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Baron & Budd hunts for D-FW office space

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A Dallas-based law firm with a lead role in litigation against BP and other companies involved with the Gulf of Mexico oil spill is searching for a new home.

Environmental and mass tort specialists [Baron & Budd PC](#), now based in an approximately 100,000-square-foot office at 3102 Oak Lawn Ave. in Dallas, is hunting for a similar amount of space, said **John Amend**, president and CEO of [The Amend Group](#), which is representing the law firm in its search. The firm's precise space requirement will be determined by an analysis now under way, **Amend said**.

The law firm is considering all of its options, including leasing space, buying a building, constructing a new building or possibly renewing its lease — although the firm is leaning toward moving, said **Russell Budd**, president and managing shareholder. The 220-employee firm has about 200 people in its Dallas office. Its lease runs through October 2013.

"I think the employees would love a fresh, new, centrally located space that is well-maintained and has the latest technology," Budd said.

For now, the firm is considering sites in Uptown and downtown Dallas, the Design District, Preston Center and along the Dallas North Tollway between Interstate 635 and Northwest Highway, Amend said. He said the search will be narrowed in a few months.

Baron & Budd is representing hundreds of individual, government and commercial entities such as seafood processors suing BP plc and other defendants over the Gulf oil spill, Budd said.

"There's massive liability out there, and it's not just BP that's responsible for this," Budd said.

A federal judge in August in the Eastern District of Louisiana consolidated the interests of thousands of plaintiffs who filed suit against companies connected to the April 20 explosion and subsequent oil spill.

Scott Summy, head of Baron & Budd's water contamination team, is one of four attorneys picked to serve on the executive committee that's coordinating the litigation and representing those plaintiffs, Budd said.

In addition to oil spill litigation, other growth areas for the firm include pharmaceutical cases and cases against the manufacturers of defective Chinese drywall, Budd said. The firm was one of the first in the nation to file claims on behalf of people who got cancer from asbestos in the 1970s, and it continues to represent plaintiffs in those cases, he said.

Baron & Budd is one of about six law firms on the hunt for space in Dallas, said **Paul Whitman**, president of the Dallas-Fort Worth office of commercial real estate firm [Jones Lang LaSalle](#). Whitman and Brad Selner, JLL managing director, are representing law firm Hallett & Perrin PC in its search for about 25,000 square feet. The firm now occupies 21,500 square feet at 2001 Bryan Tower in downtown Dallas.

Hallett & Perrin's focus will remain downtown, but the firm will also consider locations as far north as Northwest Highway, including the Preston Center area, Whitman said. Many law firms are able to lease 10 percent to 15 percent less space when they move because of technological advances, efficient floor plans in newer buildings and willingness of lawyers to have smaller offices, he said.

It's a good time for law firms to be in the market for office space, Whitman said.

"It's a tenant's market and we think it's going to stay a tenant's market for the foreseeable future," Whitman said.

Other law firms reportedly scouting or about to enter the market include McCall, Parkhurst & Horton LLP; [Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld](#) LLP; Guida, Slavich & Flores PC; [Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell](#) LLP; and Hawkins Parnell Thackston & Young LLP.