

Greenwich Time

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Two hedge funds are close to signing leases for a total of about 11,000 square feet at the Greenwich Financial Center, according to officials at the Nitkin Group.

Greenwich touts 'incredible vitality'

Nitkin Group renovating Greenwich Financial Center

By Peter Healy
Staff Writer

Bradley Nitkin said his firm made a sound investment when it bought the Greenwich Financial Center, at Fawcett Place and Greenwich Avenue, and the former Greenwich Armory for \$26.66 million two years ago.

- He secured a \$30 million first mortgage for the 83,500-square-foot Greenwich Financial Center. A \$4.5 million deal is pending to sell the former armory to the town, which would convert it into a new police station.

- Rents are about \$65 per square foot per year at the Greenwich Financial Center and two hedge funds are close to signing leases for a total of about 11,000 square feet.

- A local office of Salomon Smith Barney is scheduled to renovate the 21,000-square-foot third floor into a state-of-the-art financial facility by February. The firm is now on the second floor.

- On the lower retail level, the New York Sports Club is set to open in January in 10,000 square feet. It would replace Greenwich Fitness Center, which moved to a smaller facility on Oak Street in Greenwich.

"So much is happening at once," said Nitkin, president of the HB Nitkin Group. "It is a real sign of the incredible vitality

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of the Greenwich real estate market.

Amid the leasing activity, Nitkin Group is renovating the building's lobby, installing new floors and ceilings and building a new glass and steel canopy on the Fawcett Place side of the building.

"There is no question that Greenwich Financial Center is in a great location and is an attractive building, but there are also very attractive and interesting alternative spaces in downtown Greenwich," said Nathaniel Barnum, executive vice president of New England Land Co.

He mentioned 20 Horseneck Lane and 1 Lafayette Place, which have undergone renovations and have underground parking.

"These buildings are ideally suited for hedge funds and financially related companies coming from New York City or relocating locally," Barnum said.

And they are heeding the town's welcome. Among other Greenwich hedge funds, Amaranth Advisors, plans to expand from 25,000 to 123,000 square feet at Greenwich American Centre in Greenwich.

Andor Capital, the second-biggest hedge fund in the United States, leased 145,000 square feet in the Greenwich American complex and is temporarily in

Stamford while awaiting the completion of renovations.

AQR Capital Management, the nation's 41st-largest hedge fund, plans to relocate its headquarters from Manhattan to 21,737 square feet of office space at Two Greenwich Plaza in the spring of next year.

Building owners are courting hedge funds and financial services firms aggressively, Barnum said.

"Landlords are offering more incentives to attract tenants, such as free rent during renovations," he said.

Other office tenants at Greenwich Financial Center include a local office of Axa International Managers, which is part of the Axa worldwide financial services company; Drake Capital and the investment firm Cardinal Capital.

Lower level retailers include Alta, an upscale restaurant; Relax The Back, which sells chairs and other devices aimed at relieving back pain; the Federalist, a furniture store; and Il Papiro, a stationery and gifts retailer.

HB Nitkin owns the Playhouse Square shopping center in Westport, a small office building at 67 Mason St. in Greenwich and other commercial buildings in Darien, Danbury and Southport.

The Westport office of Holliday Fenoglio Fowler LP, a nationwide commercial real estate capital company, arranged the first mortgage for HB Nitkin. Greenwich Capital was the lender.



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