



Courtesy About Smart Cities

The Happiest City On Earth

By

Mark McGee

Where is the “happiest” city on earth? A sheik in Dubai believes he is building that city.

We are making Dubai the happiest city on earth by embracing technology innovation making Dubai a more seamless, safe, efficient and personalised city experience for all residents and visitors. [Smart Dubai 2021](#)

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum believes Dubai will be the “happiest” city on earth because it will be a “smart” city.

Smart Cities

Sheikh Maktoum is not the only wealthy person on earth working on the idea of a “smart and happy” city. Billionaire Bill Gates and Blockchain magnate Jeff Berns are also working on their versions of smart cities. Can they do it? Can these wealthy people build cities that are truly “smart” and “happy” or might we need to look somewhere else to find a really *SMART* and *HAPPY* city? Let’s take a closer look.

First question: what is a “smart” city?

To understand something as large as a “smart city,” let’s begin with something smaller — something you may be holding in your hand right now — a “smart phone.” Why is your phone “smart?” Is it because your phone makes “phone calls” to friends and family? The phone my grandmother used 70 years ago did that, so it must be more than that. IBM invented and manufactured the first smart phone in the early 1990s. It linked to the Internet in 2001 and has grown in ability and popularity in the last 20 years.

One definition of a *smart phone* is “a mobile phone that performs many of the functions of a computer, typically having a touchscreen interface, internet access, and an operating system capable of running downloaded applications” (Oxford Languages). That’s certainly more sophisticated than the old-fashioned phone my grandmother used when I was a little boy. Smart phones are small computers that connect to the Internet and also make phone calls and send text messages.

Question: have smart phones made you happier? Some people would say yes; others would say no. Being “connected” has positives and negatives. Might that be similar to what we find in a smart “city?”

Smarter?

Dubai is one of almost 140 cities in 48 countries around the world that claim to be building “smarter.” Other *smart cities* include:

- Amsterdam
- Barcelona
- Berlin
- Boston
- Dublin
- Hong Kong
- Jaipur
- Jakarta
- Kigali
- London
- Montreal
- Moscow
- Seoul
- Shenzhen
- Singapore

- Sydney
- Stockholm
- Tokyo
- Vienna
- Washington D.C.
- Zurich

According to [About Smart Cities](#) key drivers to making cities smart include:

- Standard industrial and digital sectors that cover Sensors production
- Internet of Things coverage
- Green and sustainable energy sources usage
- Resources used for city infrastructure, traffic management, and construction

The criteria for selecting smart cities is two-fold:

- Cities should be of small or medium size
- They should be covered by accessible and relevant databases

In answer to the question, **why smart cities**, we find this explanation:

Against the background of economic and technological changes caused by globalization and the integration process, global cities face the challenge of combining competitiveness and sustainable urban development simultaneously. Very evidently, this challenge is likely to have an impact on issues of Urban Quality such as housing, economy, culture, social and environmental conditions. [Global Smart City Strategies](#)

Smart Dubai

Let's look more closely at what Dubai is doing to build a smart city as an example. You can click on links above to read about other smart cities.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Smart City vision of Dubai is to make Dubai “the happiest city on Earth.” It is on track to conduct paperless transactions by this December (2021). It delivers city services through apps and encourages gathering and sharing of data “to develop and customize services for customer happiness.” It collects road tolls through RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) and transport service payments through Nol smart cards (a credit-card sized contactless smart card that contains a stored value).

Here are some of the smart city achievements and goals for [Smart Dubai](#):

- Smart Dubai Office has more than 130 initiatives in partnership with government and private sector entities (e.g. Dubai Data Initiative, Dubai Blockchain Strategy, Happiness Agenda, Dubai AI Roadmap, Dubai Paperless Strategy)
- Smart Dubai Index is a set of indicators that will highlight the achievements of Smart Dubai and illuminate future opportunities
- Paperless Strategy to build integrated paperless government infrastructure that would eliminate more than one-billion pieces of paper per year
- Dubai Blockchain Strategy for three strategic pillars: Government Efficiency, Industry Creation, and International Leadership
- Dubai Happiness Agenda includes the Happiness meter which represents a measurement of the happiness goal. A centralized data dashboard shows a map of happiness across the city each day through happiness metre touch

points. Those points relate and rank customer experiences within industry sectors and geographic areas. The Dubai Government uses a Happiness Portal to measure the happiness of Dubai's residents and visitors.

