

COMMERCIAL FITOUTS IN DUBAI

Dubai is one of the most influential places to be based for all kinds of commercial businesses – from SAAS startups, to fashion retailers and chic eateries and bars.

How we can help you to create a remarkable commercial space in Dubai

We've created this Dubai fitout guide especially for those who are planning a new commercial venture, or improving an existing business premises. As a trusted team of architects, designers, and builders, we provide a turn-key solution, where the space you have envisioned is brought to life by our in-house professionals.

We work closely with business founders, key stakeholders, and wider teams to plan and implement fit outs across the city. We've got specialist expertise in fit outs for retail stores, restaurants, and corporate office spaces, and we're here to help our commercial customers to create a space that showcases their business in the best light.

Follow the steps detailed in this five part guide, and add unmatched value to your commercial premises with RVA.



DUBAI'S COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE

Dubai is home to several key business districts, including Al Quoz, Downtown Dubai, Alserkal Avenue, Dubai Media City, and Dubai Silicon Oasis. In each area, you'll find a mixture of corporate, hospitality, and retail enterprises. Downtown Dubai is home to the most exciting mixture - here, you'll find the Dubai Mall, the Burj Khalifa, and plenty more including restaurants, bars, and shopping avenues.

Commercial premises in Dubai: key trends & factors to consider

The bar has been set extremely high for commercial enterprises in Dubai. Retailers are being pushed to add more extravagance to in-store interactions, bars and restaurants are looking for ways to give their patrons a five-star experience, and corporate firms need to enhance working conditions to encourage staff retention. All of these factors are producing an ongoing surge in commercial fit outs in the city - and we're proud to be helping a handful of businesses to bring their vision to life.

As with any kind of significant renovation process, commercial fit outs are often subjected to zoning guidelines from Dubai Municipality. The extent of this depends on the scope of improvements that you'd like to make - for example, building a new office space will involve having a different planning permission in comparison to an interior renovation including structural changes.

Being aware of the zoning requirements that apply to your project is always advised, as without this, your business can face legal challenges. At RVA, we have a team of experienced commercial project managers who will navigate all of these complexities on your behalf.

So, why invest in your commercial property in Dubai?

Commercial businesses are rising to the challenge of meeting the ultra-high expectations that Dubai customers, clients, and employees have; and those who are taking this a step further are looking for ways to go beyond this point.

This is where commercial fitouts are proving advantageous, as they give businesses the power to create a setting that truly serves their customers, clients, or staff. Investing in your commercial property in Dubai will make your business stand out, and this will be even clearer when you opt for a bespoke, custom-designed space. If you want to see longevity from your business in Dubai, you'll need to stay ahead of these expectations, and building value, purpose, and practicality into your space is the perfect starting point.



Sectors that we specialise in

The Dubai commercial landscape is vast, but there are a few specific sectors that our team of professionals specialise in. Some of our focus areas for commercial fitout projects include:



Retail

Dubai's retail sector is among the most sophisticated in the world, with high expectations for immersive shopping experiences, and boutique style presentation. From flagship stores to pop=up concepts, we create environments that captivate shoppers while telling the brand's story through thoughtful, impactful design choices.

Office

Workplaces in Dubai have embraced innovation, and businesses are constantly looking for ways to invest in employee experience; and fit outs are one key approach for achieving this. Here at RVA, we design flexible, efficient workspaces that accommodate hybrid working models, support employee wellbeing, and encourage staff retention.



Hospitality

With tourism being a major pillar of Dubai's economy, hospitality design has to deliver memorable experiences for all visitors. We specialise restaurants and bars, and other social venues, fusing functionality and style into every concept design plan that we create for our clients in this sector.

THE PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS

Every successful fitout begins with a clear vision. This means defining:

- The core function of the space – day-to-day, what does your space need to do?
- Establishing your brand positioning and visual identity – creating an aesthetic physical presence that aligns with your brand.
- Setting clear operational goals – are you renovating to meet a capacity goal, to improve flow, or perhaps to add functionality/flexibility?
- Who is your target audience and what are their experiential needs?

