

OFFICE IN WONDERLAND

Local businesses
know how to mix
business with pleasure

BY CINDI R. MACIOLEK

Las Vegas is home to some of the most creative businesses in the world. And, while an exceptionally innovative office environment helps to foster that ingenuity, in the end, it's the people inside these walls that make them come to life.

The creative minds behind the office spaces on the next few pages completely contradict the old adage "All work and no play..." as these office spaces are like nobody's business we've ever seen.

Because it's all in a day's work, let's peer behind the doors of three companies and see what kind of space they take care of business in. And after you have seen some of these work spaces you will agree, it's nice work if you can get it.



The Chicago Stock Exchange is just one of the faux features in Town Center. And, the two-story waterfall underneath the stairs houses an abundance of ADDY awards in its basin.

but also allow for private conversations. It's outfitted with a theatrical grid, so it can morph into the type of space we need it to be. A projection screen comes down so we can conduct presentations or training sessions. It allows us to have a common area for gatherings. And parties. We have a lot of parties."

For a company that works hard, playing hard is high on the list. Any organization that has a space named Party Patio must utilize it. And Town Center provides the indoor celebration area for such activities as big wheel races, haunted houses, dance exhibitions and the annual children's Christmas party. Charities even use it for fundraising.

"People look at that space and think of the strangest things to do with it," said Dreibelbis. "Any excuse for a holiday celebration or a party, we're there!"

In spite of their success, this is one company that doesn't take itself too seriously. The Chambers, the main presentation room, uses award statues modified as door handles. And, the two-story waterfall in Town Center

SUMMERLIN PLAYLAND

From the outside, it looks like any normal office building. Entering the lobby, you feel a bit like you're in an art gallery. Then, once you walk the tunnel to the open area called Town Center, the journey is complete. You're transported from the mundane to the amazing. Welcome to R&R Partners.

While the slogan, "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" was actually conceived here, the entire facility has given birth to numerous other successful campaigns. And, the environment contributes to that.

Voted "One of the 25 Best Small Companies to work for in America" in 2008 by the Great Place to Work Institute, R&R Partners is like a bustling town with several neighborhoods, including West Wing, Uptown, Area 51, the South Pole and Toon Town. Conference rooms bear unique names as well, including the War Room, the Fish Bowl, the Test Tube, and the Edith, named to honor a former receptionist sorely missed by the staff. Employees participated in naming the locations right from the start.

"At our last location, we had to be spread out over different buildings. It was hard for the staff to interact. This facility has really fostered a sense of community because you see everyone every day," said Cindy Dreibelbis,



The executive offices at R&R Partners offer the more staid side of the agency.

executive vice president. "We wanted to capitalize on our collaborative culture through our office space. We had several sessions with our employees to get their input, and I feel we're even happier now than when we first moved in."

The heart of the building is Town Center, a huge, open concept area that resembles a cobblestone town square, with park benches, plants, meeting tables, a waterfall and a pool table, with neighborhoods jutting out like old buildings.

"Town Center is a great, multi-purpose space for us," said Dreibelbis. "First of all, the acoustics are great for an open environment,

