

## Sustainability Solutions

### Let the Clips Fall Where They May

A wise person once said: "You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

Since the exterior of your building is often your first impression, it's a great place to make that first and lasting impact.

Many property managers today want to "green" their properties and benefit from the rewards of higher occupancy, boosted profits, a healthier landscape and a better public image. If your tenants see your "green" practices regularly on the outside, they'll want to know what you're doing inside, and you create a more sustainable image of your business and your brand.

One of the sustainability solutions Davey offers to its customers is recycling turf clippings. Historically, clippings were bagged for many reasons, one of which being the thought that they harm the turf through the production of thatch buildup.

But, in reality, clippings are extremely beneficial to turf. Clippings consist of 85 to 90 percent water and nutrients. According to a Kansas State University Horticulture Report, when clippings are left to dry on the turf, they shrink about 90 percent. Once dry, they settle in between the turf blades and decompose, returning that water and nutrients to the soil. The University of Missouri even found organizations could reduce their fertilizer needs by 25 percent or more by recycling their grass clippings.

### Tale of the Turf

**10%** of trash that can be reduced by recycling turf clippings vs. taking them to a landfill.

**85-90%** of water and nutrients is retained in turf clippings.

**25%** reduction in fertilizer needs when recycling turf clippings.

*Sources: University of Missouri, Kansas State University*

Decomposed turf clippings also become a part of the organic matter in the soil, encouraging earthworms and other beneficial microbial activity found in naturally healthy soil. And healthy soil is the foundation of healthy turf.

Another trick to smooth turf clipping recycling is mowing regularly to prevent the turf from growing too tall between cuts. We recommend removing no more than one-third of the total turf blade length at any one time. Turf heights can vary between 1½ and 3½ inches depending on the specific varieties – so make sure you know your turf type!

A regular mowing program with sharp blades and mulching equipment will help your clippings decompose even faster, and help your turf maintain a healthy appearance.



## A Full House

### Protect your building's most important assets.

A full house might not be the best hand in poker.

Ranked fourth behind a royal flush, a straight flush and four-of-a-kind, it's still a decent hand.

But where a literal "full house" ranks ahead of all else is if you're a property manager or building owner, where tenant retention rules the day.

But in today's challenged and competitive commercial real estate environment, attaining and retaining tenants is tougher. Getting the right cards to acquire your full house today may feel just like poker – a game of chance. As such, implementing a proactive tenant retention strategy can up your business ante.

### The cards on the table

Today, commercial properties are experiencing vacancy rates ranging from 8 percent for multi-family housing to 18 percent for office buildings. Commercial property values have fallen more than 40 percent since the beginning of 2007, according to the Congressional Oversight Panel's February 2010 report, "Commercial Real Estate Losses and the Risk to Financial Stability."

Enter tenant retention.

**"With landlords scrambling to keep their vacancy rates under 15 or even 20 percent, it would seem that tenant relations have never been more important,"** says Laura Horsley in the Building Owners & Managers Association's (BOMA) *2010 Kingsley Report*. "The truth, however, is that the best run properties are successful because tenant relations have always been important, not just during a crisis."

*The Journal of Property Management* suggests a strategy that combines tenant relations with building improvements and programs that enhance the building environment.

### Aces full

When it comes to improving your building's environment, focusing on sustainability improvements that help boost your brand and reduce costs seems to be a win-win for property managers and their tenants.



For instance, BOMA's *Kingsley Report* revealed **commercial properties on average decreased overall operating costs last year a little more than 1 percent, with the cost of energy being a large component here.** They attribute this to reductions in energy usage and improvements in energy efficiency.

### The Numbers Don't Lie

- 8% vacancy rate for multifamily housing.
- 18% vacancy rate for office buildings.
- 40% rent has declined on average for office space.
- 33% rent has declined on average for retail space.
- 20% of tenants who never hear from their property managers.

