



RTKL's downtown Chicago office. Interior design practices are highlighted on page 18.



Wide open west: I-88 corridor has new and old spaces available

By Maureen Wilkey

With some brokers pegging vacancy rates in the East-West Corridor's office market at more than 20 percent, the aging inventory in the market is going to need repositioning. But even with several buildings still vacant, new properties are starting to sprout in regions just off the corridor and also toward its western edge.

The market is typically considered the largest suburban office corridor, and as prices decrease on older buildings and new buildings come onto the market, the corridor could see more business, says Roger Hopkins, president and CEO of Choose DuPage, an economic development group that focuses on the western end of the corridor.

"We have had quite a bit of vacancy and we will probably get some new vacancies coming up soon," Hopkins says. "But we've had some companies like BP who have come in and taken some of the larger spaces."

The Corridor's occupancy rates vary from the east end to the west end, because of the proximity to the city as well as other surroundings.

"The eastern half of the market, from Wolf Road to I-355, has traditionally been a high occupancy market because of Oakbrook Mall and the McDonald's headquarters," says Andrea VanGelder, executive vice president with Jones Lang LaSalle. "The western part of the corridor, from I-355 to Route 59, has been hit hard by a couple of big vacancies like Tellabs and Lucent (Technologies)."

Historically, the corridor was known for its connectivity, which lent itself to high-tech and research and development office space. But with those few large single tenant buildings now empty, brokers along the corridor have their work cut out for them. It's time to reposition, subdivide and offer incentives if you're a landlord, as well as to try to renegotiate, if you are a tenant, brokers say.

"High tech and R&D type uses typically do command higher rents due to the higher and more specialized I.T. required," says Mark Moran, executive vice president with NAI Hiff-

Interior Design Showcase

Profile: Levenfeld Pearlstein

(From left-to-right) Brian K. Kozminski, Steven F. Ginsberg, Michael Kelly, and Thomas Jaros of Levenfeld Pearlstein LLC.



areas.

It may not be the kind of business that people want to do—as in the go-go times when deals are plentiful and investors positive—but it is important services that professionals have to do to work the economy through its current funk. Construction litigation, loan workouts, foreclosures, and defeasance transactions are all areas that are seeing increased activity in the current economic climate.

"I got into real estate law because I thought that generally, everyone leaves

LP continued on Page 23

Legal professionals shift gears

By Mark Thomson

The economic downturn has hit law firms hard in the past few months as many branches of practice have dried

up from lack of activity, however, the real estate division at Levenfeld Pearlstein LLC has managed to roll with the punches and rely on its diverse expertise to shift its business to growing

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interaction for employees in the office, and enhance the work experience by giving employees access to natural light.

In addition, Microsoft addressed employees' growing interest in sustainability by building out its space to LEED standards for Commercial Interiors. The first tenant in the Aon Center to earn LEED certification, Microsoft accomplished this feat with strategies that reduce energy and water usage, ensure indoor air quality and encourage recycling.

**RTKL (3)
RTKL offices - Chicago**

RTKL's design approach is always to create the most design "bang for the buck." When designing its new work space, the firm maximized the budget by giving careful thought to selection and use of building materials. The new space features movable, interchangeable workstations to provide for future growth; the firm incorporated innova-

tive materials, such as walnut sheet veneer in the lobby, rather than traditional wood veneered paneling. Exposed ceilings were painted white to create perceived volume in a fairly low-volume space, thus reducing material costs. Finally, RTKL built fewer perimeter walls to allow natural daylight into the workspace, significantly reducing electrical costs.

**Wight & Company (4)
UIC Motorola Innovation Center
Chicago**

Wight & Company recently turned a former grocery store into a collaborative learning environment for an Independent Product Development program at University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) that brings together engineering, industrial design and business students with Motorola researchers to work in cross-functional teams to research and develop new product concepts. The open floor plan was developed from a two-day work-



shop with stakeholders including both faculty and students and was built out in less than five months.

Due to a very tight schedule and budget concerns, it was in UIC's best interests to keep many of the existing conditions. For example, parts of the ceiling were kept and other areas were opened up to the deck saving the cost of both new grid and tile. Inexpensive enhancements to the building, including new garage doors, give the space

flexibility to transition the open space into six research teaming areas, dynamic group learning environments, a lab, a "smart" conference room, a multi-purpose classroom, a material shop and a library. In total, these strategies helped the project come in under budget at roughly \$50 per square foot.