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## Gibbons To See Its Name in Heights

**NEW-AGE DESIGN:** Gibbons, Del Deo managing partner Patrick Dunican Jr. in the firm's targeted new space, which will feature more modest attorney offices, furnished as simple workstations, but grander communal areas.



PHOTO BY CARMEN NATALE

### Firm's moniker to be writ large atop Newark skyscraper, its new home

By Charles Toutant

**W**ith an eye on expansion, Gibbons, Del Deo, Dolan, Griffinger & Vecchione is leaving its plush offices at Newark's Legal Center for new digs down the street at a building that will bear its name.

A 12-year lease at One Gateway Center, expected to be signed this week, calls for south- and east-facing "Gibbons" signs to be placed atop the 30-story building, within sight of dri-

vers on the New Jersey Turnpike and planes landing at Newark Liberty International Airport.

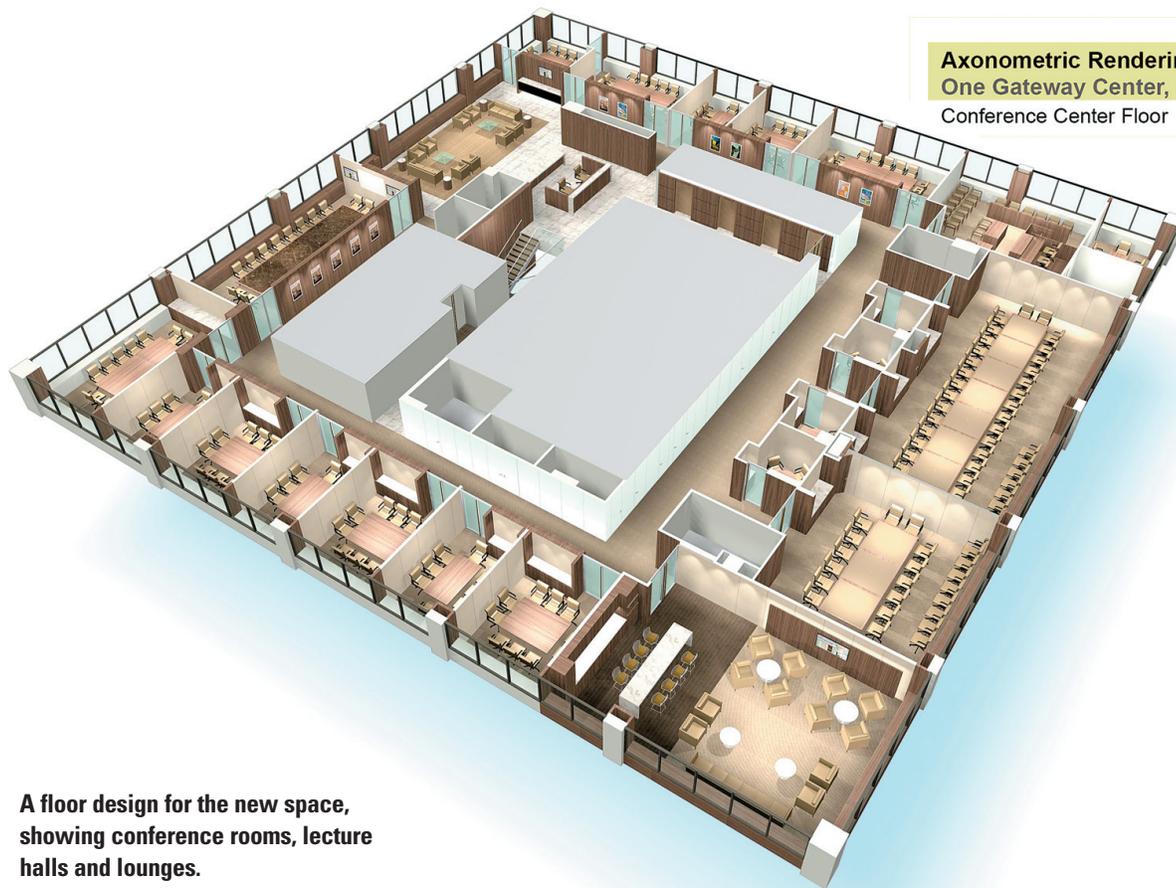
The 210-lawyer firm is leasing five-and-a-half floors in the building, which was its home from 1973 to 1990. Managing partner Patrick Dunican Jr. says the lease terms are more favorable than at the Legal Center and that the building allows greater flexibility in achieving a modern law office design.

