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From the Washington Business Journal:

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Tishman Speyer betting big on its amenity app Zo, now available in D.C.

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What, you don't know Zo?

A New York-based landlord hopes to change that for tenants in the market for new space in the D.C. area, with the larger goal of forging a stronger connection with current and prospective tenants.

After debuting the concept at New York's famed Rockefeller Center last year, Tishman Speyer Properties has begun rolling its tenant engagement platform out to other markets across the U.S. That includes Greater Washington, where it launched Zo D.C. last month at its International Square complex by the Farragut West Metro station. Zo, a name inspired by the Greek word for life, offers tenants a bundled range of services through providers like food catering company Hungry and flower delivery business UrbanStems, all accessible through an app developed for Tishman Speyer.

"Large companies like Google and Facebook, they provide a lot of these amenities and services, but smaller companies don't have the kind of critical mass to provide these types of services themselves," said Paul DeMartini regional director for Tishman Speyer's D.C. portfolio. "It's a way of increasing tenant satisfaction, employee satisfaction among our tenants, and at the end of the day, we think that's going to pay huge dividends in terms of tenant retention and also word-of-mouth that will help attract new tenants."



COURTESY TISHMAN SPEYER

Tishman Speyer has exported its Zo concept to D.C.'s International Square after launching the concept at Rockefeller Center in New York.

Tishman Speyer, with a stable of D.C. properties concentrated along Pennsylvania Avenue NW, is one of many landlords across Greater Washington and beyond looking for new ways to attract and retain tenants in a competitive marketplace. Many landlords are incorporating amenities into their buildings like fireplaces and lounges more commonly associated with a hotel setting than a commercial office.

With Zo, Tishman Speyer sought to shape its offerings into a more unified package. Zo services in D.C. include Galley, which delivers chef-prepared meals; Exubrancy, which provides well-being programs including yoga classes and massages; and Rover, a network of pet sitters and dog walkers.

"The genesis of Zo is a shift in how we see our business evolving, and how we stay competitive in the business," DeMartini said. "We really feel it's important to become more hospitality focused, and that's because we want to define ourselves more in terms of the people in our buildings."

While anyone with a smartphone can order up the same types of services, Zo leverages the employees in its buildings to get more savings and a greater range of services than they might be able to on their own. Through Tishman Speyer, for example, tenants can get a 10 percent discount when ordering flowers through UrbanStems.

"Where we can, we're negotiating discounts for our tenants and trying to achieve a scale of benefits," DeMartini said. "That's where we can bring our scale to bear, and as we continue to get traction, we have somewhere in the area of 20,000 people that work in buildings in our portfolio in the D.C. area. That will, theoretically, enhance our buying power with our partners."

The program's D.C. market launched with International Square given the size of the property, which takes up nearly a full block and features a food court and ground-floor retailers such as Pret A Manger and Starbucks. About 1,500 people attended the International Square Zo launch, and more than 500 have signed up for its app locally. While the program hinges largely on service providers, DeMartini noted it will also come with a physical component to vary based on location. The Rockefeller Center Zo, for example, features nap rooms that could also be imported to D.C. It's not, he said, a one-size-fits-all approach.

"We want this to be organic and we want to respond to tenants," he said. "We're going to plant a lot of seeds and well see which ones grow."

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