

Brady Sullivan Strikes Again

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MANCHESTER -- Brady Sullivan Properties has acquired the 20-story Hampshire Plaza office tower, its adjacent mall and two parking garages, the real-estate development firm announced yesterday.

The \$25.5 million deal, the largest in Brady Sullivan's history, means the firm owns two of Manchester's three tallest buildings, along with a good chunk of downtown Manchester's commercial office space.

"We think in twelve to eighteen months, we'll be able to fill the building," said Arthur Sullivan, a Brady Sullivan principal.

Sullivan said he has "some major leads" to fill empty space in the tower. The 327,000-square-foot property -- which includes the mall -- is about 75 percent full, Sullivan said. Some floors are vacant, he said.

The firm plans to look closely at the inside mall area next to the office tower, a good portion of which has been vacant for years.

"We're going to look at repositioning (the inside mall area) to some different use, maybe some more office space," Sullivan said.

The deal, with Kentucky-based Hampshire Plaza LLC and Hampshire Plaza Garage LLC, which are affiliates of First Southern Funding LLC, all of Stanhope, Ky., was recorded on Friday with the Hillsborough County Register of Deeds.

Attempts to reach the plaza's sellers for comment were unsuccessful. But the deal won plaudits from close watchers of the local real-estate market, who noted, among other things, the property's excellent views.

"I thought the price was a good deal for both parties. It was a big property in kind of a small market," said Thomas Farrelly, an executive director with real-estate firm Cushman & Wakefield. The city's high-end commercial properties have seen values improve markedly in the past decade.

In 2001, Hampshire Plaza LLC bought the building, the mall and an underground parking area for \$9 million. In 2003, the Hampshire Plaza group bought the Canal Street garage, which is just west of Hampshire Plaza, for \$3.3 million. In total, both parking facilities have about 900 parking spaces.

In 1996, First Southern and two other principals paid \$3.2 million for 1750 Elm St., then called the New Hampshire Tower building because of its distinctive "New Hampshire" block-lettered illuminated signage easily visible from Interstate 293 to the west.

In 2004 Brady Sullivan paid \$15 million for the building, and took the New Hampshire sign down. The company put up its own moniker on 1750 Elm, which is the third-tallest building on Elm Street. City Hall Plaza is the tallest, followed by Hampshire Plaza, the former headquarters for Public Service of New Hampshire, which now bases its business in the Millyard.

The latest deal is a sign of Brady Sullivan's continued confidence in the Manchester-area commercial real-estate market.

Sullivan said that market continues to tighten, and he was confident Brady Sullivan would be able to fill space at the building, as it has done at its other Elm Street properties, which also include the Brady Sullivan Building, at 1228 Elm St., just north of the intersection with Bridge Street.

Brady Sullivan's Manchester holdings also include the landmark R.G. Sullivan Building at 175 Canal St. and the Jefferson Mill building at 670 Commercial St.

Sullivan would not comment directly on reports that his firm was looking at purchasing another mill building in Manchester's Millyard.

He did say, however, that Brady Sullivan is still very much open to making additional property buys.

"We are looking at properties, literally, every day," Sullivan said, adding, "Any properties we can still acquire in the greater Manchester area, we're very, very interested in."

In keeping with the company's branding strategy, Hampshire Plaza will soon be re-named the Brady Sullivan Plaza, the company said.