dhabi:

Modon Holding

Aldar Properties (ADX-listed, Mubadala/IHC links)

Dubai:

Dubai Holding Real Estate (integrating Nakheel,
Meraas, Dubai Properties, Meydan)

wasl (DREC group)

Emaar (DFM-listed, ICD stake)

Northern Emirates:

Ras Al Khaimah:

Marjan, RAK Properties (ADX-listed)

Sharjah:

Shurooq (Sharjah Investment & Development Authority)

Key Strategic JVs:

Aldar & Modon: Strategic delivery arms in Abu Dhabi.

Marjan / RAK Properties: Hospitality JVs on Al Marjan Island.

Cross-Border Examples: Emaar Misr, DAMAC London, Arada London (Regal acquisition 2025).

The Yasar Abu Hejleh Developer Classification System

An Independent Framework for Buyer Orientation

Grade	Description / Indicators	Illustrative Examples (as of 2025)
A  - Prime / Institutional	Gov-linked or blue-chip; long delivery record, listed/rated entity; multiple escrowed mega-projects.	Emaar, Aldar, Dubai Holding RE, Nakheel, Meraas, Modon, Marjan, RAK Properties
B  - Established Private	10+ yrs track record, ≥5 delivered communities, consistent quality, strong escrow compliance.	Azizi, Sobha, Danube, Ellington, Imtiaz, Binhatti, Prescott, Samana
C  - Emerging	2-5 projects under development with escrow; limited delivery history but financially sound partners.	Nshama, Tiger, Reportage, Bloom, Arada, Eagle Hills (UAE projects)
D  - New / Boutique	Newly licensed (≤ 2 projects); require extra due diligence on escrow and timeline verification.	Firms added to DLD/ADREC list 2024-25.

**Note: This is not an official government grading system. It is an independent framework developed by Yasar Abu Hejleh for orientation only. For exact registration status and escrow confirmation, use official portals listed in §5.*

04

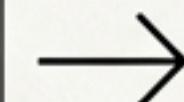
The Transaction Lifecycle

Mapping Exit Strategies and and Resale Liquidity

Mapping the Resale Journey: Key Milestones & Fees

During Construction

- **Action:** Assignment of contract.
- **Prerequisites:** Typically \geq 30-40% of property value paid.
- **Process:** Obtain developer NOC (fee applies), update Oqood/DARI.
- **Cost:** **4% DLD transfer fee applies.**



At Handover

- **Action:** Taking possession of the property.
- **Process:** Snagging report, final account settlement, service charge clearance.
- **Outcome:** Developer issues final NOC for Title Deed issuance.

