

ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

OC Plays Key Role in L.A. Startup Bank

FINANCE: Half of bank's directors, backers from here

By PAT MAIO

A cadre of former Mellon 1st Business Bank senior executives with ties to Orange County have jumped ship to form their own business bank.

1st Enterprise Bank is expected to open its headquarters in downtown Los Angeles this week after raising more than \$27.5 million in an offering of 2.5 million shares.

The bank is expected to go after business in OC.

Roughly half of its board members and founding investors come from here.

"We are probably the first bank to open to leverage the Los Angeles and Orange County business markets simultaneously," said John C. Black, chief executive of 1st Enterprise. "We will have deep Orange County roots."

Black is a banking veteran who was co-president of Mellon 1st Business, a Los Angeles-based unit of Pittsburgh's Mellon Financial Corp.



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1st Enterprise plans a loan office in OC that officials hope will grow into a branch catering to small and midsize businesses with \$2 million to \$100 million in yearly sales.

Other Mellon managers are said to be ready to join 1st Enterprise.

David Plourde, a Mission Viejo resident, plans to join 1st Enterprise this week as a regional vice president to help build OC business.

The OC office also has recruited Matthew West, a former executive with Irvine-based CommerceWest Bank.

"I don't see it as poaching," Black said. "People from Mellon 1st Business have contacted us."

Mellon has been considered the

He left a year ago to start forming 1st Enterprise.

Earlier, Black worked in Long Beach for First Interstate Bancorp, which was bought by Wells Fargo & Co. a decade ago.

"Harvard" of business banking. Executives go there to learn the ropes and then move on to other jobs.

About a year ago, K. Brian Horton, co-president of Mellon's southern division including OC, left to begin work on 1st Enterprise.

Horton, who lives in Orange, is president of the new bank.

Black had been responsible for Mellon's West Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley and downtown markets.

Horton oversaw OC, the Inland Empire and the South Bay.

Another former Mellon executive to join 1st Enterprise is Jeffrey R. McGraa, who will serve as chief credit officer. He held the same post at Mellon.

Another hire for 1st Enterprise has been that of Reginald Prout, former chief financial officer at Commerce National Bank of Fullerton.

Also joining 1st Enterprise as chairman is Corona del Mar's David C. Holman, who once ran First Interstate Bank's OC operation.

Charles R. Beauregard, a retired Huntington Beach banking executive, is a director.

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