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Fast track



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ENTREPRENEUR

Finding *The Bounce* in Rubber

Ontario-based entrepreneur **J.D. Wang** is showing the world that there are environmentally friendly alternatives to the way the world deals with old tires.

BY ERIN TOBIN

JD. Wang is proving that changing the world can be profitable. He says 2010 has been up for his Ontario-based business, reRubber, which offers an environmentally-friendly alternative to the traditional ways of dealing with old tires. With degrees in business and finance, Wang, 32, knew he wanted to do something that would benefit the environment and settled on revolutionizing tire recycling after noticing a lack of options in the industry throughout California. He says part of his company's success is a strong team that includes his father as the chief operating officer and mother as a chairwoman. Wang attributes his entrepreneurial spirit to his mother, whom he remembers always running one business or another as he was growing up. "It is nice to have their support and I'm still learning a lot from them," he says. According to Wang, it wasn't easy working with a product that has a tainted reputation. Tires are classified as hazardous waste by the government, and their disposal is the responsibility of registered tire haulers. Wang points out that many current methods of recycling tires "use old technology and are dirty." Because people associated the process with filthy waste yards or piles of burning tires giving off heavy smoke and fumes, he had trouble finding reRubber a home. "We looked up and down California," Wang says, mentioning San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles. He settled on



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COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Activity Heating Up

Leasing is increasing according to **Ron Washle** of Grubb & Ellis **BY ERIN TOBIN**

These days, when it comes to commercial real estate, the buzz is all about the IE's industrial space. A pent-up demand that led to lower lease rates and sale prices has spawned a flurry of activity among both buyers and tenants as consumer confidence slowly increases, at least according to Ron Washle. Washle is senior vice president, SIOR, of the Grubb & Ellis Company, a nationwide commercial real estate firm with an office in Ontario. Simply put, he says businesses are now getting more for their dollar when it comes to industrial real estate, especially if they rent space in the I.E. "Food-related businesses are probably the most active," he says. "The shoe sector is also seeing a lot of activity, along with many tire companies."

"The old standby is still true, location is key," Washle says, pointing out that the areas doing the best are the ones in the western part of the region surrounding Ontario International Airport and will probably continue to see growth into next year. He also mentions that Redlands and San Bernardino are attracting companies due to the significantly low lease rates in those cities.

According to Washle, the age of the building is also important. "Newer buildings are being the first to lease. Older ones are sitting longer or taking discounts or decreases in rates. They just don't have the same qualities," Washle says. Competitive prices and large amounts of space with ample truck loading areas are attractive to businesses wanting to streamline their transportation and operating costs.

While the industrial real estate sector shows the promise for the quickest growth, decreased demand has also driven down the costs of office space rental, including that of Class A space. Meanwhile, retail space in the region is going strong. Though a handful of large stores did close, others have stepped up and opened in much of what was vacated.

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Ontario because of its proximity to LA and the lack of a similar company nearby. After bringing in equipment used by tire processing plants in countries like Japan and Denmark, Wang developed a rapport with the area's tire haulers, encouraging them to bring their scrap tires to reRubber instead of the local landfills. Determined to change the public's mind about what a tire recycling facility should look like, Wang takes pride in the cleanliness of his plant. "We are high-tech," he says. "It isn't chic, but it's a lot better than people think." He also focuses on what he calls the triple bottom line: "people, planet and profit." The process he uses shreds and reduces almost 100 percent of each tire to various grades of crumb rubber as well as steel and fibers. These products are then re-used by manufacturers of everything from playground mats to the bases of orange traffic safety cones.

Looking toward the future, Wang plans to double his workforce this year. He says reRubber currently processes a million tires a year and his goal is to triple that. But it is not just the future of his company he's focused on. He also hopes to raise environmental awareness throughout the surrounding community. "Waste is a big problem in California," he says. "We all need to be more conscious about our carbon footprint and how our daily lives affect the environment."



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