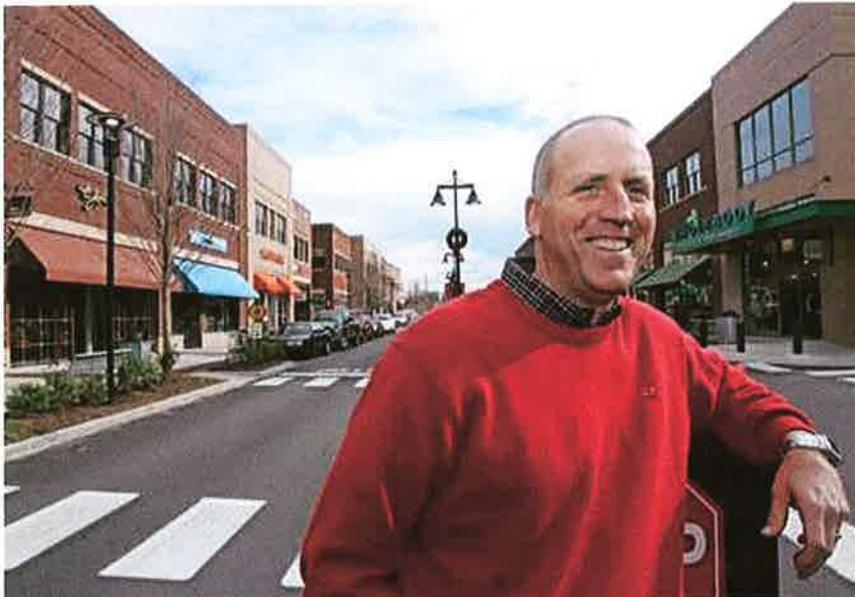


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## **Granbery proud of building city within a city Hill Realty CEO looks to building lifestyle center in Belle Meade**

*By Danica Wright Booth*



**Jimmy Granbery is the man behind the creation of the Hill Center in Green Hills. (SANFORD MYERS / THE TENNESSEAN)**

Jimmy Granbery, CEO of H.G. Hill Realty, spent the latter part of 2007 attending store opening after store opening, as each new business hung out its shingle at the new Hill Center at Green Hills.

The two-story project sits on 10 acres in the middle of the commercial district in Green Hills and represents a trend toward mixed-use developments, this one with office and retail space, and Granbery ranks the \$70 million project as his biggest undertaking to date.

"All of our projects are treated with the same attention to detail, the way you put things together, the way you build things," Granbery said. "With Green Hills just the types of tenants were different. There's no cookie cutter store, like a Walgreens."

Granbery, the fourth generation of the H.G. Hill Co. in Nashville, started in the family's grocery business after college and moved to the real estate side of the business 25 years ago.

When the company sold off its well-known grocery chains in 1999, Granbery knew they would eventually do something different with the land where the businesses once thrived.

"As we got close to 2004, we started the research," Granbery said. "We went and traveled all over the South just looking at them (lifestyle centers) and taking notes and ideas."

After five years of leasing to the grocery store in Green Hills, Granbery began the process of rezoning the area in 2004 to an Urban Design Overlay, reconstructing roadways over and around creeks, and obtaining permits for all of the maneuverings.

An Urban Design Overlay (UDO) is a planning tool that helps communities set standards for new development.

### **Whole Foods was new to Granbery**

When it came time to fill the development, Granbery revisited his grocery store past to research tenants for the new lifestyle center.

"In the beginning we were sort of grocery men at heart," he said. "All of the major chains that were not in the market were interested. Quite frankly, we weren't all that familiar with Whole Foods. It just sort of evolved that if we were going to do what we were going to do, it made sense with Whole Foods."

Though retailers Smith & Hawkins, Brio and Oak Hall chose not to move into the Hill Center, west elm, Anthropologie and Five Guys signed on, and since early fall, shoppers have filled the stores and the sidewalks.

Now, the man, who with the help of many architects and designers, created a little city within a city, occasionally walks through and admires the outcome.

"Especially when I go out there, and I'll just sort of stealth around and watch people doing exactly what we thought they'd do," he said of the customers walking over from the YMCA for a quick dinner or sitting on the park bench between shops.

## **Belle Meade plan moves forward**

Next on Granbery's plate, the Hill Center at Belle Meade is under construction.

"There are a lot of similarities to Green Hills and Belle Meade in the overall vision for the development. They're both UDO-driven," Granbery said. "The big difference is it's half the size in the first phase."

If Granbery and team can do some fancy footwork with the owners of the new Harris Teeter in Belle Meade regarding the building of a connector road, then the Hill Center there will be completed in two phases.

For now, Granbery was taking a bit of time to shop for the holidays, but would not reveal which stores he would peruse.

"It'll be from one of our tenants. I can assure you that," he said, "but maybe not in Green Hills."