

# Genesee Regional Bank moving main office

## Headquarters going to Linden Oaks; branch stays on Monroe Ave.

By THOMAS ADAMS

Corporate offices of Genesee Regional Bank will be moved this weekend to 190 Linden Oaks in Pittsford, with the Pittsford bank branch to remain at 3380 Monroe Ave.

The move is to begin at the close of business today, and the Linden Oaks office is expected to open Monday. The relocation is necessary because the bank has outgrown leased space on Monroe Avenue, President and CEO Philip Pecora said.

The bank has increased its work force by some 60 percent in the last 12 months, to 40 employees.

"Part of our story along the way has always been that we're not branch-dependent," Pecora said. "Back in the day, when we were at \$40 million, we had four branches. Today we have two.

"Although Linden Oaks will have limited transaction ability, our focus is still to network through relationships and also provide technology to accommodate the transactional part of banking."

GRB in recent years closed retail branches in East Rochester, although it kept offices there, and in downtown Rochester.

Assets have grown by 350 percent since Pecora came to GRB from M&T Bank Corp. six years ago, from \$40 million to \$180 million, he said.

"When I joined the bank six years ago, I was the only commercial banker," he said. "Today we have two senior officers who are commercial bankers and four relationship managers who report to them."

Thirty-two employees will move to Linden Oaks. They include the senior management, commercial bankers, the mortgage team and marketing and human resources

managers. Accounting and operations staff members, including Chief Financial Officer Gary Schwingel, will relocate from offices in East Rochester.

"Linden Oaks is really an office park, but we're going to allow commercial transactions at the site," Pecora said.

More than \$100 million in assets is at Monroe Avenue. Much of that is commercial banking, which is moving to Linden Oaks.

Three personal bankers and a retail relationship manager will remain at Monroe Avenue, as well as at the retail branch on Mt. Read Boulevard in Greece.

The existing headquarters occupies as much as 7,000 square feet at the 10,000-square-foot Monroe Avenue building, Pecora said. The bank branch accounts for 3,000 square feet.

"We probably need 10,000 square feet," he said of the bank's corporate needs. "A lot of us are sitting on each other's laps. So we'll have additional room to grow at Linden Oaks, and then also we have an option for another 4,000 square feet in the building."

The bank has renewed its lease for the Monroe Avenue branch space, Pecora said.

"For us to stay here would've required us to take this entire building," he said. "Even then, that would have imposed some limitations for future growth."

Bank officials had been scouting potential sites for headquarters for the last 12 months, Pecora said.

Sites on Winton Road and in the city of Rochester were among the possibilities, Pecora said. The bank had a downtown branch in the Reynolds Arcade Building on Main Street for four years before closing it in 2004 because of parking issues.

"There are a lot of positive things going on in the city of Rochester," Pecora said. "We would have loved to have been part of that. The city (location) just posed too many challenges in terms of what we're used to.

"Reaching out to our clients requires our employees to be in and out of the building

a lot, which means we need parking that's free and accessible. In downtown Rochester, although vacancy rates are pretty high, parking is still very much a challenge. Linden Oaks, although it's not in the city, is very easily accessible to all the communities in Rochester."

The bank's client base has grown by an average of 30 percent in recent years, Pecora said.

"You need more people to manage those relationships," he said. "In our budget for next year, we're going to hire at least three new folks. That's probably going to be the progression as we grow.

"And that's excluding anything extraordinary, such as our residential mortgage business that we're trying to push now. If things go the way we'd like, we could be adding five to 10 more people in that business."

The company is bullish on residential mortgages despite the current economic climate, Pecora said.

"People are still going to be buying homes," he said. "The Rochester market has stayed relatively stable compared to the rest of the country. Although housing starts are down and home purchases are down, it's still happening.

"With the downfall of secondary markets, it's been very cumbersome for borrowers to get financing for their homes. As a community bank, we're very well positioned to provide that type of service, not only to our clients but to other folks in the Rochester area who are prospective clients."

With \$103 million in local deposits as of June 30, 2008, GRB ranks 15th on the Rochester Business Journal's 2009 list of local banks. Deposits are now at \$145 million, with all business segments growing at the 30 percent pace, Pecora said.

"Whether it's organically or through some other type of strategic move," he said, "we're going to be a bigger player within the next year."

tadams@rbj.net / 585-546-8303