

REALTY INCOME CORP
Form 424B5
November 20, 2003

QuickLinks -- Click here to rapidly navigate through this document
Prospectus Supplement
November 19, 2003
(To Prospectus dated January 2, 2003)

This filing is made pursuant to Rule 424(b)(5)
under the Securities Act of 1933 in connection
with Registration No. 333-102073.

\$150,000,000

5.50% Senior Notes due 2015

The notes will mature on November 15, 2015. We will pay interest on the notes on May 15 and November 15 of each year. The first interest payment on the notes will be made on May 15, 2004. We may redeem the notes at any time in whole, or from time to time in part, at the make-whole redemption prices described in this prospectus supplement under the caption "Description of Notes Optional Redemption." The notes will be our senior unsecured obligations and will rank equally with all of our other existing and future senior unsecured indebtedness.

Investing in the notes involves risks. See "Risk Factors" on page S-5 of this prospectus supplement.

	<u>Per Note</u>	<u>Total</u>
Public offering price (1)	99.508% \$	149,262,000
Underwriting discount	0.675% \$	1,012,500
Proceeds, before expenses, to Realty Income Corporation (1)	98.833% \$	148,249,500

(1)

Plus accrued interest, if any, from November 24, 2003, if settlement occurs after that date.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

Delivery of the notes will be made only in book-entry form through the facilities of The Depository Trust Company on or about November 24, 2003.

Joint Book-Running Managers

Banc of America Securities LLC

Citigroup

Credit Suisse First Boston
A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc.

Merrill Lynch & Co.

Wachovia Securities

BNY Capital Markets, Inc.

Banc One Capital Markets, Inc.

Wells Fargo Institutional Sales and Trading

TABLE OF CONTENTS
Prospectus Supplement

	Page
Prospectus Supplement Summary	S-1
Risk Factors	S-5
Selected Financial Information	S-13
Ratios of Earnings to Fixed Charges	S-14
Use of Proceeds	S-14
Capitalization	S-15
Description of Notes	S-16
Supplemental United States Federal Income Tax Considerations	S-25
Underwriting	S-32
Legal Matters	S-33
Experts	S-33
Incorporation by Reference	S-33

Prospectus

	Page
About this Prospectus	2
The Company	3
Use of Proceeds	4
Ratios of Earnings to Fixed Charges	5
Forward-Looking Statements	6
Description of Debt Securities	7
Description of Common Stock	19
General Description of Preferred Stock	22
Restrictions on Ownership and Transfers of Stock	29
United States Federal Income Tax Considerations Related to Our REIT Election	32
Plan of Distribution	43
Stockholder Rights Plan	43
Experts	44
Legal Matters	44
Where You Can Find More Information	45
Incorporation of Information We File with the SEC	45

You should rely only on the information contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus. We have not, and the underwriters have not, authorized any other person to provide you with different information. If anyone provides you with different or inconsistent information, you should not rely on it. We are not, and the underwriters are not, making an offer to sell these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted. You should assume that the information appearing in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference is accurate only as of their respective dates. Our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects may have changed since those dates.

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT SUMMARY

This summary may not contain all the information that may be important to you. You should read the entire prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated and deemed to be incorporated by reference herein and therein, including the financial statements and related notes, before making an investment decision. Unless this prospectus supplement otherwise indicates or the

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

context otherwise requires, the terms "Realty Income," "our" and "we" as used in this prospectus supplement refer to Realty Income Corporation and its subsidiaries on a consolidated basis. Unless otherwise expressly stated or the context otherwise requires, information relating to our properties excludes properties owned by our wholly-owned subsidiary Crest Net Lease, Inc. and its wholly-owned subsidiary, CrestNet 1, LLC, which we collectively refer to herein as Crest Net.

Realty Income

Realty Income is organized to operate as an equity real estate investment trust, commonly referred to as a REIT. Our primary business objective is to generate dependable monthly dividends from a consistent and predictable level of funds from operations, or FFO, per share. Additionally, we seek to increase distributions to stockholders and FFO per share through both active portfolio management and the acquisition of additional properties.

We are a fully integrated, self-administered real estate company with in-house acquisition, leasing, legal, retail and real estate research, portfolio management and capital markets expertise. As of September 30, 2003, we owned a diversified portfolio of 1,254 retail properties located in 48 states, with over 10.5 million square feet leased to 84 different retail chains doing business in 28 separate retail industries.

Recent Developments

Credit Ratings Upgrade

In November 2003, our credit ratings were upgraded by Standard & Poor's Ratings Services. Our senior unsecured debt rating was raised from BBB- to BBB and our preferred stock rating was raised from BB+ to BBB-, in each case with a stable outlook.

