

# THE MORNING CALL

## PPL Plaza in downtown Allentown has a new name

By JON HARRIS

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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. The company is now hoping to make minor changes and find new tenants. (Kristen Harrison/The Morning Call)

Say goodbye to PPL Plaza.

Say hello to Grand Plaza.

That's the new name of the eight-story building at 835 W. Hamilton St. in Allentown, owner Somera Road Inc. announced Thursday. The news comes after Somera Road, the New York City commercial real estate investment firm that acquired the building this year, in June had announced the hiring of local marketing and communications agency Altitude Marketing to lead the rebranding efforts at PPL Plaza.

The new name marks the next step in the refresh of the plaza, which was previously mired in foreclosure proceedings and has been mostly vacant since spring 2018, when Talen Energy moved a couple blocks away.

[PPL Plaza to get new name, new tenants »](#)

The [name Grand Plaza](#) is a nod to the site's history, Somera said, since the property was originally home to the Grand Central Hotel, which dated to the 1890s. Somera said in a news release that it wanted a building name that played off downtown's historical nature while also drawing attention to the building's plaza, which has become a spot where community events are held.

Somera on Thursday also announced the hiring of two Nashville, Tennessee, firms: architectural firm ESa will handle interior renovations, while Hawkins Partners Inc., a landscape architecture and urban design firm, will lead a refresh of the outdoor plaza.

"Grand Plaza is a classic name that signifies the ideal evolution for this property, which is already renowned for its impressive, inviting plaza," Somera Managing Principal Ian Ross said in the release.

Now, Grand Plaza needs tenants. Leading those leasing efforts is a local team from commercial real estate services firm JLL.

Basel Bataineh, a vice president with Somera Road, said Thursday that JLL has "really good momentum in drumming up tours from prospective tenants" from the suburbs and the greater region.

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

“I think we believe in the quality of our building, its location, the attributes it has and what’s happened in downtown Allentown in the past six, seven years,” he said. “I think our asset speaks for itself.”

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Jon Harris joined The Morning Call in May 2015. He previously spent two years at the Press & Sun-Bulletin in Binghamton, N.Y., covering upstate New York’s casino expansion, Lockheed Martin and BAE Systems. Harris, a western New York native, graduated from Syracuse University in May 2013 and lives in Allentown.