

Green Partners

Era Building Solutions—Meeting multiple bottom lines through energy savings

Welcome to our Green Partners series, highlighting our partners in the community that help make Montgomery County Green Bank a success.

We visited with Mike Cain, Managing Director at Era Building Solutions, a Bethesda-based company, to learn about its latest successes and why they are proud to partner with the Montgomery County Green Bank.

Tell us about Era and your work there.

Mike Cain [MC]: Era is a local organization based out of Bethesda, MD that offers a unique combination of actionable building consulting and delivered building solutions to commercial and multifamily property owners, managers, and contractors. We believe in merging classic business values (like face-to-face business partnerships, handshake deals, and words that are stronger than contracts) with the building technologies of today and tomorrow to maximize value and deliver real results.

As Managing Director, I am privileged to work with and for an amazing team of industry experts and help to guide our vision of delivering a client experience that is unlike what you will find anywhere else.



What's something exciting you're working on now?

MC: We get excited by every opportunity to turn a typical project into an experience that our client will feel good about for a long time to come. From a simple lighting retrofit or basic chiller replacement to a difficult retrocommissioning or complex building automation installation, we tend to be smiling ear-to-ear.

Perhaps most interesting of our current projects are the development of a master energy strategy for a 3,000,000 square-foot senior living campus (one of the local utility incentive program's largest retrocommissioning/building tune-up projects to-date), the re-tuning of DC's first microturbine cogeneration plant, and—more generally—the rapid growth of our IOT-enabled controls and advanced building automation analytics platforms.

Why do you choose to partner with the MC Green Bank as an Authorized Contractor with the CLEER program?

MC: We work with clients across a variety of sectors and tend to take a business-based approach to energy efficiency. In doing so, we account for our clients' operational, financial, social, and environmental objectives to create the strategy which will best suit their property. By adding CLEER to our financing offerings and merging it with local and federal incentives and grant programs, we are able to significantly improve project cash flows and often make near-immediate impacts on a property's net operating income.

CLEER has been especially attractive for our common ownership property clients (condominiums and co-ops) which are not easily able to benefit from other local financing programs like Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE).

What are the top reasons your clients seek energy efficiency and/or renewable energy improvements?

MC: The top reasons that our clients tell us they are making "green" decisions are operational reliability (replacing aging or failing infrastructure), financial sustainability ("the double-green"), and corporate/environmental responsibility.

The beauty of taking a holistic approach to commercial property improvement is that good business and well-planned energy strategy tend to go hand-in-hand. Proactive maintenance and replacement of physical infrastructure is fundamental operations management; leveraging capital investments to maximize financial returns is basic investment strategy; and minimizing capital spend by utilizing every available tax, grant, incentive, rebate dollar is simple common sense. Merge these with the gut feeling that you are doing the right thing—be it for your grandchildren or your bottom line—and you have a winning equation for almost any business—big or small.

How is CLEER a resource for your clients?

MC: CLEER has multiple impressive and appealing attributes for our commercial, multi-family, and non-profit clients who are looking to take on property improvements—from building tune-ups and lighting retrofits to mechanical system replacements and solar PV. Thanks to loan terms of up to 12 years, CLEER can turn large investments into neutral (or even positive) cashflow. The program will finance 100% of project costs (even if 30% of the loan amount is for non-energy improvements) and very often does not require placing a lien on the property. For an immediate cashflow benefit, CLEER can even finance some portions of a project which are also funded by grants and incentives.

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