In February 2003, our credit ratings were upgraded by Moody's Investors Service. Our senior unsecured debt rating was raised from Baa3 to Baa2 and our preferred stock rating was raised from Ba1 to Baa3, in each case with a stable outlook.

The credit ratings on our securities, including the notes, are subject to ongoing evaluation by credit rating agencies, and we cannot assure you that any rating will not be changed by a rating agency or withdrawn in the future if, in its judgment, circumstances warrant. In addition, credit ratings are not recommendations to purchase, hold or sell the notes offered hereby or any of our other securities. See "Description of Notes Ratings" for more information.

Issuance of 10-Year 5³/₈% Senior Unsecured Notes

In March 2003, we issued \$100 million of 5³/₈% senior unsecured notes due 2013. The net proceeds were used to repay the borrowings outstanding under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility.

Issuance of Common Stock

In October 2003, we issued 2,875,000 shares of common stock at a price to the public of \$40.59 per share. The net proceeds were approximately \$110.8 million and were used to repay a portion of the borrowings outstanding under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility, including amounts borrowed

S-1

in connection with the acquisition of a portfolio of 114 convenience stores from The Pantry, Inc., as described below under "Recent and Proposed Acquisition Activity."

Recent and Proposed Acquisition Activity

During the first nine months of 2003, we invested an aggregate of \$124.3 million to acquire 91 new properties and to develop certain existing properties. Of these acquired properties, 78 properties are currently held by us as long-term investments in our core portfolio, and 13 properties are held by Crest Net to be subsequently sold.

In October 2003, we acquired 114 convenience store properties from The Pantry, Inc., an existing tenant, for an aggregate of \$94.5 million. Of these acquired properties, 90 properties are currently held by us as long-term investments in our core portfolio, and 24 properties are held by Crest Net to be subsequently sold.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

We are also negotiating the acquisition of an additional portfolio of properties, in an industry in which we have previously invested, for approximately \$135 million. We expect to close this acquisition during the fourth quarter of 2003. In addition, we are actively evaluating other acquisition opportunities and one or more of these other acquisitions may close during the fourth quarter of 2003. All of the transactions described in this paragraph are in various stages of evaluation, negotiation and documentation, and are subject to conditions over which we have no control. Accordingly, we cannot assure you that we will be able to complete any of these transactions or that, if we do complete any of these transactions, the terms will not differ, perhaps substantially, from those reflected above.

Sale of Investment Properties

During the first nine months of 2003, we sold 21 investment properties and exchanged three excess land parcels (from three properties) for \$13.7 million and recognized a gain of \$3.8 million. The 21 properties consisted of ten child care facilities, seven restaurants, two home improvement centers, one automotive service location and one other property. The proceeds from the sale of these properties were used to repay outstanding indebtedness on our credit facility and to invest in new properties.

Funds from Operations

For the quarter ended September 30, 2003, our FFO increased 3.3% to \$25.1 million as compared to \$24.3 million for the same quarter in 2002. See our discussion of FFO in the section entitled "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2003 incorporated by reference in this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, which includes a reconciliation of net income available to common stockholders to FFO available to common stockholders.

S-2

The Offering

For a more complete description of the terms of the notes specified in the following summary, see "Description of Notes" in this prospectus supplement and "Description of Debt Securities" in the accompanying prospectus.

Issuer	Realty Income Corporation
Securities Offered	\$150,000,000 aggregate principal amount of 5.50% Senior Notes due 2015.
Maturity	November 15, 2015
Interest Payment Dates	Semi-annually in arrears on May 15 and November 15, commencing May 15, 2004.
Ranking	The notes will be our senior unsecured obligations and will rank equally with all of our other existing and future senior unsecured indebtedness. The notes are not obligations of any of our subsidiaries and none of our subsidiaries has guaranteed the notes. The notes will be effectively subordinated to all indebtedness, guarantees and other liabilities of our subsidiaries from time to time outstanding and will be subordinated to any secured indebtedness we incur to the extent of the value of the assets securing that indebtedness. See "Risk Factors" Although these notes are referred to as "senior notes," they will be effectively subordinated to all liabilities of our subsidiaries and subordinated to our secured indebtedness to the extent of the assets securing that indebtedness."
Ratings	The notes are expected to be rated "BBB" by Fitch Ratings, "Baa2" by Moody's Investors Service and "BBB" by Standard & Poor's Ratings Services. See "Description of Notes" Ratings."
Use of proceeds	As described above under "Recent Developments" Recent and Proposed Acquisition Activity," we are negotiating the acquisition of a portfolio of properties for approximately \$135 million and, if that acquisition is consummated, we intend to use most of the net proceeds from the offering of the notes to fund the purchase price of this portfolio and to use the remaining net proceeds to repay borrowings under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility. However, this acquisition is subject to

