

OMAN AVENUES MALL - A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY

OMAN AVENUES MALL - FROM HUMBLE ORIGINS

Oman Avenues Mall, located at the heart of the city of Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, is a luminary landmark that harks back to its humble origins from a standalone Hypermarket centric retail complex to a destination Mall that stands tall as the redefinition of shopping, lifestyle, and entertainment centre.

From a standalone LuLu Hypermarket in 2004, the property has transitioned into a five-level Mall that started operations in 2015, flourishing through pertinent demand in terms of retail offering in the area and the high potential that it presented. 2019 saw the attachment of a world-class, 14-screen mega-scale Cinema complex being added to the thriving Mall. In 2022, the Mall embarked on a massive expansion increasing the footprint by another 30,000 m2 of GLA in a 62,000 m2 built-up area expansion with the anchoring by IKEA, the Swedish behemoth with its first megastore experience at Oman Avenues Mall.

Oman Avenues Mall is an archetypal example of how a Mall can reposition itself to be an adaptive, re-imagined Lifestyle Destination while retaining much of its classical fervour. The Mall has been a torchbearer of redefining a retail offering that is a product of an ever-evolving marketplace.

THE DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

Along with impeccable and meticulous planning that was painstakingly put together, land development and site engineering factors were given utmost importance, especially in light of increasing the Mall capacity while operating the existing Mall without reducing customer traffic, while keeping in mind the local zoning ordinances which meant that there needs to be a properly planned extensive implementation of the project with phase-by-phase rerouting of traffic, resulting in no obvious hassle for the Mall customers.

Hence, the redevelopment was zoned into 4 phases - the lower ground level, the parking extension, the ground level and IKEA building. The zoning of each phase was done with careful consideration and meticulous planning to ensure that all details were adequately taken care of.

In order to ease traffic and provide a seamless commute experience to the Mall visitors, the rear side road feeding the parking was enhanced to a four-lane road from a two-lane road, two bridges are being built and a flyover extension from the Sultan Qaboos road is being linked directly to the Mall parking complex to provide a seamless and hassle-free connectivity experience.

The Mall now has 3 main entry corridors, with the new structure being connected to the west wing entrance with seamless integration to the Mall and the parking. The rear side road of IKEA is also enhanced to directly connect to three main road arteries (1) Ministerial District, (2) Dohat Al Adab Street and (3) Muscat Expressway. Over 4000 vehicles commute directly on the flyover which will establish seamless connectivity from roads to the parking. A dedicated loading and unloading access is developed to establish a hassle-free traffic movement to the Mall.

To comfortably house the burgeoning parking needs, new parking spaces were created which included additional 500 bays on the roof level which integrates horizontally into the second floor of the Mall where key categories of the Mall are operational like the Cinema, Family Entertainment Centers and the Food Court. Similarly, the north wing has been connected to the parking area through another extended parking package of 500 bays.

This elaborate project encountered several complexities throughout its implementation, yet was completed and open for trade within a record time of 20 months which IKEA built was delivered for fit out 6 months prior to trading.

REDEVELOPMENTS IN LINE WITH THE NEED OF THE MARKET

Revitalization of the area as not only a shopping destination, but a customer experience hub, was a potential opportunity that needed to be capitalized on, to stay well ahead of stifling competition and consolidate the Group's position in the market. This was a conscious and informed decision that was taken to potentially increase the overall profitability of the asset while reinvigorating the community with new amenities and experiences.

In this regard, the leadership was envisioning a larger connected purpose, bringing the Swedish furnishing giant, IKEA's first ever store in Oman as the anchorage. IKEA at Oman Avenues Mall has substantially supported in boosting the overall foot traffic for the Mall.

LEADERSHIP

The leadership at the LuLu Group International, the property operators and Al Taher Group, the developers of Oman Avenues Mall, partnered on this ground-breaking vision. The firmly rooted vision was linked to powerful and well-directed actions, which have translated into one of the largest redevelopment projects in the country. The Mall has become a quintessential and inescapable part of Oman's consumer culture, ushering in considerable customer traffic from across the country.

Gogi George has been at the helm of the project since 2013 delivering the project from the original blueprint of the hypermarket into a full-fledged Mall to the current development as it is. He is the Asset Management Head for Lulu Group International in Oman and has since led the opening and the subsequent 4 phased redevelopment.

In his words, redevelopment and reconfiguring of a project usually follow the market demands and the need for the project to be relevant. In his previous stints at many landmark projects across the region including projects in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the project redevelopment cycle has been usually undertaken in a span of 5 years or so, however, Oman Avenues Mall has gone through multi-phase expansions in the past 7 years since the start of operations mainly due to the paradigm shift in retail scenarios, multiple challenges including threats posed by e-Commerce businesses, change in the competitive landscape as well as the need to stay relevant in current times. In his opinion, malls would never lose their sheen in Middle Eastern markets unlike visible in matured markets like the American and the European markets considering the consumer behaviours, weather conditions favouring mall visits, as well as, as generally high disposable income levels that are conducive to consumerism.



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2004
Lulu Hypermarket anchored retail complex opens to public

2015
Oman Avenues Mall opens to public

2016
Interior refurbishments, adjacent landscaping and road connectivity enhancements

2019
14 Screen Multiplex opens to public

2022
New expansion with IKEA as an anchor opens to public

