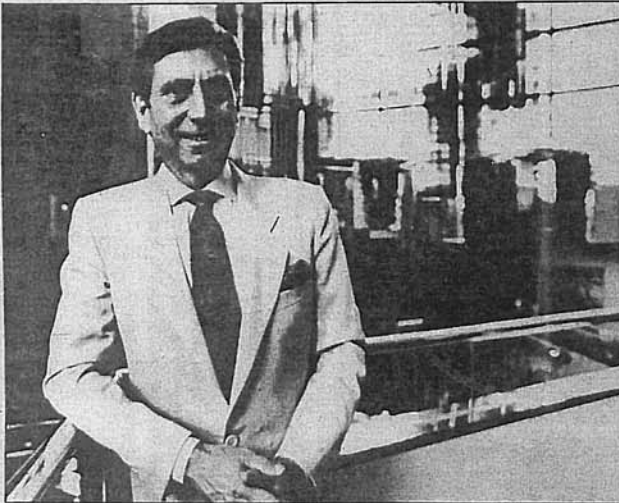


THE DAILY AZTEC

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Alum's dream towers over downtown



THE DAILY AZTEC/Don Liebig

Sandy Shapery, an SDSU alumnus, inside his Emerald-Shapery Center, which he said will be 'user-friendly' and 'a healthier place to live and work in.'

By Rina Szwarc
DAILY AZTEC NEWS WRITER

The new Emerald-Shapery Center started out as a gleam in SDSU alumnus Sandy Shapery's eye and crystallized under his careful nurturing into a building whose revolutionary hexagonal design now graces more than 14 national magazine covers, including the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*.

Although his dream is a towering reality on San Diego's downtown skyline, Shapery is still refining its aesthetics and engineering.

Shapery said he plans to unveil a new jewel-like sculpture in front of the Broadway Avenue entrance and install a new water recycling system.

The sculpture, by Steve Maslach, will be a cluster of glass rising like crystals from the concrete in front of the building. Because the glass will be laminated with a dichromatic chemical, it will radiate different colors as the light shifts or as viewers move around it.

The recycling system will further

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refine the building's prototype air-conditioning system by collecting water condensed on the pipes in the office tower.

"I'm going to tap into (the water) and use it for the pool, our plants and our laundry," Shapery said.

The creation of the structure's distinctive towers was a synthesis of economics and the thinking of Buckminster Fuller, a philosopher who advocated a partnership between technology and nature, said Shapery, adding that he copied the natural formation of crystals in designing his hexagonal high-rise towers because of its structural efficiency.

In addition to marrying the concepts of technology and nature, Shapery has also engaged the idea of making something both profitable to business and healthy for employees.

Shapery said making a building "user-friendly" becomes "a philosophical issue" because "people want to go to a building that is healthier to work and live in."

To that end, he built the Emerald-Shapery Center to go beyond the standard health code.

To combat what Shapery called the "sick building syndrome," he designed, in cooperation with air-conditioning manufacturer Carrier Corp., a prototype for a new high-rise air-conditioning system.

Shapery said the technology dated from the 1920s, but a grant from the Public Utilities Commission helped him

"put the pieces together."

The new system differs from conventional air conditioning with two key design elements, a decentralized air-vent system that uses fresh air and a basement cooling system.

Shapery said conventional air conditioning relies on a ceiling fan with a single vent running down a building, which is then continuously recirculated through the building. Dragging the air down the vent results in air full of positive ions, which studies have found to be unhealthy.

By contrast, Shapery said his system carries air within a smaller unit, a distance of three floors, then pipes in air from both outside and inside the building. This design results in air full of negative ions, which are considered healthier.

Another innovation within the air-conditioning system is its price. Shapery's system uses San Diego Gas and Electric's nighttime rates to freeze coolant used during the day. SDG&E's nighttime rates are substantially lower than daytime peak ones.

Despite a real-estate market Shapery described as tight, his towers have a 55 percent occupancy rate, in comparison to the many vacant office towers which surround them.

The center's tenants include the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, the Pan-Pacific Hotel, San Diego Small Business Development Center and San Diego 109, a subsidiary of Tokyu Corp., which financed the building.

Shapery said another "user-friendly" element is the building's lighting, which

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relies on both natural light and fluorescent bulbs that mimic sunlight.

Shapery said General Electric Co. discounted the newly designed bulbs to help promote them. If the promotion is successful, GE will be able to reduce the price of the bulbs to what could be one-fifth the cost of regular incandescent bulbs.

Shapery also lives in his creation in a rooftop penthouse which has a

panoramic view of the city below and the harbor. He is currently hand-decorating his new home, right down to the vanilla-colored marble floor moldings and his cave-like jacuzzi and bathtub, which has a sliding "moon roof."

Stepping past his granite cutting table, Shapery said, "The point of this is creation. The more you create, the closer you are to God."