

Slew of leases highlights turnaround for Greenwich office building

By Macaela J. Bennett Published 4:12 pm, Tuesday, September 19, 2017



From left, Ivy Equities Chief Investment Officer David Archibald, Ivy Equities Co-Chief Executive Officer Rusty Warren Jr., Rhys Commercial Managing Director Sam Chambers and Rhys Commercial Executive Vice President Christian Bangert pose for a photo outside their West Putnam Avenue office building in Greenwich, Conn. on Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2017. [less](#)

Against the backdrop of a slump in new office leases signed across Fairfield County this year, Ivy Equities is celebrating the payoff of its investment in a downtown Greenwich office building

Within the last year, Stamford-based Rhys Commercial — **working as Ivy's exclusive** broker for the building — has leased more than 20 percent of the offices located at 41 W. Putnam Ave., lowering its vacancy rate to nearly 10 percent.

The new tenants include financial advisory investment firm ASL Management, taking 1,150 square feet; Prana Capital, signing for 1,270 square feet; Weichert Realtors, relocating from Arch Street; and, most recently, Marcus Evans, with a lease for 1,410 square feet.

While none represent big leases, altogether they constitute good news for Ivy Equities. In 2013, Ivy bought the property for more than \$10 million, according to public property records. The 25,000-square-foot, four-story structure was built in 1969, and by the 2000s its age showed, according to Russell Warren Jr., Co-CEO of Ivy Equities, which **is based in Greenwich a short walk from its West Putnam property.** "I had walked past this building a million times and never noticed it," Warren said.

Coming off the 2008 recession, the offices were only around 65 percent occupied and fetched rents in the high \$30s per square foot, he said. Yet its accessibility to shops and **restaurants in downtown Greenwich, as well as proximity to Greenwich's Metro-North train stop combined with on-site parking, made it an attractive investment. "It had a high walk score and good bones," he said.**

Soon after, his firm refinished the exterior, replaced its windows and updated its common areas with a modern-looking atrium and new restrooms.

"We made it really appealing to family offices and financial firms," Warren said. "We view it as very niche and boutique, where tenants get a lot of bang for their buck." Following Ivy's renovations, the building that's located in Greenwich's priciest office corridor raised its rents closer to \$60 per square foot and most existing tenants were willing to accept the bump given Ivy's investments, Warren said.

"It proved that if you invest in a building, people are willing to pay," said David Archibald, Ivy Equities co-chief executive. "We made high-impact investments."

Today, the office building has just a couple suites left to fill with some interested tenants **eyeing them, said Rhys Executive Vice President Christian Bangert, who cited Ivy's investments as the driving force behind its success. "People everywhere are looking for more value," he said. "If you're not keeping up with what the competition is doing, you won't retain tenants."**

This slate of leases, several signed within the last few months, have closed as the the office markets in Greenwich and across the region are moving slowly.

The 880,000 square feet of office space leased in the second quarter of 2017 in Fairfield County represents a 15 percent year over year decline, according to a Newmark Knight Frank report published this summer.

The smaller tenants filling up 41 West Putnam "are truly the bread and butter of the market and are still active," Bangert said. "The Greenwich tenant mind-set has changed. Value is the general consensus and a good building with solid bones is attractive to tenants today."