

MAKES WAVES

square feet, serve as common areas and can house large parties.

Showrooms are laid out in a grid pattern, with product categories mixed throughout the building. Although the third and fourth floors house permanent showrooms, most of the building functions as temporary space. Thus, the building can be used year-round for events, conventions and meetings, in addition to its use for the twice-a-year furnishings markets.

Johnson, of the city's Economic Development Corp., says *Showplace* "elevates High Point to another level to be able to accommodate multiple industry trade shows. We can now compete for different shows that we weren't in a position to compete for in the past."

"We've created a very people-friendly building," Easter says. "The same layout that helps the buyer also helps our exhibitors, whether it's location directories, cafés or phone banks. We've spent an enormous amount of time working on the footprint, because we think that's vital to the life of a building."

Exhibitors like Ron Bramble are excited about being in the new building. The Bramble Co. has grown with *Showplace* since the



company started in 1995, he says.

"We've become recognizable through *Showplace* so people expect us to be there," says Bramble, vice president of the furniture and decorative accessories manufacturer. "People know our name so they will be looking for us." Bramble says he is not concerned with buyers having trouble finding his new home. "I think people are going to walk the whole thing anyway," he says.

When Walters and Easter, *Showplace's* founding managers, decided to build a permanent structure, one of the challenges was to make the new building as enjoyable to shop

as the temporary structures it would replace. Buyers loved the high ceilings and easy-to-navigate halls of the tents, says Easter. *Showplace* partners wanted the new building to be just as welcoming and easy to walk.

Showplace held a design competition that brought some of the largest architectural firms to High Point to experience the bustle of a market and gather input from attendees. In the end, seven firms made presentations. When *Showplace* partners saw Hyndman & Hyndman's plans, "we just looked at each other and grinned," recalls Easter. They knew they had found the

winner.

Easter says she hopes that *Showplace* will not only serve furnishings buyers and exhibitors, but also will become a landmark for the city of High Point, where all of the owners live. The team includes co-managing partners Easter and Walters, Earl N. "Phil" Phillips Jr., James H. Millis and Paul Brayton. □

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