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## Downtown vibe draws office furnisher

Triangle Business Journal - April 8, 2005 by [Katherine Kopp](#)

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When Michael Kerr bought out his employer and established **Edge Office** in 2004, his next step was finding a space to grow the new workspace furnishings company.

He had no doubt that downtown Raleigh was where the company should be. "I wanted something with more character, with more architectural interest," Kerr says. The location also made business sense. "We know that a lot of the clients we serve in the architecture and design community are downtown, and it's an advantage to be near them."

So the company left flex space in Morrisville and settled at One Exchange Plaza, a building owned by the city of Raleigh.

Kerr admits that he was attracted to the energy forming around downtown's redevelopment. He came to Raleigh a decade ago from Seattle, a city with a vibrant core. "To me, it's undeniable the value that a vital downtown brings to a community," he says. "I'm a small business, and I chose to get down there and become a part of it."

In 1984, Kerr worked as a design engineer for Steelcase, one of the largest manufacturers in the industry. He worked for a stint as vice president of operations for B&OI in Seattle, which handles approximately \$40 million of orders for Steelcase each year, and served as a corporate vice president for HON Industries, another major office furnishings manufacturer.

After moving to North Carolina in 1995, Kerr worked for several venture-funded technology startups before returning to the furniture industry in 2002 as general manager for BRG of N.C., a San Jose, Calif.-based office furnishings, facility services and computer-aided facility management (CAFM) technology provider.

Kerr launched Edge Office after acquiring the assets of BRG of N.C.'s Teknion dealership. Edge Office offers office design services and several lines of office furnishings, from the high-end manufacturer Teknion to mid-priced Global Brands to **OFM Inc.**

Edge's downtown location has helped rather than hindered recruiting, Kerr says. "More and more people want to live and work in downtown." He thinks Raleigh will need to grow its downtown population to reach a tipping point. And he sees holes in the downtown shopping scene. "We're still finding ourselves with retail," he says.

But as a downtown business owner, he wants to debunk one of the popular complaints about the

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area - the parking woes that he thinks are more perception than real. Kerr's office sits across from a seven-story parking deck and within close walk of another, and he sees ample on-street parking. "To me, it's a non-issue," he says.

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