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Energy firm to expand in Memorial City as district sees one of its busiest quarters for office leasing



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Rystad Energy is expanding its office in Memorial City after more than doubling its headcount in Houston. It will occupy about a floor within 920 Memorial City Way (pictured)

MetroNational

Energy consultancy Rystad Energy is expanding in Memorial City, as part of a string of more than 90,000 square feet of deals signed in the popular mixed-use district that is attracting office tenants despite a challenging leasing environment.

In addition to Rystad, landlord MetroNational said Wednesday that it signed office deals with Asset Living, a Houston property management firm, BW Energy USA Management, a Houston oil and gas company, Longbridge Financial, a New Jersey financial services firm, Marubeni America Corp., a New York trading firm, and two additional energy tenants within its 300-acre district in west Houston.

Rystad Energy is outgrowing its 7,240 square-foot space at 9811 Katy Freeway elsewhere in Memorial City. The Norway-based consultancy more than doubled its Houston headcount from 20 employees two years ago to 51 employees as of June, said Nick Livingstone, head of Americas at Rystad, in a statement. Rystad wants to expand to 125 people in Houston by 2024.

“After slowing down our hiring in 2020 in light of COVID, we kicked off an aggressive recruitment program in 2021,” Livingstone said in an email. “Demand for our consulting services has risen as traditional upstream-focused companies look to embrace the energy transition.”

Rystad expects to move into its 23,692 square-foot office at 920 Memorial City Way this fall, Livingstone said. The firm picked the tower as its new home-base because of the building’s views, location, amenities and ability to design the space to reflect its brand.

“With clients downtown, in the Energy Corridor, along the Beltway and an employee base spread across the greater Houston area, it was critical we stayed in a location that made everyone’s commute efficient, but it also had the amenities like hotels for overseas visitors, restaurants and a mall the team could walk to during their lunch,” Livingstone added.

On HoustonChronicle.com: [Memorial City Mall area to be transformed with 27-acre mixed-use district](#)

The consultancy is moving forward with the new offices even as employees are working in a hybrid schedule, he said. The firm offers consulting services to the exploration and production, pipeline, refining and chemicals, and renewable energy sectors.

Elsewhere in Memorial City, MetroNational scored several leases at 945 Bunker Hill Road including: a 23,652 square-foot lease from BW Energy USA Management, (moving in July); a 24,040 square-foot lease from Asset Living (moving this fall); a 16,415 square-foot lease from Longbridge Financial (moving in June) and a 4,655 square-foot lease from Marubeni America Corp (a subsidiary of a Japanese conglomerate moving in at the end of 2022), according to MetroNational.

MetroNational said it also signed deals with undisclosed energy companies for about 23,000 square feet and 7,000 square feet at 945 Bunker Hill.

MetroNational, a Houston-based real estate firm, has more than 400 office tenants across Memorial City, which overall is more than 94 percent occupied across all the office space in the 300-acre mixed-use district. Activity at Memorial City and the neighboring CityCentre has kept office vacancy within the Katy Freeway East office market at roughly 9 percent, considerably low compared to the 19 percent office vacancy rate in the metropolitan area, according to commercial real estate data firm CoStar.

“Tenants right now are having a hard time retaining and recruiting employees; they’re looking at office spaces that can provide a fix for employees to enjoy work-life balance. We have a mixed use development here in Memorial City (that offers that),” said Brad MacDougall, vice president of office leasing at MetroNational, in an interview.


Memorial City offices are also in the midst of renovations, including a \$25 million remodel of 800 and 820 Gessner, plus ongoing renovations at 945 Bunker Hill Road, and upgrades planned at 920 Memorial City, MacDougall said. MetroNational also has also added 30,00 square-feet of green space near its office towers in a project known as The Lawn, located near Interstate 10 and Bunker Hill Road. Next month, MetroNational also expects to reach a key construction milestone at a future 9-story office tower planned at 9753 Katy Freeway, he added.

Despite the uncertainty in the office market overall in Houston, MacDougall said, “I’ve been with MetroNational for over 10 years and this has probably been one of the busiest quarters I’ve ever seen.”

Next month, MetroNational also expects to top out 9753 Katy Freeway, meaning the [future 9-story office building](#) is expected to reach its tallest point, a key construction milestone.



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