

Ropes & Gray Doubles Size Of Its San Francisco Office

By Jill Redhage

Daily Journal Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Boston-based Ropes & Gray just doubled the size of its San Francisco office at a time when other firms are trying to slough off space, or at least hold steady on their existing lease obligations.

The firm confirmed this week it has signed up for two full floors of office space — 50,000 square feet altogether — at Three Embarcadero Center in the financial district. The 37 San Francisco lawyers and their crew hope to make the move from One Embarcadero Center in April after their new space is built out.

“We’re really happy to have space that we can grow into,” said Geoffrey Leonard, managing partner of the firm’s San Francisco office. He expects the firm will now be able to house more than 100 lawyers in its San Francisco office.

“We also have attractive expansion options in the new space, as well,” Leonard said.

The move is in contrast to firms that have been shrinking their San Francisco office space in hopes of unloading unnecessary overhead costs. Last month, Philadelphia-based Duane Morris consolidated its 56 San Francisco-based lawyers onto three floors in Spear Tower at One Market Street, where it previously occupied four floors. DLA Piper, meanwhile, has been trying to rent out some of its space at 555 Mission St.



S. TODD ROGERS/Daily Journal

Geoffrey P. Leonard

Other firms, like Palo Alto-based Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati and Los Angeles-based O’Melveny & Myers, are holding steady. Wilson Sonsini renewed its lease for 40,000 square feet of office space in San Francisco this fall, and O’Melveny put up for rent the 50,000 square feet of space it had secured as an option to take

over next year, effectively keeping the size of its office space in the city the same.

Steve Barker, a San Francisco-based broker for Studley, a commercial real estate firm that advises tenants, described Ropes & Gray’s expansion as an anomaly.

“I do think it’s a pretty dramatic and unusual story,” he said. “We haven’t seen any firms in San Francisco have that kind of growth in the last 18 months.”

Barker noted that the only firms to have grown their space are ones like Jones Day, Howrey and Reed Smith, which picked up large groups of attorneys from Heller Ehrman and Thelen when they dissolved.

Ropes & Gray’s office space expansion is being paired with ongoing recruiting efforts for lateral partners. Its most recent additions came in December, when it picked up Thad Davis from Quinn Emanuel Urquhart Oliver & Hedges and Michael Wong from the U.S. attorney’s office as the office’s first two litigators. It since has gained four litigation associates.

Leonard said the firm is hoping to add partners to its health care, corporate finance, private equity, investment management and litigation practices.

The firm will occupy the second and third floors of its new building, which are already connected by an internal staircase. Leonard declined to say what the firm’s rental rate would be, but called it “very favorable.” Boston Properties remains the firm’s landlord.