conditions over which we have no control and, if we do not consummate this acquisition, we intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for general corporate purposes, which may include financing all or a portion of the cost of any future acquisitions we may make or to repay borrowings under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility. Pending application of the net proceeds for the foregoing purposes, we may temporarily use the net proceeds to repay borrowings under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility or invest the net proceeds in a short-term government money market fund. Borrowings under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility totaled \$82.1 million at November 18, 2003. Borrowings that we repay under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility may be reborrowed, subject to customary conditions.

S-3

Limitations on Incurrence of Debt

The notes contain various covenants, including the following:

We will not incur any Debt (other than Intercompany Debt) if, immediately after giving effect to the incurrence of such Debt and the application of the proceeds therefrom on a pro forma basis, the aggregate principal amount of all of our Debt on a consolidated basis is greater than 60% of the sum of (1) our Total Assets as of the end of the fiscal quarter covered by our most recent report on Form 10-K or Form 10-Q, as the case may be, and (2) the increase in our Total Assets from the end of that quarter including any increase in Total Assets caused by the application of the proceeds of that additional Debt (that increase together with our Total Assets is referred to as "Adjusted Total Assets").

We will not incur any Secured Debt (other than Intercompany Debt) if, immediately after giving effect to the incurrence of such Secured Debt and the application of the proceeds therefrom on a pro forma basis, the aggregate principal amount of all of our Secured Debt on a consolidated basis is greater than 40% of our Adjusted Total Assets.

We will not incur any Debt (other than Intercompany Debt) if the ratio of our Consolidated Income Available for Debt Service to our Annual Debt Service Charge for the four consecutive fiscal quarters most recently ended prior to the date on which the additional Debt is to be incurred would be less than 1.5 to 1.0, calculated on a pro forma basis after giving effect to the incurrence of that additional Debt and the application of the proceeds from that incurrence, computed on a consolidated basis and subject to certain additional adjustments.

We will maintain Total Unencumbered Assets of not less than 150% of the aggregate outstanding principal amount of our Unsecured Debt, computed on a consolidated basis.

The foregoing summary of certain covenants applicable to the notes is not complete and you should carefully review the information, including the definitions of some of the capitalized terms used above, appearing in this prospectus supplement under "Description of Notes" and in the accompanying prospectus under "Description of Debt Securities," as well as the indenture under which the notes will be issued, for more information.

Sinking Fund

The notes are not entitled to the benefit of any sinking fund payments.

Optional Redemption

We may redeem the notes at any time in whole, or from time to time in part, at the redemption prices described in this prospectus supplement under the caption "Description of Notes - Optional Redemption."

S-4

RISK FACTORS

In evaluating an investment in the notes, you should carefully consider the following risk factors, in addition to the other risks and uncertainties described in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference therein, including the information appearing under the heading "Business Matters Pertaining to Certain Properties and Tenants" and "Business Other Items" in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2002.

Our business operations may not generate the cash needed to service our indebtedness.

Our ability to make payments on our indebtedness, including these notes, and to fund planned capital expenditures will depend on our ability to generate cash in the future. We cannot assure you that our business will generate sufficient cash flow from operations or that future borrowings will be available to us in an amount sufficient to enable us to pay our indebtedness, including these notes, or to fund our other liquidity needs.

In order to grow we need to continue to acquire investment properties which may be subject to competitive pressures.

We face competition in the acquisition, operation and sale of property. We expect competition from:

businesses;

individuals;

fiduciary accounts and plans; and

other entities engaged in real estate investment and financing.

Some of these competitors are larger than we are and have greater financial resources. This competition may result in a higher cost for properties that we wish to purchase.

Our tenants' creditworthiness and ability to pay rent may be affected by competition in their industries.

The tenants leasing our properties generally face significant competition from other operators. This competition may adversely impact:

that portion, if any, of the rental stream to be paid to us based on a tenant's revenues; and

the tenant's results of operations or financial condition.

As a property owner, we may be subject to unknown environmental liabilities.

Investments in real property can create a potential environmental liability. An owner of property can face liability for environmental contamination created by the presence or discharge of hazardous substances on the property. We may face liability regardless of:

our knowledge of the contamination;

the timing of the contamination;

the cause of the contamination; or

the party responsible for the contamination of the property.

