

Going green gains gold

BY JOHN GOLDEN
jgolden@westfairinc.com

At its headquarters building in downtown White Plains, Reckson, a division of SL Green Realty Corp., recently reached the U.S. Green Building Council's gold standard for energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable operations. The distinction is rare for commercial office buildings in New York. Yet the work of going green goes on at Reckson.

The suburban division of SL Green recently was awarded gold certification in the national building council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program for 360 Hamilton Ave., a 384,000-square-foot, 12-story office building. The 40-year-old building is one of only 10 buildings in New York state to reach the gold level for operations and maintenance improvements.

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— Jason Black, SL Green Realty Corp. sustainability director

Reckson's own new office at 360 Hamilton also was awarded LEED gold certification for commercial interiors.

The LEED awards followed Reckson's receipt in 2010 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star label for 360 Hamilton Ave. The building's energy-efficiency ranking placed it among



Jason Black, sustainability director at SL Green Realty Corp., in the lobby of 360 Hamilton Ave., a leading example of green-building practices in the state.

the top 10 percent of buildings across the nation.

Last June, Reckson officials announced the company would buy renewable energy credits - used to support energy generation on the power grid through wind, water and solar resources - to offset its full annual energy use at 365 Hamilton. They said the environmental impact of the purchase was equivalent to removing 2,295 cars from the road for one year.

"It's quite a significant achievement to have a gold certification" for an existing building, said Jason Black, director of sustainability at SL Green Realty Corp. Reckson, working with its sustainability consultant, Manhattan-based Code Green Solutions Inc., took about one year to achieve that level, the second-highest ranking in the LEED program.

Black said recycling has been

improved by 50 percent, energy use by 25 percent and water consumption by 20 percent at 360 Hamilton. Reckson's new headquarters in the building, one of 43 offices in New York to receive a gold-level designation or higher, has reduced energy consumption by 25 percent and diverted 75 percent of construction waste from landfills.

Black said improvements to reduce water usage in rest rooms, including the installation of low-flow faucet aerators priced at \$1.60 each, has saved 500,000 gallons of water annually at the downtown building. "The payback was in a couple of weeks," he said.

Three years after a lighting retrofit to cut down energy usage and costs, the real estate property manager and owner this winter will begin installing LED lighting

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in common areas at 360 Hamilton and at several properties across its suburban portfolio. With the change to light-emitting diode technology, Black said SL Green expects to save approximately \$300,000 yearly across the suburban portfolio and see a payback in less than two years.

Since 2009, green-building projects at its suburban buildings collectively have saved the company about \$1.25 million annually, Black said. "It's important to us to make sure that we're continually monitoring to see what other opportunities exist."

While building "healthier, more productive environments" for office workers, the sustainability effort is also good for Reckson's business. "We see sustainability as a tool to help make this business stronger. It's helping make our business better," said Black. "I think other businesses should learn that, because from an economic standpoint, you want to take advantage of whatever is available to you."

Though sustainability in building construction and operations "is still in its infancy," Black said, the green-building initiative "actually has been getting stronger. People are starting to understand the benefits of sustainability."

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Dani Glaser, founder and CEO of Green Team Spirit in Croton-on-Hudson and an organizer of the Westchester Green Business Challenge, an initiative of Westchester County government and the county's business sector launched in 2008 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, said Westchester companies have been asked to do voluntarily what New York City is requiring owners of commercial buildings of more than 50,000 square feet to do in energy-efficiency upgrades and audits as part of the city's Greener, Greater Buildings Plan.

"Using Reckson as a best practice is wonderful for us," Glaser said. "They



really do what we're encouraging all of the commercial sector to do in the county."

Global companies such as Heineken USA Inc., a major tenant at Reckson's 360 Hamilton, are complying with green practices in their office spaces, Glaser said. "We're really trying to push it out of

the gate," she said. "We're trying."

"It's early," Glaser said. "There's a lot of education that needs to be done. Of course, property managers and tenants are all worried about the bottom line. This process saves money, but there needs to be education to show how it saves money."