

Planning to Succeed

To succeed as a real estate developer, you'd better be able to deal with risk. Michael LeValley, principal of Live Oak Design Group, knows this all too well.

LeValley specializes in non-traditional projects such as Smith Ranch Studios, a combination of artist studios and public gallery space, and Academy Heights, luxury homes built primarily with environmentally friendly materials and techniques.

"Some developers treat risk like a fixed cost; they budget a set amount and hope it's enough. But to me that's planning to fail," remarks LeValley. "I want to assess a project upfront and do everything I can to minimize my exposure."

Of the many risk factors confronting developers, one near the top of LeValley's list was construction risk. To get a handle on that he turned to Charles Wilson of RiskSmart Solutions[®] (RSS).

Being Smart About Risk

"Charles's approach is unique in my experience," says LeValley. "First off, he doesn't sell insurance so I know the advice I'm getting is objective. Second, he blends "big picture" consulting with a laser focus on the details – especially implementation. It was exactly what I was looking for."

RSS performs a custom risk analysis on each LeValley project. Specific recommendations are made on aspects as diverse as tenant lease and insurance agreements, art inventory procedures, appropriate and protective contract wording, construction site safety and signage, broker selection, premium levels, and the fine details of WRAP insurance.

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— Michael LeValley
Principal, Live Oak Design Group

"His industry knowledge is comprehensive and current," comments LeValley, "and his recommendations are practical and straight-forward. I can implement them without losing my shirt."

Communication, Co-ordination, and Follow-Through

A critical aspect of managing real estate development risk is understanding how exposure is spread among the many participants of a project.

LeValley notes, "Charles is impressive in his ability to communicate and persevere through all the back and forth between the various parties to a project. He can work with anyone – me, my partners, my CFO, my project manager, the subs, attorneys, co-developers – and keep everyone on the same page. His organizational skills and follow-through are simply amazing."

Why Carry Avoidable Risk?

Initially engaged on a project basis, LeValley has since converted the relationship to be ongoing.

"At first, there was some natural skepticism. But once my team worked with Charles, we found we wanted his professionalism, insight, and quite frankly his integrity to be at the table all the time."

What does LeValley tell his peers about RSS?

"It's pretty simple," he says. "My philosophy is: why carry unnecessary risk? Charles' approach is: buy your insurance last – in other words, eliminate and mitigate risk before spending money on coverage you don't need. It's a perfect match."

With that LeValley smiles and adds, "I tell them RSS lets me sleep at night."

Struggling with insurance? Risk and insurance can be puzzling. Yet properly managing risks and creating the right protection plans are essential to safeguarding your assets and reputation from losses and lawsuits.

Let RiskSmart Solutions[®] help you acquire and implement the critical protection your business needs. RSS does not sell insurance. Our advice is objective; our sole focus is your success. To find out more, call 510-685-3883 or visit www.risksmartsolutions.com.