



**BUSINESS
TODAY
PASSIONATE
2017**

THUSITHA WIJAYASENA

**FOUNDER/CHAIRMAN,
KANDY CITY CENTRE**

1993

Thusitha Wijayasena transformed Kandy with the establishment of the Kandy City Centre (KCC) in 2009. The KCC paved the way to uplift business in the citadel, elevated its lifestyle experience and breathed new life into the cultural heart of Sri Lanka. It was a vision realised through determination amidst many challenges and was a journey driven through passion.

In the 1990s, Thusitha Wijayasena, though enjoying the success of his business interests, had a desire to establish a legacy that would benefit the country. He received a request from the Chief Prelates of Malwatte and Asgiriya to initiate a project that would revive Kandy in 1992. Thus, the vision for KCC was formulated.

In 1993, a land was purchased in the centre of Kandy city. The proposal to develop a lifestyle venue and transport hub was submitted in 1994, yet, they were required to submit a masterplan with ten projects in 1995. The project had an all-encompassing mission, to develop the economy of the city while also mitigating its traffic congestion. Thus, the initial plan included a mall, outdoor entertainment centre, parking space as well as seamless connectivity to public transport, though later only the mall and multi-storey car park were allowed to be completed. Thusitha Wijayasena was keen to ensure the skyline of the heritage city was not disturbed, hence the exterior design of the KCC honoured the impressive legacy of Kandyan architecture. The interior and functionality would be state-of-the-art and superior in quality. He was determined to show Sri Lanka's capabilities to the world and prove the sceptics wrong.

With approval from authorities as well as obtaining flagship status from the Board of Investment, the construction of the KCC commenced in 1998. The entire complex was scheduled to be completed in 2003, but the journey of the KCC was wrought with many challenges leading to a significant delay. In 2002, after overcoming substantial obstacles, construction of the main superstructure commenced. Enduring a total of 21 unjustified interruptions, the KCC was finally completed in 2008, yet it could not be opened as sewage facilities were not granted. In 2009, with its own sewage treatment plant, the Kandy City Centre was successfully opened. Bearing great losses, Thusitha Wijayasena and his team persevered, driven by his passion as well as with encouragement from his family, Buddhist teachings and motivation from religious leaders.

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Today, the Kandy City Centre is the only mall of its kind in Sri Lanka and is an undeniable iconic landmark in the historic citadel. Without altering the cultural identity of the city, KCC has elevated its lifestyle and improved its economy. KCC has enhanced retail in Kandy through an experience curated by Thusitha Wijayasena. The mall has been organised with purpose to provide a high-end and convenient experience, including a unique Financial Street within the mall. In the beginning though only a few businesses were willing to be a part of the KCC, today it is a coveted space for retailers who compete to be present at this landmark.

KCC offers a variety of dining experiences to suit everyone and entertainment for the youth and children. While increasing the tourist potential of Kandy, new job opportunities for local businesses and craftspeople have been created. Overcoming a challenging construction journey, KCC will reach 100 per cent operational level with the opening of its cutting edge cinemas in the near future.

Business Today recognises pioneer Thusitha Wijayasena for his altruistic mission in transforming and reviving the city of Kandy while elevating the lifestyle of thousands of Sri Lankans. He has shown the world the capabilities of the country and its determined spirit. 