- Dubai Smart City Accelerator supports startups that are developing innovating solutions to help make the city smarter and deal with challenges from congestion, waste and energy for the purpose of improving the quality of people's lives using smart buildings, smart transportation, intelligent logistics, smart lifestyles, and smart planning and maintenance (e.g. IoT and Connectivity, Urban Automation and Mobility, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Open City Data, Sustainable Cities and Living, Smart Government, Smart Retail Industry)
- Services 1 Centre provides a platform for co-creation and delivery of government services using artificial intelligence (AI). It delivers integrated government services as bundles (e.g. wedding bundle, new born bundle, business bundle) without the need for customers to visit other government service centres.

- DubaiNow App to pay for utilities, transportation, religion (Islam), health, residency, security and justice, education and business
- Sustainable Cities that conserve energy and harness renewable energy using technology and architectural designs
- Smart Car Rental Service enables customers to rent cars for short periods not exceeding six hours via Smart Apps

Strategies that support the Smart Dubai plan include:

- Smart Dubai 2021 Strategy
- Dubai Autonomous Transportation Strategy
- Dubai 3D Printing Strategy
- Dubai Data Strategy
- Dubai Cyber Security Strategy
- Dubai Blockchain Strategy
- Dubai Internet of Things Strategy
- Dubai eCommerce strategy

Happiness at the Core

Happiness is at the core of the Smart Dubai Strategy. Here are some thoughts about that from the [Dubai Smart City](#) website:

Our strategy for a Smart Dubai has happiness at its core. As the city is transformed, we are using the Happiness Agenda as a one-of-a-kind, scientific, and systematic approach to raising and sustaining happiness levels and measuring the impact on our residents and visitors. We hope to discover people's wants and needs, to inspire positive change, to build awareness and encourage self-reflection, and to predict the impact of happiness by using our city-wide Happiness Index. To help us achieve our goals, our Happiness Champions are a key part of this integrated system to spread happiness through all parts of our society. Leading the implementation of the Happiness Agenda, they are working as ambassadors across a growing range of government- and non-government entities, embedding happiness into the DNA of these

organizations. Our ultimate aim is to create a happy, positive experience for all, one that is seamless, safe, personalized, impactful, and efficient.

Overall, the Happiness Meter presents the easiest interface towards the user who will mark one of three cases, (1) satisfied, (2) neutral, (3) dissatisfied, generating simple but most valuable output data for the hosting entity. Through its simplicity and ease of use, the Meter integrates seamlessly into the experience flow of residents and visitors of Dubai while creating meaningful data towards the goal of 'making Dubai the happiest city on earth.'

You can read more about the [Smart Dubai Strategy here](#). You can read about the strategies of [other smart cities here](#).

Other “Smart Cities” also have happiness as an objective. Here are four other examples:

The ‘dynamics of the city’ and the ‘participation of citizens’ are the factors that make a city smart. A ‘smart city’ is the product of mankind’s agony and introspection on how to make life happier and fuller, and the output of both the city and the citizens by actively realizing and using state-of-the-art technologies. Moreover, a smart city has become the most useful method to enhance the quality of life of citizens and an efficient tool to resolve global urban challenges. Beyond its dominant status as the best global e-government in the world for seven consecutive years, Seoul is now leaping forward as a leading smart city in the world based on big data and new technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. [Seoul](#)

The Songdo Knowledge and Information Industrial Complex contains world-class RFID/USN facilities and provides high-quality services based on sharing. The city forms the basis for establishing a cluster network of the RFID/USN industry, including inviting core corporations, accumulating support facilities, etc.

