

PPL Plaza to get new name, new tenants

By JON HARRIS | THE MORNING CALL | JUN 24, 2019 | 8:56 PM



Somera Road, the New York commercial real estate investment firm that recently acquired the PPL Plaza in April, gave a tour of the building on Wednesday, May 29, 2019. (Kristen Harrison/The Morning Call)

It's called PPL Plaza now, but it won't be for much longer.

Somera Road Inc., which acquired the downtown Allentown building in April, on Monday announced it has hired local marketing and communications agency Altitude Marketing to lead the rebranding efforts at PPL Plaza. That

will include helping to come up with a new name, logo and website, Somera said.

In addition, Somera hired a local team from commercial real estate services firm JLL to lead the building's upcoming leasing efforts.

“We are embarking on an exciting, full-scale transformation for this building, and it is critical to our strategy that we partner with experts who have local insight and expertise from a rebranding and marketing standpoint,” Somera Road Managing Principal Ian Ross said in a news release. “With investments all over the United States, Somera Road is always seeking out local partners to advise on a deeper level. We’re confident that our partners in Allentown will offer invaluable support as we reenergize PPL Plaza.”

[PPL Plaza is 'hands down the best office space in the market,' new building owner says »](#)

That's something PPL Plaza needs, especially as a LEED-Gold certified structure that was mired in foreclosure proceedings for two years before [Somera scooped it up at a sheriff's sale April 26](#). The eight-story, 245,000-square-foot building at 835 W. Hamilton St. has been mostly vacant since spring 2018, when primary tenant Talen Energy moved a couple of blocks away to a new office tower. The building's current tenant list: PPL Gold Credit Union, a restaurant and a BB&T bank branch on the first floor, along with some PPL Electric Utilities employees on the third floor.

It'll be the job of JLL Executive Vice President Phil Schenkel and Vice President Matthew Dorman to get the building fully leased.

Schenkel said JLL will work with Somera to come up with a leasing strategy for PPL Plaza, a building that he says lends itself to various office users with its open layout. Schenkel also said the building will, “without question,” be able to offer competitive rent prices, which is something the prior ownership struggled with beneath a significant debt load and while trying to compete with lower rent offerings down the street.

[In appeal, PPL Plaza's new owner says NIZ 'unjustly burdened' its building »](#)

As it repositions PPL Plaza, Somera also is doing some refreshing, bringing in original building architect Robert A.M. Stern Architects to consult on some minor upgrades for the 16-year-old structure. That includes a lobby redesign, fresh foliage in winter gardens on the third and fifth floors and some demolition work on the top two floors to create open space.

[New PPL Plaza owner shows off building, expects tenants this year »](#)

In the release Monday, Somera also noted the building's courtyard, which will be renovated and "activated" with community events.

Overall, Schenkel said the building's features give JLL plenty to work with as leasing efforts begin.

"It's got some tremendous attributes to it that we're really looking forward to using in our marketing pitch," he said.

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