

CHICAGO LAWYER

SPACES



Ahead of its 10th anniversary, Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila finds a new home

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Before there was an address, there was a vision for what would serve as an ideal office space. Room for a growing firm, the latest technology upgrades and, of course, plenty of natural sunlight were on the list, said Patricia Brown Holmes, a founding partner of Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila and a retired Cook County judge.

The firm, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary next year, found its ideal space at 1 S. Dearborn St. It uses the entire 22nd floor and a portion of the 17th floor to house its attorneys and business professionals.

"We were looking to upgrade," Holmes explained. "More single-size offices, more amenities, upgraded technology and a lot more light and open space and collaborative spaces."

After several years of growing at another leased space on Dearborn,

firm leadership took the opportunity to create its perfect office just across the street. It started with a blank slate, completely gutted and ready for a new buildout. Holmes led the way while she worked with RaMoná Westbrook of Brook Architecture.

"I had a vision for what I wanted based on the space," Holmes said. "RaMoná was able to draw and design what I was saying."

Holmes feels Riley Safer's new space is modern and traditional at the same time. Its marble counters provide a bright white look against the pops of the firm's signature red. Its glass walls allow for ample sunlight in the office, critical to Holmes.

"I think that's important, to have sunlight," she said. "It makes you feel better. It makes the space feel bright and airy."

The 22nd floor includes the firm's reception space and a new conference center. Attorneys use it for meetings and programming. In a nod



to its roots in Chicago, Riley Safer has named its conference rooms for locations in the city, including Gold Coast, Hyde Park and Midway. The conference rooms on the 17th floor were named Justice and Truth, Holmes explained, adding that Riley Safer's trademark is, "A law firm built for clients."

Since moving to 1 Dearborn St. earlier this year, Riley Safer has hosted several events, including an author lecture and client board meetings. Each conference room is wired with high-speed WiFi and large screens for high-quality video conferencing.

Maintaining a central location was important to the firm, Holmes explained. She said Riley Safer trial lawyers made their desire to remain close to the Daley Center and Dirksen U.S. Courthouse known. Prior to her work in private practice, Holmes served as an associate judge in the Circuit Court of Cook County. She was also previously an assistant U.S. attorney and an assistant state's attorney. As an attorney, she tried cases in state, city and federal court, as well as state appellate, federal appellate and state supreme courts.

Holmes maintains an eye to the future of Riley Safer, which is in a period of strong growth. At its founding, the firm had 22 attorneys.

"We were hoping to be at 30 to 35 [attorneys] in 10 years, and we are almost at 100 and growing," Holmes said. "We grew so much faster than we anticipated."

She said the firm's rapid growth is correlated to its growing client base and client needs. The current



office space availability provides hoteling office space for visiting attorneys. Riley Safer was founded in Chicago, and over the past nine years, it has expanded, with attorneys located throughout the country, including offices in New York, California, Michigan and Washington.

"Our clients are coming on strong," Holmes said. "I see us growing more. We're growing with the demands, and the demand is strong."



LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Holmes said the firm sought local talent for completing the office's interior style. Kim Chilton Griffith of Chilton Griffith Style was the coordinator of the interior. Along with her eye for style, Griffith connected with her son, Chicago-based graphic designer and fine artist Howard Griffith II, to create pieces for Riley Safer.

When a firm moves into a new office, there's the chance to furnish it with new desks, chairs and other stylistic offerings. At Riley Safer, leadership wanted to make thoughtful decisions with the older furnishings that were being replaced. Partner Joseph Cancila Jr. serves on the Chicago State Foundation board of directors, and he learned the school could use the furnishings on its campus. Rather than decommission or pay to have the pieces removed, Riley Safer re-homed them at Chicago State University.

Holmes said when the firm first started, it received support from many along the way. Helping Chicago State, Holmes explained, felt wonderful, and she was pleased Riley Safer could provide some generosity. She knew that some of the firm's sentimental pieces would serve others.

"We even helped Chicago State move the furniture there," she added.

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