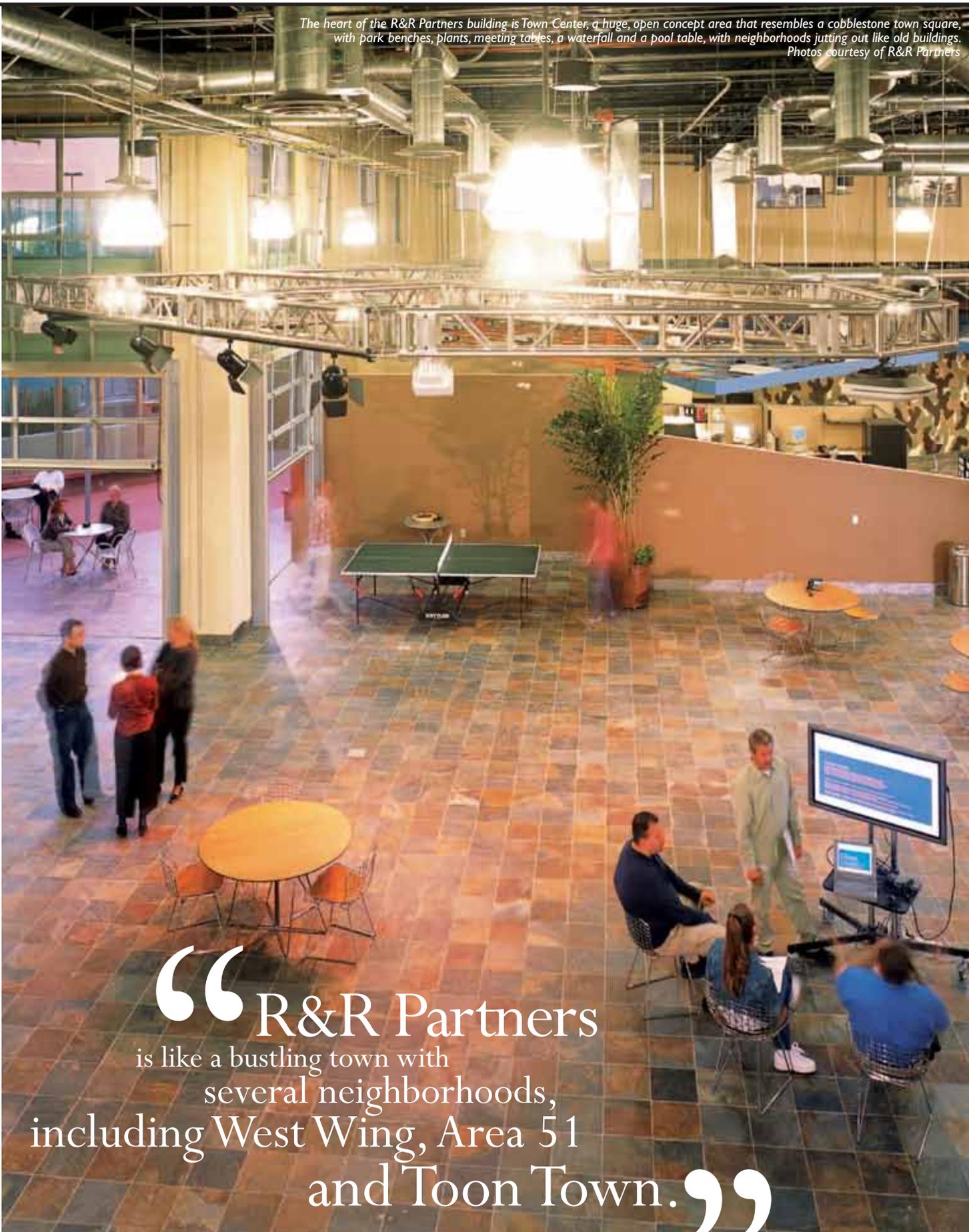


The graffiti wall at R&R partners is embellished with the names and creativity of the advertising agency's team members.

also houses an overabundance of ADDY awards in its basin. After all, when you've won so many, what's a company to do with the fruits of their labor.

"Awards are part of our culture," said Dreibelbis. "Fun is also highly valued here. It's a big part of who we are. We use an open and playful work environment to inspire our staff to work creatively. You rely on the employees for their productivity, and their happiness and the work environment helps with employee retention.