We work closely with stakeholders to understand exactly what they want the outcome of their newly refurbished space to be, and we feed these objectives into our concept design process. By keeping our clients objectives at the forefront, we're able to make decisions that mean every square metre in your commercial premises will serve a purpose; maximising value while staying aligned with your brand's mission and future growth plans.



Budgeting and ROI considerations

Cost is a fundamental part of fitout planning in Dubai, but our biggest piece of advice is that it must be viewed through the lens of long-term value. A well-designed space enhances productivity, improves customer experience, and elevates brand perception, and this all contributes towards the ROI that you'd hope to achieve from your fit out project – it won't be possible without this level of consideration. Key cost influences include:

Initial capital expenditure – your first costs

By this, we mean finding a provider for the concept design, and factoring in the price of materials, labor, and the cost of obtaining any necessary permits – this is all something that we can take care of.

Operational efficiency

Can energy-saving systems be considered within your budget? Allowing for this will keep your space in line with the government's ever changing goal posts – and this is particularly important in Dubai, where you'll find some of the most ambitious efficiency targets.

Lifecycle cost

Your budget also accounts for the durability of finishes, and future-proofing design elements – cutting costs at this point can drastically reduce the lifespan of your total investment, and these types of outcomes will reflect on your customers, clients, or staff.

We provide detailed cost plans and phased strategies to help clients make informed decisions, all without compromising on design quality.

Selecting the right location

As we've mentioned in Dubai, location is not just about geography, it's about being within easy reach of the right audience for your business – all while complying with zoning laws, and brand positioning. We've taken some key examples of some of Dubai's most popular commercial locations, explaining the kinds of businesses that populate each.

Al Quoz

Known for its industrial roots and emerging creative scene, Al Quoz is ideal for art galleries, studios, and quirky retail concepts. Its urban vibe supports alternative and experimental fitouts that challenge convention.

Downtown Dubai

Downtown Dubai showcases the upmarket prestige that the city is synonymous with – the area suits high-end offices, flagship retail stores, and sophisticated hospitality venues. It also offers close proximity to landmarks like the Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall, and this fact alone lends itself to visibility and footfall for businesses that set up shop here.

Alserkal Avenue

A thriving arts and cultural district in Al Quoz, this area is a magnet for creative businesses and out-of-the-box brands.

Of course, there are other commercial districts in the city – Dubai Design District (d3) tends to be the place for fashion and tech startups, whereas Jumeirah Lake Towers is popular amongst corporate offices, and City Walk is the place to be for boutique shopping and dining.

The consideration that we put into your commercial fit out will help to ensure that you have not only beautifully designed space; but that it's in a strategically located place.

DESIGNING YOUR PRIME, PRACTICAL COMMERCIAL SPACE

When it comes to creating a concept for a commercial property, our designers think about far more than just aesthetics. Your fitout project is a strategic investment in your brand, operations, and customer experience, so all considerations made at the design stage should reflect this. At RVA, we bring a design-thinking approach that merges functionality, sustainability, and innovation with a deep understanding of commercial performance needs – regardless of whether you’re in the corporate, retail, or hospitality space.

Design thinking for business & why your project needs it

Here at RVA, we use design thinking to solve real business problems. This human-centric approach ensures your commercial space is not just visually appealing, but highly functional and aligned with your goals. Our architectural process considers:

Space efficiency – we’ll look for ways to maximise the usable area, without compromising comfort or compliance.

Brand expression – the concept design that we create for you will essentially translate your company’s identity into physical form – and we account for this in all details, from layout to finishes.

Customer flow & staff productivity – we prioritise flow, and we aim to design intuitive spaces that enhance both customer journeys and team workflow.

Adaptability – your fitout needs to serve your business in the long-run, so we’ll look for ways to future-proof your space for growth, tech integration, and evolving market needs.

By taking this design-thinking approach, we ensure that our commercial fitouts are tailored to suit their purpose – whether it’s retail, office, hospitality, or mixed-use environments, all created with a balance of form and function.

