



Shapery crystallizes

SAN DIEGAN DEVELOPS WITH NEW AGE FLAIR

by Robert Schupp

I don't need a castle anymore." So says Sandor Shapery, developer of Emerald Shapery Center, an intricate highrise of hexagonal towers now rising in downtown San Diego.

Shapery has been one of the city's flashier real estate players. He has a choice of desks to sit behind; one overlooking the Cove in La Jolla and the other on the 16th floor of a downtown tower. Crystals, spheres, obelisks and other geometric artworks line his shelves. He has a 2-year-old son and a baby on the way with his live-in companion of five years. His hair is longish and on a day with 95-degree heat he wears no tie to keep gray hair from spilling out of his loosely-buttoned shirt.

Profile

Only 44, Shapery leaped into the highly competitive downtown office market after making his fortune by building, buying and selling small office complexes and strip shopping centers. The Emerald Shapery Center, arguably downtown's most striking structure to date, is just the first of several downtown projects he plans to build.

But Emerald Shapery Center, which features eight hexagonal towers of varying heights in a scheme that Shapery himself first put to paper, is his one development that is a manifestation of his personality.

"I'm pretty much recognition-driven," says Shapery. "I never got much attention from my mother as a child and everything branches out from there. All of a sudden I replaced Mom with all of society. When I was grow-



Sandor's castle: Hexagonal towers of Emerald Shapery are rising in San Diego.

ing up, for example, I'd get all A's (on a report card) and an A-. I'd bring it home all excited and show Mom, and instead of saying 'That's wonderful!' she'd say 'What's this A-. I could never do enough and that created a drive and motivation.'

High motivation, however, is only a part of what has shaped Emerald Shapery Center. His desire to create San Diego's most efficient building has led Shapery to adopt a corporate and developmental philosophy that could be described as "New Age."

The design of the Emerald Shapery complex and of Shapery's "company culture" is a direct result of his fascination with crystals.

"Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the all-time great architects, had a philosophy that I agree with: To create the perfect building, you imitate nature. Nature is the perfect interaction of all the energy levels that creates a universal balance.

"Frank Lloyd Wright's work was very organic in nature. I decided to take the next step in these high-tech times and work with crystals. I started studying crystals and discovered that most crystals in nature are hexagons."

And from hexagons comes Shapery's new creed: Create more with less.

Hexagons, explains Shapery, are simply six triangles connected together, three on top and three on the bottom. To draw these six triangles, it would take three lines to draw the first one. But drawing the next four triangles would require only two lines each, because each would share a side with a previously drawn triangle. Drawing the sixth triangle would require only one line because it shares a side with two other triangles. Thus, six triangles are drawn with only 12 lines.

"What I've learned from this is that by combining things you create a greater efficiency," he says. "The universe is saying that through integration, you create more with less. That became the whole developmental philosophy behind the project."

His design has practical benefits as well, he claims. He says Emerald Shapery Center will have 12 percent more window space than a conventional rectangular building of the same square footage. Inside, only 5 percent of a given floor will be made up of common-space halls and elevator lobbies compared to the normal 10 percent to 15 percent for the rectangular building.

Creating more with less has led Shapery to boast that Emerald Shapery Center will "reduce everyone's utility bill."

This will be achieved by the center's air conditioning system, which will employ underground tanks holding 100,000 gallons of

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water. This water will be cooled at night during the non-peak hours of midnight to 6 a.m. when electrical rates are two-thirds as much as during peak hours of between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. The cold water will be circulated the next day to cool the building.

Not only will tenants save money by lower utility bills, but the public will save, says Shapery. The utility company will not have to build more infrastructure to provide the building with electricity. Instead, the complex will actually use surplus electricity that would normally go unused at night. The purchase of non-peak-hour electricity goes straight to the bottom line for the utility company and is pure profit, thus reducing the public's utility bill, says Shapery.

Other innovations to be used at Emerald Shapery Center are operable window mullions to allow fresh air into the building. This will prevent people from getting what Shapery calls "sick building syndrome" caused by breathing air made toxic by fumes released by vinyl carpeting and wall coverings in air-tight offices.

Traditional air conditioning systems are unhealthy as well, the developer contends. "Experts have found that when you move huge columns of cold air through turns in ducts you get a discharge of negative ions resulting in positively-ionized air," he says. "Studies show that positively-ionized air is unhealthy."

"You've heard the term 'ill wind,' well that's the same thing. Santa Ana wind coming off the desert becomes positively-ionized as it passes over the ground. Crime rates, suicide rates increase because of the positively-ionized air. Conversely, air coming off the ocean is negatively charged. People living near the beach are healthier."

At Emerald Shapery Center, fresh air will be brought in on each floor, thus eliminating the huge columns of air moving throughout the building.

General Electric will also supply the center with full-spectrum fluorescent lights. This, too, will be healthier for tenants, he asserts. The lights, which Shapery says are five times more expensive than normal fluorescent



Sandor Shapery

lights, eliminate the flickering that causes headaches. The lights will be supplied at a reduced cost and, in return, General Electric will use the building for advertising purposes, he says.

Creating more with less has become his corporate philosophy as well. It has led to the formation of a company culture that includes this purpose: "To create the greatest benefit for the most people while realizing our full human potential through the pursuit of quality and excellence in harmony with nature."

Shapery is developing Emerald Shapery Center as a joint venture with Tokyo Corp. of Japan, which is providing the capital needed for the project. Since no other financing was required, Shapery is not worried that his 30-story, 375,400-square-foot office building (plus a 27-story, 445-room Emerald Hotel) lags behind the leasing activity of other new projects downtown.

The building is about 25 percent preleased, which compares to The Koll Center's 50 percent figure and Cabot, Cabot and Forbes' 60 percent total.

"What other developers have to do is give away the farm to get 30 percent, 40 percent

preleased and get financing," says Shapery. "As soon as they get financing, their deals tighten up. On the 60 to 70 percent of the building, they have to make some money on the deals because they've given away a third of the building already."

"In our case we don't have to do that. Actually, we can give better deals all along the way rather than have to tighten up because of lost income."

Shapery is also laying plans for an all-suites, extended-stay hotel and another office building downtown. He is about to propose a 16-story residential project built in a New Orleans style above his existing Old Colum-

bia Square project downtown.

While his professional career shows no sign of slowing, Shapery maintains that his personal life has.

"The more I accomplish, the more secure I am with myself. I don't need as much recognition. I used to live in a castle in Del Mar. I don't need a castle anymore."

But Shapery says this shortly after announcing that he is building a 25,000-square-foot penthouse suite atop the Emerald Hotel in his new project, complete with artificial rock waterfalls constructed of a resin that will be translucent.

"I guess that is pretty ostentatious, isn't it?"