



# PUTTING ENTERTAINMENT FIRST A CASE STUDY

FORREC Ltd. shares its concept design for Wave City Centre, envisioned as an iconic destination retail entertainment complex on one of the largest pieces of property in India.

BY STEVE SHAH

## THE CHALLENGE

On one of the last, and largest, prime pieces of commercial property in Noida, the developer wanted more than to just maximize the value of the overall development. Wave City Centre had to be more than a shopping mall. It needed to be a show-stopper of a destination – one that would be about more than shopping, that would reflect high-end luxury at every turn, attract people and, most importantly, keep them coming back for more.

The overall Wave City Centre master plan was already ambitious based on the sheer scale of its contiguous landmass – almost 100 ha. And Noida – the city location – was an up and coming area, ripe for the opportunity. The first stages of the development

were to include three hotels (5-star, 4-star themed and convention), commercial towers, indoor water park, snow park, indoor theme park, cinemas, bowling, nightclub, performance areas, dining terraces and high-end retail. The master plan the developer had commissioned handled the basics of organization traffic, phasing, and land use, but missed out on a critical factor. Entertainment. That's where FORREC stepped in.

## USING ENTERTAINMENT AS A POINT OF DIFFERENTIATION

In today's competitive market, shopping is no longer just about buying a product. People can get running shoes anywhere. They can buy them online, and never have to leave home. To be successful, a grand bricks and mortar



RETAIL DESTINATIONS ARE A SOURCE OF ENTERTAINMENT BECAUSE THEY'RE SPACES WHERE PEOPLE MEET, GATHER AND CONNECT. NOT EVERYONE WANTS TO SPEND THE DAY IN A THEME PARK, BUT MANY WILL SPEND HOURS SHOPPING, DINING AND SPENDING PRECIOUS TIME. -

venue like Wave City Centre had to put guest experience and entertainment first.

Retail destinations are a very current wave of entertainment because they're spaces where people meet, gather and connect. Not everyone wants to spend the day in a theme park, but many will spend hours shopping, dining and spending precious time just hanging out in those special places. They've become social centres.

FORREC knows that successful places capture our imagination as well as the spirit of their surroundings, even as they assert their own identity. They're entertaining experiences and memorable places and that keep us engaged and coming back for more. Fundamentally, these places are a pleasure to be in and around.

In the first concepts for Wave City Centre, the vision was a combination of indoor and outdoor spaces. This pleasant, continually changing street-like environment would support public gathering and the pedestrian connections to the other project precincts. People would feel like they'd visited a destination of its own.

But in working with the developer, it became clear that Noida's intense climate, the high temperatures, dust and cool winters would simply be too uncomfortable. It was also necessary to fully maximize the available plot ratio.

### BRINGING THE OUTDOORS INDOORS

The second concept was to make a primarily indoor space. That solution held several challenges – not the least of which was how to modulate a large structure to make it interesting. As well as fully maximizing the building area to make it deliver the economic results the developer needed.

FORREC believes that to create a strong identity and sense of place, it's important to have a clear and compelling sequence of public spaces organized on a provocative planning strategy. The Big Idea/Story provides the opportunity to create a strong sense of destination. To be completely successful it must also be integrated with the larger community. Ultimately the strategy has to operate on many levels – symbolic, urban, experiential, rich in sensation – all activated by a delight in providing pleasure and the desire to entertain.

FORREC decided to use the best of the first concept – the outdoor pedestrian street feeling – and bring the character of it indoors. The outside of the building still needed to be interesting and support the pedestrian



street theme, so stores were designed to face the street. The facade was to be a varied composition of a sweeping stone and glass undulating wave. Not only would that make the building look more interesting, it would successfully reflect the WAVE brand.

Inside, the venue would be filled with public streets. The landscape would change as people progressed. Around every turn, and across four floors, there would be entertaining elements that contributed to the feeling that this was a special guest experience.

The fifth floor, occupying a massive 45,000 sq. m., integrated the cinemas, night club, water park, theme park and snow park to become not only the focus of the complex, but also a true regional entertainment destination.

In order to further reinforce the pedestrian street concept, there needed to be some outdoor spaces. A key ingredient would be a "Times Square" like area, surrounded by food and beverage, where people would want to gather. Full of energy, just like a New York City centre, it had a performance area, and a large multimedia canopy that would be programmed to suit special events or holidays. It also had places to just walk and sit and linger, and was to be as active during the day as at night.

### THE RESULTS

The concept design for Wave City Centre was built around a singular point of difference; the creation of an entertaining experience.

As the developer wanted, the concept delivered more than just shopping. The building design had unique character because of its integrated design, and interior and exterior shopping opportunities. Bringing the outdoor space indoors, and complementing it with entertainment, was a unique way to communicate a powerful guest experience. And the project balanced the financial goals with the creative aspirations

It's the entertainment factor, the experience and the memories that attract more people and more success. Carefully considered projects that focus on these experiences can completely change the perception of a project, and give it the ever-important emotional attachment that brings visitors back time and again. ●●

#### About the author:

Steve Shah is senior director of Retail & Mixed Use and principal of FORREC Ltd., an entertainment design company that creates places of escape and destinations of distinction.