

BOASTING BUFFALO

Taking a new career path

MICHAEL MISTRINER READY TO LEAD CLARK PATTERSON LEE'S BUFFALO OFFICE



JIM COURTNEY

Michael Mistriner travels often for business and said he's noticed that "people talk about Buffalo in a very different way. They are interested in what is happening here and how it happened."



It would have been easy for Michael Mistriner to stay put. He was a CannonDesign principal who led the Grand Island firm's higher education practice. He had been with Cannon, the region's largest architecture firm, for 31

years. But last year, principals of a firm in Rochester that also specializes in architecture, engineering and planning wanted to grow their Buffalo office and reached out to Mistriner with an offer that he ultimately took. This spring, he was named principal and vice president of the local office of Clark Patterson Lee. "Just as I watched Cannon grow, I am now in an opportunity to watch CPL grow," said Mistriner, 55. A decade ago, the company opened an office with five employees. Now based in the Cobblestone District, there are 30 people working there. "We are definitely in a growth mode," he said.

It had to be difficult to leave Cannon, especially after spending 31 years there and being a principal. It was a decision I made on my own, but this is a chance to help grow an office and provide a level of leadership. I love the challenge.

Has the job given you a new sense of energy? I went through this soul-searching and looked at the next 10 years and asked myself, "What do I want to do?" Cannon gave me an experience that I could never



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replace. They were great; they are great. But now I have a chance to share some of my own experiences with young and up-and-coming architects and engineers.

You are a graduate of the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning and UB has an engineering school, too. Does this help firms such as Clark Patterson Lee find talent? People have no idea how much of a win-win it is for us in the industry. It gives Buffalo a huge advantage when it comes to finding young talent. A lot of times, you get someone as an intern and we foster that connection, as does the student. Having UB right here, it allows us to evaluate students and allows them to elevate us. It is a great two-way process.

Does it help prevent the brain drain where young architects and engineers leave UB and go elsewhere? It is one of the benefits but remember, there is no shortage

of resumes that come into our office or the other firms. We get a lot from UB but also get them from such places as Syracuse and Cornell, among others. The thing about Buffalo is its great architectural legacy, and programs like UB make the city very attractive to college graduates.

More so now than in years past? Absolutely. The brain drain has slowed down. Students see what's happening in Buffalo, especially in downtown and how its dynamics have changed and they want to be and live there. It has become a game changer for the city.

Any prediction as to how long the development resurgence will continue? I think it is very sustainable, especially with growth projections around the Buffalo Niagara Medical campus. Plus, there is a quality of life here that is very attractive.

Where do you see growth continuing? Obviously it starts with the medical campus, and I think we will continue to see more growth in downtown housing, which will lead to more retail opportunities. And there is all the growth coming from the Pegulas and the downtown casino. You have the private sector doing things in Buffalo that you never thought you'd see. Right now all the cylinders are firing and firing in the right direction.

– James Fink