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King & Spalding Opens Up Its Headquarters With Glass and a Rooftop Deck

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KING & SPALDING'S transformation of its headquarters at 1180 Peachtree St., completed earlier this year, has radically opened up the office. The new aesthetic is light, bright and airy with pops of vivid color from art and furnishings—and sweeping views of the Midtown Atlanta skyline and beyond.

Even though the firm shrank its space by 25%, from 416,000 square feet to about 300,000, the new design is dramatically more open and connected, allowing for more collaboration and chance meetings.

Back in 2006, when King & Spalding became the office tower's anchor tenant, it opted for a contemporary and clean look—an update from the skyscraper-gothic aesthetic of its former home at 191 Peachtree St., which had ornate black marble and dark wood paneling.



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King & Spalding's headquarters features a rooftop deck over the parking garage. This view shows a lounge area in front of a skylight structure and, behind it, a covered dining area.

But by 2017, when the firm renewed its lease until 2031, it was time for a change. The 2006 design “was more transitional than contemporary,” said Bryan Pope, the firm's director of facilities and administrative operations.

The old office's resolutely neutral color scheme, with tan wood

floors and paneling blended with beige carpets and walls, was jet-tisoned for lots of glass and shiny white walls.

Now the space is all about the views from King & Spalding's perch on the 16th through 26th floors of 1180 Peachtree. The star feature is a rooftop deck atop the

adjacent parking garage that connects to the 18th-floor canteen. The west-facing deck affords a panoramic view of Atlanta's many skylines from downtown to West Midtown, Buckhead and beyond.

Before, the skyline views were blocked from the interior by walled-off conference rooms and offices around each floor's perimeter. All now have glass walls.

The 17th floor reception has a two-story atrium now—punctuated by a cascade of glowing pendant lights—with a staircase leading up to the canteen and the vast deck just outside.

King & Spalding's Atlanta managing partner, Josh Kamin, said the new space was designed to help its lawyers connect to the local business and legal community. The Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce is borrowing the deck for an upcoming meeting, and the firm offers clients and local nonprofits the use of its expansive, 22-seat boardroom.

King & Spalding renovated its Atlanta headquarters around the roughly 800 people who work there—about half lawyers and half staff. That required 180 moves of people over the 18-month build-out.

Chance Meetings

While stunning visually, King & Spalding's headquarters was carefully redesigned to be more people-centric.



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King & Spalding's Atlanta managing partner Josh Kamin (from left), chief operating officer Derek Hardesty and facilities director Bryan Pope pose in front of the History Wall on the reception floor.

Back in 2006 “the idea was to keep things quiet,” the firm's chief operating officer, Derek Hardesty, told the Daily Report.

Just over a decade later, the aim is to encourage collaboration around the office in a variety of common areas—and with King & Spalding's other 22 offices globally via a plethora of screens in the 14 conference rooms, boardroom and a multipurpose room on the public reception floor as well as in practice floor meeting areas.

Running into a colleague at a practice floor coffee bar can spark productive conversations, Pope said. “While our people still do a lot of head down, silent types of individual work, the collaboration areas are designed to encourage interactions that might not happen otherwise.”

Before, the reception area was cut off from the firm's largest gathering room by a long hallway leading past walled-off conference rooms. Now it can open into the adjacent multipurpose room via a bank of floor-to-ceiling pivot doors, and it connects via the staircase to the 18th floor canteen and deck.

A separate food bar on the main floor's interior services the glass-walled meeting rooms around the perimeter. “We're big foodies now,” Hardesty said, adding that the centralized meal area means catering staff don't need to interrupt potentially confidential meetings.

Paper Chased Out

One reason there is more shared, open space, despite the smaller office footprint, is that

King & Spalding got rid of a lot of paper. It shed 45 tons of files (all shredded and recycled), reducing the file storage space by 70%, Pope said. That entailed a lot of digital scanning.

The building committee gave prizes for the oldest artifacts unearthed, Pope added, which included a few church funeral fans.

“I was nervous about designing the office with so much less file storage, but it hasn’t been a problem,” Hardesty said. In fact, the firm is shrinking file storage even more aggressively for other office redesigns.

The main library disappeared, while enclosed mini-libraries on each practice floor were turned into open areas for work and conversation. (The remaining books were relegated to a vestigial library on the administrative floor.)

Each practice floor has a social zone just off the elevator with a long bar for coffee and snacking and separate seating around a video screen. There also are open workspaces with high tables and stools, plus glassed-in meeting rooms.

The firm retained separate-sized offices for partners and associates, Hardesty said, because gutting and rebuilding would have been too expensive. However, it is using single-size offices in newer locations.



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The firm’s canteen on the 18th floor offers sandwiches at this counter and hot entrees, soups and a salad bar at another station around the corner until 7 p.m. A separate grab ‘n’ go area is always open.

The administrative space used to take up two floors with offices for directors and other top managers. Now the administrative staff are all on the double-sized 16th floor, which is entirely open plan with workstations for everyone. (Like the public reception floor above, it extends over the parking deck.)

“Huddle rooms” around the perimeter allow privacy for extended phone calls, and there are semi-enclosed booths for conversation and a coffee bar for socializing.

Here the aesthetic is what Pope termed “loft industrial,” with polished concrete floors and 14-foot exposed ceilings. Since King & Spalding competes with other industries for talent in IT, finance, marketing and the like, it needs similar space, he explained.

Hardesty transitioned from a partner-sized office to a workstation in one corner of the vast floor, where he has become a devotee of his standing desk (now standard issue for lawyers and staff alike).

The administrative floor was quiet during a recent visit, but Hardesty revealed a small Nerf football that he can deploy if someone is too loud on a call.

IA Interior Architects’ New York office, led by Julio Braga, designed the space. Cushman & Wakefield was the real estate broker and Cushman’s Nan Loudon was the project manager. Humphries and Co. was the general contractor. 📍