

Former downtown dealership to be new home for regional accounting firm



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Published: Sat, July 7, 2018 5:00 AM



The former Mercedes of Oklahoma City at NW 13 and Broadway will undergo extensive renovations in advance of it becoming the new Oklahoma City office for HoganTaylor. [Rendering by Fitzsimmons Architects]

One of the largest accounting firms in Oklahoma and Arkansas, HoganTaylor, is set to move its 75-employee operation in suburban Oklahoma City to the former Mercedes dealership at the gateway to Automobile Alley.

Mercedes of Oklahoma City relocated from the main dealership building at 1225 N Broadway earlier this year to a new home along Broadway Extension just north of Memorial Road. HoganTaylor, located the past decade at Hefner Road and Broadway Extension, is set to move downtown in late 2019 following an extensive renovation of the former dealership.

“As a business advisory firm, this move supports our mission and allows us to serve a greater role in the large investment our city is making in the future,” said Jamie Keehn, a partner in HoganTaylor's Oklahoma City office. “It will also bring greater career opportunities for current and future employees who are looking forward to getting more involved in Oklahoma City's innovative business community,”

Finding the right fit

Richard Wright, managing partner of the local HoganTaylor office, said the search for a new home downtown started three years ago and they once considered leasing space in the Monarch Building being built by Midtown Renaissance Group at 1133 N Robinson Ave.

That building did not fit with the firm's direction, Wright said, but the building on Broadway was seen as a perfect match for changes being made internally at HoganTaylor. Wright said he has followed planning efforts to transform the Oklahoma Health Center into a more vibrant magnet for researchers, doctors, academics, students, scientists, high-tech workers, bio tech, aviation, robotics and oil and gas.

The Oklahoma Health Center Foundation, which oversees governance of the innovation district, recently announced Katy Evans Boren has been selected as the district's President and CEO to implement ideas from completed studies and to oversee potential development in the area.

“The idea of innovation fits and dovetails into how we want our people to serve our clients,” Wright said. “We like the timing of Katy Boren now leading the Innovation District, and we're a service provider that wants to build on that and work with the people creating the Innovation District.”

In addition to proximity to the Innovation District, the former dealership is along the Oklahoma City Streetcar, which starts up later this year, and across from the future home of Oklahoma Contemporary, a campus that will mix in performing arts, visual arts and maker space.

Ready for growth, change

Gail Huneryager, chief marketing officer at HoganTaylor, said the firm employs a total of 325 employees at its offices in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Little Rock and Fayetteville. She said the local office is set to experience significant growth. That workforce already participates in the Thunder Launch Pad, a team-hosted innovation and business incubator minutes away from their future home at 309 NW 13.

“The nature of the industry is changing so much, and the types of companies we serve are changing so much that we are committed to staying ahead of that,” Huneryager said. “We are excited for our young people. We have a focus on community involvement but it's been tough at times for our people to break away. But with the streetcar, it would be really fun to serve as financial mentors at John Rex school.”

Architect Brian Fitzsimmons is redesigning the dealership to extend a second floor into the former service bay garages and to redo the building's facade. The makeover will include a second-floor balcony extending from the HoganTaylor offices.

More like HoganTaylor

With the HoganTaylor lease and work already started on the dealership's former "Classics" garage, only one building, a small 3,000-square-foot pre-owned showroom, awaits redevelopment.

Chris Fleming, a partner in Midtown Renaissance, said interest is high in the dealership properties. The pre-owned building at NW 13 and Broadway could end up being torn down.

"I'm not sure what is the highest and best use for the corner, but it's probably not a 3,000-square-foot building set back from the street," Fleming said, adding the partners are looking for not just any tenant but ones like HoganTaylor that are a good fit for the future direction of north downtown.

"Innovation happens at the convergence of diverse industries, institutions, companies, and startups," Fleming said. "With its move to the Innovation District, I believe that HoganTaylor will play an important role in supporting the success of Oklahoma City's entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem."

Cathy O'Connor, president of The Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City, has participated in efforts to shape an innovation district and agrees HoganTaylor is a good fit for what is underway. O'Connor is also working with Boren to draw up development strategies for growing the Innovation District.

"HoganTaylor's decision to move to the old Mercedes dealership is further evidence that investments like the streetcar and the focus on building an innovation economy helps companies make the move into the Innovation District," O'Connor said. "With more companies and people working in the area it will help better connect Automobile Alley to the Oklahoma Health Center."