

Baltimore Business Journal (Green Business)

Development Meets Demands of Renters

By Tim Hyland, Contributor

Green Development:

The Town Center at Arundel Preserve

Top executive:

David Hillman, CEO, Southern Management Corp.

Location: Hanover

Why Go Green? “As time goes on, the cost-benefit more sense,” said Hillman. “Most of these things do make sense if you’re thinking long-term.”



David Hillman says green apartments attract many young residents.

David Hillman is a bottom-line kind of guy. And according to Hillman, one of the new bottom-line realities of the apartment community business is that “green” sells.

It sells big.

So it's no surprise that Hillman, CEO of Vienna, VA-based Southern Management Corp., has made a concerted effort to ensure that his firm's new apartment communities fall squarely into the category of “environmentally friendly.”

After all, Hillman notes, it’s what customers want.

“Our market for most of our apartment communities is young people, and they’re really into this green stuff,” Hillman said. “When you say a building is LEED-certified, it means something to them. We do it for that reason.”

And they do it well, too. Most recently, Southern's increased focus on green building could be seen in the blueprints for Town Center at Arundel Preserve, a planned 268-acre mixed-use development in Hanover, not far from Arundel Mills, that will eventually include 1.3 million square feet of space. The development will be certified as silver under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The first phase of the project, totaling 600,000 square feet, will include 242 apartments, more than 170,000 square feet of top-tier office space, 45,000 square feet of retail space, and a boutique hotel, all organized in a "town center" design that will make it easier for residents to live, work, and play right there in their community. That concept, of course, is green, too.

"It gets people out of their cars for a lot of the daily stuff," Hillman said. "They will have a lot of the services right there on the site that most people would normally drive to. So that will promote biking and walking and maybe staying close to home more."

The second phase will add another 700,000 square feet of mixed-use space to the site.

Certainly, the Town Center stands to benefit from its strategic location — neighboring the massive Arundel Mills development and smack in the middle of the Baltimore-Washington corridor. But according to Hillman, all of the development's green features — from the mile-long park that winds its way throughout the space and the 100 acres of forested area, to the cutting-edge HVAC systems designed to reduce energy consumption and the litany of green materials used in its construction — might be every bit as important to its success.

That's not only because "green" buildings attract residents these days, but also because those green features figure to save Southern quite a bit of operating cash going forward.

"There's a lot of stuff [in green building] that makes sense, both because it makes for a better living environment for the customer and because, in the long run, it saves a lot of money," Hillman said.

There are other benefits, including the quality of some of the more popular environmentally-friendly products. While he notes that not all green building materials are winners — he and his designers were initially intrigued by a new countertop product made from recycled aluminum cans, but then had to scrap it when it was discovered that the untreated cans were not flame-retardant — many of them are. In fact some of those materials are not only more attractive than conventional products, but more durable.
