

The logo for Cloverly + HKS, featuring the word 'cloverly' in a lowercase sans-serif font with a green clover leaf icon, followed by a plus sign and 'HKS' in a larger, bold, uppercase sans-serif font.

cloverly + HKS

HKS charts a path to net zero emissions

REACHING A CRITICAL MILESTONE ON THE JOURNEY
TO NET ZERO WITH HIGH-QUALITY CARBON CREDITS

Global architecture and design firm initiates action to reduce its carbon footprint with a high-quality carbon credit portfolio that aligns with its values and business goals

Business challenge/goals

HKS, a global design and planning firm, has helped clients design sustainable buildings for decades. In recent years, the firm sought to demonstrate climate leadership to its clients – and its 1,500 employees – by taking accountability for its own operational emissions. Rand Ekman, Chief Sustainability Officer, faced the challenge of measuring the company’s carbon footprint across 27 offices, as well as developing a strategy to neutralize and eventually eliminate those emissions. HKS partnered with two organizations to address these challenges.

Solution and climate approach

Measuring the carbon footprint

HKS first partnered with Verdis Group, a carbon accounting firm, to verify and audit the data and methodology for measuring its emissions. Calculating scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions was a complex process, involving multiple aspects like natural gas, owned vehicles, purchased electricity, business travel, waste generated, and more. Once the carbon footprint was quantified, Verdis Group also helped HKS develop a roadmap for its decarbonization journey.



We need to take action now and chose to partner with Cloverly for our carbon credit investment because their deep expertise and commitment to integrity allowed us to confidently create a portfolio that reflected our climate and social impact goals.”

-Rand Ekman, Chief Sustainability Officer at HKS



HKS CARBON CREDIT SPOTLIGHT

(US) Biochar: Uses wood waste from sawmill production such as bark or sawdust to create biochar, a carbon-rich material that sequesters CO₂ for every ton of biochar produced. The biochar provides soil amendments for nearby farmers, improves crop yields and soil nutrient absorption, and provides local employment opportunities.

(US) Carbon storage in concrete: Injects waste CO₂ into concrete during the mixing process to mineralize the CO₂. The mineralized CO₂ improves the strength of the concrete, enabling the concrete producer to reduce cement and therefore avoid some of the emissions associated with cement production.

(US) Advanced carbon restored ecosystem (ACRE): Plants trees on lands that have been in continuous agricultural use. For each acre where forest is successfully established, it will generate approximately 200 metric tons of CO₂e offsets over the life of the project (15 years). Not just carbon, ACRE is also water storage credits, biodiversity credits, nutrient credits, etc.

Neutralizing emissions

Rand felt strongly that neutralizing corporate emissions through the purchase of carbon credits would play a critical role in fast-tracking the organization's path to net-zero emissions. HKS set a goal to eliminate operational carbon from 100% of the firm's active design work by 2030. Concurrently, the company aims to reduce net carbon emissions from its business operations to nearly zero. As an initial step, in early 2023, HKS decided to offset its emissions from its 2022 operations by purchasing high-quality carbon credits.

Selecting carbon credits

To identify the right carbon credits to purchase, Rand sought a credible carbon market partner that could meet HKS business goals, values, and the quality criteria outlined by Verdis Group. He sought to develop a portfolio with a strong social impact focus that also helps to advance innovation for building technologies such as sustainable timber and low-carbon concrete. As a global firm, Rand placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that the HKS carbon credit portfolio also had global representation and a means for driving employee engagement. He wanted employees to feel connected to the company's decarbonization journey and take pride in its efforts to drive meaningful climate action.

Why Cloverly

A carbon market partner that's values-aligned

Rand chose to partner with Cloverly after evaluating various carbon credit marketplace advisors, brokers, and programs. Cloverly was selected for its high market intelligence, robust risk management framework for evaluating carbon credits, ability to create a custom portfolio in line with HKS goals and values, and its curation of vetted high-quality credits. Specifically, Rand felt that Cloverly had these advantages:

- A globally informed database of carbon offset programs with visibility into the entire Voluntary Carbon Market.
- Impartial in-house climate expertise to help HKS make an informed decision.
- A commitment to transparency, coupled with a rigorous quality methodology and risk management framework for assessing credits
- Ability to create a custom portfolio tailored to HKS goals and criteria.
- Experience with and alignment to the design and construction industry.

KEY RESULTS/VALUE REALIZED

1. **Offset the Scope 1, 2 & 3 emissions** for 2022 (10,378 metric tons of CO₂e)
2. **Invested in eight climate action projects** that advance innovation in the built environment, as well as positive sustainability and social impact
3. **Saved significant time** by partnering with a trusted carbon credit provider who could provide transparency, a high degree of rigor, a custom carbon credit portfolio, and credit retirement
4. **Contributed to employee retention** and engagement initiatives
5. **Supported UN Global Compact** reporting requirements

Looking ahead: Pioneering a net-zero future

HKS is on a mission to achieve net-zero operations by 2030. To that end, the company has started re-negotiating vendor contracts for greater carbon efficiency and is looking at operational policies — such as employee commuting and business travel — where emissions can be reduced. Rand's longer-term vision includes setting a science-based target and creating an internal financial framework where business units are accountable for both their business metrics and emissions. By embracing and championing this internal model of responsibility, Rand aspires to drive industry-wide change through roundtable discussions and strategic alliances. Ultimately, HKS is committed to reducing and neutralizing its emissions annually until it achieves true net zero — where the operational carbon footprint has been eliminated.

“Cloverly's deep market intelligence allowed us to invest in carbon credits that neutralized our emissions AND advance innovations for the built environment. That's a major win for HKS.”

-Rand Ekman, Chief Sustainability Officer at HKS

ABOUT HKS

HKS is a global firm of 1,500 architects, designers, advisors, and makers driven by curiosity and devoted to creating places that combine beauty with performance. In partnership with each other, our clients and our partners, we craft powerful ideas and solutions. Together we create places that stand apart. www.hksinc.com

ABOUT CLOVERLY

Cloverly provides the infrastructure for the voluntary carbon markets. With a focus on trust, ease, and access, our platform and expertise empower carbon credit buyers and suppliers to scale meaningful impact now. See why 200+ enterprises worldwide trust us to scale their climate action. cloverly.com