



Building an Environmentally Responsible Office Building

BY DAVID H. HARPER AND CINDY SIMPSON

PHOTOS BY CHUCK CLARK PHOTOGRAPHY

Inside the recently completed Haynes and Boone mid-rise Victory Park headquarters, employees have heard so much about the environmentally sustainable features of their new space that some joke the “G” elevator button no longer stands for “Ground,” but “Green.”

Certainly, getting the 450-employee Dallas office on track to become one of the first American law firms with a U.S. Green Building Council “Gold” certification has necessitated almost as many internal education efforts as executive skull sessions over blueprints.

Going green is more than a building materials checklist; it’s a new work-life philosophy for those striving for highest marks under the building council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program.



“Part of this move was always a discussion about the needed changes in daily routine throughout all processes,” said Terry Conner, Haynes and Boone’s managing partner. “We have to incorporate sweeping changes in behavior, but everyone is being supportive. I think they accept that we’re doing this because it’s the right thing for the environment.”

The law firm left its 24-year home in a downtown Dallas high-rise late last October, but the planning for its physical and philosophical emersion into a modern green office actually began more than two years ago.

Then-managing partner Robert Wilson, a veteran Dallas real estate attorney, was the firm’s thought-leader. “We knew what we wanted,” Wilson said. “We were seeking a way to make both our interior space and the next building itself as green as reasonably possible.”

Not only did Wilson anticipate that eco-friendly offices were about to become mandatory, but he also saw an extraordinary opportunity to establish the firm as a trendsetter among peers.



Haynes and Boone has moved into One Victory Park in Dallas, a LEED-certified Silver core-and-shell building.

“As a real estate lawyer, Robert had the knowledge and experience with the leading trends in development,” said Vicki Martin-Odette, one of the Haynes and Boone partners who served on every planning committee for the two-year ramp-up to Victory Park. “He said, ‘As a big firm, we need to do this because it is the right thing — not just for us, but as corporate citizens.’”

And so the mission was set. The earliest decision was to hire Gensler, an architectural firm that could help Haynes and Boone find the right building with a “core and shell” construction that would automatically cast verdant light on the new address, wherever in Dallas it might be.

“Most law firms negotiate the lease, then hire an architect,” Wilson said. “In our situation, we hired the architect first to help us select a building from a variety of existing buildings and buildings that were merely in the planning stage. We knew we’d have had a much more difficult time achieving our goals and would embark on a more costly enterprise if the building we selected was not as committed to the green concept as we were.”



Lobby — Koa wood, Hawaiian lumber that has not been harvested but collected from forest floors after falling, is used throughout the office, including as a component of the two-story reception area walls.



Lobby — The onyx feature wall is backlit by low-voltage LED light sources. The firm selected reclaimed teak for elevator lobbies and the main reception area.

The Green Site Selection Imperative

At the time, Ross Perot, Jr.'s One Victory Park edifice was little more than a twinkle in the developer's eye.

"Several clients — commercial real estate developers — wanted to build a structure for Haynes and Boone when they heard we were moving," said Martin-Odette. "Management talked to each client, plus some non-client developers."

Based on all factors — the "greenness" of the promised structure, proximity to downtown and public transportation, and available amenities — a marriage was ultimately forged with Hillwood, a firm client about to begin construction on the first of two planned mid-rise buildings southwest of the American Airlines Center. The brownfield site, former home to a TXU Energy power station, already had been painstakingly remediated for redevelopment.

"Ross Perot, Jr. always felt that we should do the prudent thing for the future and build green within the district because the site itself was reclaimed," said Bill Brokaw, Hillwood vice president. "Besides, if you don't build green today, your building is going to quickly become obsolete."

Hillwood's commitment to sustainability promised LEED Silver certification for the core and shell, a major boost in the point-accumulation process at the heart of Haynes and Boone's Gold ambitions.

Gensler's early involvement allowed an interior architectural team to educate the firm's planning and design committees on the benefits of conforming to as many LEED requirements as reasonably possible. Selection of materials for the interior build-out would be a key component in that drive.