Functional design principles that make optimal use of space

Whether you'll be renovating an existing premises, or if finally you've found the right commercial property for your purpose, every square metre counts. We consider the space that you have, and create our concept designs around proven functional principles, including:

Zoning – We use zoning to distinguish a clear separation of public, semi-private, and private zones to optimise navigation and security – for example, in our retail renovation for The Hour Dress, we created a private changing area, away from the main shopfloor, giving customers a personalised experience.

Ergonomics – We consider the ergonomics of your space, aiming to create the most practical layout possible. In this sense, we're aiming to design premises for office spaces that support employee well-being, or retail stores that encourage customers to flow from browsing to purchase.

Lighting and acoustics – Intelligent use of light and sound are intricate details that create a measurable impact – in our project with Elite Key Design, we used lighting to showcase the bespoke joinery features we'd built into the space, creating eye-catching focal points.

Beyond these areas, our functional design principles also account for compliance with building codes, accessibility standards, and fire safety; all while ensuring the space remains dynamic and inspiring.



Sustainability & Innovation

As we've established, today's commercial tenants and customers expect more, from both a sustainability and user-experience perspective. We've built this into our design approach, so that we're able to deliver high-performance spaces that meet these expectations without sacrificing style or luxury.

Where possible, we choose eco-friendlier materials, finishes and construction methods, and we devise smart building systems that account for factors such as energy and water efficiency. The commercial spaces that we design and build are fully compliant with the UAE's sustainability targets, so your space will have an equal measure of premium quality and innovative, eco-friendly features.



OUR 7 STAGE RIBA FITOUT PROCESS

Turning a great design into a fully operational commercial space requires precision, coordination, and experience. Our team has already guided businesses across the UAE, UK, and Europe through all seven distinctive stages of the fitout journey, giving them confidence, clarity, and quality from day one to handover and beyond.

Below, we've detailed the seven steps, as outlined by RIBA, that we follow for our end-to-end fitout process:

1. Preparation & brief

Every successful fitout starts with a clear understanding of your goals. During this initial stage, we work closely with you to:

- Define the project vision, scope, and budget
- Understand operational requirements
- Identify site constraints and opportunities
- Develop a clear timeline and delivery strategy

This stage sets the foundation for a streamlined project, and ensures everyone is aligned from the outset.

2. Concept design

With your goals and brief in place, we translate ideas into visual direction. RVA's concept design phase includes:

- High-level space planning and layout sketches by our technical team
- Initial mood boards and material palettes from our interior designers
- Exploration of branding elements within the built form
- Presentation of creative direction for approval

This phase is collaborative, and ensures your commercial identity is reflected in every design decision.

3. Spatial coordination

Once the concept is approved, we will refine it with further technical and operational detail. This includes:

Fine-tuned floor plans and zoning
Coordination with services (electrical, mechanical, plumbing)
Alignment with accessibility, fire safety, and compliance regulations
Integration of furniture, joinery, and equipment requirements

We ensure all moving parts work together; visually, functionally, and legally.

4. Technical design

This is where we prepare your space for construction. RVA's technical design phase includes:

Comprehensive construction drawings and documentation
Detailed joinery and fixture specifications
Finalisation of materials, finishes, and lighting

This in-depth documentation ensures accurate pricing, seamless approvals, and efficient execution onsite.

5. Manufacturing & construction

With documentation complete, the build begins. Our team manages and collaborates with trusted local contractors and suppliers to ensure:

- Quality fabrication of bespoke elements
- Onsite construction aligned with project timelines
- Regular progress reviews and site meetings
- Cost control and issue resolution as needed

We keep communication open and transparent to ensure minimal disruption and maximum control.

6. Handover

Once construction is complete, our aim is to make your space operational again – to get to this point, we'll carry out several closing tasks with care and precision. This includes:

- Final snag review and refining any design defects
- Finalising a 'Plan For Use' strategy (a RIBA process designed to ensure buildings are designed and constructed to meet the client's needs, and perform as intended while operational).
- A thorough handover package and walkthrough
- Carrying out a light touch post occupancy evaluation (a brief assessment into how well a building is performing, once commercial tenants have moved in, carried out before the end of the initial building contract)

Our goal is to deliver a space that's not only complete, but ready to perform from day one.

