NANO GCC REAL ESTATE · POINT OF VIEW

Beyond the Metro Shortlist

Most location studies rank cities. A nano GCC needs somewhere a specific team can be hired, housed and kept. Why the shortlist should start from the work, and how to test it before you commit.

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AT A GLANCE

- The standard GCC shortlist reflects where large centres have gone. For a nano GCC (20 to 200 people), a handful of critical roles and one workable building usually decide the outcome.
- Tier I cities hold more than 90% of GCC activity, and ten micro-markets took over 70% of GCC space since 2021[1,2]. A small entrant there competes with the largest employers for the same senior people.
- Shortlist on fit, not size: profile the work, test the micro-market, set minimum thresholds on what you cannot do without, and line up a fallback site.

01 The shortlist trap

A mid-market engineering firm plans a 40-person centre for embedded software and test automation. The board approves the city at the top of every GCC list. Six months in, the junior roles are filling, but the four senior engineers who define the mandate are still open; offers keep going to larger centres a few buildings away on the same corridor. Meanwhile a smaller city a short flight away has a cluster of exactly that skill, built up around a long-standing industrial employer. Nobody tested it, because it was not on the list.

The cause is rarely the wrong city. It is a shortlist ranked on volume rather than fit. A nano GCC has a narrow risk profile: its success often rests on three to five hard-to-fill roles and a single site. Citywide talent counts and average rents say little about either. The useful question is not "which is the best GCC city?" but "where can this team be hired, housed and kept?"

> *A city should be chosen for the capability it can sustain, not because it appears on a standard list. At nano scale, depth in the right skills matters more than depth overall.*

02 Why the default list is so strong in 2026

JLL estimates that more than 90% of current GCC activity sits in Tier I cities, with Bengaluru holding a 34% to 39% share and Hyderabad 20% to 23%[3]. Colliers finds that from 2021 to H1 2026 the top ten micro-markets took more than 70% of GCC space uptake, and that Bengaluru's Outer Ring Road and Hyderabad's Secondary Business

[1] JLL, "India GCC leasing hits record 31 million sq. ft in 2025, metros dominate" (release of the India GCC Guide 2026, February 2026). www.jll.com/en-in/newsroom/india-s-gcc-expansion-hits-record-31-million

[2] Colliers, "GCCs in India: Global leadership through scale, competitiveness, talent & innovation", as reported in "GCC demand to expand beyond technology sector" (NBM&CW, July 2026). www.nbmcw.com/news/reports-insights/gcc-demand-to-expand-beyond-technology-sector-colliers-india.html

[3] JLL, see note 1.

District alone accounted for 37% of GCC leasing[4]. On the hiring side, foundit puts Bengaluru at 30% of all GCC hiring in 2026[5].

These are different series, measuring activity, space and jobs, and should not be blended into one estimate. Together, though, they say the same thing: scale has gone to a few cities and, within them, a few corridors. That is a sensible starting point for a 1,000-seat centre that needs depth across dozens of roles. For a 40-person team it also means competing for senior talent with some of the largest employers in the world, usually with less brand pull and less room on pay.

03 Looking ahead: 2027 and beyond

The map is widening, slowly. foundit reports that Tier II hubs now account for 15% of GCC hiring, growing 23% a year, nearly twice the pace of the metros, with attrition of 8% to 12% against 18% to 22% in Tier I cities[6]. FICCI–ANAROCK expects more than 2,400 GCCs by 2030 and names Jaipur, Indore, Kochi and Coimbatore among emerging hubs[7], and the Union Budget 2025 proposed a national framework to help GCCs expand into Tier II locations[8]. Three shifts follow for nano GCCs:

- **Core corridors get tighter.** Colliers expects GCCs to lease 35 to 40 million sq ft a year over the next two years[9]. More large centres on the same corridors means more competition for the senior roles a small team depends on.
- **Smaller cities become a deliberate choice, not a fallback.** JLL cites cost savings of 10% to 35% in Tier II markets[10], but the range is wide for a reason: savings depend on the role mix, and senior hires may still need to come from, or relocate from, a metro.
- **The second site gets planned on day one.** Colliers sees a "hub-plus-one" model, a metro hub paired with a Tier II or III site, gaining traction[11]. For some centres the best growth path is a planned second city, not the floor next door.

04 Three rules for the shortlist

Start with the work, not the list. Write down the profile before ranking anything: the specific skills, seniority mix, languages, shift patterns, customer proximity and how often leaders will need to visit. Then ask hiring managers which roles are genuinely scarce. That conversation often reshapes the shortlist more than any market report.

Test the micro-market, not the city. What matters is the area you would actually occupy: available space of the right quality, commute times for the people you plan to hire, and room to grow without moving. At nano scale, managed or flexible space is often the right first step, so the operator's track record matters as much as the building. Name at least one workable fallback building or operator in every city that stays on the list.

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[4] Colliers, see note 2.

