



This Old House Becomes A New Law Office

Wiggin and Dana opens branch in historic Greenwich building

By MARIE P. GRADY

With its 12.5-foot-high ceilings and two fireplaces, the 166-year-old home housing Wiggin and Dana's new location in Greenwich is not your typical law office. But the historic structure fits right in, both with the culture of the affluent Fairfield County community and the personal service partners say they plan to provide to some of the wealthiest clients in America.

Dan Daniels, a 20-year Greenwich resident, and David Leibell, who grew up in the town, said the offices will allow the firm to better serve a growing base of wealthy clients who expect to be counseled close to home. The private client services encompass estate, business formation and succession planning as well as tax counseling and litigation.

"It's a very personalized business," said Leibell. "Being in a historic house is a throwback to a time when you went to your attorneys for difficult decisions; they were trusted advisers and they helped you solve problems."

The house, once part of the historic Congregational church grounds in the center of town, was moved to its present location by horse and wagon at the turn of the 20th century, Leibell said.

Current clients range from those worth in the millions of dollars to over \$1 billion, with holdings often including a family business. That's among the reasons Leibell says the lawyers' roles can be akin to serving as a "general counsel to wealthy families."

Daniels agrees. "If you're working with a family of significant wealth, they may have their own family office to assist with investment of money and management of finances," he said. "Many of our clients are

owners of significant family businesses; with respect to anything related to ownership of that business, we try to be the first call the client makes for legal services."

Greenwich, which is home to subsidized housing as well as mansions, trails nearby Darien in median family income for communities with population over 20,000, according to a 2008 U.S. census report. But it is home to some of the wealthiest people in the nation, including hedge fund founders.

Other Firms Present

Wiggin and Dana, a 135-lawyer firm, has offices just eight miles away in Stamford. But the mindset among many clients is that they should not have to go to Stamford for legal services. Indeed, some other law firms have long had a presence in Greenwich, including Day Pitney.

Law firm consultant Peter Giuliani said the firm's move to open a Greenwich office makes competitive sense. "Greenwich is where there's a significant amount of money; if you really want to be in that business, you've got to be in Greenwich," said



Wiggin and Dana partners David T. Leibell and Daniel L. Daniels say they will serve as 'general counsel to wealthy families' in their new office, a history house build in 1845.

Giuliani, a partner at Smock Sterling Strategic Management Consultants in Weston.

Notwithstanding the homey offices, Daniels and Leibell are quick to point out that clients also get the full range of services offered by the firm's six offices, including four in Connecticut and one each in New York and Philadelphia. Both Daniels and

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Leibell also have written and spoken extensively on estate and tax planning as well as legal matters involving closely held businesses.

“That’s a wonderful advantage of our platform here,” Daniels said. “It allows us to seamlessly serve the needs of our clients.”

The bottom line, say both partners, is

that a business must give a customer what he or she wants if it expects to grow. Daniels said one client he had been courting for three years called him after learning the office was opening in Greenwich and wanted to meet now that he was “just down the road.”

Leibell said that a large percentage of the

firm’s clients have always come from Greenwich, which is home to many whose wealth can make tax and estate planning complex. The community also is home to an increasing number of entrepreneurs and those involved in the financial services industries. “I think this office is capturing a niche in the market,” he said. ■