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Squeegee maker heads to Alameda

By Alec Rosenberg, BUSINESS WRITER

ALAMEDA — After nearly 70 years in Oakland, squeegee maker Ettore Products Co. is moving its window-cleaning empire to new bayside digs in Alameda.

Ettore, the leading maker of squeegees for professionals and consumers, said Friday that it will move to The Waterfront at Harbor Bay in Alameda, a few miles from its current headquarters on Pardee Drive in Oakland.

"We had to consolidate our operations, so we started looking for a new site," said Lew Davis, Ettore chief financial officer. "We were concerned about whether we'd be able to stay in the Bay Area."

The company is named for Italian immigrant Ettore Steccone, a window washer who invented the modern squeegee in 1936 in Oakland. Steccone died in 1984, but the business remains family owned, with Steccone's daughter, Diane Smahlik, as its chairwoman and her husband, Michael Smahlik, as its chief executive.

Ettore, with annual sales approaching \$50 million, is currently spread out in three buildings near Oakland International Airport. Its new 90,000-square-foot building in Alameda should be ready for occupancy in February. Most, if not all, of Ettore's 80 employees are expected to stay

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with the company after the move, Michael Smahlik said. "There will be basically no impact on anyone's commute," he said. "The Waterfront has great access. We'll have plenty of parking. And we'll be right next to the Bay rather than in a typical business park."

In two years, SRM Associates and Pacific Coast Capital Partners have boosted occupancy at The Waterfront's existing

380,000 square feet of space to 70 percent from 20 percent. Also, they have added or

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are adding another 390,000 square feet, including Ettore's space, and can build on another 40 acres.

"We're seeing a wide range of companies" from The Cheese Works to Venture Corp.'s commercial condominiums, SRM project manager Joe Ernst said. With monthly net rents starting at \$1.10 per square foot, "it's definitely cheaper than Emeryville, Oakland or Berkeley."

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