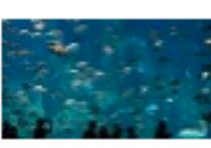




LIFESTYLE
Concrete Green

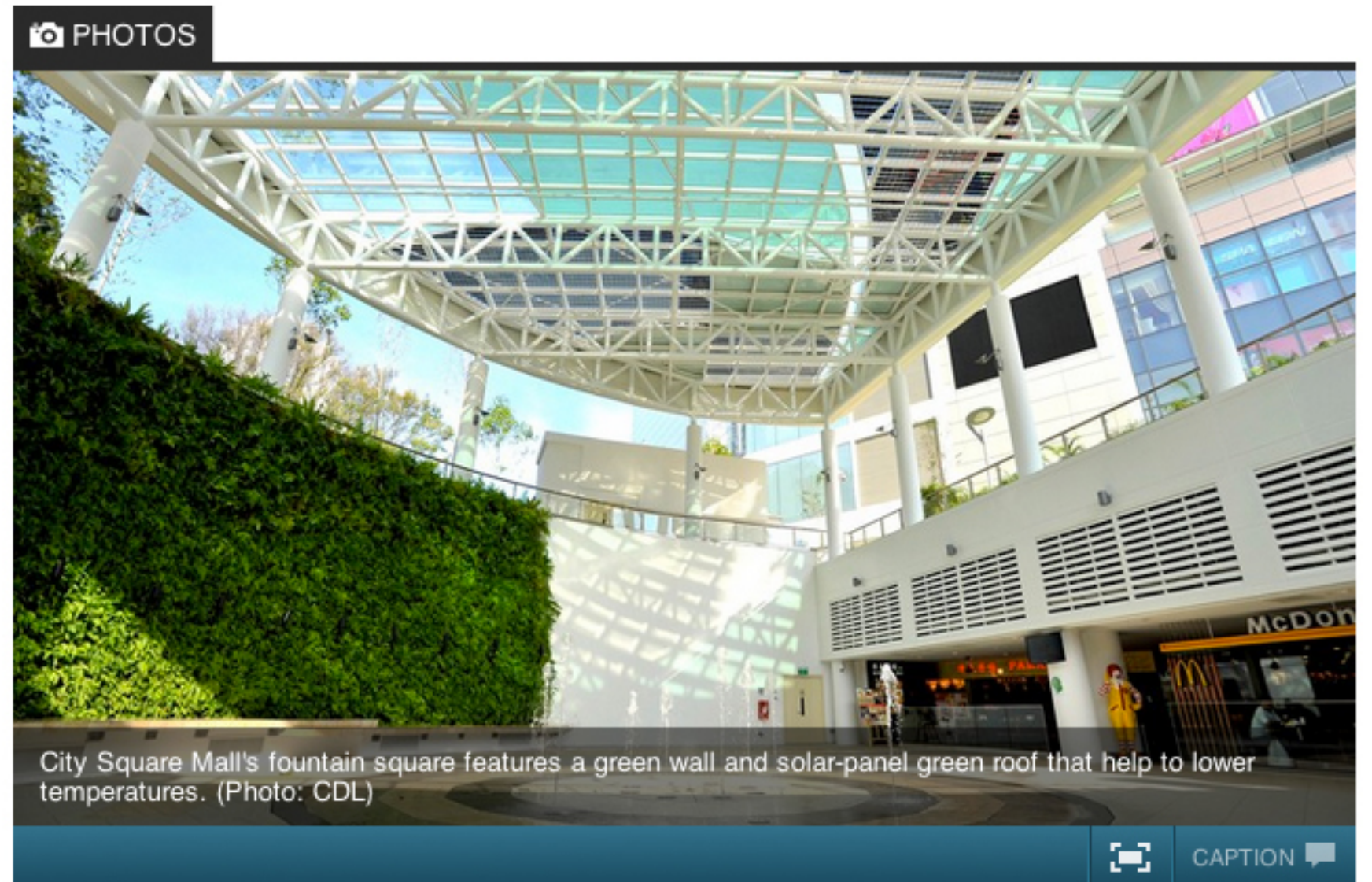
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When City Developments Limited (CDL), developed Singapore's first green-mall, it made heavy investments in green and energy efficient technologies, and now it's not just Saving Gaia, it's also saving dollars!



