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Kilpatrick Transforms Library Into Modern Collaboration Hub—With Latte

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KILPATRICK TOWNSEND & Stockton has transformed the little-used 27th-floor library at its Midtown headquarters into a high-tech and welcoming collaborative space. Since opening last month, it has quickly become an informal meeting spot for the firm's lawyers and staff.

Dubbed the KT Hub, the 3,100-square-foot space has zones for casual conversations, private meetings in videoconference rooms, individual work pods—and a state-of-the-art espresso machine.

"Coffee is a draw to get people together," said the firm's chairman, J. Henry Walker IV, on a recent Friday morning. "Every morning I come by and get my coffee here."

He said Kilpatrick considered the reliability of various coffee machines and held a taste test to arrive at its final choice—a Nespresso Aguila. "Strong, strong coffee, I would call it," Walker said as he brewed his usual latte.



REBECCA BREYER

Wab Kadaba, who heads Kilpatrick Townsend's IP group, left, chats with **Henry Walker**, the firm's chair, over lattes in the firm's new collaborative space, called the **KT Hub**.

Walker spends about 10 minutes chatting with whoever is around before getting back to work. Asked if associates approach him, he replied that he usually starts talking to them. It could be someone he's working with on a case or whoever happens by. "It's somewhat random," he said.

Walker took a break from a tour to greet Wab Kadaba, the head of the

firm's intellectual property group, who'd dropped by for coffee, along with two litigators, Ron Raider and David Reed.

The coffee canteen is right off a striking white sculptural-tiled entryway that leads into a general conversation area. The hub affords a sweeping view of Midtown from a corner of the penultimate floor

of 1100 Peachtree Street, where Kilpatrick occupies 10½ floors.

“We wanted more space where we can collaborate and work together,” Walker said. “You want your space to reflect your work style.”

Audra Dial, the firm’s Atlanta managing partner, has already held a quarterly gathering for Kilpatrick’s roughly 230 Atlanta lawyers in the new space. Before, they used the more formal dining room around the corner on the 27th floor.

Walker said they’ve also hosted client receptions at the hub. “They’ve been very impressed,” he said. The KT Hub is located on the firm’s communal floor, right below the public reception area with visitor conference rooms on the 28th floor.

The light-filled, open space feels intimate despite the size because it’s organized into zones. The designer, Brian Parker of Cooper Carry, used different textures and finishes to demarcate informal gathering areas from work areas. Walnut wood floors in more social areas alternate with cream carpet in quieter work zones. Contemporary chairs and sofas are upholstered in light creams and greys, punctuated by splashes of orange on the work pods and conference room seating.

In the main conversation area, three members of the intellectual property group, partner Tina McKeon, associate Kimberlynn Davis and patent agent Lizette Fernandez, perched on stools at a tall work table, talking animatedly and making notes on legal pads.

McKeon said they were working on business development, planning visits and presentations for clients.

“It’s easier without the walls between our offices,” she added dryly.

Before, they would pull some extra chairs into her office for meetings, McKeon said, but it could get a little crowded. “To come to a clean, fresh space, it seems less intimidating and it’s better for brainstorming,” she said. “We’re less distracted by the stuff on my desk and the phone and the computer.”

While there is a conference room on their office floor, it has no windows and feels too formal, the three said. Fernandez said the KT Hub’s “open and loftlike” atmosphere promotes the free flow of ideas. She added that she had her annual review in one of the hub’s conference rooms, so they could video-conference with a North Carolina partner. “It felt more like a conversation. It was more warm than a conference room,” she said.

McKeon said some of her clients prefer to communicate via videoconference, which is easy to do in the new space. “This is their expectation,” she said.

Asked if they’d ever used the old library as a workspace, McKeon, who joined Kilpatrick three years ago, said she once was asked to a meeting there, but she didn’t know where it was. “I asked around and nobody knew,” she said.

When facing the full-length windows in the main conversation area, there is a divider wall to the right with an embedded flat screen that separates it from a more enclosed lounge with another video screen. At 11 a.m., an array of newspapers on a low shelf along one wall was still untouched.

A zone with jet-set individual workpods flanks the other side of

the conversation area. Each semi-enclosed, bright orange pod houses a reclining chair with a laptop tray table, built-in light and a footstool—akin to a semiprivate, first-class airline seat, but more comfortable.

Beyond the pods are two small, glass-walled conference rooms and a larger one with stadium seating and a videoconference screen that could hold a practice group.

A vestigial library remains—a small room with about 15 short rows of compact shelving through a door between the conference rooms and the coffee area.

“When I started out, I knew where every book in the library was. It’s all electronic now,” said Walker, who joined Kilpatrick in 1986 as a first-year associate.

The entrance hall is a focal point. A sculptural pattern of white trefoil tiles computer-machined from fiberboard contrasts with warm, distinctively striped wood walls in the can- teen that are paneled in a reclaimed walnut veneer.

The firm used sustainable materials throughout, said Walker, who helped plan the 3,100 square foot space with Dial and Ashley Luke, the firm’s operations director.

Cooper Carry also has overseen a renovation of the firm’s Atlanta, New York and Washington offices and is working on its San Francisco quarters.

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