



HOMEGROWN PHARMACY EYES ON DRONE DELIVERY OF MEDICINES IN KOLKATA

JUPITER WAGONS HAS RAISED ₹125CR THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL PLACEMENT



The central business district (CBD), created by the British to attract European commerce to India, still retains its two-century-old charm, witnessing a surge in demand for office space. What was once restricted to Esplanade, Dalhousie and Strand Road, has now stretched up to Park Street, Camac Street, Minto Park and Park Circus

CBD'S SECOND COMING

UDIR PRASADNA MUKHERJI & SARITHAK GANGULY | TNN

As Kolkata evolved, a new commercial hub emerged in Salt Lake's Sector V for IT and allied business in the beginning of the 21st century. Even several government offices shifted to sprawling plots in the tree-lined township. Gradually, with the development of New Town, more offices and businesses shifted to the new township as well as places along ICM Bypass. But the office para in Dalhousie, which now stretches up to Park Street, Camac Street, Minto Park and Park Circus, still retains its pull. The strategic location of the central business district has been attracting big, swanky commercial projects, which will share space with the old, imposing buildings of the past. TOI spoke to some of the biggest new real estate groups venturing into CBD.

EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

Rameswar Prasad, director Prasad Group, attributed the renewed interest in CBD to a demand-supply mismatch in other parts of the city. "The demand outstrips the supply as every established and fast-growing company wants office space at premium locations. I saw this as an opportunity and decided to venture into real estate in CBD. We leveraged our vast experience in real estate and offered different office spaces to meet the demands of clients and invested in prime commercial property." Demand for space in CBD is likely to get more intense with more retail brands trying to foray into the Kolkata market. Mayank Jalan, chairman and MD of Keventer Group, pointed out, "Dalhousie had always been the epicentre of business in Kolkata. But with time and lack of development there, most commercial institutions started moving out, seeking modern revamp." Anushuman Magazine, chairman and CEO India, Southeast Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE, said, "The city's growing economy has created an environment for businesses to establish their presence in the heart of Kolkata. Given the mix of industries, the CBD has become a preferred destination



for companies seeking prime locations. Our January-March 2023 data indicates the office space absorption in Kolkata stood at 0.3 million sq ft, while that of retail space at 0.02 million sq ft. The MD of JLL (east), Surekha Bhandal, pointed out 25%-30% of commercial space in Kolkata was in CBD.

BRAND VALUE

Some of the best-known brands in jewellery, high-end retail and top corporates were looking for space in CBD and it would add to the area's brand value, said Prasad. "These companies are willing to shell out money if the property meets their expectations in terms of quality and design. Our projects are customised to the clients' needs," said Prasad.

"The demand for commercial space at Siddha Esplanade is fascinating. There is a diverse range of buyers who have booked their offices here. We have limited inventory left and those, too, are likely to be sold out fast. This project is indeed a great place for corporate houses, entrepreneurs, trading companies, chartered accountants, lawyers, consultants and other professionals planning to start a business centre of their own with all conveniences at stone's throw," said Sanjay Jain, MD, Siddha Group.

BUSINESS PARK

Srijan has joined hands with PS Group and Signum to set up a business park, the biggest commercial project, in the CBD, close to Park Circus. Keshav Agarwal, associate director of

Srijan, said the project was being built on a 6.5-acre land and the total investment was pegged at Rs 400 crore. "The project will offer 7 lakh sq ft space, the highest in CBD. Our other big commercial projects in the area include Diamond Heritage, one from Siddha Group and old ones, like Tata Centre," Agarwal said.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The outlook for commercial space in the city's CBD remains promising because of its strategic location, ongoing infrastructure development and government initiatives, according to Magazine. The CBD's proximity to key amenities, transport networks and a skilled workforce will continue to attract local and international businesses. The East-West Metro will give a further boost to the area. "Prices are expected to go up and several Grade-A office spaces are likely to come up over the next two-three years, which will renew interest from MNCs to set up offices there," said Magazine.

DEMAND & EXPANSION

- The CBD earlier covered only Esplanade, Dalhousie and Strand Road
- Over the years, it stretched up to Park Street, Camac Street, Minto Park and Park Circus
- The outlook for commercial space at CBD remains promising because of its strategic location
- Several big commercial real estate projects have already come up in this area
- Among the new projects is a business park, which is coming up on a 6.5-acre land
- The investment in this business park project is pegged at ₹400 crore
- The office space absorption in the city stood at 0.3 million sq ft, while retail space absorption stood at 0.02 million sq ft between Jan & Mar 2023
- In 2022, the retail space absorption grew by 80% and that of office space by 63%

BUSINESS NETWORKS

The proximity to business networks and access to easy transport have always been CBD's advantage. "The major switch in interest for a modern and futuristic development in a commercial real estate is the driving force for our project. We can see the surge in demand for space. We will have to concentrate more on the supply rather than the demand," said Jalan. "Keventer One will be a twin-tower project, enhancing the two USPs of the area—its proximity to main business houses and commercial institutions and a view never explored before. The project is in a development mode," Jalan said.

OWNERS' TAKE

"We leveraged our vast experience in real estate and offered different office sizes to meet the demands of clients. We invested in prime commercial property"

Rameswar Prasad | DIRECTOR, PRASAD GROUP

"Work from home is the new trend but employees prefer to work from office because of the ambience and facilities"

Keshav Agarwal | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, SRIJAN

"The major switch in demand for a modern and futuristic development in a commercial real estate is the real driving force for our project"

— Mayank Jalan | CMD, KEVENTER GROUP

"The demand for commercial space at Siddha Esplanade is fascinating. We have limited inventory left and those, too, are likely to be sold out fast"

Sanjay Jain | MD, SIDDHA GROUP



The business park that is coming up close to Park Circus is so far the biggest commercial project in the central business district. The 70,000-sq-ft club, which the park will house, can be used for business meetings, trainings, sports, launch and cultural events. Srijan is in talks with big operators regarding this project