"We had to think long-term," Martin-Odette said. "As a law firm, you just don't move that often. We'll be in this building for the next 20 years, if not longer. What was going to be best for our lawyers, staff, clients, the community? This was our one shot."

Adapting the Space

The law firm's previous nine-floor, 214,500-square-foot high-rise home was a testament to the changes brought to law firms

by technology. Over the years, staff and attorneys had begun embracing computers and their efficiencies so quickly that floor plans and furniture had become out of sync with reality. Fewer secretarial bays were needed, large rooms for copying centers and document storage were becoming a waste of space, and reception desks with waiting areas on every floor made no sense any more.

With efficient use of the One Victory Park floor plan, the firm figured it could easily and comfortably downsize to 175,000 square feet on six floors. In many respects, the shedding of unneeded square footage was in itself a green move. More efficient use of space, after all, would immediately translate into lower energy costs.

As the concrete began pouring at One Victory Park during 2007, the firm's planning and design committees under Gensler's guidance moved from fielding conceptual wish lists to the construction nitty-gritty.

The previous Dallas headquarters space, like most law firms, offered larger offices for partners, providing almost a rite of passage for promoted associates. Final versions of the new design offered the more egalitarian single-office size, eliminating the need for lighting, HVAC, and electricity changes and associated expenditures whenever moves are required.

"Single-sized offices also played to our culture of teamwork," Martin-Odette said. "This firm has never emphasized a hierarchy so I think the concept works really well for us. As you walk down the halls, you can't tell who is an associate or who is a partner."

Hillwood and co-developer Hines established raised flooring as standard, allowing efficient installation and operation of electrical and HVAC systems, including individually adjustable air-flow vents in all work areas and tightly zoned thermostatic controls.

The raised floor came with an added bonus: It allowed the firm to use more sustainable and cost-effective recyclable carpet tiles rather than wall-to-wall carpet.

Extreme measures were taken to ensure indoor air quality standards were maintained during the construction process,



Carpet tiles — Sustainable and recyclable carpet tiles are used throughout, and natural light filters to interior spaces with textured glass walls and doors.



Tire Tile Hallways — Recycled aircraft tires molded into squares create an ideal flooring for high-traffic areas.

made more difficult because the building itself was not enclosed air tight when construction began. Haynes and Boone was willing to bear the cost of bringing in small portable air conditioning units to condition and filter the air until the base building HVAC was operable.

Natural light is another key to achieving important LEED certification points, and Wilson committed early to a configuration that made it abundant for all. Even interior offices feature large sections of textured glass that allow a healthy, sunny glow to permeate.

Even more natural light was channeled throughout the interior by the careful placement of floor-to-ceiling windows in the reception and shared lounge areas and full glass-front conference center meeting rooms at the end of corridors.

The entire lighting plan was geared toward achieving LEED Gold, with energy-efficient overhead installations throughout. Motion detectors automatically turn off office lights after periods of inactivity. Low-voltage LED lighting was installed to backlight the two-story onyx feature wall, which is the centerpiece of the firm's seventh-floor reception area.

Mixing the Materials

Law firms are frequently attracted to upscale materials that aren't always procured by the most sustainable means. The Haynes and Boone design team worked to blend great design with sustainability by selecting materials rated well above typical green specifications. As a result, reclaimed and recycled matter is found in every nook and cranny.

For example, the firm made a conscious choice to use furniture rather than custom millwork for attorney offices and secretarial/paralegal workstations. The furniture solution, all Green Guard Certified from Knoll, enabled planners to economically differentiate partner and associate offices. It also allowed greater flexibility and more efficient assembly than the alternatives.

"We did extensive planning to ensure spaces fit the specific needs of the practice groups they would serve, yet remained generic enough that they could serve anyone," said Martin-

Odette. "We wanted to facilitate efficient moving of people. If an entire group relocated to another floor, we needed to be sure the spaces still worked."

The covering chosen for the millwork was a veneer of Koa wood, a Forest Stewardship Council-certified Hawaiian product taken from fallen, not harvested trees. Even the substrates used for the millwork were green-certified.

