

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

ODW Logistics moving HQ to Buggyworks

By Evan Weese | Columbus Business First | Friday, June 3, 2016



ODW Logistics' new Arena District headquarters will incorporate natural light and neutral tones.

ODW Logistics Inc. CEO John Ness recalls an alarming conversation last year with an executive who wanted to make two hires.

Ness questioned a capital expenditure request that was about 10-times the usual amount.

“(He said), ‘John, I know you don’t want to hear this, but we are completely out of room. This is to knock down a wall and turn a supply closet into two more work stations,’” Ness recounted. “I said, ‘OK, I’ve had my head in the sand about this haven’t I?’ (We decided) we’re not going to do that—that’s crazy. Let’s really explore the best strategy of how we can create space for our growing company.”

A year later, the Columbus third-party logistics provider has signed a lease to move its headquarters to the historic Buggyworks complex in the Arena District amid an ambitious plan to double revenue by 2020.

ODW will relocate 65 to 70 workers from its operation on the city’s south side, near Obetz, leaving the six-building campus with a little breathing room and 550 employees.

“We’re on an aggressive growth plan. This move is one of the many things we’re doing to realize that mission,” Ness told *Columbus Business First* in an exclusive interview. “It will allow us to better support the growing business and provide some relief for over-stuffed buildings.”



In the project, to be completed this fall, Nationwide Realty Investors will convert two historic buildings into more than 145,000 square feet of Class A office.

Ness expects the company's nearly 20,000-square-foot space at 400 W. Nationwide Blvd. will help it attract and retain workers.

In the project, to be completed this fall, Nationwide Realty Investors Ltd. is sinking \$21 million into rehabilitating two historic buildings. The larger, 114-year-old structure at 400 W. Nationwide Blvd. will include 115,000 square feet of offices on four floors, with exposed-brick interiors, original wooden beam ceilings and views of downtown.

ODW is the first tenant to make public a lease there.

The three-story building next door at 390 W. Nationwide Blvd. will total 30,000 square feet of office space. Cameron Mitchell Restaurants LLC last month committed to fill 17,000 square feet there.

ODW's attraction to the complex aligns with the sales pitch.

"Everybody's competing for talent, especially young talent," Nationwide Realty President Brian Ellis told *Business First* while touring the complex.

Ahead of an early October move-in, ODW has tapped M&A Architects to design its space in a "vintage industrial" look with a nod to the buggy manufacturing history of the site—after all, with 160 trucks and 280 trailers, Ness notes ODW provides the modern equivalent of horse-and-buggy transportation for mostly the manufacturing, health and beauty, food and beverage and consumer packaged goods industries.

The company will enjoy room to grow to 97 workers. Its home office, to house executives, human resources, information technology and other functions, will be considered for financial incentives from Columbus City Council on Monday.

The incentive could save ODW nearly \$126,000 over the life of a five-year deal that involves payments equal to half of new local income tax withholdings.

The company expects to spend \$1.8 million to furnish the space with the help of Dupler Office of Columbus. Turner Construction Co. is renovating the complex.

ODW was represented in the lease transaction by John Boll of Cushman & Wakefield. Nationwide Realty Investors was represented by Real Estate Director Christopher Bradley, in partnership with Wayne Harer and Ken Isenbarger of Continental Realty.

Taking to downtown

ODW was co-founded in 1971 as Ohio Distribution Warehouse Corp. by Ness' father, Bob. Its headquarters was moved three years later to its 85-acre Williams Road campus.

The \$130 million family-owned business counts more than 1,000 employees and 4 million square feet of warehouse space in the Columbus, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Chicago and Milwaukee areas.

But it's still the local setup that influenced decisions about the headquarters.

"We did a heat map of our associates and felt like we really needed to be within 10 miles of our campus. That's what brought us into the downtown area," said Ness, who became CEO in 2003. "I thought, if we could get on the fringe of downtown, it allows for easy in-and-out access."

ODW plans to maintain its 1.5 million-square-foot campus at Williams and Groveport roads, where 40,000 square feet are dedicated to office use. The company plans to renovate those offices as part of its headquarters relocation.

"It's a model we do in other markets," Ness said. "The existing operation will become a regional office." ■