

SUSTAINABLE SPACES

An overview of sustainable practices in shopping centres in India

■ *By Kanchana V. Gokhale*

A \$450 billion strong industry in a country has a substantial impact on the environment as can be expected. Scientists predict that the temperature of the planet will increase by 2 degrees against all efforts and declarations by the nations to control it. This is a critical and dangerous threshold to reach and needs serious efforts by each nation to mitigate.

The RAI (Retailers Association of India) in the report on “Strategic issues of Retail CEOs” by PWC have identified three sustainability issues that the retailers are confronted with. They are (1) Climate change (2) Waste (3) Supply chain.

1. Climate change: The measurement of retailers carbon footprints and those of their products is vital to enable retailers understand and mitigate its impact on climate change.

2. Waste: In Mumbai alone 70% of the waste is food, increasing toxicity in the dumping grounds by virtue of being unsegregated. There is need for widespread awareness of reduction of waste at all links in the supply chain and the need for re-cycling, re-using and use of eco-friendly material in packing.

3. Supply chain: Responsible procurement becomes more relevant in the context of sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY IN SHOPPING CENTRES

As we gear up for FDI in single brand and multi brand retail, we will have many retailers who will up the game by following already incorporated sustainable practices. This will help in involving Indian retailers to contribute their bit.

In retail real estate currently only a handful of malls out of the 260 A grade malls in India have either incorporated sustainability in the design or have

incorporated in the building post occupation. There is greater awareness among the developers, customers and the general public, which in turn pushes greater efforts from all concerned.

When the services are planned for a building about 40% of construction cost is contributed by MEP (Mechanical, electrical & plumbing) of which nearly 75% is towards heating, ventilation and air-conditioning. Green initiatives hence are a necessity and not an option.

Singapore offers a great example of what’s possible. Since 2005 when Singapore implemented a green mark policy specifically for tropical climate, 1650 projects and 49 million sq. mts. have been made green. By 2013, Singapore had been recognized as the most heavily involved among 62 countries.

As many as 32 malls have been made as eco malls in Singapore and have achieved huge savings in water and energy. With a 2 - 3% higher investment in construction cost, good sized returns on the investment have been made.



► Pacific Mall, New Delhi

CHALLENGES & CHANGE

The foremost challenge to implementing sustainability in most projects has always been the increased initial investment. Though the scale of investment has reduced from 6% of the project cost to 2 -3%, for some developers, this still proves too much to take up.

The second challenge yet the more important one is the lack of will to change. That said, initiatives like the respected Prime Minister's Swachh Bharat program go a long way in pushing reform.

Mall advisory/management companies are aware of the pitfalls of not implementing the environmental measures to optimize the operation of the malls and hence encourage developers to take some proactive steps.

In a small but steady manner, with active encouragement of the developers, several shopping centres have incorporated sustainable measures in some manner. In the case of leading malls, the principles of recycle and reuse are incorporated in the design stage itself. Although not every mall is desirous of getting an LEED/ IGBC rating due to pecuniary reasons, mall advisory companies share their experience into the design to maximize its efficiency leading to saving in operating costs in nearly every MEP discipline.

ENCOURAGING EXAMPLES

Seawoods Grand central at Navi Mumbai has a LEED gold rating.

Vega mall in Bengaluru has incorporated waste compactors for more efficient disposal of waste.

Pacific mall New Delhi uses water collected in the rain water harvesting tank for landscaping and saves up to 10 – 12,000 litres of water.



► Vega Mall, Bengaluru

Thane One, Thane a predominantly commercial complex with complimentary retail has achieved Platinum rating.

Even though developers miss the sustainability bus during development stage, they can embark on the journey down the line. Oberoi Mall in Mumbai that undertook a green audit exercise after five years of operation is a fine example of this. The mall went on to become India's First LEED Gold Rated Mall under EBO&M category (Existing Building Operation & Maintenance).

Viviana mall in Thane near Mumbai has achieved a LEED IGBC Gold rating eventually.

Virginia Mall, Bengaluru rewards customers using bicycles to reach the centre by a welcome drink and giving out entertainment vouchers to be used in the mall (the green voucher). The disposable cutlery used in the mall is non-Styrofoam based. More initiatives are planned in the coming year.

As awareness about the benefits of sustainable retailing practices increases, more and more shopping centres will invest in them. After all, it makes sound business sense. 🌱



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