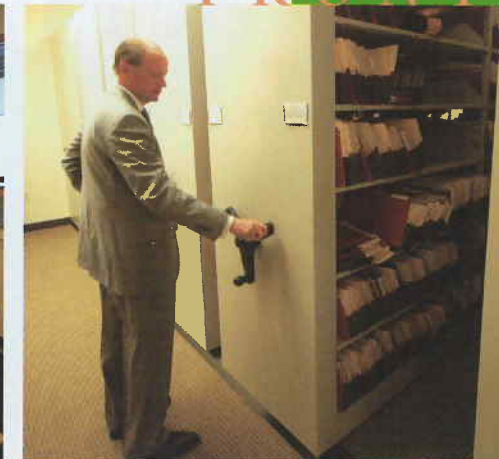




Meeting Rooms at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore have movable walls and doors to create different sized rooms



A kitchen gets considerable use at GLRC; Mike Pace with rolling book shelves in the library



all photos: Dan Smith

Work Spaces

A rethinking of how space is used >

Executive Summary:

A Roanoke law firm needed more space, but didn't want to move to another building. A solution emerged.

By Jill Elswick

A few years ago, Roanoke-based law firm Gentry, Locke, Rakes & Moore considered moving out of its offices on the seventh and

eighth floors of the SunTrust building. The firm was growing rapidly. It would soon need more space for employees and visiting clients.

Yet the firm's management didn't really want to move. Gentry Locke had been in the building since 1978. "This building is in the perfect space for us to do work," says Managing Partner Mike Pace.

When office space became available on the sixth floor of the SunTrust building, Gentry Locke opted to lease it rather than move.

The firm hired architect and designer Lora Katz to design the new workspace.

Says Pace, "Growth required more space, which caused us to rethink how we were using our existing space."

The new offices feature a number of conference rooms to meet a growing employee need for meeting space and training rooms. Each room is named for the view outside its window: Mill Mountain, Blue Ridge, Tinker Mountain, Bank.

Katz's goal was to fit up to 30 people in the large boardroom, so that all the attorneys could be seated at once. She selected tables that can be easily reconfigured. To seat all the lawyers, tables can be arranged into a single, long table. All tables are "wired" so workers can plug in laptops and other devices.

A catering kitchen with an open serving window adjoins the boardroom, with a tiled path to and from the elevator, so food can be transported easily.


To save energy, Katz opted for tinted windows. Solar shades let in light, but block out heat and cold. "They save huge amounts of dollars in energy," says Katz.

The natural light coming in through the windows creates a more comfortable environment, particularly for administrative workers. Their desks are positioned near the windows. "When you have people working, you want them to be able to see out," says Pace, citing studies that show natural light increases productivity.

The new workspace layout is open and easy to navigate. "The circulation and flow through the floor is easier," says Katz.

Katz selected a palette of earth tones for the new workspace. The walls are light sage green. The leather on the boardroom chairs is deep olive. "It's a subtle color scheme that enhances the art collection," says Katz. Gentry Locke's offices are decorated with colorful local artworks.

Basset-based Clark Construction completed the year-long project in November, despite a water leak that set construction back by a month. "I have found a huge respect for what it takes to pull a project like this off from start to finish," says Pace. "We are extremely pleased with our construction and design team."

The sixth floor is turning out to be popular, even among Gentry Locke lawyers whose offices are on the seventh and eighth floors. They often visit to use the conference rooms or to host client meetings. 



Local art is a major part of the look of the rooms



The rooms have names based on what you see out the window