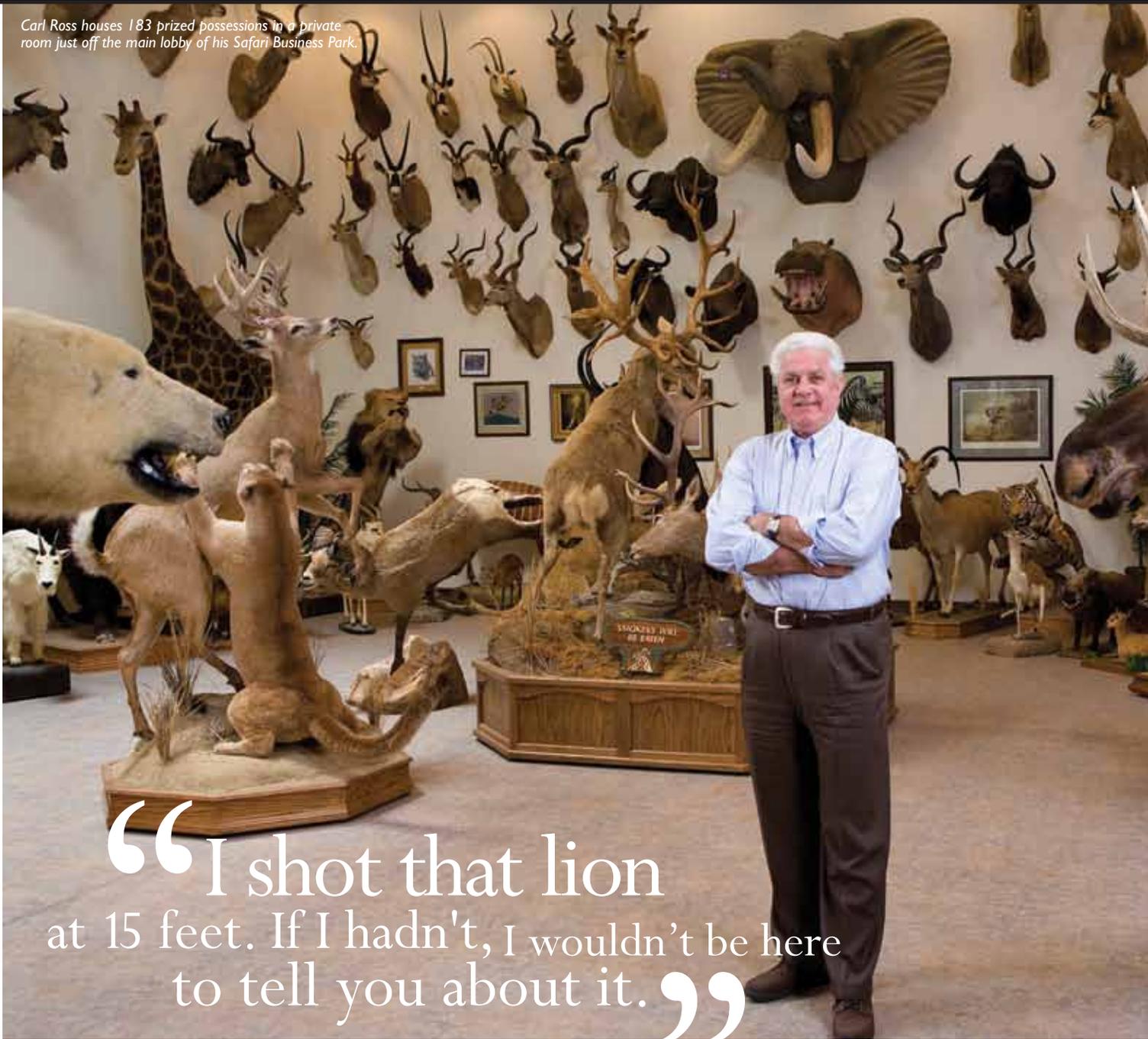
"We built it with the future in mind," continued Dreibelbis. "We plan to be here 20 years from now."



The heart of the R&R Partners building is Town Center, a huge, open concept area that resembles a cobblestone town square, with park benches, plants, meeting tables, a waterfall and a pool table, with neighborhoods jutting out like old buildings. Photos courtesy of R&R Partners

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Carl Ross houses 183 prized possessions in a private room just off the main lobby of his Safari Business Park.



“I shot that lion at 15 feet. If I hadn't, I wouldn't be here to tell you about it.”

IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE

Las Vegas business parks cover the city, most of them pretty normal, industrial in style. But, if a stuffed giraffe or a bronze bison would motivate you to work harder, or inspire your clients to close more deals, then your new office can be found on the southern tip of the city.

Safari Business Park isn't on the list of most popular Las Vegas tourist sites, but perhaps it should be. Driving south down Interstate 15, just before the Blue Diamond exit, you'll see the complex to the right of the freeway. You can't miss it because the wild

animals are easily seen adorning the exterior of the buildings.

Leopard print carpeting greets you as you enter the leasing office, a sure indication this is no ordinary business. A bronze bison sits in the center, and if you think bison are big to begin with, this one is twice the normal size. A daunting bronze eagle with a 14-foot wingspan guards the back of the room. All the artwork in the room, whether sculpture or painting, depicts the beauty of animals in their natural habitat, rarely experienced first hand.

You might think that this office complex is extraordinary because of the Safari theme. Well, you'd be wrong. What makes this a special place is the owner, Carl Ross, who believes in tenant support so much, he still works six days a week.

