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Global Capital Now Backs The UAE Economy, Not Just Dubai Property

A Gulf News analysis published on 07 September 2026 argues that international investors are widening their focus from individual Dubai buildings to the UAE's broader economy and institutions. The piece cites 6.2% UAE GDP growth ...

MEDIUM	7.5	7 September 2026	7/10
INVESTOR IMPACT	SIGNIFICANCE SCORE	EVENT DATE	SOURCE RELIABILITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

01 Global Capital Now Backs The UAE Economy, Not Just Dubai Property

Gulf News, timed to the opening of IPS 2026 at Dubai World Trade Centre on 07 to 09 September, makes the case that the UAE's investment story is no longer just about towers and waterfronts. The UAE economy grew 6.2% in 2025 to approximately Dh1.9 trillion, with non-oil GDP up 6.8% to Dh1.5 trillion. Dubai's Q1 2026 real estate transactions reached Dh252 billion, up 31% year on year, with foreign investment alone at Dh148.35 billion and 29,312 new investors entering the market. Abu Dhabi recorded Dh117 billion in first half 2026 transactions and Sharjah recorded approximately Dh29.5 billion across 59,460 transactions. For an investor thinking in decades rather than quarters, the relevant point is not any single number. It is that three different emirates are building three different investment propositions on top of one improving national economy, which is a more durable foundation than a single hot property cycle.

- UAE economy expanded 6.2% in 2025 to approximately Dh1.9 trillion, with non-oil GDP up 6.8% to Dh1.5 trillion
- Dubai Q1 2026 real estate transactions hit Dh252 billion, up 31% year on year, with foreign investment of Dh148.35 billion and 29,312 new investors
- Abu Dhabi recorded Dh117 billion in real estate transactions in the first half of 2026, with resident expat and non-resident foreign buyers accounting for 70% of residential sales value
- Sharjah recorded approximately Dh29.5 billion in property trading value across 59,460 transactions in the first half of 2026
- The most recent DLD data shows Dubai sales transactions at AED 34.9 billion in July 2026 across 13,930 transactions, with off-plan making up 69.1% of sales by count
- IPS 2026, the 22nd edition, opened at Dubai World Trade Centre on 07 September, aligned with the Dubai Land Department's vision to attract global investment

THE EVENT

02 What happened, and why it matters

WHAT HAPPENED

Gulf News published an opinion piece on 07 September 2026 arguing that the real story behind UAE real estate is the economy and institutions supporting it, not the buildings themselves. The article was timed to the opening of the 22nd edition of the International Property Show at Dubai World Trade Centre, running 07 to 09 September 2026, which it describes as a real estate investment platform aligned with the Dubai Land Department's vision to attract global investment. The piece cites UAE GDP growth of 6.2% in 2025 to approximately Dh1.9 trillion and non-oil GDP growth of 6.8% to Dh1.5 trillion, driven by trade, finance and insurance, construction and manufacturing. It then walks through property data across three emirates. Dubai recorded Dh252 billion in real estate transactions in Q1 2026, up 31% year on year, with real estate investments of Dh173 billion, an investor base of 48,448 people including 29,312 new investors, and foreign investment of Dh148.35 billion. Abu Dhabi recorded Dh117 billion in transactions in the first half of 2026, with resident expat and non-resident foreign buyers together making up 70% of residential sales value. Sharjah recorded approximately Dh29.5 billion in property trading value across 59,460 transactions in the same period.

WHY IT MATTERS

When a market is being sold on square footage alone, that is a warning sign. When it is being sold on GDP diversification, institutional record keeping and the ability to register, finance and dispose of an asset within a functioning legal system, that is a different conversation entirely. The article's central argument is that sustainable real estate demand needs companies, jobs, entrepreneurs and economic activity behind it, not just investors selling to other investors. If global capital is genuinely allocating to the UAE as a jurisdiction rather than to Dubai as a sector, that reduces the risk that property values are being propped up purely by speculative flipping. It also means the 'Dubai is overheated' argument has to contend with a much wider base of economic activity than a single skyline.

WHO IT AFFECTS

This matters most to you if you are holding, or considering holding, property in the UAE as a long term store of capital rather than a short term trade. It also matters if you are comparing Dubai against Abu Dhabi or Sharjah, since the article makes clear these are not interchangeable markets. Anyone weighing up whether to diversify wealth outside their home country, and specifically whether the UAE offers institutional stability rather than just a good exchange rate on a beachfront apartment, is the intended reader here.

INVESTOR READ

03 Implications, risks and opportunities

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The article's numbers build on a run of strong recent data. Dubai's Q1 2026 transaction value of Dh252 billion, up 31% year on year, sits alongside the Dubai Land Department's more recent July 2026 figures of AED 34.9 billion in sales transactions across 13,930 deals, suggesting the market has continued to see steady monthly activity through the middle of the year rather than a single quarter spike.

