



# The Knoer Group, PLLC

## Sustainability Plan

[Ver. 2015]



### I. The Firm

The Knoer Group, PLLC was formed in April 2007. The law firm is involved in business transactions, real property development and litigation. We work with clients in the urban regeneration movement in the City of Buffalo, counsel clients on historic rehabilitation, brownfield redevelopment and green building. Combined, the firm's attorneys are admitted to practice in all New York State Courts, the United States District Court for the Western District of New York, the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and the United States Supreme Court.



The attorneys at The Knoer Group, PLLC have been involved in litigation over major environmental issues in the Western New York area including the West Valley Demonstration Project and the expansion of the Peace Bridge crossing at Buffalo.

The firm supports and provides lectures on a variety of environmental related topics such as *Sustainability for Lawyers: An Introduction*, *Renewable Energy in Western New York*, *Brownfield Redevelopment*, *Historic Tax Credit Based Regeneration and Adaptive Reuse*, and other topics related to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

The firm is a regular sponsor of events that provide the public with information and an opportunity to advance environmental considerations including sustainability and green development.



## **II. The Firm's Sustainability Journey**

While teaching *Law and the Environment* at the State University of New York at Buffalo to engineering students for 17 years, the goal of firm founder Robert Knoer was to assure that the next generation of engineers would be sensitive to the regulations and controls at the private, state and federal level which impact and protect the environment.

Coming from a strong environmental background with an understanding of the interconnectivity of human actions with the natural environment, The Knoer Group, PLLC sees an opportunity to be a catalyst for appropriate and sustainable business development. There is a recognition that the most important impact the firm can have on global sustainability is to educate and advise our clients and other parties that connect with the firm of the importance of sustainability - from both an economic and environmental perspective.

### III. Elements of Sustainability Plan



#### *Waste and Pollution*

The firm utilizes recycled materials when possible, and avoids creation of paper documents when electronic communications can achieve the same goal. While conscious that some hardcopy documentation is required in order to meet legal and regulatory requirements of the firm’s practice, the firm attempts to “train” clients to not only expect but expect and welcome digital communications. This reduces the number of copies made as well as the firm’s need for more expansive storage - which reduces the firm’s physical footprint. This is especially important when the firm is involved with large-scale litigation that can easily consume boxes and boxes of paper with a short period of time.

The firm’s legal research library is digital to all extents possible. The firm encourages the local and State Bar Associations to use digital delivery for all presentation materials.

The firm has switched subscription preferences where possible to digital delivery from paper delivery.

#### *Areas for improvement*

The firm recognizes that no matter how well intended the sustainability plan may be, or how well intentioned the firm’s attorneys and staff are toward implementing that plan; there is always room for improvement. The firm seeks educational opportunities regarding law firm sustainability, especially through the American Bar Association’s sustainability efforts.

The firm also participates in arranging and presenting at educational seminars meant to encourage the firm’s clients and others to participate in sustainability efforts within their own industries

## IV. Action Plan



The firm has identified those areas of consumption and their physical footprint where sustainability gains can be made. The firm identified the following areas with potential for the most significant gains relative to the firm's carbon footprint:

### *Paper and Documentation*

In order to reduce its carbon footprint based on paper consumption, the firm has sought to digitize to the extent possible its communication infrastructure, including installing computer hardware which will allow the firm to distribute documentation via a hub a server as well as receive paperless faxes and share documents with clients and others via large-scale transfer applications.

The firm is conscientious of its obligations under client confidentiality rules not to utilize cloud storage and other options which may be available to other industries.

The paper that is used by the firm is sourced from recycled materials to the extent possible. Paper that can be is recycled for multiple uses. As an example manila file folders are "harvested" when a file is closed and saved for reuse in another file. Through this method such materials are used two or three times instead of only once.

At the end the lifecycle of paper documentation the firm assures that its wastepaper is properly recycled through efforts undertaken by its landlord. All firm desks, copier and printer areas have a recycle box that is collected on a weekly basis.

The firm recycles toner cartridges to assure proper reuse and if necessary disposal.

## *Travel*

### i. Firm travel

Where possible the firm arranges meetings either via conference call using the firm's conference line or via outside services such as *GoToMeeting*.

### ii. Employee travel

In designing its employee benefit package the firm recognizes that sustainability has a significant economic component. Instead of providing for reimbursement for parking the firm provides a stipend for transportation that allows individual employee to make a determination as to the most appropriate and efficient means to travel to and from work. This flexibility allows employees to choose to commute in nontraditional forms such as bicycling, mass transit, or carpooling. There is an economic incentive to the employee to reduce automobile use since the stipend is the same regardless of the means by which the employed chooses to travel.

## *Protection of Water*



The firm's offices have a spectacular view of Lake Erie at the mouth of the Niagara River which creates the illusion of endless fresh water. The firm also has a view of the Buffalo River which reminds the attorneys and staff how easily water can be misused and abused and how concerted efforts over a long period can achieve rejuvenation of water supplies.

The firm's water impact is minimal compared to other industries. However the firm has installed an in-line water filter system to avoid the need for purchase of bottled water.

## *Energy and Materials*

The firm strives to make use of energy efficient lighting and to reduce electronic “vampire” watt usage where possible through automatic sleep settings on computers and servers.

### **V. Community Investment**

The firm is a regular sponsor of efforts toward sustainability and the protection of the environment. Robert E. Knoer was chairman of the Wind Action Group that assisted in facilitating the development of renewable energy sources on the former Bethlehem Steel site.



Firm members are encouraged to be and are regularly involved in industry organizations and public groups that focus on sustainability on a volunteer basis.

### **VI. Goals / Metrics**

The firm has reviewed and is seeking to incorporate as appropriate the American Bar Association Policy on Sustainability.

### **VII. Firm Efforts to Promote Sustainability**

The firm promotes sustainability through the individual efforts of its members as well as to through financial support of programs and presentations that advance sustainability goals. The most important and effective promotion is in the subtle message the firm delivers to its clients establishing the connection between economic sustainability and environmental sustainability.

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