In a concrete jungle such as Singapore, an enormous amount of energy is needed to power buildings.

No surprise then, that Singapore has set a goal to make 80 per cent of buildings on the island eco-friendly by 2030.

As of March 2013, there are close to 1500 Green Mark building projects in Singapore, a nod towards promoting sustainability with environment-friendly buildings and environmental awareness among developers, designers and builders.

When the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) handed out its 2013 awards, one of the most lauded was City Developments Limited (CDL).

Apart from being the inaugural winner of the Quality Excellence Award – Quality Champion (Platinum) and Construction Productivity Award – Advocates (Platinum), CDL added another 21 project awards to its honours roll, including five new Green Mark awards.

In total, CDL added 67 Green Mark awards to its name. More importantly, the building developer makes sure it walks the talk.

“By incorporating sustainable green features in the buildings, it enables us to use natural resources more efficiently,” says Esther An, head of corporate social responsibility at CDL.

“We believe that it is possible to ‘Conserve as we Construct’, if we take a conscious effort to be more environmentally responsible.”

Green shopping

Forget for the moment, of the need to say “no” to plastic bags when shopping.

When CDL decided that shopping could be greener, it opened City Square Mall.

Launched in 2009, the shopping centre doesn’t just have a green theme; it is also Singapore’s first eco-mall.

While City Square Mall ticks all the right boxes with green innovations all around the building, developing an eco-mall means more than just water and energy-saving features such as motion sensor lights, solar panels, and urinals that do not require flushing.

At City Square, many of the sustainable features are built to work together to achieve the most efficient result.

A high-efficiency air-conditioning system for instance, is complemented by double-glazed windows to keep the heat from the sun out, to cut energy use and costs.

The mall also has an eco green roof that helps absorb heat, while the plants and soil collect rainwater that are in turn, pumped to water the gardens.

These various innovations help to reduce energy consumption by 39 per cent, and save enough water to fill about 10 Olympic-sized swimming pools, each year.

While the mall may embody sustainability methods, it goes the extra mile to engage visitors in an eco-learning experience as well.

Each level of the shopping centre is tied to a theme, with bite-size information about the ecosystem placed all around the mall so that shoppers can get to know more about the environment.

At the same time, CDL encourages vendors at City Square to adopt green practices.

The combined effort results in the best eco-friendly shopping experience, which has earned City Square the Green Mark Platinum Award from BCA, which CDL proudly notes, is the first in Singapore to be awarded to a mall.

Sustainability is not just a fad

While some may argue that most companies practising eco-friendly building are just greenwashing with little or no effort in reducing their carbon footprint, CDL believes that sustainability is the way to go in its industry.

“There is no denying that sustainability is a global business trend that is here to stay,” says An, who also points out that it “has become intricately linked with long-term growth of a business”.

“Efficiency gains in buildings are likely to provide the greatest energy reductions and in many cases will be the most economical option,” says CDL’s head of corporate social responsibility.

According to An, between 2008 and 2011, up to S\$19.7 million was saved on electricity bills alone from 37 of CDL’s Green Mark awarded buildings.

“City Square Mall achieved annual energy savings of 14.9 million kWh or over S\$4 million,” cites An of the 2011 figures, that show CDL’s green investment was paid off within 2.5 years, despite having initially invested 4.85 per cent of building costs on green and energy efficient technologies.

As more developers and buildings turn green, CDL on the other hand planted its seeds some 15 years ago, and have been pressing on with their green agenda.

“In the 1990s, CDL wanted to change the perception that the building industry necessarily has a negative impact to the environment,” explains An.

“Moreover, through the implementation of green innovations into the buildings, it is also helping to develop the industry’s expertise and capabilities in adopting sustainable solutions for our built environment.”

While going green seems to have worked out pretty well for the developer, going by the prize count at the 2013 BCA Awards, CDL does not create sustainable buildings to win awards or keep up with standard industry codes.

In the eyes of CDL, green “is not just a short term goal but a continuously evolving process”, An stresses, adding that while the sustainability journey has been rewarding, the larger gains lie in establishing an environmentally friendly operation and business.

Saving Gaia is a month-long campaign marked by MediaCorp every June to create environmental awareness

- CNA/sf