

Walking the Walk

BY RYAN M. CHRIST

Building in a sustainable and efficient manner not only makes sense in today's environment, but in terms of the economy as well.

When our law firm began considering a move to new offices a few years ago, there were plenty of options in the Denver metro area; from older, existing buildings with plenty of "character," to newer, flashier models with all the latest bells and whistles. In the end, we chose a property on 17th Street in downtown Denver because the developer took the additional step to renovate the building into a more sustainable project, which is now registered as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver with the United States Green Building Council (USGBC).

Our firm has a strong commitment to sustainability, which is the key reason for selecting this new property. In fact, we have a sustainability committee comprised of lawyers and staff whose charge it is to promote "green" practices, establish policy, monitor compliance and provide earth-friendly activities outside of the firm. It is the goal of the committee to go beyond simply reducing our paper usage (which is a worthy goal given the volume of paper used by law firms), to slowly but surely transform the culture of the firm and get everyone on board with its "green" initiatives.

In addition to the sustainability committee, we also have a sustainable development practice group that helped drive the decision to upgrade our office space. According to Bill Silberstein, the group manager, at Isaacson Rosenbaum, "It simply makes sense to move into a space that is environmentally friendly. Why wouldn't we elect to move into a place that is more efficient, a better place to work and a better space for our clients?"

Given current economic circumstances, the answer, as with all businesses, is money. We had to make some hard decisions to push forward with the LEED certification process and chose products that may cost a bit more, but will provide a greater return in terms of lower operating costs, enhanced marketability and increased productivity. In the eyes of the firm, it is a small price to pay for an enormous long-term gain.

The firm incorporated simple, yet effective enhancements, such as efficient fixtures that provide a 30% reduction in water usage. Offices are being designed to maximize exposure to natural light, with daylight harvesters and task lighting providing optimum control. Zoned heating and cooling systems, energy star rated equipment and indoor air quality will be enhanced by the use of MERV-14 air filters. Additionally, tenant improvements

will be made using recycled, reused or rapidly renewable materials, including carpeting materials made with consumer and industrial recycled content. Flooring will be made with wood from sustainable forests or comprised of cork, rubber and post-industrial waste. The list goes on and on.

To become a leader in sustainable development and set an example for contemporaries, clients and potential clients, it was essential that we set a proper tone within our firm's policies and practices. Our new space provides a great platform from which we can build our sustainable development practice. This move also presented us with a unique opportunity to make the right choice and not only talk the talk, but walk the walk.



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