There may be environmental problems associated with our properties of which we are unaware. In that regard, a number of our properties are leased to operators of oil change and tune-up facilities as

S-5

well as convenience stores that sell petroleum-based fuels. These facilities, and some of our other properties, use, or may have used in the past, underground tanks for the storage of petroleum-based or waste products, which could create a potential for release of hazardous substances.

The presence of hazardous substances on a property may adversely affect our ability to sell the property and we may incur substantial remediation costs. Although our leases generally require our tenants to operate in compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws, ordinances and regulations and to indemnify us against any environmental liabilities arising from the tenants' activities on the property, we could nevertheless be subject to strict liability by virtue of our ownership interest, and we cannot assure you that our tenants would satisfy their indemnification obligations under the leases. The discovery of environmental liabilities attached to our properties could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations, financial condition or our ability to pay the principal of and interest on our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby, and to make distributions to our stockholders.

Compliance. We have not been notified by any governmental authority, and are not otherwise aware, of any material noncompliance, liability or claim relating to hazardous or toxic substances or petroleum products in connection with any of the properties we currently own. Nevertheless, if environmental contamination should exist, we could be subject to strict liability for the contamination by virtue of our ownership interest.

Insurance. Since December 1996, we have maintained an environmental insurance policy on our property portfolio. The limit on our current policy is \$10 million per occurrence and \$50 million in the aggregate, subject to a \$25,000 self insurance retention per occurrence for properties with underground storage tanks and a \$100,000 self insurance retention per occurrence for all other properties. It is possible that our insurance will be insufficient to address any particular environmental situation and that we could be unable to continue to obtain insurance for environmental matters, at a reasonable cost or at all, in the future.

If we fail to qualify as a real estate investment trust the amount of dividends we are able to pay would go down, which could adversely affect the value of the notes.

We believe that we are organized and have operated, commencing with our taxable year ended December 31, 1994, and we intend to continue to operate, so as to qualify as a "real estate investment trust" under Sections 856 through 860 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"). However, we cannot assure you that we have been organized or have operated in a manner that has satisfied the requirements for qualification as a REIT, or that we will continue to be organized or operate in a manner that will allow us to continue to qualify as a REIT.

Qualification as a REIT involves the satisfaction of numerous requirements under highly technical and complex Code provisions for which there are only limited judicial and administrative interpretations, and the determination of various factual matters and circumstances not entirely within our control.

For example, in order to qualify as a REIT, at least 95% of our gross income in each year must be derived from qualifying sources and we must pay distributions to stockholders aggregating annually at least 90% of our REIT taxable income (as defined in the Code and determined without regard to the dividends paid deduction and by excluding net capital gains).

In the future it is possible that new legislation, regulations, administrative interpretations or court decisions will change the tax laws with respect to qualification as a REIT, or the federal income tax consequences of that qualification.

S-6

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

If we were to fail to qualify as a REIT in any taxable year:

we would be required to pay federal income tax (including any applicable alternative minimum tax) on our taxable income at regular corporate rates;

we would not be allowed a deduction in computing our taxable income for amounts distributed to our stockholders;

we may be disqualified from treatment as a REIT for the four taxable years following the year during which qualification is lost;

we would no longer be required to make distributions to stockholders; and

this treatment would substantially reduce amounts available for investment or distribution to stockholders because of the additional tax liability for the years involved, which would likely have a material adverse effect on the market value of our common stock and could have a material adverse effect on the value of our outstanding debt securities, including the notes.

In addition, if we fail to qualify as a REIT, all distributions to stockholders will be taxable as regular corporate dividends to the extent of our current and accumulated earnings and profits, which also could materially adversely affect the market value of our common stock and the value of the notes. Even if we qualify for and maintain our REIT status, we are subject to specified federal, state and local taxes on our income and property. For example, if we have net income from a prohibited transaction, that income will be subject to a 100% tax. Our subsidiary Crest Net Lease is subject to federal and state taxes at the applicable tax rates on its income and property.

Distribution requirements imposed by law limit our flexibility.

To maintain our status as a REIT for federal income tax purposes, we generally are required to distribute to our stockholders at least 90% of our REIT taxable income determined without regard to the dividends paid deduction and by excluding net capital gains each year. We are also subject to tax at regular corporate rates to the extent that we distribute less than 100% of our REIT taxable income (including net capital gains) each year.

In addition, we are required to pay a 4% nondeductible excise tax to the extent that the distributions we pay, with respect to any calendar year, are less than the sum of 85% of our ordinary income for that calendar year, 95% of our capital gain net income for the calendar year, and any amount of that income that was not distributed in prior years.