As the firm's design committees encountered opportunities to score LEED points, the material selection process actually became easier.

For high-traffic service areas, the planners settled quickly on recycled aircraft tires, sliced and formed into squares. Instead of haggling over a wide variety of flooring options for the elevator lobbies and reception area, the design team selected dark teak recycled from other construction. And there was little debate about the decision to use only paints and adhesives derived from low volatile organic compounds throughout the project. Those kinds of products are increasingly available at prices competitive with less environmentally friendly materials.

The firm achieved additional points through its willingness to buy green power credits. Because Texas does not provide for the direct purchase of renewable power as sought in the LEED checklist, the firm made the purchase decision as an offset that helps subsidize production of clean energy.

The Human Element Is the New Focus

A law firm can live in the greenest of green buildings, but still behave in an environmentally irresponsible manner. That's why meeting the LEED Gold office standards requires fundamental systemic changes that work in concert with green building features.

"We took some small steps at first," said Martin-Odette.

Haynes and Boone used the pending move to prompt an all-out assault on unnecessary paper. More than 93,000 pounds were ultimately shredded for recycling. In eco-terms, that process alone saved 14,000 trees.

Attorneys were prompted to purge or consolidate paper files, and tons of records were moved off-site. Pre-move, the firm

also converted away from Styro-foam cups, substituting recycled paper vessels. And the routine use of glassware was eliminated.

Those preliminary measures were nothing compared with the changes that awaited the staff and attorneys at One Victory Park. Virtually every activity from a visit to the bathroom to the nightly clean-up was tweaked for green effect.

At the new firm home, bottled water has been almost completely eliminated for the filtered fountain variety. All bathroom equipment features water-saving timers and valves. Automatic soap dispensers dole out dollops of environmentally friendly foam. Surfaces are cleaned with green disinfectants that leave no residual odors.

The office's green educational efforts are still being rolled out, but staff and attorneys have begun to follow some basic guidelines that were not in place in the previous headquarters.

Saving Green

10 EASY IDEAS

For Your Law Firm

1. **Reduce:** File electronically.
2. **Restore:** Print double-sided.
3. **Rethink:** Use biodegradable pantry products.
4. **Recycle:** Do it!
5. **Restart:** Turn off computers and lights.
6. **Refresh:** Use "green" cleaning products.
7. **Replenish:** Convert to ENERGY STAR equipment.
8. **Reinforce:** Negotiate commuting discounts.
9. **Renegotiate:** Encourage landlord to get ENERGY STAR rating.
10. **Recoup:** Provide separate power metering.

SOURCE: GENSLER, HAYNES AND BOONES INTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FIRM

Walk through the One Victory Park space after hours, and you'll find the vast majority of Haynes and Boone workers now turn off their computers at the end of the day and douse the lights. The IT department is developing an automatic power on/off switch for the dozens of new plasma screen televisions.

An intensive recycling effort also has been instituted. Every desk has its own receptacle for recyclable paper, cans, and cardboard. Through the Hines building management company, the firm is seeing the first tangible signs that the green efforts are indeed worth the effort. Hines reported that in January alone the recycling efforts for

One Victory Park saved about \$675 in landfill expenses by repurposing 43 metric tons of debris and paper. Translated into eco-terms, that means 255 trees were saved, and 5,700 gallons of oil, 10,500 gallons of water, and 61,500 kilowatts of power were conserved.

Those numbers for a single month are worth smiling about.

Said Terry Conner: "We're really proud of the incredible variety of environmentally sustainable features our design team has been able to incorporate in such an elegant way. Our people are really starting to respond, do their parts, and feel good about it. It's kind of like pro bono service for the environment."

DAVID H. HARPER,

chair of one of the Haynes and Boone litigation sections, served alongside fellow partner Vicki Martin-Odetta on all of the planning committees that produced the One Victory Place sustainable design.

CINDY SIMPSON,

a principal with Gensler, served as primary contact at the architectural firm and guide for the Haynes and Boone planning committees.