The U-City International Conference that has been held since 2008 provides the future direction of future cities, city regeneration models and shares the vision of a happy future technology city. By hosting international meetings related to U-IT and carrying out Songdo tours, the IFEZ is appraised to establish its status as a 'Global Leading U-City.' [Songdo](#)

City of diverse, vibrant, and inclusive economy — A City of sustainable infrastructure and resource management — A City of affordable homes and neighborhoods — A City of enchanting nature and diversity — A City of happy and healthy residents — A City of endearing character and local identity. [Kigali](#)

Mission 1

To make people happier, healthier, smarter and more prosperous, and the city greener, cleaner, more livable, sustainable, resilient and competitive. [Hong Kong](#)

The Happiest City on Earth – Really?

Can human beings really create “happy” cities? Happy cities would need to have happy citizens to fulfill that claim. Is that humanly possible given what we know about the human condition? I think most people will agree that cities in history have not lived up to the ideal of having happy citizens. Unhappy citizens can and have led to societal collapse through the ages.

GraceLife has another ongoing series, *Warning and Lament: The Collapse of Civilizations*, that is addressing the fact that most civilizations have and will eventually collapse. Societies change dramatically because leaders and citizens are not able to build and maintain “happy” societies.

I do want to share some hope with you. There is a city in our future that will live up to and exceed the claim of “Happiest City on Earth.”

The New Jerusalem

There is a City that will contain the highest technology known in the universe and perfect societal justice and equity. However, it's not a city that humans can make. This Smart City is far above and beyond human capabilities. That City is the **New Jerusalem**.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Revelation 21:1-4

The New Jerusalem will be the true Smart City where God will live with human beings in a perfect city located between Heaven and Earth — a new Earth that God will create after the first earth passes away. This City will be perfect in every way. God will live with His people. He will abolish death along with its accompanying sorrow and pain. All of the “former things” that cause death, pain and sorrow will have passed away. The citizens of that City will be happier than anyone can now imagine.

God showed a human being a vision of that City more than 19-hundred years ago. Here’s what the Apostle Paul saw in the vision:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most

precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh

chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the

tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Revelation 21:9 – 22:5

Size

The New Jerusalem, based on John's description, will be an extremely large cube – between 14-hundred and 15-hundred miles high, long and wide (Its length, breadth, and height are equal). That's about two-million square miles of ground space – an amazingly large city. Nothing like that exists on earth today, especially when we consider that the City will be as high as it is long and wide. It would be almost twice the size of the country of India (1.24 million square miles) and more than half the size of the entire Middle East (3.5 million square miles). That's just the ground space.

The City will be made with pure gold, like clear glass, and be surrounded by a giant wall made of precious stones. There will be twelve gates – each one made from one giant pearl. Lighting will not be an issue anywhere in the City because Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, will be its light. There will be no need for a sun or moon. Nighttime will not exist in the New Jerusalem. It will always be daytime with the Light of Christ. As for a Temple, God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple.

The City will have giant gates that bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. Nothing that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie will be allowed into the City. Only those people whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be allowed into the City.

The fact that God will create a new heaven and a new earth, that the New Jerusalem will come down out of Heaven from God and that the kings of the earth will bring their glory and honor into the City leads me to think the New Jerusalem may either sit on the earth or hover a short distance above it.

That's based on the idea of the kings of the earth having easy access to the New Jerusalem through its gates.

Some Bible students believe the New Jerusalem may be a floored system, meaning multiple floors from ground level to the top of the City. Depending on the ceiling height of each floor, a structure that is 14-hundred to 15-hundred miles high could hold an enormous number of floors.

John's vision didn't reveal that particular detail, but whether it is a floored system or an open space vertically my thought is that there may be a way for people living in the City to access the top. The City coming down from Heaven and sitting on or near the earth may be a type of City-bridge between Heaven and the new earth. Even as we see the angels ascending and descending between Heaven and earth, citizens of the New Jerusalem and the new earth may also have that kind of access between Heaven and their home on earth or in the New Jerusalem.