IMPLICATIONS

If you are allocating capital for the next 5 to 15 years rather than the next 5 to 15 months, the distinction the article draws matters. A market propped up by flipping is fragile when sentiment turns. A market propped up by trade, finance, construction and manufacturing activity, with Dh1.5 trillion of non-oil GDP behind it, has more places to absorb a shock. The fact that Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah are each building different risk return profiles, rather than all chasing the same investor, also gives you genuine choice within one jurisdiction rather than a single bet dressed up as three. That is worth more to a capital preservation strategy than a headline yield number on its own.

RISKS

Be straight about what this piece actually is. It is a single opinion article from one outlet, not a data release, and the framing is naturally favourable to the market it is describing given its timing alongside IPS 2026. Investment safety, as the article itself concedes, does not mean prices cannot fall, that every developer will outperform, or that every off plan purchase will generate a profit. The 6.2% GDP growth and 31% transaction value growth are strong figures, but strong growth figures can mask concentration risk if too much of that non-oil activity still traces back to construction and real estate itself. Financing conditions also matter here. With the 3 month EIBOR at 4.0% in September 2026, borrowing costs remain a real constraint on buyer affordability regardless of how confident the macro narrative sounds. And with off-plan still accounting for 69.1% of Dubai sales by count as of July 2026, a meaningful share of this market is still forward dated delivery risk, not completed, income producing stock.

OPPORTUNITIES

For an investor already comfortable with the UAE, the diversification the article describes is itself an opportunity. Dubai offers international liquidity and scale, Abu Dhabi offers longer duration capital preservation in specific premium communities, and

Sharjah offers a different price point and a more residential, family led demand base. That means you do not have to force every allocation into one emirate or one asset type to get UAE exposure. The broader point, that capital is starting to price the UAE as a diversified economy rather than a single sector bet, also supports the case for treating a UAE property purchase as one part of a wider wealth protection strategy rather than a standalone speculative position.

WHAT TO WATCH

Watch for coverage and outcomes from IPS 2026 itself, running 07 to 09 September at Dubai World Trade Centre, since the article frames the event as a genuine gauge of where international capital is willing to commit. Beyond that, the more useful signal for you will be whether future Dubai Land Department releases keep showing broad based foreign investment growth, of the kind seen in the Dh148.35 billion figure for Q1 2026, rather than transaction counts alone.

THE BOTTOM LINE

04

What this means for Dubai investors

THE MEANING

For you as an overseas investor, the meaning is simple. The pitch is no longer just 'buy this building because Dubai is growing.' It is 'the UAE economy is growing, and Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah each give you a different way to participate in that growth.' That is a more defensible position to hold capital in through a full cycle, provided you still underwrite the specific asset, the specific developer and the specific financing terms on their own merits rather than borrowing confidence from the national growth story.

> “ *Here's the thing about this kind of article. It is exactly the sort of shift I want to see in how this market gets talked about, because it is closer to how I actually think about it with the people I work with. Nobody who is serious about protecting capital over 10 or 15 years should be buying because a tower looks good in a brochure. You should be buying because there is a functioning economy, a growing non-oil base and a legal system that will still let you register, finance and eventually sell that asset in 10 years' time. What I would push back on is treating one op-ed timed to a property show as proof the argument has already won. The data behind it, 6.2% GDP growth, Dh252 billion in Dubai transactions, Dh148.35 billion in foreign investment, is genuinely strong. But strong data and a settled narrative are two different things, and the EIBOR sitting at 4.0% right now is a reminder that financing costs have not gone away just because the growth story has improved.*

> *Two things are true at once. The UAE's economic base is broader than it was, and that base still needs to be tested asset by asset before you commit capital to it.*
>
> BRADLEY JAMES, DUBAI REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT ADVISOR

SOURCES AND VERIFICATION

Gulf News, 'The UAE's confidence capital: Why global investors are looking beyond property to the nation behind it', Asia Al Qurashi, published 07 September 2026. Dubai Land Department, July 2026 transaction data. Central Bank of the UAE, 3 month EIBOR, September 2026.

Begin the conversation.

Every allocation starts with a candid, numbers-first discussion shaped around your mandate, risk profile and timeline.

Bradley James

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Bradley James is an Associate Director and Senior Investment Advisor based in Dubai, specialising in Dubai real estate, off-plan investment, strategic wealth allocation, portfolio diversification, and relocation and residency planning. He advises private investors and family offices on entering the Dubai market with the same rigour he applies to his own capital.

SPECIALISMS

- Dubai Real Estate
- Off-Plan Investment
- Strategic Wealth Allocation
- Portfolio Diversification
- Relocation & Residency Planning

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SOURCES
Gulf News, 'The UAE's confidence capital: Why global investors are looking beyond property to the nation behind it', Asia Al Qurashi, published 07 September 2026. Dubai Land Depart

SCAN TO MESSAGE