We intend to continue to make distributions to our stockholders to comply with the distribution requirements of the Code and to reduce exposure to federal income taxes and the nondeductible excise tax. Differences in timing between the receipt of income and the payment of expenses to arrive at taxable income, along with the effect of required debt amortization payments, could require us to borrow funds on a short-term basis to meet the distribution requirements that are necessary to achieve the tax benefits associated with qualifying as a REIT.

Real estate ownership is subject to particular economic conditions that may have a negative impact on our revenue.

We are subject to all of the general risks associated with the ownership of real estate. In particular, we face the risk that rental revenue from our properties will be insufficient to cover operating expenses, debt service payments on our indebtedness, including the notes offered by this prospectus supplement, and distributions to our stockholders. Additional real estate ownership risks include:

adverse changes in general or local economic conditions;

changes in supply of, or demand for, similar or competing properties;

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

changes in interest rates and operating expenses;

competition for tenants;

changes in market rental rates;

inability to lease properties upon termination of existing leases;

renewal of leases at lower rental rates;

inability to collect rents from tenants due to financial hardship, including bankruptcy;

changes in tax, real estate, zoning and environmental laws that may have an adverse impact upon the value of real estate;

uninsured property liability;

property damage or casualty losses;

unexpected expenditures for capital improvements or to bring properties into compliance with applicable federal, state and local laws;

acts of terrorism and war; and

acts of God and other factors beyond the control of management.

An uninsured loss or a loss that exceeds the policies on our properties could subject us to lost capital or revenue on those properties.

Under the terms and conditions of the leases currently in force on our properties, tenants generally are required to indemnify and hold us harmless from liabilities resulting from injury to persons, air, water, land, or property, due to activities conducted on the properties, except for claims arising from the negligence or intentional misconduct of us or our agents. Additionally, tenants are generally required, at the tenant's expense, to obtain and keep in full force during the term of the lease, liability and property damage insurance policies. The insurance policies our tenants are required to maintain for property damage are generally in amounts not less than the full replacement cost of the improvements less slab, foundations, supports and other customarily excluded improvements. Our tenants are generally required to maintain general liability coverage varying between \$1,000,000 and \$10,000,000 depending on the tenant and the industry in which it operates.

In addition to the indemnities and required insurance policies identified above, many of our properties are also covered by flood and earthquake insurance policies (subject to substantial deductibles) obtained by and paid for by the tenants as part of their risk management programs. Additionally, we have obtained blanket liability, flood and earthquake (subject to substantial deductibles) and property damage insurance policies to protect us and our properties against loss should the indemnities and insurance policies provided by the tenants fail to restore the properties to their condition prior to a loss. However, should a loss occur that is uninsured or in an amount exceeding the combined aggregate limits for the policies noted above, or in the event of a loss that is subject to a substantial deductible under an insurance policy, we could lose all or part of our capital invested in, and anticipated revenue from, one or more of the properties, which could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations, financial condition or our ability to pay the principal of and interest on our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby, and to make distributions to our stockholders.

Compliance with Americans With Disabilities Act and fire, safety, and other regulations may require us to make unintended expenditures that could adversely impact our results of operations.

Our properties are generally required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the ADA. The ADA has separate compliance requirements for "public accommodations" and "commercial facilities," but generally requires that buildings be made accessible to people with disabilities. Compliance with the ADA requirements could require removal of access barriers and non-compliance could result in imposition of fines by the U.S. government or an award of damages to private litigants. The retailers to whom we lease properties are obligated by law to comply with the ADA provisions, and we believe that these retailers may be obligated to cover costs associated with compliance. If required changes involve greater expenditures than anticipated, or if the changes must be made on a more accelerated basis than anticipated, the ability of these retailers to cover costs could be adversely affected and we could be required to expend our own funds to comply with the provisions of the ADA, which could materially adversely affect our results of operations or financial condition and our ability to pay the principal of and interest on our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby, and to make distributions to our stockholders. In addition, we are required to operate our properties in compliance with fire and safety regulations, building codes and other land use regulations, as they may be adopted by governmental agencies and bodies and become applicable to our properties. We may be required to make substantial capital expenditures to comply with those requirements and these expenditures could materially adversely affect our results of operations and financial condition or our ability to pay the principal of and interest on our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby, and to make distributions to our stockholders.

Property taxes on our properties may increase without notice.

Each of our properties is subject to real property taxes. The real property taxes on our properties and any other properties that we develop or acquire in the future may increase as property tax rates change and as those properties are assessed or reassessed by tax authorities.

Matters pertaining to particular properties and tenants.