Comfort

Living comfortably is an important aspect of the New Jerusalem. First, God is the architect. Jesus told His disciples that there are “many mansions” in His Father’s house and that He was returning to Heaven to prepare a place for them. (John 14:2-3). Think about that. The Creator of the universe is preparing a place for His children. That is amazing!

The description of the City’s beauty is beyond anything we’ve ever seen on earth. Gold and precious stones are used as building materials. The street of the City will be pure gold, like transparent glass. A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, will proceed from the throne of God and the Lamb (Revelation 22:1). The Tree of Life (yes, from the Garden of Eden) will be in the middle of the great street, on either side of the river, and will bear twelve fruits – possibly a different variety every month. The leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the nations. There will be no more curse (see Genesis 3). The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the City and His

servants will serve Him. They will see His face and His name will be on their foreheads.

The New Jerusalem is built with beauty and comfort in mind. Plenty of food to eat and water to drink; perfect temperature and atmosphere. It will be a City full of great things to see and do. Though there won't be marriage in Heaven (Matthew 22:29-30), I think we'll remember relationships we had during our lives on earth – like parents, relatives, spouses, children, grandchildren, friends, etc. I believe we'll have the opportunity to dine together, talk about the greatness of God and His wonderful love for us and share our adventures in serving God. I believe we'll have the opportunity to meet and talk with people we read about in the Bible, believers from all ages and the angels who serve God and us (Hebrews 1:14). I think Heaven, the New Jerusalem and the new earth will be filled with music and laughter as we praise God and rejoice in Him continually.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit will be everywhere in the City (e.g. love, joy, peace, goodness). All of the residents will be very happy and get along perfectly. We will experience true justice and equity under God's rule. We will remember the good things from our earthly experience, especially our salvation through Christ's death and resurrection.

Everything we read in the Bible about the future for Israel and the Church is about peace and joy and great comfort. We see all of the promises come together in the final chapters of Revelation.

Purpose

The idea of comfort is appealing (e.g. no more death, pain or sorrow), but purpose is also important. The idea that believers will sit aimlessly on clouds all day playing harps has no basis in fact. Everyone will have important work to do as they serve God and reign with Him forever and ever. The best thing about the new heaven and earth and New Jerusalem will be meeting Jesus Christ in Person and serving Him. We will also “reign” with Him, which is an exciting and hopeful thought.

What we know about serving God and reigning with Him concerns the new heaven and earth and the New Jerusalem. There will be billions of people living in the New Jerusalem and many more living on earth. What we don't know about serving God and reigning with Him is what plans He has for the future. Will God create new universes with new adventures for His subjects? He certainly could. While I see no evidence for the many “multiverse” theories in vogue today, that doesn't mean God couldn't create new universes and new worlds for His people to explore and rule. What we

see in Revelation 21 and 22 may be all there will ever be in the future, but there may be more. That's one of the exciting things about serving the King of kings and Lord of lords.

*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.
Deuteronomy 29:29*

Residency Requirement

The key to becoming a resident of the New Jerusalem is this — “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” Only people whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will be allowed to live in the New Jerusalem. That leads to an obvious question: how do I get my name written in that Book?

The answer is easy and hard at the same time. It’s easy to understand, but hard to do. We must humble ourselves, repent of our sins and confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead. The promise is that we “will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:9-10)

The Real Smart City

The New Jerusalem is the real Smart City that we should yearn for during our life on earth. What we decide now will determine whether we will live in that wonderful City or another place where we wouldn't be happy or comfortable.

Humans have been trying to build great cities and empires for thousands of years and they fail continually and miserably. They cannot do it because of a fatal flaw in the planning and building process. That fatal flaw is sin. People sin. They can't help it. Sin is part of our human nature. But there is an answer. Jesus died for our sins. He paid the price with His blood shed on the cross. Living in the real Smart City forever starts at the Cross.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1-2

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