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Lauckgroup bulks up in Austin

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When you're in the business of creating spaces people spend their workday in, you've got to think outside of the box.

That's the logic at Lauckgroup. The Dallas-based interior architecture firm, which opened its Austin office in 2002, has built a reputation in the local market for coming up with workplace designs that help define the companies that inhabit them. In recent years, Lauckgroup has completed high-end projects for clients such as law firm Hunton & Williams LLP, Green Mountain Energy and even the corporate headquarters of Whole Foods Markets Inc.

With years of steady growth and a formidable portfolio of Austin projects behind it, Lauckgroup is expanding its local team. Designer Mary Bledsoe is joining the firm as associate vice president, and Lauckgroup is relocating one of its top associate vice presidents, Matt Taylor, from the Dallas office to Austin. The firm also anticipates adding several more people to its seven-member office in the coming months.

Bledsoe brings with her 15 years of experience, having worked on such projects as Advanced Micro Devices' 870,000-square-foot campus. Taylor worked on Whole Foods as well as projects for TXU Energy and USAA.

The transition is a homecoming of sorts for Bledsoe, who was most recently design director for interiors with Austin-based Graeber Simmons & Cowan. Six years ago she was working in the Dallas office of Lauckgroup when she decided she wanted to augment her skills by working for a major architecture firm.

"I learned a lot," says Bledsoe. "But right now it's time for me to do the best work of my career ... and I knew that the place where I could really focus with the best success was Lauckgroup."

Lauckgroup has averaged 10 percent to 15 percent revenue growth in Austin in recent years, says local principal Joe Gowing.

"Austin is a unique city where people really want to live so it takes a little extra effort and it's a little more competitive to be here," says Gowing. "That means every few years the bar gets

raised, people's expectations go up, and I think we've done a good job of exceeding the expectations of our clients."

Though the core of the company's work focuses on corporate offices, Lauckgroup is branching out. The firm has worked with the University of Texas and, with Bledsoe's experience in the health care field, is beginning to target that growing market segment in Central Texas.

Bledsoe says there's a transition playing out in companies, not just in Austin, but around the country. With multiple generations -- from baby boomers to Generation Y -- in one office, executives have to decide how to alter the physical environment to attract and retain new, younger talent.

"Our approach is going to be unconventional, and that makes natural sense for Austin," says Bledsoe.

Lauckgroup, which launched in Dallas in 1984, has a total of 26 employees firm-wide today.

"It's a little different here than in Dallas," says Gowing. "The nature of our service and design puts us into a smaller group in our field. It's competitive, yes, but for what we bring, we're competing locally with a smaller group."