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FAVORITE HOBBIES Photography and travel

Phillip Katz

Founder and principal | Phillip Katz Project Development LLC | Age: 38

It is often said that people go into architecture because they have an ambition to make the world a better place. Phillip Katz, founder and principal of Phillip Katz Project Development LLC in Mequon, sees liturgical architecture as his best opportunity to fulfill that ambition.

"It's a chance to create meaningful environments that enrich people's lives," Katz said.

Katz decided to strike out on his own after six years with Kahler Slater, where he worked on projects like the Milwaukee Art Museum's Calatrava addition. He launched his design and construction management practice in 2001, just before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"That changed everything," he said. "It really caused me to focus on liturgical architecture."

Katz's personal interest in sacred spaces has evolved into professional expertise in the design and construction of liturgical en-

vironments, specifically synagogues. One of his recent projects, the creation of a sanctuary and communal space for Congregation Emanu-El Bnei Jeshurun, has received international attention since its completion in September 2009.

Katz admits that liturgical architecture isn't for the faint-of-heart.

"It requires a lot of patience," he said. "You're working with a diverse constituency."

In addition to liturgical architecture, Katz works on residential and industrial projects, such as the renovation of a Brown Deer building for the new headquarters of TAPCO. His firm also served as the owner's representative for A.B. Data Ltd.'s new headquarters at the former Manpower site in Glendale.

Katz received a master's degree in architecture from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee following a bachelor's degree in landscape planning from the College of Santa Fe in New Mexico.

Katz, who grew up on Milwaukee's east side, has chosen to stay in the city despite job offers from around the country. It was a trip to Lucerne, Switzerland, that ultimately influenced his decision. Struck by Lucerne Station Hall, the city's train station designed by internationally renowned architect Santiago Calatrava, Katz realized that Milwaukee had many of the same attributes as the serene, Swiss lakefront community.

"I recognized the potential Milwaukee had and the potential impact I could have here," Katz said. His colleagues also see his potential to make a lasting impact on Milwaukee.

"Designing a building that is going to stand for 100 years is a very daunting task," said Bill Orenstein of Williams Development Corp., Milwaukee. "Phil has the posterity and integrity to design buildings that are going to last."

— Rebecca Konya