7. In-use support

Our commitment doesn't end at handover. RVA offers post-completion support to help your space operate as intended:

- Ongoing maintenance advice and design support
- Post-occupancy assessments and optimisation
- Assistance with future adjustments or upgrades

We design for longevity, and we're here with you long after your premises has its grand opening.

WHY RICCARDO VICARELLI ARCHITECTS?

Choosing the right architectural partner is essential for a successful commercial fitout project. At Riccardo Vicarelli Architects, we bring over 15 years of design expertise, along with strategy, creativity, and a deep understanding of how space influences business. Our commercial design philosophy revolved around the following:

People-first design

Whether it's customers, clients, or employees, we shape environments that elevate human experience.

Brand integration

We translate your values and visual identity into built form, creating spaces that speak your brand.

Timeless appeal

We balance innovation with longevity, creating spaces that look and feel relevant for years to come.

Whether you're building a flagship retail store, hospitality venue, or future-focused office, we approach every project with precision and creativity.



Case studies

We've partnered with some of Dubai's most forward-thinking businesses to bring their visions to life. A few highlights include:

The Hour Dress Dubai – full retail fitout with bespoke joinery

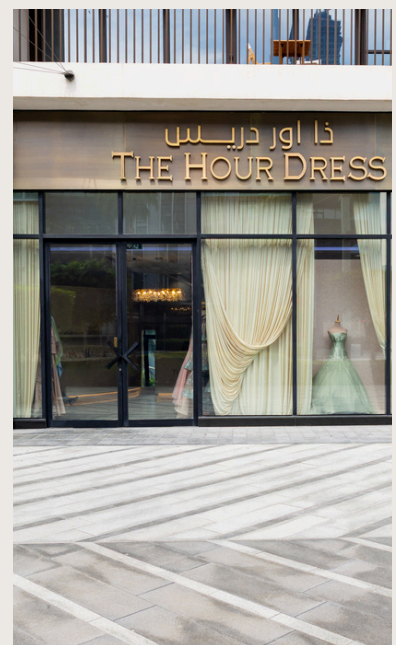
An elegant, highly considered boutique fitout that balanced minimalism with function. Every detail was curated to reflect the brand's sophisticated identity, from a bespoke shopfloor with curved features, to a private, workshop area for the in-store seamstress, all while delivering flexibility and space efficiency in a relatively compact space.



CUSTOM CURVED DISPLAY UNIT
TO SHOWCASE PRODUCTS.



PRIVATE CHANGING ROOM
SPACE FROM SHOP FLOOR.



STRIKING EXTERIOR FACADE
WITH BRANDING.

Full commercial fitout for a busy hair salon.

We were appointed to create a commercial fitout plan for a creative hair salon, located in one of Dubai's business hotspot areas.

This adaptive project involved extending the existing premises, while the studio itself remained operational. Our plan would transform currently unused space into additional practical areas for the studio's stylists to work in.

We created detailed architectural drawings to illustrate the design phases, and we devised a barrier between the construction work, and the client-facing side of the building – this was necessary as the salon would remain operational throughout the duration of the project.



WHY RICCARDO VICARELLI ARCHITECTS?

What you can expect from working with us

From first meeting to final handover (and beyond), working with RVA means:

A highly collaborative process

We listen closely, communicate clearly, and involve you at every key decision point.

Hands-on involvement

Riccardo Vicarelli, our design director, personally oversees each commercial project to ensure design integrity and quality.

Tailored, not templated solutions

Your business is unique. So is our design response.

Balance of vision and pragmatism

We understand both the creative and the commercial realities, and we deliver on both.

A design-led but outcomes-focused team

We're as passionate about functionality and timelines as we are about architectural expression.

Working with RVA means partnering with a team that's invested in your business outcomes, not just your built environment. We design spaces that work, inspire, and perform – to book your free design consultation, simply contact us today.