

## Signature Bank signs on office in White Plains

By DAVID GURLIACCI

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Signature Bank expects to open its newest branch on the sixth floor of 360 Hamilton Ave. in White Plains by the end of November.

The 6,000-square-foot location, close to law offices and municipal bond offices of some of the bank's current clients, was one big factor as to where to locate the new branch, said Joseph J. DePaolo, president and chief executive officer of the bank.

"We've had some great experiences with Reckson," DePaolo said. "We're in one of their buildings in Melville, Long Island." The Reckson-owned site in White Plains was chosen after the bank looked closely at three or four different locations.

The bank offers business banking services and private banking to clients who are usually the heads of those businesses, DePaolo said. John C. Ricchezza, with 28 years' experience in banking, will head the new office.

Named group director and senior vice president at Signature this spring, Ricchezza previously spent 21 years working in the White Plains office of Fleet Bank and Bank of America, which took over Fleet. He was a senior vice president in that office when he left. Ricchezza is joined by Isabel Shevlin, a senior client associate with 16 years' experience in banking. She also previously worked at Bank of America.

Because Signature focuses on building personal relationships with its clients, the bank doesn't open new branches, or "offices" as it calls them, unless senior bankers in the company have gathered

enough new clients in an area to make the new office convenient, DePaolo said.

Ricchezza, for instance, has been working out of Signature's New Rochelle branch. Many Signature branches contain several "banking teams" that may



DePaolo

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later form new offices elsewhere.

DePaolo said the new office will probably have three teams in it, eventually, each with three to five people for a total 15 to 20 employees. He is always looking for more experienced bankers to hire, he said, adding that Signature usually gets plenty of inquiries when bank mergers take place, such as the one between Bank One and Chase or Bank of America and Fleet.

Signature's assets have been growing at a fast clip in recent years, from \$1.9 billion at the end of 2003 to 3.4 billion a year later. As of June 30 of this year, they had grown to \$3.8 billion. "We suspect that we've been growing a couple of hundred million (dollars) every quarter," he said.

DePaolo said he expects to be making more loans for larger commercial real estate transactions in Westchester County with the hiring this past summer of Robert Rothschild, a 30-year banking veteran who oversees that area of the bank's operations.

Rothschild, senior vice president for commercial real estate, previously worked for The Bank of New York and for 13 years was responsible for that bank's real estate lending in Nassau and Suffolk counties. He works out of Signature Bank's corporate headquarters in Manhattan.

Alfred B. DelBello, a lawyer in White Plains and former Westchester County executive, and husband of Dee DelBello, publisher of the Westchester County Business Journal, is a director of Signature Bank.

There's a lot of business in commercial real estate in Westchester County, said DePaolo, a resident of New Rochelle, "and we hope to have a piece of that."

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