[5] foundit Insights Tracker, as reported in "At 5.1 lakh jobs, India's Global Capability Centre hiring boom scales new peak" (Business Today, July 2026). www.businesstoday.in/jobs/story/at-5-1-lakh-jobs-indias-global-capability-centre-hiring-boom-scales-new-peak-540328-2026-07-01

[6] foundit, see note 5.

[7] FICCI–ANAROCK, as reported in "India to host more than 2,400 GCCs, employ 2.8 million professionals by 2030" (Business Today, February 2026). www.businesstoday.in/amp/real-estate/story/india-to-host-more-than-2400-gccs-employ-2-8-million-professionals-by-2030-ficci-anarock-514378-2026-02-03

[8] Vestian, as reported in "India leads global GCC expansion, projected to cross 2,100 centers by FY28 amid Tier-2 city surge" (The Realty Today, July 2025). therealtytoday.com/news/expert-opinion/india-leads-global-gcc-expansion-projected-to-cross-2100-centers-by-fy28-amid-tier-2-city-surge-vestian-report

[9] Colliers, see note 2.

[10] JLL, see note 1.

[11] Colliers, see note 2.

Check the network and set red lines. Look beyond the office: flight links for visiting leaders, local recruitment and payroll partners, universities that feed the skills you need, and power and connectivity resilience. Then decide which factors carry a minimum score. A city that fails a red line should drop out, however well it scores overall.

05 What the scorecard hides

Return to the opening scenario. The firm compares a major metro with a smaller city where its scarcest skill is concentrated but suitable buildings are few. Using illustrative weights and scores of 1 to 5:

EXHIBIT 1 · LOCATION SCORECARD (ILLUSTRATIVE)

Factor	Weight	Metro A	City B	City B, mitigated
Access to the critical roles	35%	3	5	5
Workplace supply in the target micro-market	25%	5	2	3
Connectivity and resilience	20%	5	3	3
Total cost	15%	2	4	4
Leadership access	5%	5	3	3
Weighted score (out of 5)	**100%**	**3.85**	**3.60**	**3.85**

Weights and scores are hypothetical and describe no real city. Weights should change with every mandate. Vertara Global analysis.

On the weighted total, Metro A wins, 3.85 against 3.60. That is where many location studies stop. Two further tests change the answer. If the firm sets a red line that access to the critical roles must score at least 4, Metro A drops out despite its higher total. And if City B's weakness can be fixed, by securing a managed-space operator and a named fallback building, its workplace score rises to 3 and the totals draw level at 3.85. The decision now rests on the right question: can the firm hire its scarce roles in the metro, or house its team in City B?

06 How to run the decision

Match the search to the mandate before scoring anything. The same city can be the right answer for one centre and the wrong one for another.

Mandate	Where to start looking	Decision test
Scarce specialist skill	Wherever that skill clusters, even if the city is smaller	Can we fill the three to five critical roles within six months?
Broad capability at volume	Metro micro-markets with real depth	Can we compete on pay and brand with the large GCCs next door?
Second site or cost-led growth	A Tier II city paired with an existing hub	Are leadership travel, vendors and continuity workable from day one?

- **Compare on one scorecard.** Put talent depth, workplace supply, connectivity, resilience, total cost and leadership access side by side for each shortlisted micro-market, and record where the evidence is thin.
- **Test the hiring market directly.** Ask local recruiters to size the pipeline for the critical roles, with realistic time-to-hire and pay ranges, rather than relying on citywide headcount figures.
- **Secure a fallback before you commit.** For each finalist, name a second building or operator, and confirm the vendors you will rely on for recruitment, payroll, IT and facilities.

- **Set a review gate after two quarters of hiring.** Compare actual time-to-hire, offer acceptance and attrition against the assumptions behind the choice. If the market is tighter than expected, that is the moment to activate a second site, not a year later.

QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD

1. Which three to five roles will make or break this centre, and where can we hire and keep them?
2. Are there at least two viable buildings or operators in the micro-market we would use?
3. Which factors are red lines, and does every finalist pass them?
4. What would trigger a second site, and which city would it be?

07 How Vertara Global helps

We start from the capability the centre needs, not from a city ranking. We build the role profile with your business leaders, test the hiring market for the critical roles, and assess real estate at the level of actual buildings and operators, each with a fallback. The deliverable is a location brief: the shortlist rationale, a scorecard with the strength of evidence marked, named sites and operators, and the triggers for a hub-plus-one decision.

Whichever operating model the client chooses, we stay engaged into year two, tracking hiring and workplace assumptions against what actually happens and flagging early when a market proves tighter than planned. The test of success: the critical roles filled on time, in a site that can grow with the team.

ABOUT VERTARA global

Vertara Global is a practitioner-led GCC advisory firm. We help mid-market companies across sectors and geographies design, set up, scale and transform their Global Capability Centres, from the first business case and location choice to the operating model, entity, talent and workplace.

Our services span five pillars:

1. **GCC Consulting**
2. **Legal & Entity Support**
3. **People Advisory**
4. **Digital & AI**
5. **Engineering GCC Solutions**

Client-first and leader-led: senior practitioners run every engagement, and we stay involved after handover, because year two is where many GCCs are tested.