Fourteen of our properties were available for sale or lease at September 30, 2003, thirteen of which are single-tenant properties. Five of the properties had been previously leased to child care operators, five to restaurant operators, one to an automotive service operator, one (which is a multi-tenant property) to a grocery store operator, one to a home improvement store and one to a shoe store operator. At September 30, 2003, 24 of our properties under lease were unoccupied and available for sublease by the tenants, all of which were current with their rent and other obligations.

Our largest tenant is Children's World Learning Centers which accounted for approximately 9.7% of our rental revenue for the quarter ended September 30, 2003. In general, a downturn in the child care industry, whether nationwide or limited to specific sectors of the United States, could adversely affect this tenant and other tenants in this industry, which in turn could materially adversely affect our financial position and results of operations and our ability to pay the principal of and interest on our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby, and to make distributions to our stockholders. In addition, a substantial number of our properties are leased to middle market retail chains which generally have more limited financial and other resources than certain upper market retail chains, and therefore are more likely to be adversely affected by a downturn in their respective business or in the regional or national economy generally.

Our tenants in the child care, convenience store and restaurant industries accounted for approximately 18.6%, 13.3% and 11.9%, respectively, of our rental revenue for the quarter ended September 30, 2003. A downturn in any of these industries generally, whether nationwide or limited to specific sectors of the United States, could adversely affect tenants in those industries, which in turn

S-9

could materially adversely affect our financial position and results of operations and our ability to pay the principal of and interest on our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby, and to make distributions to our stockholders.

Terrorist attacks and other acts of violence or war may affect the markets in which we operate and our results of operations.

Terrorist attacks may negatively affect our operations and your investment. There can be no assurance that there will not be further terrorist attacks against the United States or United States businesses. These attacks or armed conflicts may directly impact our physical facilities or the businesses of our tenants.

Also, the United States has entered into an armed conflict in Iraq which could have a further impact on our tenants. The consequences of this or any other armed conflicts are unpredictable, and we may not be able to foresee events that could have an adverse effect on our business or your investment.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

More generally, any of these events could cause consumer confidence and spending to decrease or result in increased volatility in the U.S. and worldwide financial markets and economy. They also could result in a continuation of the current economic recession in the U.S. or abroad. Any of these occurrences could have a significant adverse impact on our operating results and revenues, may result in volatility in the market price of our common stock or the value of the notes offered hereby, and may adversely affect our ability to pay the principal of and interest on our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby, and to make distributions to our stockholders.

Dependence on key personnel.

We depend on the efforts of our executive officers and key employees. The loss of the services of any of our executive officers and key employees could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations or financial condition and our ability to pay the principal of and interest on our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby, and to make distributions to our stockholders. It is possible that we will not be able to recruit additional personnel with equivalent experience in the retail, net-leasing industry.

Although these notes are referred to as "senior notes," they will be effectively subordinated to all liabilities of our subsidiaries and subordinated to our secured indebtedness to the extent of the assets securing that indebtedness.

These notes will be our obligations exclusively and will not be the obligations of any of our subsidiaries. In that regard, while our subsidiaries (other than Crest Net) have guaranteed our indebtedness under our unsecured \$250 million acquisition credit facility, none of our subsidiaries has guaranteed the notes. As a result, the notes will be effectively subordinated to all existing and future indebtedness and other liabilities, including guarantees, of our subsidiaries. In the event of a bankruptcy, liquidation or similar proceedings involving any of our subsidiaries, the creditors of that subsidiary (including, in the case of any subsidiary that has guaranteed any indebtedness outstanding under our \$250 million credit facility, the lenders under that facility) will generally be entitled to payment of their claims from the assets of that subsidiary before any assets are made available for distribution to us, except to the extent that we may also have a claim as a creditor of that subsidiary, in which case our claims would still be subordinated to any security interests or mortgages on the assets of that subsidiary and would be subordinate to any indebtedness of that subsidiary senior to that held by us. As of September 30, 2003, our subsidiaries had approximately \$900,000 of total liabilities (excluding liabilities owed to us and other intercompany liabilities and subsidiary guarantees of borrowings outstanding under our \$250 million credit facility) and we had \$95.3 million of indebtedness

S-10

outstanding under our \$250 million credit facility which had been guaranteed by our subsidiaries (other than Crest Net). Although the indenture under which the notes will be issued and other debt instruments to which we are a party limit our ability and the ability of our subsidiaries to incur additional indebtedness, both we and our subsidiaries have the right to incur substantial additional secured and unsecured indebtedness.

The notes are unsecured and therefore will be subordinated to any secured indebtedness we may incur to the extent of the value of the assets securing such indebtedness. In the event of a bankruptcy, liquidation or similar proceeding involving us, our assets which serve as collateral will be available to satisfy the obligations under any secured indebtedness before any payments are made on the notes. As of September 30, 2003, we (including our subsidiaries) had no secured indebtedness outstanding.