Sources: Congressional Oversight Panel's February 2010 report, "Commercial Real Estate Losses and the Risk to Financial Stability" and Kingsley Associates

During the past six months, Rich Chilcoat, national sales manager for Davey Commercial Grounds Management, has spent a lot of time presenting exterior strategies and solutions to property managers. Among the most widely requested subjects was how to implement a planting and maintenance plan to advertise the fact they are "going green."

Achieving gold or platinum LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) through the U.S. Green Building Council, a rigorous third-party certification program, offers compelling proof to you and your current and prospective tenants that you've achieved sustainable environmental goals. More and more of Chilcoat's clients are asking how they can reach that status. In fact, he says policies in some areas are requiring government entities to lease spaces that are certified as LEED gold status or better.



**"Over-communicating with your tenants on what is going on with the property and seeking feedback is the real key to keeping a pulse on what is going on,"** he says.

"We can evaluate irrigation systems and make sure they are working correctly to eliminate wasted or misdirected water and help them conserve water use with higher tech irrigation products like subsurface and drip irrigation and soil moisture sensors," Chilcoat shares. "We can implement landscape programs designed to reduce run-off and erosion. We can replace annuals in landscape beds with perennial plantings and focus on native plants to reduce water needs and cost and still provide an aesthetically pleasing exterior."

In fact, according to BOMA, "implementing energy saving and sustainable practices has been shown to increase tenant satisfaction and property values."

### Know HOW to Hold 'em

Building improvements are important, but if they aren't **communicated** to tenants, then they may go unnoticed.

**"Frequent, memorable connections between the property manager and the tenant yield significantly high levels of tenant satisfaction, which yield higher tenant retention ratios,"** BOMA

explains in their recent report "The Era of the Property Manager: Strategies for Creating Asset Value in a Down Economy."

DIY Real Estate Solutions'

Rob Crichlow agrees.

Improving tenant communication can separate you from the competition.

The first step is listening. Conduct annual surveys asking tenants for their opinions and then track your performance improvement. Communicate building improvements and changes and ask for feedback.

Property managers can also connect with tenants more regularly on an informal basis.



In addition, BOMA recommends more formal interactions through the creation of tenant councils, which are groups comprised of the property management team, chief engineers, and key vendors and tenants, that

meet monthly, bimonthly or quarterly to communicate and solve problems. **"The frequency of service calls will drop and tenant satisfaction levels will increase dramatically,"** the association reports.

Becoming a more sustainable business today – for the environment and for your pocketbook – means becoming an active player in tenant retention – and that can land you a full house every time.

### Your Green Partner

#### Go Green!

For more information on how Davey can help you go green, visit [www.davey.com/greenlandscape](http://www.davey.com/greenlandscape)



## From the Field

### Landscaping Like a Lion

"In like a lion and out like a lamb."

Most of us have heard this popular saying about our March, or even spring, weather. During this unpredictable weather period, many of our customers don't want to talk about their exterior maintenance until they know that winter's snow, ice, slush and cold temperatures are truly behind them.



**George Gaumer**  
VP & GM

Approaching spring cleanup like a lion can impress current and prospective tenants. There are about 30 to-do items on our spring cleanup checklist.

We start by picking up the litter and snow damaged tree branches that have fallen on the property – we clear all of it.

Then we remove leftover fall leaves and sticks from the lawn. We also rake the lawns, starting to eliminate any snow mold damage.

On concrete walkways, we make sure traces of winter are removed.

Building entryways are where we can really make an improvement. We remove trapped leaves stuck in corners beside doorways and eliminate silt. It's amazing what this can do for the inside as well. Employees, visitors and others will immediately stop tracking dirt into the building.

Living up a property in this way, particularly around entranceways, adds value right off of the bat because you're walking into a clean environment. Plus, by having us come in early, you're ahead of the pack. If you're trying to fill vacancies in your building, you will stand out from your competitors.

Remember, even though Mother Nature seems a lioness at this time of year, you can move through the spring season calm as a lamb by following a proven checklist.