

First American moves to new digs in Victor

Following a decade of solid growth, First American Equipment Finance has moved its Rochester headquarters from its longtime Fairport location at Woodcliff Office Park to a new facility at High Point Business Park in Victor.

Prior to the move, First American occupied the majority of the space at 255 Woodcliff Drive, a total of nearly 75,000 square feet. The company will occupy more than 85,000 square feet at High Point, where the building offers a total of 150,000 square feet. First American will take up half of the second floor and all of the third and fourth floors of the building.

“We came to realize a few years ago that we were outgrowing our current space and as our business grew and became more and more successful, we began looking for opportunities to move into space that would allow for continued future growth. In late 2019, we made the decision to relocate our headquarters from Woodcliff to the High Point Office Park in Victor,” said First American CEO Alan Sikora. “Given the size of the new headquarters, it will give us ample opportunity to grow our business over the next 10 years.”

When First American moved into its location at Woodcliff, the company had just a handful of employees, Sikora said, and occupied a small suite. Today, the company employs more than 275 staffers, nearly all of whom are located in the Rochester area.

First American provides equipment leasing and equipment financing services to large organizations including hospitals, universities, large manufacturing firms, large law firms and large corporate businesses across the U.S. The company was founded in Ithaca, Tompkins County, in 1994, but moved to Rochester in 1999.

While most of the company’s employees continue to work from home, Sikora said that enabled First American to work steadfastly on creating a state-of-the-art space for staffers once they return to in-person work. All of the decisions the company has made in the last 18 months have been with a post-COVID hybrid work model in mind.

“The process we went through to design the new space and make decisions on our new headquarters were driven by an employee-led team,” Sikora explained. “We have what we call our HQ2 team and they were meeting weekly with our architect, with the developer, our new landlord and



First American moved from Woodcliff Office Park to High Point Business Park, adding 10,000 square feet of space. (Photo provided)

the construction company to make the decisions for the new headquarters as it relates to furniture choices, design, aesthetic, wall colors, and really think about how they would like to collaborate and get work done in a hybrid environment.”

All of the conference rooms are high-tech, advanced Zoom rooms, with high-dimension cameras and exceptional audio to allow for hybrid collaboration, he added. The company has an upgraded efficient air handling system for staffers’ health and safety. The space also features an abundance of natural light via tall windows.

“We have a lot of outdoor collaboration spaces, so we have a heated patio for people to do meetings and collaborate,” Sikora said. “There’s also outdoor recreation as part of the greater campus that has an on-site trail system for hiking, cross-country skiing and snow shoeing.”

And throughout the indoor space, the HQ2 team was thoughtful with how work will be done not two years ago or two years from now, but how it will be done over the next decade, to make High Point a destination that colleagues want to come to, whether it is three days a week or every day.

“(The space has) things like private phone booths is what they’re calling these small, private work areas; as well as a library to get quiet, focused work done. We have 22 virtual meeting studios. All Zoom rooms are state-of-the-art from a camera and audio standpoint because we recognize that even though virtual meetings have been a part of First Americans’ history for many years, it’s likely going to be a material part of our future as well,” Sikora said. “And there’s just great flexible collaboration spaces where furniture is moveable to en-

sure that people are spaced apart appropriately to ensure safety, but also bring people together and really have it be a destination.”

The new headquarters also features a live plant wall, a family artwork wall, large kitchens and a cafeteria with shuffleboard and a fireplace.

Sikora declined to give financial details of the move, but said he and his team worked closely with Rainaldi Bros., the “visionaries,” he said, behind the entire mixed-use campus. First American enlisted Genesee Construction, Hanlon Architects P.C. and worked with the Ontario County Industrial Development Agency on the project.

Although construction began in late 2019, it was not derailed by the pandemic. The plan all along was to move the staff into the new headquarters on Nov. 1 this year.

A September report from the Equipment Leasing & Finance Foundation shows that confidence in the \$900 billion industry had declined in September, with just 18 percent of executives expecting an improvement in business conditions during the next four months. And the percentage of executives who expect to hire more staffers during the next quarter was down from August numbers.

But First American seems to be bucking that trend. Its new space has the capacity for 360 colleagues, with room for additional expansion as the firm continues its growth path.

“We continue to grow and our clients are businesses that invest in equipment and software to grow their business. The economy so far this year has been very strong. In this type of economic environment companies tend to invest in capital expenditures and choose to lease and finance many of those acquisitions,” Sikora said. “Over our 25-plus years in business we’ve found the Rochester community to be a fantastic place to grow a business, where we’re able to attract talented, smart people from local colleges and universities and provide them with a career opportunity. And they’ve worked really hard and are tremendously loyal to us, so we’re very pleased to be able to continue to keep all of those jobs in the Rochester area and continue to grow our business here.”

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