

Footfall Surge: Malls in NCR Redesign Strategies to Attract Footfall

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Delhi-NCR's retail landscape is seeing a compelling revival. Footfall in malls has not only bounced back post-pandemic but is surpassing pre-COVID levels during weekends, holidays, and festive periods. This resurgence reflects a deeper shift in consumer behavior, where physical spaces are once again central to how people shop, socialize, and unwind.



Retail Redefined: NCR Malls Transform from Shopping Hubs to Experience-Driven Destinations

In response, mall operators and developers are reimagining these spaces to go beyond transactions. By blending entertainment, community engagement, and curated experiences, they are aligning with the expectations of experience-hungry, digitally aware consumers.

Indias retail sector is poised for historic expansion, with a record 16.6 million sq. ft. of Grade A mall space expected to be completed across the country's top seven cities by the end of 2026, as per Anarock's report. Leading this growth are Hyderabad and Delhi-NCR, which together will contribute nearly 65% of the new retail space, reaffirming their position as the country's most promising consumption hubs. The research reflects a broader trend of rising consumer demand, fuelled by increasing incomes, urbanisation, and the entry of global retail brands into the Indian market.

The report also notes that leasing activity remains robust, with over 12.6 Mn sq. ft. projected to be leased across 2025 and 2026. A key driver of this momentum is the entry of more than 60 international brands across fashion, electronics, lifestyle, and food & beverage sectors in the past four years. As a result, mall developers are increasingly focusing on quality and location, with a clear shift toward Grade A developments.

Arjun Gehlot, Director, Ambience Malls – Gurugram and Vasant Kunj, says, "*In the NCR region, malls have become central to redefining how modern India experiences retail. Consumers are seeking deeper, more curated interactions, placing value on ambiance, events, personalisation, and lifestyle integration. In Gurugram, rising disposable incomes, strong metro connectivity, and significant infrastructure upgrades have made the city a magnet for top-tier Indian and global brands, rivalling even Delhi. At Ambience Malls, we've responded to*

this shift by creating immersive, multi-sensory environments, combining gourmet food, wellness zones, art installations, and entertainment arenas. We've also integrated sustainable design elements and eco-conscious dcor to align with evolving consumer values. Our malls are designed to be places where people not only shop but build lasting emotional connections and experiences they return to."

As malls evolve into holistic lifestyle destinations, developers are rethinking how space is planned and experienced. Fashion, F&B, entertainment, and essential services are being blended more intelligently to guide consumer flow and maximise engagement. There's a clear move toward premiumisation of the tenant mix, with high-end brands and gourmet experiences gaining ground, but without distancing the broader, value-conscious audience.

Pankaj Jain, Founder and CMD, SPJ Group, says, "Gurugram's commercial growth has been a catalyst for the city's thriving retail ecosystem, driving strong momentum in leasing activity. We're seeing a clear shift in consumer expectations-people now gravitate toward spaces that offer more than just shopping. Interestingly, Gurugram's next big retail story is emerging from high-potential yet untapped micro-markets, and we see a significant opportunity in locations like Old Gurgaon, where curated, experience-led retail formats will strike the right balance between convenience and discovery."

Ishwin Singh Hora, Director, Reach Group, says, "High Street formats are gaining traction due to their well-designed, open-format spaces that offer visibility, adaptability, and a deeper connection with the community. Unlike traditional mall environments, high streets allow brands to craft more personalised and immersive narratives, while benefiting from easy accessibility and a vibrant street-level presence. Thus, with strong interest from both national and international brands, we see high street retail as the next frontier in urban shopping experiences, especially in dynamic cities like

Gurugram."

Prakash Mehta, Chairman and Managing Director, Ocus Group, says, *"Retail leasing in NCR is growing momentarily, particularly with the renewed focus on organised high-street formats and evolving investment preferences. We're seeing global and domestic brands increasingly drawn to strategically located, well-planned high streets. Emerging corridors like Sohna Road and sectors along it like Sector 68 are gaining traction for their connectivity and development potential. Thus, we see the market clearly shifting toward projects that go beyond conventional retail."*

Thus, the resurgence in mall footfall across NCR signals more than just a return to pre-pandemic normalcy—it marks a redefinition of what retail spaces mean to communities. While the numbers are encouraging, the real challenge lies in sustaining engagement over time.