Architects' plans call for more modest attorney offices, furnished as

simple workstations, and larger communal spaces — such as lounges, conference areas and a moot courtroom — that conventional wisdom says make for an improved quality of life and a boost in productivity.

"We've talked to our architects, who are designing a lot of law firms, and what they are seeing is less of the large oak desk and more of designs like this," Dunican says.

Dunican says that in designing the new space, the firm is making quality of life a priority and has been polling



**Axonometric Rendering**  
One Gateway Center, Newark, NJ  
Conference Center Floor

**A floor design for the new space, showing conference rooms, lecture halls and lounges.**

GIBBONS, DEL DEO, DOLAN, GRIFFINGER & VECCHIONE

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ARCHITECTURE

staff and attorneys on what they'd like to see.

Among the planned amenities:

- An attorney lounge, with comfortable chairs and a large-screen television.
- A larger, more well-appointed lunchroom.
- Ample conference rooms.
- Lawyers' offices faced with frosted glass to provide daylight to staff working on the inside of the building.
- Clustering of lawyers' offices around theater-style training rooms, with practice groups to be situated together.
- A new moot courtroom, to be named after firm standard-bearer John Gibbons, former chief judge of the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Duncan calls the move strategic. "Part of what we're doing is going with the trend in the legal marketplace, that is, to improve the efficiency of the

office, so you can have more attorneys working [in the same space]," he says.

Other firms have followed that logic in recent redesigns. "Twenty years ago, there was a whole different philosophy as to what you present to clients," says Robert Guthrie Jr., executive director of Woodcock Washburn, a Philadelphia intellectual property boutique with more than 90 lawyers. "Opulence is out."

"Real estate, after the cost of labor, is the number two expense for law firms," says Edward Poll, a law firm management consultant in Venice, Calif. "Any time you can reduce that, you're well off. I think moving away from the big mahogany desk is appropriate."

Negotiations for the new space got under way in January, shortly after Advance Realty Group, owner of One Gateway, showed the firm a photo of the building that was doctored with a mockup of the "Gibbons" sign on top.

One Gateway, which, like the Legal Center, is connected by a skywalk to Newark Penn Station, houses the offices of Sens. Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez, as well as law firms Saiber, Schlesinger, Satz & Goldstein and Hellring, Lindeman, Goldstein & Segal.

Advance, which acquired the building three years ago, has spent \$3 million on lobby improvements and \$7 million on heating, air conditioning and telecommunications wiring, says a spokesman for the landlord.

Gibbons, Del Deo was looking for new space because its lease at the Legal Center was almost up and, if it stayed put, renovations would be needed to accommodate expansion of office space.

The new design is easier at One Gateway, which provides square floor plates in contrast to the triangular floors at the Legal Center, Duncan says. This allows more offices to be

built in a space only slightly larger. The current office houses 140 lawyers in 93,000 square feet, while the new space will house 180 lawyers in 103,000 square feet.

The offices will be slightly smaller, though. Partners' offices, now 180 to 235 square feet, will be pared to 155 and 167 square feet. Associate offices, currently 125 square feet, will be 107 square feet.

Duncan declines to disclose the firm's current rent and says the new rent is still being finalized. He says the firm would realize "a significant savings" with the move. One Gateway space leases for \$27-\$32 per square

foot, according to the Web site of its leasing agent, GVA Williams.

Another perk is better parking, Duncan says. Garage access got more difficult at the Legal Center when post-9/11 security measures related to the abutting Federal Bureau of Investigation headquarters closed one of the two entrances. (The Legal Center has recently added a valet service to make parking easier, says Frank DiMaria, vice president of Matrix Properties, its leasing agent.)

The new office also will have larger meeting facilities as well as data ports on every conference room table. Video screens and teleconferencing

facilities will permit the growing number of lawyers in New York, Philadelphia and Trenton to participate in firm meetings without making the trip to Newark, Duncan says.

Above all, the move keeps the firm in Newark and does not disrupt the working lives of its employees. The firm's attorneys and staff "get to go to the same places for lunch," Duncan muses. "How else can you move somewhere and not impact everybody's commute adversely?"

*Lori Tripoli, a freelance writer for Law Firm Inc., an ALM affiliate, contributed to this report. ■*

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