

[http://mainlinemedianews.com/articles/2014/05/23/main\\_line\\_times/news/doc537f50b213c3d082375501.txt?viewmode=fullstory](http://mainlinemedianews.com/articles/2014/05/23/main_line_times/news/doc537f50b213c3d082375501.txt?viewmode=fullstory)

## Manko Gold Katcher & Fox environmental law firm boasts LEED Gold certification

Published: Friday, May 23, 2014

By Cheryl Allison

[callison@mainlinemedianews.com](mailto:callison@mainlinemedianews.com)



The lobby and reception area of Manko Gold Katcher Fox.

In politics, the saying goes that a leader should not just “talk the talk,” but “walk the walk.”

Still holding the record as Lower Merion Township’s longest-serving commissioner eight years after he retired from the board, Joseph M. Manko knows that dictum well.

And that is what the environmental law firm he helped found in 1989 has done in its recent move to new offices in its longtime home at the 401 Building on City Avenue in Bala Cynwyd.

When Manko Gold Katcher & Fox needed more space, it not only moved up to fill most of the ninth and top floor of the building, but it transformed the space with a commitment to follow guidelines of the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) initiative.

In a dual celebration May 8, the now 30-attorney firm marked 25 years specializing in environmental, energy, land use and

related regulation and litigation, as well as its new standing as the first law firm in the Philadelphia region to achieve LEED Gold certification for commercial interiors.

For that effort and its record of community service in the field, Manko Gold Katcher & Fox was also recognized May 15 as the 2014 recipient of the Lower Merion Township Environmental Advisory Council's Go for the Green Award in the commercial category (see related photo on A10).

In many aspects of design and construction, the firm wanted its home base to demonstrate real-life leadership in reducing environmental impacts while promoting the health and well-being of those who work in the space. "Our LEED-certified office space is a reflection of our practice, firm culture and business operations," said managing partner Robert Fox.

Manko, who served as the Environmental Protection Agency Region III's general counsel in the mid-1970s, was the founder and chairman of the Environmental Department at Wolf, Block, Schorr & Solis-Cohen, when Fox, a younger colleague, announced plans to move on.

Instead, Manko, with two other founding partners, Bruce S. Katcher and Marc E. Gold, took the opportunity to form their own firm specializing in a wide range of environmental and energy law, including working with clients on compliance with federal, state and local regulatory programs.

In what it terms a multi-disciplined approach, the firm has grown to include 30 attorneys and two in-house engineers, Manko said. In addition to the Bala Cynwyd office, it also has offices in Cherry Hill, N.J., headed by Katcher, and, most recently, opened an office in Williamsport, where it works with companies on regulatory compliance in Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling.

The firm's scope has expanded to include an active litigation practice and concentrations in energy, health and safety law. Community engagement and involvement has been a hallmark of the firm since its founding. Many of its attorneys serve on the environmental advisory councils of their communities. Members also serve on the board of directors of the Delaware Valley Green Building Council and on Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter's Sustainability Advisory Board.

Speaking at the event this month for family, friends and clients, Fox said that with the firm's growth, there was a need for additional contiguous space that could not be provided in its longtime home on the 401 Building's fifth floor. In the move to the top floor, which offers the unique feature of a large outdoor balcony with a view toward the skyline of Center City Philadelphia, the space was literally taken down to the studs, he said.

He credited partner Brenda Hustic Gotanda, who leads the firm's sustainability practice, for her "absolutely dogged pursuit" of LEED Gold certification with the reconstruction. As the project proceeded, it encompassed choices for energy efficiency, reduced environmental impacts, and sustainability across a spectrum from small to large, from the use of low-flow plumbing fixtures that use 32 percent less potable water than conventional, to high-efficiency lighting and optimization of natural light,

to recycling of construction waste and ongoing use of materials, to reusing most office furnishings and choosing low-emission materials such as carpeting and paints.

The attention to detail includes not only sensors that automatically turn off lights when space is not used, but vending machines that only light up when someone approaches. The firm purchased green power for 50 percent of its estimated electricity use over two years. The latter, according to a report on the sustainability measures, equates to the removal of 69 cars from the roads for one year.

Ninety-five percent of demolition and construction waste in the project was diverted from disposal in landfills, and in choosing new furniture and building materials, the firm considered recycled content and local sourcing, so that 42 percent of materials were sourced regionally and 20 percent used recycled materials.

Thanks to architect/designer Francis Cauffman, Fox said the results are not only environmentally-conscious, but pleasing to the eye and beneficial to those who work in the space. The balcony that opens off the lobby and reception area offers a rare opportunity in a higher-rise office building for an outdoor space. From its vantage point, the office suite provides a 360-degree-view of Philadelphia, City Avenue and Bala Cynwyd, and the Schuylkill River.

In the design, the many offices around the perimeter not only take advantage of those exterior window views, but make use of full-height interior glass walls to “expand” those scenic views and allow daylight to penetrate to the suite’s central core.

All of that would not have been possible, Fox said in his remarks, without three important factors that he wanted to recognize on the occasion of the firm’s 25th anniversary.

“First and foremost, I want to thank our clients. We are very fortunate to have [their] incredible loyalty that has made us be able to grow and thrive the way we do,” he said. As a family of colleagues, the firm’s members “care about each other as people. That has been a central organization principle for the way we have operated the firm from the beginning,” he added.

And, certainly not least, he thanked his mentor Manko and fellow founding partners Katcher and Gold. “Through the foresight of the three of them, they made this happen,” he said. “It took a tremendous risk and gamble 25 years ago” to venture out on their own, Fox said. “Through their incredible vision, hard work, stick-to-itiveness, their fine management and the atmosphere they created made our firm successful.”

In recognition of the anniversary and their leadership, Fox said, the firm is donating a bench in the founding partners’ names to be placed at Lower Merion Township’s Rolling Hill Park.