“We have a theme and a personality,” said Ross. “Tenants love the place because of the quality I put into the buildings. I build to own, and I baby my tenants.”

Ross is a man with a passion for life and his eye on the ball. A golf ball. His first brush with fame was making friends with Arnold Palmer at the ripe old age of 13,



The variety of animals in Carl Ross' collection is from such remote locales as Outer Mongolia, Cameroon and Nepal. If you've never seen an ocelot, a sable or a giraffe up close, you should make plans to stop by. Photos by Jim K. Decker

a friendship that has lasted 60 years. Ross met Palmer while working as a clothing salesman at a store in their hometown of Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

"I grew up very poor and I wanted to work," said Ross. "I needed clothes, so I thought I'd get a job in a clothing store." Little did he know how that decision would change his life

Palmer felt something special with Ross, and in due time, he was part of the Arnold Palmer Golf Co. sales team. From there, Ross went on to found Lynx Golf Company, which he ran for 17 years.

Along the way, he developed a love of both real estate investing and big game hunting, and his collection of animals has to be seen to be believed. So, where would a Las Vegas big game hunter display his catches? In his own personal federally certified museum, of course!

Ross houses 183 prized possessions in a private room just off the main lobby. The variety of animals is a worldwide lesson in getting up close and personal with wild life from such incredible remote locales as Outer Mongolia, Cameroon and Nepal. If you've never experienced an ocelot, a sable

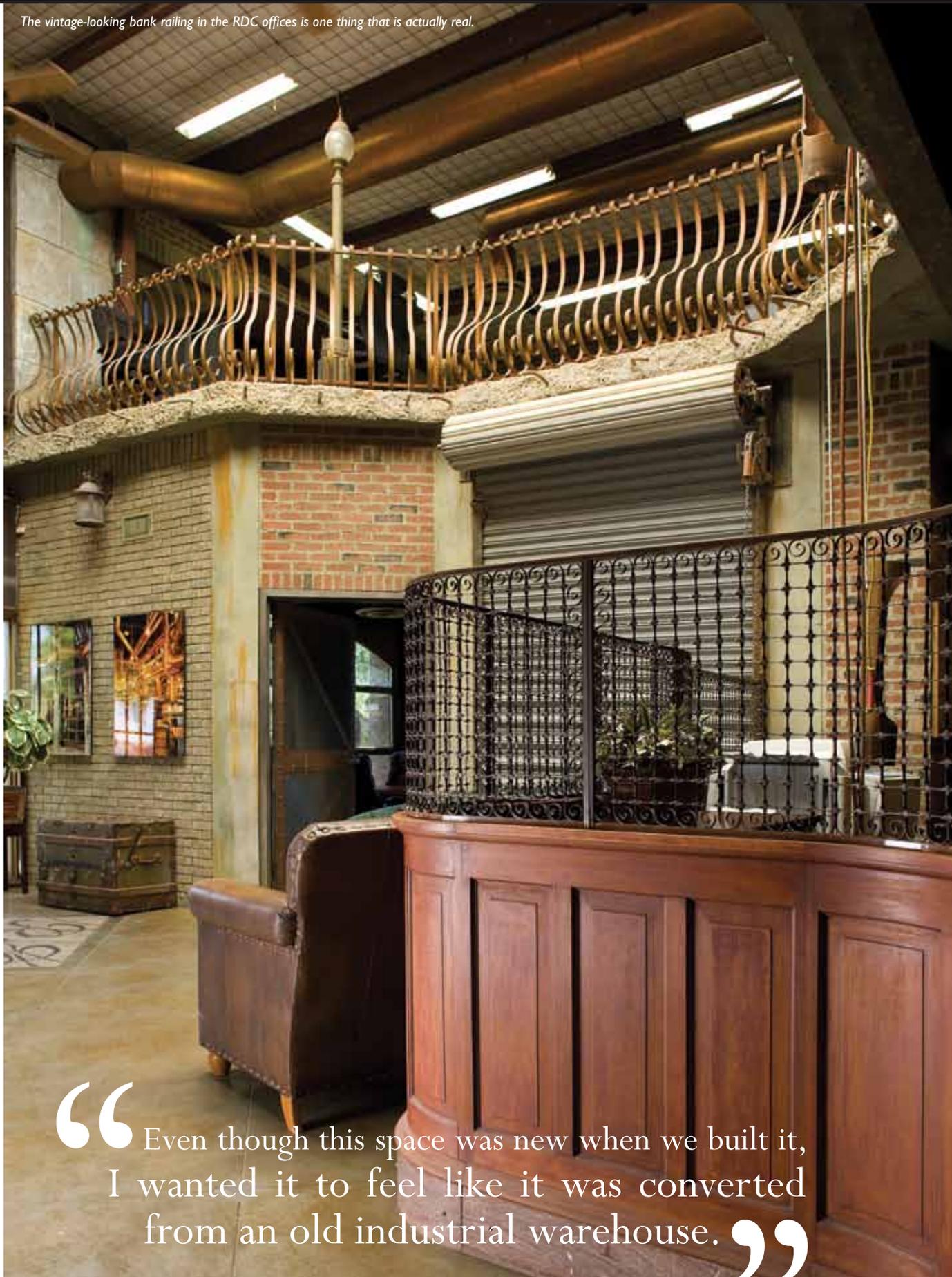
or a giraffe up close, you have to make plans to stop by.