An active trading market may not develop for the notes.

Prior to the offering, there was no existing trading market for the notes. Although the underwriters may make a market in the notes after we complete the offering, they have no obligation to do so and may discontinue making a market at any time without notice.

We do not intend to apply for listing of the notes on any securities exchange or for quotation on the Nasdaq National Market.

The liquidity of any market for the notes that may develop will depend on a number of factors, including:

the number of holders of the notes;

our performance;

the market for similar securities;

the interest of securities dealers in making a market in the notes; and

prevailing interest rates.

We cannot assure you that a trading market for the notes will develop or, if developed, that it will continue, or as to the liquidity of any trading market for the notes that may develop.

Risks of debt financing.

At September 30, 2003, our total consolidated indebtedness was approximately \$446.9 million, including \$95.3 million outstanding under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility. Our indebtedness outstanding at September 30, 2003 also included \$110 million aggregate principal amount of our 7³/₄% Senior Notes due 2007, \$100 million aggregate principal amount of our 8¹/₄% Monthly Income Senior Notes due 2008, \$20 million aggregate principal amount of our 8% Senior Notes due 2009 and \$100 million aggregate principal amount of our 5³/₈% Senior Notes due 2013. We intend to incur additional indebtedness in the future and we may therefore make substantial additional borrowings. To the extent that new indebtedness, including the notes, is added to our current debt levels, the related risks that we now face would increase. As a result, we are and will be subject to risks associated with debt financing, including the risk that our cash flow could be insufficient to meet required payments on our debt, particularly in light of the fact that the interest rate on our credit facility is variable and could increase over time, and the risk that we may be unable to refinance or repay our debt as it comes due.

Our indebtedness could also have other important consequences to holders of the notes, including:

limiting our ability to satisfy our obligations with respect to our indebtedness, including the notes offered hereby;

increasing our vulnerability to general adverse economic and industry conditions;

S-11

limiting our ability to obtain additional financing to fund future working capital, capital expenditures and other general corporate requirements;

requiring a substantial portion of our cash flow from operations for the payment of principal of, and interest on, our indebtedness and reducing our ability to use our cash flow to fund working capital, capital expenditures and general corporate requirements;

limiting our flexibility in planning for, or reacting to, changes in our business and our industry; and

putting us at a disadvantage compared to competitors with less indebtedness.

In addition, our \$250 million acquisition credit facility provides that, in the event of a failure to pay principal of or interest on borrowings thereunder when due (subject to any applicable grace period), we and our subsidiaries may not pay any dividends on our capital stock, including our outstanding common stock. If this were to occur, it would likely have a material adverse effect on the market value of our common stock and could have a material adverse effect on the value of our debt securities, including the notes offered hereby.

S-12

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

SELECTED FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The following information was derived from our consolidated financial statements. The information is only a summary and does not provide all of the information contained in our consolidated financial statements, including the related notes, Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Conditions and Results of Operations, and Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures about Market Risk, which are part of our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2002 and our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended September 30, 2003, incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus. You should read our financial statements and other information we have filed with the SEC. Information as of and for the nine months ended September 30, 2003 does not purport to be indicative of our financial condition or results of operations to be expected as of and for the year ending December 31, 2003.

	Nine Months Ended September 30, 2003	Year Ended December 31,				
		2002	2001	2000	1999	1998
(dollars in thousands, except per share data)						
Total assets (book value)	\$ 1,161,044	\$ 1,080,230	\$ 1,003,708	\$ 934,766	\$ 905,404	\$ 759,234
Cash and cash equivalents	5,709	8,921	2,467	3,815	773	2,533
Lines of credit and notes payable	425,300	339,700	315,300	404,000	349,200	294,800
Total liabilities	446,943	357,775	331,915	419,197	370,573	309,025
Total stockholders' equity	714,101	722,455	671,793	515,569	534,831	450,209
Net cash provided by operating activities	60,840	124,807	90,035	56,590	72,154	64,645
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	(3,212)	6,454	(1,348)	3,042	(1,760)	410
Total revenue	109,290	138,230	120,623	112,175	98,359	79,628
Income from operations	54,993	70,744	53,000	43,239	40,375	36,689
Gain on sales of investment properties		340	10,478	6,712	1,301	526
Income from continuing operations	54,993	71,084	63,478	49,951	41,676	37,215
Income from discontinued operations	3,959	7,583	4,080	4,837	4,920	4,315
Cumulative effect of change in accounting principle						(226)
Net income	58,952	78,667	67,558	54,788	46,241	41,304
Preferred stock dividends	(7,285)	(9,713)	(9,712)	(9,712)	(5,229)	
Net income available to common stockholders	51,667	68,954	57,846	45,076	41,012	41,304
Distributions paid to common stockholders	61,812	78,042	64,871	58,262	55,925	52,301
Basic net income per common share	1.48	2.03	1.98	1.69	1.53	1.55
Diluted net income per common share	1.47	2.03	1.98	1.69	1.53	1.55
Distributions paid per common share	1.7663	2.3025	2.2425	2.1825	2.0850	1.9650
Distributions declared per common share	1.7700	2.3075	2.2475	2.1875	2.0950	1.9750
Basic weighted average number of common shares outstanding	34,998,993	33,933,749	29,225,359	26,684,598	26,822,285	26,629,936
Diluted weighted average number of common shares outstanding	35,046,352	33,988,157	29,281,120	26,700,806	26,826,090	26,638,284

