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One of Cincinnati's largest architectural firms moving downtown office

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One of the largest architectural firms in Greater Cincinnati is moving out of its longtime downtown office.

Nelson Worldwide has signed a 10-year lease for about 23,000 square feet of space in Omnicare Center, located at 201 E. Fourth St. The firm will be relocating from 311 Elm St., where Nelson and its predecessor firm, FRCH, has been located for more than 30 years.

Robyn Novak, vice president and national retail practice leader with Nelson, said the firm decided to look at office options as its current lease was up. Plus, the pandemic played a role.

"Covid helped provide the opportunity to really rethink the role



CORRIE SCHAFFELD

Nelson will move its Cincinnati office into Omnicare Center in

of the office, to reevaluate our space,” November.
Novak told me.

Emily Hamilton, vice president of brand strategy and marketing for Nelson, said 311 Elm St. has served the firm well, but as its culture evolves and the role of the office changes, it made the choice to move.

“This is a chance to really redefine who Nelson is in Cincinnati,” Hamilton told me.

Nelson is designing its own space in the office building, working with Austin-based Swivel, a digital leasing startup that provides 3D visualization technology to help clients explore and interact with commercial real estate virtually. The Nelson office on the 17th floor of Omnicare Center will be designed for both heads down work, where employees can focus on individual tasks, as well as in-person collaboration. Omnicare Center also gives Nelson two private outdoor patios its employees can use.

“The opportunity to work outside is a really exciting opportunity for us,” Novak said. “It’s part of the flexibility of how people want to work today in different environments.”

The space will have individual workstations and phone booth rooms for privacy. It also will have different sized creativity and collaboration areas. Some of the walls will be moveable, so a space could be three small meeting rooms or one very large flex space.

The Cincinnati office, which is home to about 100 of Nelson’s 800 employees, will be a prototype for other Nelson offices across the country. Nelson, headquartered in Minneapolis, has 20 offices in the U.S.



Omnicare Center provides large floorplates, which will allow Nelson to consolidate all of its employees on one floor. Even though Nelson is downsizing from about 50,000 square feet in 311 Elm St., the firm’s new space will be much more efficient. At 311 Elm St., Nelson employees were spread across five floors.

“You would go weeks without ever leaving your floor,” Hamilton said. “You were super siloed and there was a lack of collaboration.”

As more teams, such as workplace and hospitality, blend, there was more need for a space where everyone could easily come together and collaborate. Another benefit of moving to Omnicare Center will be a space where the entire Nelson team can meet. In 311 Elm St., there isn’t a space large enough to fit everyone.

I recently wrote about the trend of companies looking to upgrade their office space during the pandemic, as a way to make it more attractive for returning employees. All Nelson employees are currently working remotely. The firm is planning a return to the office for all its locations after Labor Day. The team at Nelson determined having a physical office was an important component of their company culture.

“The industry we are in, design and architecture and strategy, is really rooted in the culture of socialization and collaboration,” Novak said. “We thrive on spontaneous connectivity.”

The office plays a critical role in brainstorming, creativity and collaboration, she said. “You can’t replicate everything online.”

Wayne Hach, executive managing director with Newmark, represented Nelson in the lease. Darin Armbruster, managing director with Newmark, represented the landlord in the transaction.

Before selecting Omnicare Center for its new office, the Nelson team looked at 12 other options downtown, visiting seven different buildings. Hamilton said it was important for the firm to stay in the city's core.

"It's where our clients are, the pulse of what's going on in Cincinnati," Hamilton said. "We want to encourage a resurgence post-Covid."

Nelson, the region's third-largest architectural firm with 2020 local billings of more than \$29.1 million, is expected to move into Omnicare Center in November.

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