

ROCHESTER BUSINESS JOURNAL

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■ JUNE 27, 2025

Phillips Lytle moves to Innovation Square in Rochester

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When the leadership at Phillips Lytle LLP decided they were not renewing their lease at the First Federal Plaza space they occupied for 40 years, one thing was certain.

Even though they were moving, the law firm was not leaving downtown Rochester.

"That was a question that the partners in our office had that was really kind of the preliminary question when we started doing the office search ... We all wanted to stay in downtown Rochester," said Jillian M. Dunbar, a Phillips Lytle partner and Rochester office leader.



Jillian Dunbar

"For us, the big reasoning behind it was that we felt it was important, as a New York firm with a Rochester office, to invest in downtown Rochester," Dunbar said.

"We really think it's important to be a leader in that space and to show our investment in the city," Dunbar said.

On June 19, Phillips Lytle relocated to the 29th floor and part of the 28th floor at the Innovation Square building. June 23 was the first official day in the 19,769-square-foot space for 68 staff members.

"We're proud to reaffirm our commitment to Rochester by remaining in the heart of downtown. The new office reflects the strength of our presence in the Rochester market and the depth of our investment in its future," Dunbar said.

The moving process started early last year, when the partners decided not to renew their lease.

Dunbar and one other partner visited 10 locations in one day in Rochester. They narrowed the choices to three and all the partners toured those spaces. Innovation Square was a unanimous decision.

Phillips Lytle Managing Partner Douglas W. Dimitroff said the move to Innovation Square "reflects both the strength of our existing presence and our confidence in Rochester's future."

"This new office enhances our ability to recruit top legal talent, deepen relationships with clients, and support the evolving needs of businesses and institutions across the region. It's a meaningful investment that reinforces our presence in Rochester and positions us for continued growth," he said.

The firm has been preparing for the move for many months. One of the biggest chores was to get rid of much of the paper that had accumulated over decades at the old office.

It was a laborious task to make sure documents were scanned correctly and unwanted documents were being properly shredded, Dunbar said.

"As you can imagine, being in any office space for 40 years, you just end up having a lot of stuff, so it was figuring out what we actually needed to move and what we would use in our new space," she said.

"A lot of the space that we ended up not using goes back to how law firms used to practice law. It was very paper heavy, so a lot of the space that

we had before was really just storage space for paper and much of our practice has gone electronic ... so we just didn't need the square footage for paper storage, and we felt we could use a better more efficient use of the space," Dunbar said.

They saved time on the move by buying all new furniture, so they didn't have to move any from the old office.

The office design includes height-adjustable desks for all staff, a designated wellness room and a spacious breakroom that serves as a central hub for innovation and collaboration. And every office space has window access and natural light.

The move to Innovation Square is part of the firm's overall growth strategy, Dunbar said.

Phillips Lytle has a total of about 170 attorneys in all offices: Rochester, Albany, Buffalo, Canada, Chautauqua, Chicago, Garden City, New York City, and Washington, D.C.

A big reason the firm chose Innovation Square is that it provides an opportunity to expand and occupy more space as the firm grows.

"The general plan is that we would like to grow and that was again another reason that we wanted to stay downtown and we felt like that positioned us well to recruit top legal talent, especially being in a central location," Dunbar said.

"I think we would ideally be looking to grow our current practice areas and then also we're interested in adding new practice areas to the group to the office," Dunbar said.