

# LOUISVILLE BUSINESS FIRST

AUG. 28, 2009

BusinessFirstofLouisville.com

| VOL. 26, NO. 3

## Louisville investors buy Springhurst Towne Center for \$42.4 million

### *New owners in talks with national retailers for former Fashion Shop space*

BY JOHN R. KARMAN III | STAFF WRITER  
jkarman@bizjournals.com

Springhurst Towne Center, one of Louisville's largest shopping complexes, has been sold to a group of local investors for \$42.4 million.

The investors, led by D. Talmage Hocker, closed on the deal Aug. 13. The seller was Centro Properties Group, a troubled real estate investment trust based in Melbourne, Australia.

Hocker is president of The Hocker Group LLC, a Louisville-based real estate development and investment firm formed in 2007. He and his associates took title to the Springhurst shopping center under the name of an affiliate, Springhurst Partners LLC.

The partners are Louisville investors Jack Wells, Tyler Thompson, John Schutte and Schutte's mother, Betty Schutte.

#### Second time's a charm

Centro had been marketing Springhurst for sale for some time. Hocker said he bid on the shopping center a year ago but was not selected as the buyer.

**"It is a great property, and it's going to be even better. We're pretty excited."**

**TALMAGE HOCKER**  
*The Hocker Group LLC*

he still was interested.

The acquisition was financed by U.S. Bank, according to Hocker.

Upgrades of the Springhurst center are planned, but Hocker said it is too early to discuss them. He said a "game plan" will be developed in the next 60 to 120 days.

Meanwhile, his firm, which will manage and lease the center, is talking with "six or eight" national retailers that might be interested in taking space vacated by Fashion Shop of Kentucky Inc. That company folded in 2007 after filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection a year earlier.

The 26,000-square-foot former Fashion Shop space is the largest available at Springhurst. A handful of small storefronts are available.

"It is a great property, and it's going to



**Springhurst Towne Center, located off Westport Road in northeastern Jefferson County, has been sold. Cinemark Tinseltown movie theater, shown above, is one of the shopping center's tenants.**

RON BATH | BUSINESS FIRST

be even better," Hocker said. "We're pretty excited."

#### One of city's first 'power centers'

Springhurst, located at 10508 Fischer Park Drive, near the intersection of Westport Road and the Gene Snyder Freeway, placed No. 5 on Business First's July 3 list of the area's largest shopping complexes. The list was ranked by the amount of square feet managed.

Springhurst was built by Chattanooga, Tenn.-based CBL & Associates Properties Inc. and opened in 1997 as one of Louisville's first "power centers" or unenclosed malls.

It has 782,407 square feet and 36 tenants, according to the Business First list. Tenants include Cinemark Tinseltown theater, Meijer, Kohl's, Dick's Sporting Goods, Liquor Barn, Target, TJ Maxx, Office Max, Books-A-Million and several restaurants.

Robert Schwartz, a senior vice president, partner and retail broker with CB Richard Ellis/Louisville, called Springhurst "one of, if not the best power center" in Louisville because of its strong tenant base.

#### Broker applauds new local owner

Hocker formerly was president and

chief operating officer of Owensboro, Ky.-based David Hocker & Associates Inc., a firm operated by his father, David Hocker.

Hocker & Associates has owned or developed 45 shopping centers in 14 states. Its current holdings include The Mall at Barnes Crossing in Tupelo, Miss., and The Mall at Turtle Creek in Jonesboro, Ark.

Hocker & Associates managed Oxmoor Center in Louisville for six years. An affiliate of the company, Hocker Oxmoor LLC, owned the Shelbyville Road mall from 2003 until 2004, when it sold it to The Rouse Co., a Baltimore-based REIT, for \$123 million.

Rouse, which also owned Mall St. Matthews at the time, was acquired by Chicago-based General Growth Properties Inc. a short time later.

Schwartz, the local broker, praised Talmage Hocker, who has worked in retail and real estate development since 1984.

Hocker helped his father build Hocker & Associates over the course of two decades before going out on his own.

Talmage Hocker continues to be a partner in a number of shopping centers outside of Kentucky.

Schwartz said the younger Hocker often tells childhood stories of touring mall properties on Saturdays with his dad.

**"Talmage Hocker has grown up in retail. He lives it, breathes it. Talmage is here in Louisville, and he will focus on (Springhurst). He'll do what's right for that property."**

**ROBERT SCHWARTZ**

*CB Richard Ellis/Louisville*

"Talmage has grown up in retail," Schwartz explained. "He lives it, breathes it. Talmage is here in Louisville, and he will focus on (Springhurst). He'll do what's right for that property."

#### Former owner weighed down by debt

Centro Properties Group owned the Springhurst center since 2007, when it acquired Galileo Shopping America Trust, an Australian REIT.

Galileo took ownership of Springhurst following a 2003 joint venture between CBL and Galileo America REIT, the United States affiliate of the Australia-based entity.

Centro owns 610 properties in 39 states, according to its Web site, [www.centro.com](http://www.centro.com).

But the REIT has been on a shopping center selling spree for more than a year in an effort to pay down debt that has threatened to sink it.

The global credit crunch hampered Centro's ability to refinance its debt load.

The closing on the Springhurst deal coincided with Centro's sale of four other assets: properties in Houston; Southington, Conn.; Statesboro, Ga.; and Stevensville, Mich.

The aggregate sale amount for the properties was \$74.3 million.

Centro officials could not be reached for comment before Business First's press deadline. |