

CHICAGO LAWYER

Young at heart



Taft Law renovation focuses on appealing to a new generation of attorneys

By Melissa Rubalcaba Riske

To stay or to go. It's the first question firms tackle as they try to solve the need for more office space. Taft Law found its answer just a short elevator ride down a floor.

Last March, Taft unveiled the completion of its multi-phase office renovation that added a third floor to its home at One Illinois Center at 111 E. Wacker Drive. The project added additional offices on all three floors, a new conference center, lounge and reception area and refreshed the look of the entire space.

In a span of 10 years, Taft's Chicago office has grown from 70 attorneys to 145, with continued staff growth on the horizon, according to Taft's Chicago office chairman and partner Cezar M. Froelich.

"We've grown dramatically," he said. "Our goal is to be around 180 to 200 in the Chicago market in the next few years."

After nearly doubling its staff and choosing to opt for private attorney offices, the firm looked to add space for current and future staffing needs. Leadership decided to add the adjacent 26th floor to its footprint and renovate its current 27th and 28th floors to re-image certain areas that include an office library and reception space.

The project added 70 new offices for attorneys and paralegals across the three floors. It was designed by the architectural firm

HED and Valenti Builders, who both served as construction project managers.

The former rotunda space off the 28th floor's reception area was closed to create new workspaces. A new reception area was created on the 26th floor with a nearby large conference center along the outer walls and an open lounge space in the center.

"We wanted to build a more modern, central conference room space that was both inviting and modern and technologically up to date," Froelich said.

Floor-to-ceiling windows in the conference center provide views to the north of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan, creating a light-filled space large enough to accommodate meetings and after-hours events.

Leonora Georgeoglou, principal at HED in Chicago, said Taft's office allows for hosting programming, guest speakers and entertaining clients. Its furnishings are movable and it's easy to create a unique setup. There is a full-size bar that marries the building's classical design with a modern look because of its wood and brass accents, Georgeoglou said.

The central walls are accented with walnut-fluted wood panels — selected to reflect the firm's objective of creating warmth in a modern look and feel, Georgeoglou said.



Tagging itself as “The Modern Law Firm,” it was important for partner-in-charge Paul Jenson to have an office that feels and looks updated.

“While modern can be cold, we actively tried to avoid this by using warm accents,” Jenson explained.

The design utilized Taft’s logo in subtle ways throughout the space, including within the paneling and glass walls outside the conference rooms.

“The views from the client center are some of my favorites,” Georgeoglou said. “Looking down Michigan Avenue and out over the lake, you don’t get that with many buildings in the city.”

Taft and the design team wanted to create a space that speaks to the firm’s modern style and balance it with a look that appeals to younger generations, Georgeoglou said. This includes an internal staircase that links all three floors.

“It was very easy to plan [for the internal staircase] because it’s a very efficient floor plan,” she said.

The initial staircase was built when the firm moved into the building in 2005. The construction of an additional floor and making all three floors connect to the spiral staircase required creating a vertical opening through a slab on the 27th floor.

The entire staircase was finished by incorporating walnut wood and curved glass railings. Jenson said the internal stairwell is a high-traffic area that’s enjoyed by staff.

The renovation included updates to furnishings inside attorney offices. The walls are decorated with Chicago-centric art created by local artists. Each floor has an updated cafeteria space with small nooks for beverages within its walls.

“With the new design and the different options for seating, the cafeteria space is getting a lot more use,” Georgeoglou said.

Having an updated feel within the office and improved places to gather and socialize has been warmly received and improved in-office morale, according to Jenson.

“That has helped the culture, and it has really brought people back,” he said.

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Photos by Garrett Rowland