"I don't get drunk, smoke or do drugs, so this is my only extravagance," said Ross. "I've probably spent around a million dollars on hunting." He points to a rather menacing animal in the back of the room. "I shot that lion at 15 feet. And, if I hadn't, I wouldn't be here to tell you about it."

Ross has always been a lucky guy, including finding a very understanding wife who allowed him to share his love of hunting with his children, naming his daughter, Safari, and his son, Remington.

OFFICE IN WONDERLAND

The vintage-looking bank railing in the RDC offices is one thing that is actually real.



“ Even though this space was new when we built it, I wanted it to feel like it was converted from an old industrial warehouse. ”



Recreation Development Company's ability to create the look of metal, rock and other materials is even evident in their office space. Photos by Jim K. Decker

IS IT REAL, OR IS IT LAS VEGAS?

Somewhere near the hustle and bustle of Cheyenne Road and I-15 lies the heart of fantasy land for a large number of Las Vegas businesses. If you've ever seen the Statue of Liberty at New York-New York Hotel & Casino or visited the Brew Pub in the Monte Carlo Casino, then you've experienced the handiwork of Recreation Development Company (RDC).

Las Vegas wouldn't have the same sort of élan without RDC's ability to create the look of metal, rock and other materials. Even in their office space, it's hard to discern fact from fiction.

"This is a great metal door. How old is it?"

"It's not metal. It's painted wood."

"Oh. But, I love how you drilled out the second floor and left the rebar exposed through the broken concrete."

"That's all fake. We didn't drill through the floor. It just looks like it."

"I see. I love the copper ductwork. It really adds a great feel to the lobby."

"That's just faux painting."

"Hmm... great vintage-looking bank railing. I feel like I'm in a movie from the 1940s."

"Uh, that's real."

Jeff Whittle, a lifelong Las Vegas, took

over RDC from his dad who learned his craft from his father. When the business started, they were working with real rock, creating fireplaces and pools with waterfalls. In an "Aha!" moment, they realized they could make fake rocks, and create themes in their designs. The rest, as they say, is history.

Whittle believes that a creative staff needs an imaginative environment in order to blossom. Their previous offices were in a strip mall, and their current location was practically in the middle of nowhere when they moved in 1995.

"Our business is so interesting. We often get to design a space, then remodel it a few years down the road," said Whittle. "But when we moved here, it made us feel like we could do anything. In a couple of years, we grew our business tremendously. We're struggling with the economy now, just like everyone else, but that was a very good time."

"Where you work and the environment you work in really make a difference," continued Whittle. "People here are so happy. Even though this space was new when we built it, I wanted it to feel like it was converted from an old industrial warehouse."

Whittle didn't have to think twice when asked what project he was most proud of after



The metal door in RDC offices is actually painted wood, the copper ductwork is a product of faux painting, and the rebar exposed through the broken concrete on the second floor is all fake.

all these years in the business. "I've done so many cool things, but I'm proudest of the Statue of Liberty," he said. "It's an interesting challenge to do a piece that everyone has seen. I believe that she's perfect."

Although his dad is no longer around, the love of a son for his father is evident as Whittle speaks. "My dad was always so proud of the details, making sure everything looked exactly like the real thing. I keep my dad's memory alive by paying attention to the details, and I think that's what keeps our clients coming back." □