



Before signing a new lease at 3 First National Plaza, the partners at Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton insisted that physical upgrades be made to the space. Photos by Michael R. Schmidt

New lease, new look

By Dustin J. Seibert

Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton's first four years as tenants in 3 First National Plaza were marked by growth and success. This served only as motivation to sign a second lease.

But the firm's partners insisted on contingencies before they signed a six-year lease last September — specifically, significant physical upgrades to the space.

As such, Sheppard Mullin's Chicago office located on the building's 48th floor looks significantly different than when it first opened its doors in July 2012 (and when it was the subject of this column two years ago).

"We figured this would be a suitable home for at least the next six years, but we definitely needed some things worked on," says partner

Lawrence Eppley, co-founder and partner of the Chicago office, which went from the newest office to second-newest for the Los Angeles-based, full-service firm when a new office opened in Brussels in October.

Construction craze

The rehabilitation, which wrapped up in May after less than eight months, went through four phases. Starting in September 2015, each phase lasted two months and focused on a particular corner of the building, displacing people from their offices as the construction moved around the floor.

The work, which was done during office hours, forced the staff to deal with workmen and the noise while still getting their work done.

"There were moments of rage," Eppley says with a smile. "We still had access to the whole floor, but we had to do some navigating around construction equipment."

Many of the changes were practical in nature — repainting walls, replacing carpet, updating the out-of-code florescent lighting ballasts and completely replacing the square-foot ceiling tiles that were discontinued by the manufacturer.

"If one fell and broke, we'd never be able to replace it," Eppley says. "We weren't sure we'd want to stay here for six years without replacing all this stuff."

By May 1, the work was completed, and all employees were stationed at their permanent desks.

Bigger and better

Changes made to the Sheppard Mullin offices during the rehab ran the gamut, from using recycled material for desks and cubicles, to building out the interior desks and storage spaces, to rotating art pieces from Misericordia and other local nonprofits. But the most profound changes came from knocking down a few walls.

While the office's square footage has remained the same at just shy of 25,000 square feet, there are more open spaces and larger rooms. There are also smaller examples, like the break room with seats and a table that used to be a copy and print center. The print center was relocated to an unused closet from which the doors were removed.

But the expanded kitchen and new conference room are the two biggest examples of the efficacy of taking walls down and utilizing previously unused or underused space.

The kitchen is more than double the size of the original — now 1,130 square feet, up from 735. The coffee bar and other amenities remain, but there are now significantly more seats and tables, which make it a more attractive space for staffers to relax and work on their laptops or to host extracurricular events.

"We could've lived with the kitchen at the size it was, but we didn't need the room for files anymore, and it would've just become



Sheppard Mullin's renovations happened during work hours, so employees had to navigate around construction.

dead space," Eppley says. "Since we were renovating anyway, we figured we might as well expand it."

Top-of-the-line conference room

The first phase of the renovations produced the 555 square-foot Jeanne Gang conference room — a name in keeping with Sheppard Mullin's trend of dubbing its conference rooms after local architects. Folding walls allow the room to be converted into two separate ones.

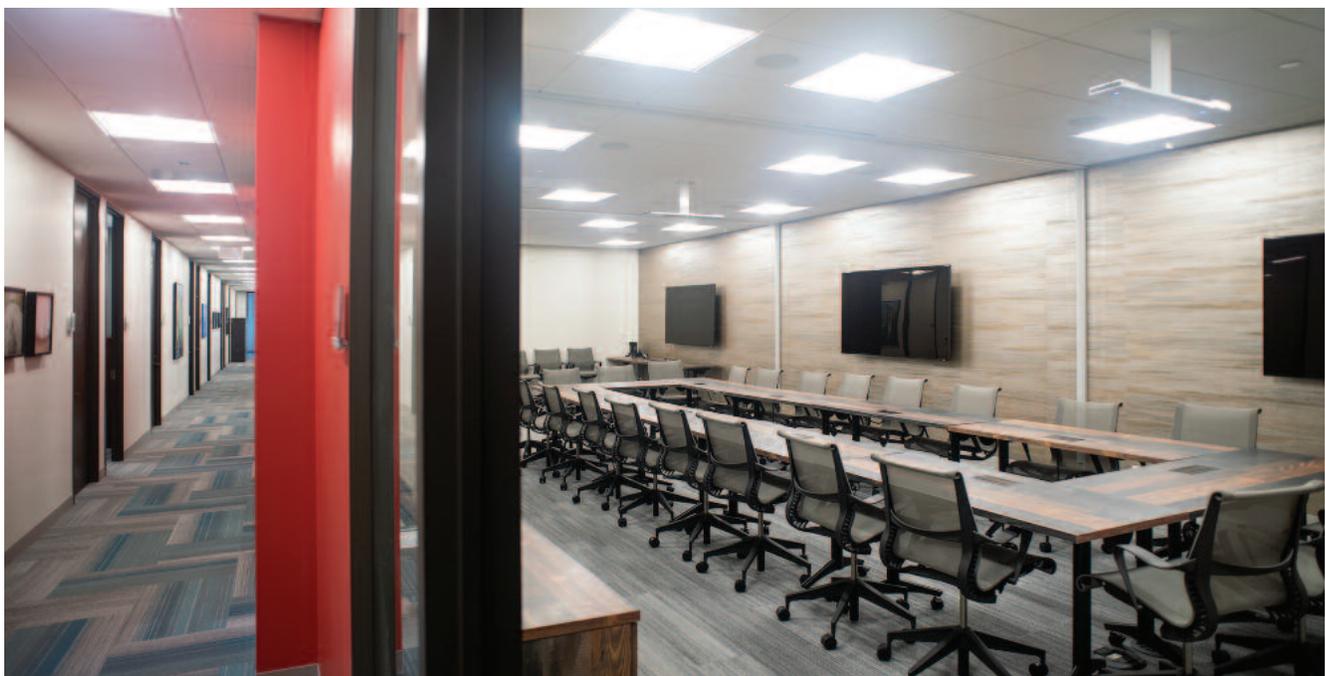
The Gang room is the most technologically advanced in the firm: Touch-screen controlled

mics and speakers were installed in the ceiling; the room's walls hold five, 85-inch, flat-screen televisions that are used for business and pleasure (including the office Super Bowl party).

By converting the offices from 15-foot-wide by 10-foot-deep to 10-foot-wide by 15-foot-deep, the firm gained four offices — two extra for associates and two for partners. Some of the newer offices are still empty.

"In a perfect world, the new offices won't hold us forever, because we'll continue to grow," Eppley says. ■

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The 555 square-foot Jeanne Gang conference room at Sheppard Mullin features five, 85-inch, flat-screen televisions and touch-screen controlled mics and speakers.