As Saudi Arabia’s most populous region, Makkah is home to the cities of Mecca and Jeddah as well as numerous towns on the Red Sea coast. BuroHappold Engineering was commissioned to develop the Makkah Region Economic Development Strategy (MREDS) which aims to accelerate economic development and create employment across the area’s major urban centres, small towns and villages.

A large and varied region, Makkah’s economy was not balanced and disadvantaged small towns and booming big cities were largely disconnected. Our experts conducted a detailed socio-economic and infrastructure analysis of all 12 regional governorates, covering over 140,000 km². This established a clear need for an integrated, development corridor connecting smaller towns to key nodal markets and transport hubs. Improving connectivity will help to increase trade and access to work bringing significant economic benefits to Makkah.

The study also enabled our team to identify key focus sectors for growth and outline detailed steps both to promote such growth and to provide accurate measurements of economic and employment benefits.

To support the plans we also identified several enabling interventions. These included the upgradation of physical infrastructure, education and skills and the removal of restrictions on women’s participation in the workforce. Our expert team also defined a need for an innovation ecosystem promoting university-industry partnerships, and outlined steps to support knowledge transfer from foreign to local companies and between local companies.
Our strategic planning and support culminated in the creation of an implementation roadmap. This will ensure the development of necessary organisational capacity, stakeholder alliances and financing mechanisms. A key aspect of the roadmap was the creation of a regional development board, along with a funding structure to support new ventures.

By developing an understanding of the unique demands and emerging opportunities within the region our expert team was able to develop a visionary growth strategy that will help Makkah to realise its enormous economic potential and become a true symbol of progress in the Middle East.