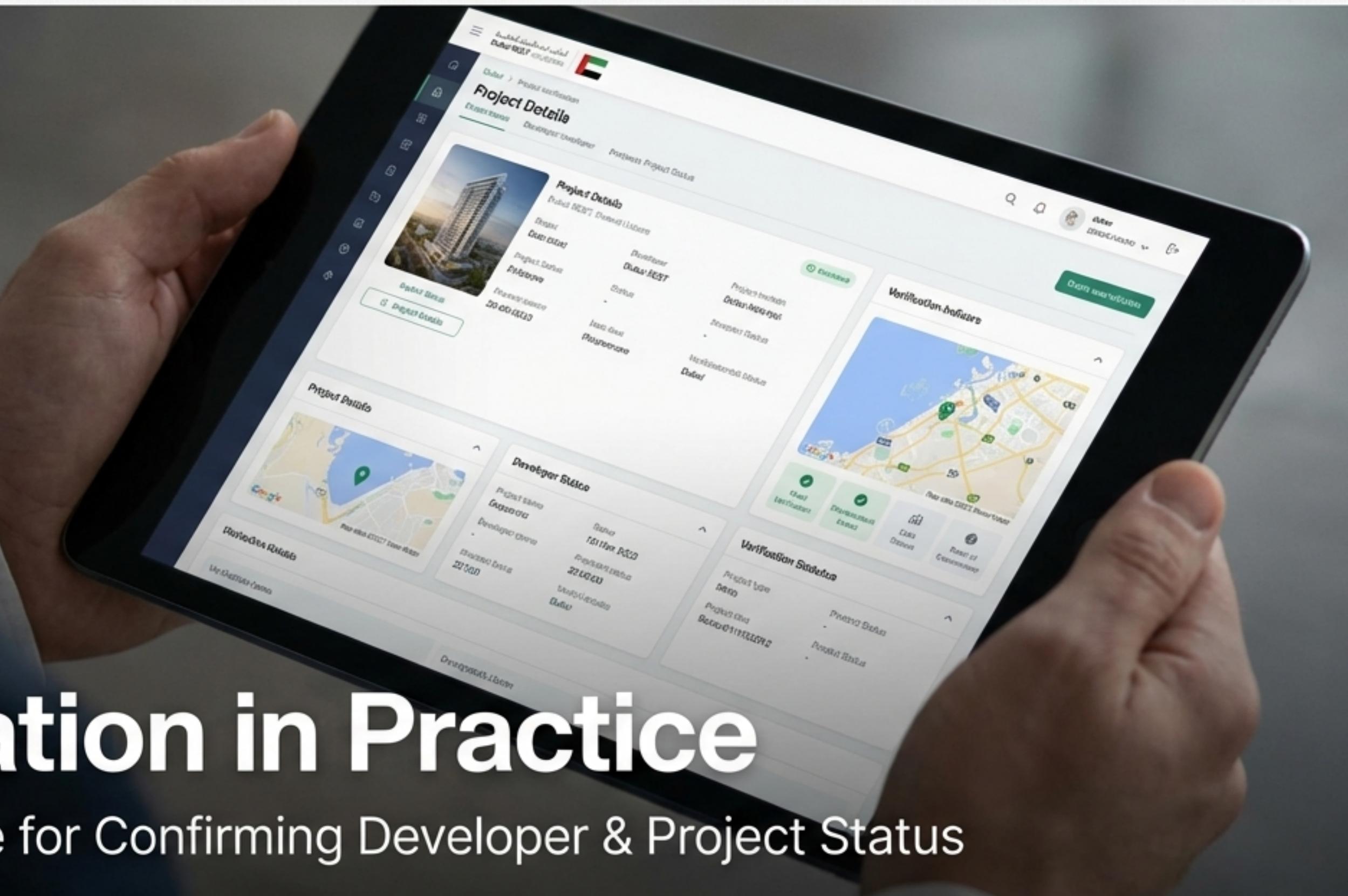


Post-Handover

- **Action:** Standard secondary market sale.
- **Process:** Transaction via DLD Trustee or ADREC/DARI.
- **Cost:** **4% (Dubai) or 2% (Abu Dhabi) transfer fee**, plus agency and any mortgage/NOC fees.

Resale liquidity is driven by developer brand, location, service charge discipline, and infrastructure access.

05



Verification in Practice

A How-To Guide for Confirming Developer & Project Status

How to Identify and Verify New Developers with Escrowed Projects

Dubai (DLD/RERA):

- **Source 1:** Approved Developers list on DLD portal.
- **Source 2:** Mashrooi project status for escrow + % completion.
- **Source 3:** DLD Open Data - Developer Details CSV (filter by registration date).

Sharjah (SRERD):

- **Process:** Request developer extract directly from the SRERD official portal.

Abu Dhabi (ADREC/DARI):

- **Source 1:** Check official Developers Directory.
- **Source 2:** Use Off-Plan Registration services for escrow confirmation.

Other Emirates:

- **Ajman:** View Escrow Accounts services on the Land Dept portal.
- **RAK/UAQ/Fujairah:** Verify via Marjan (for Al Marjan Island) or respective Land & Property/Municipality systems.

06

Synthesis & Strategy

Why Diligence is the Cornerstone of Value

The Strategic Value: Why AML & Escrow Evidence are Your Greatest Assets



Ensures Viability

Guarantees compliance with federal law and secures eligibility for bank financing.



Protects Capital

Safeguards your investment against fraud, especially in cross-border and digital transactions.



Strengthens Exit

Bolsters resale value and liquidity by providing a transparent and credible history of delivery and compliance.

Data Sources & References



Federal Legislation:

Federal Decree-Law 20/2018; Cabinet Decision 10/2019; Res. 109 & 132 of 2023.

Dubai Authorities:

DLD Law 8/2007 (Escrow); Dubai REST, Mashrooi, RERA Mollak.

Abu Dhabi Authorities:

Abu Dhabi Real Estate Centre (ADREC) / DARI developer directory.

Other Emirates:

SRERD (Sharjah); Ajman Land Dept; Marjan (RAK).

Virtual Assets:

VARA (Dubai) Rulebooks 2023; ADGM FSRA Guidance (June 2025).

Corporate Releases:

Dubai Holding RE (2024); Arada Regal acquisition (2025); RAK Properties AGM (2024).