

Sustainability

Skyline Design's commitment to sustainability begins—and continues—on Homan Avenue in Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood, where the company occupies a 150,000 square foot building originally constructed in the 1920s.





One of the building’s former occupants was Monark-Silver King, a bicycle manufacturer from 1934 to 1957 with a signature model named the “Skyliner.”

While the connection between the names of the Skyliner bike and Skyline Design is a coincidence, the use of the building is not—Skyline Design’s home has continuously operated as a factory for nearly a century and is now one of the very few remaining manufacturers in the city of Chicago.



Skyline Design was founded in 1983 as a company that specialized in thematic fabrication and glass. Sarcophagi for a casino in Las Vegas, an enormous bagel for the entryway of a Chicago bakery, and a giant baseball player for a stadium were among its early commissions.

Concerned about the environmental impact and health hazards of working with fiberglass, however, the company's founder, Charles Rizzo, began to experiment with more environmentally conscious materials, processes, and products, including Greenplay, a line of children's furniture composed of non-formaldehyde plywood, recycled plastic bottles (HDPE), and low-VOC coatings.

Moving into this new direction, Skyline Design shuttered its thematic fabrication division and turned its attention to decorative glass, perhaps the most sustainable industrial material — infinitely renewable and fully recyclable.





Ever since, the company has taken systematic steps to reduce its carbon footprint and move toward ever-increasing sustainability in every facet of its operations. Skyline Design made the most significant investment in its history several years ago in the machinery necessary to cut, polish, and temper its glass in-house, which eliminated 900 miles of transit for every order.

Moving these operations to Humboldt Park—at an initial cost of millions of dollars—significantly reduced Skyline Design’s carbon footprint. And the company additionally invested in a centrifuge—rarely found in fabrication facilities—to clean the water used to grind glass, making it possible to easily reuse this critical resource.



Skyline Design believes in local sourcing: for its line of backpainted Vitracolor glass, the low-VOC, water-based paint the company developed is manufactured within five miles of the Humboldt Park factory. Skyline Design believes in environmentally-friendly materials: its proprietary Eco-etch® process does not use chemicals as an abrasive but instead recycled aluminum oxide, which is chemical-free, reusable, and results in a surface so resilient that it renders additional sealants unnecessary.

Skyline Design believes in efficiency and economy: glass is custom-cut for every order, rather than inventoried, to achieve the highest yields possible. And Skyline Design believes that every aspect of its practices can be evaluated and improved in light of their environmental impact—from custom-building its shipping crates in order to reduce packing material to replacing thousands of light bulbs in its factory and offices in order to reduce energy consumption.

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Skyline Design is one of the largest employers in its west side neighborhood and its commitment to social responsibility is reflected in its diverse work force, which includes members of at-risk populations.

Bike commuters are greeted with ample bike storage and showers throughout the complex. Employees are encouraged to bring industrial materials—like batteries, old computers, and, yes, even glass—to work for proper disposal or recycling. “Ultimately,” says Rizzo, “we are responsible for the stewardship of our planet, and we take that responsibility seriously.”

