



When 'The Center'—a new shopping complex in Dubai—opens for business this October, it will add new dimensions to the city's shopping facilities, says **Julie Ritter**

Artist's impression of The Center

The centre of attraction

Dubai will soon witness the opening of a prestigious new shopping complex called "The Center" in the Muragabat area on Deira side. As well as bringing a number of much-needed high quality shops to Dubai, the architectural design of The Center will be receiving deserved attention at the opening this October.

Built by Engineering Contracting Company, it is a steel structure open plan design using the traditional dumbbell method which places an arcade of shops between two anchor tenants, in this case Spinneys and Al Souk Al Markazi. The remaining space will be taken by approximately 16 different shops.

The conceptual design proposed by Retail Design Consultant David Otter and made feasible by Osman Audeh, was based on American shopping malls and specially designed with both the retail tenants and shoppers in mind. The steel structure omits the use of pillars inside the building restricting space and design flexibility.

"Most shopping complexes are built before the retail space is rented out. With The Center we've allowed the retailers to choose exactly the size of space they wish

and then designed around their requirements," said Elaine Jones, Managing Partner, Asteco Property Management, managers of The Center.

The overall plot size of The Center is 120,000 sq ft. Of this the built-up area is 77,000 sq ft. Retail space is 55,000 sq ft.

The two anchor tenants—Al Souq Al Markazi with 23,000 sq ft and Spinneys with 15,000 sq ft—have agreed to give certain finishes to their stores to coincide with the prestigious look of the building. In return, Asteco Property Management, based their exterior colour choice for The Center on those of Al Souq Al Markazi and Spinneys by choosing a bright green aluminium parapet to compliment their colours of orange/green and yellow/green, respectively.

Although built on one level, the main entrance to The Center will be elaborated by a projected office block to house the offices of Asteco Property Management. Through this the shoppers will arrive at a 'T' shaped arcade giving immediate entry to adjacent shops and to the supermarket and department store at either end of the arcade. Direct entry from the carpark will

also be provided for the supermarket and department store.

For the shopper, circulation will be free-flowing with no interior seating. Easy access has been made for pushchairs, wheelchairs and shopping trolleys and full facilities are available for the handicapped. Suspended ceiling plantation will add to the pleasant atmosphere. Apart from its aesthetic qualities The Center has been designed to be longlasting and energy-saving. The aluminium sandwich panels for roof claddings and double glazed windows will greatly assist the fully airconditioned building in keeping the interior cool.

"By using this modern method, the steel structure only needs to be protected against erosion with a special protection paint every three or four years and if well maintained the building has an indefinite life span," said architect, Osman Audeh.

Building of The Center began only early this year. "We are building as quickly as it is being designed and are right on schedule thanks to the remarkable teamwork between Engineering Contracting Company, ourselves and our clients," said Mr Audeh.

The location of The Center, in the Muragabat area close to the Dubai Cinema, will provide adequate shopping facilities for the nearby neighbourhoods of Hamriya, Safia, Abu Hail and Al-Buteen and for those further afield a chance to shop at ease and buy top of the range high quality products which previously could only be purchased abroad.