S-13

RATIOS OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

The following table sets forth the ratios of earnings to fixed charges and the ratios of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends for the periods shown. The ratios of earnings to fixed charges were computed by dividing earnings by fixed charges. For this purpose, earnings consist of net income before interest expense. Fixed charges consist of interest costs (including capitalized interest) and the amortization of debt issuance costs. In computing the ratios of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends, preferred stock dividends consist of dividends on our 9.375% Class B cumulative redeemable preferred stock and 9.50% Class C cumulative redeemable preferred stock.

	Year Ended December 31,					Nine Months Ended September 30,
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges	3.8x	2.7x	2.6x	3.5x	4.3x	3.9x
Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends	3.8x(1)	2.3x	2.0x	2.6x	3.0x	2.9x

(1) We did not have preferred stock outstanding in 1998.

USE OF PROCEEDS

The net proceeds from the sale of the notes, after deducting the underwriting discounts and other estimated expenses relating to this offering payable by us of approximately \$350,000, are estimated to be approximately \$147.9 million. As described above under "Prospectus Supplement Summary Recent Developments Recent and Proposed Acquisition Activity," we are negotiating the acquisition of a portfolio of properties for approximately \$135 million and, if that acquisition is consummated, we intend to use most of the net proceeds from the offering of the notes to fund the purchase price of this portfolio and to use the remaining net proceeds to repay borrowings under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility. However, this acquisition is subject to conditions over which we have no control and, if we do not consummate this acquisition, we intend to use the net proceeds from this offering for general corporate purposes, which may include financing all or a portion of the cost of any future acquisitions we may make or to repay borrowings under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility. Pending application of the net proceeds for the foregoing purposes, we may temporarily use the net proceeds to repay borrowings under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility or invest the net proceeds in a short-term government money market fund. Borrowings that we repay under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility may be reborrowed, subject to customary conditions.

Borrowings under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility totaled approximately \$82.1 million at November 18, 2003 with an effective annual interest rate of 2.0%. These borrowings were generally used to acquire properties. The \$250 million acquisition credit facility is a revolving, unsecured credit facility and expires in October 2005. Borrowings under the \$250 million acquisition credit facility currently bear interest at a spread of 0.9% over the London Interbank Offered Rate, although the credit facility offers us other interest rate options.

S-14

CAPITALIZATION

The following table sets forth our capitalization as of September 30, 2003 on an historical basis and on a pro forma as adjusted basis. The pro forma as adjusted data in the following table reflects (i) the issuance and sale of the notes and (ii) the issuance and sale in October 2003 of 2,875,000 shares of our common stock for total net proceeds of approximately \$110.8 million, as if those transactions had occurred as of September 30, 2003. The pro forma as adjusted data in the following table do not reflect our use of any of the net proceeds from the sale of the notes or the shares of common stock we issued in October 2003. See "Prospectus Supplement Summary Recent Developments Issuance of Common Stock" and "Use of Proceeds."

As of September 30, 2003	
Historical	Pro Forma As Adjusted

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

As of September 30, 2003

(dollars in thousands)

Debt			
\$250 million acquisition credit facility(1)	\$	95,300	\$ 95,300
Notes due 2007		110,000	110,000
Notes due 2008		100,000	100,000
Notes due 2009		20,000	20,000
Notes due 2013		100,000	100,000
Notes offered hereby due 2015			150,000
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total debt		425,300	575,300
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Stockholders' Equity			
Preferred stock and paid in capital, \$1.00 par value per share, 20,000,000 shares authorized, 4,125,700 shares issued and outstanding		99,368	99,368
Common stock and paid in capital, \$1.00 par value per share, 100,000,000 shares authorized, 35,024,327 shares issued and outstanding historical and 37,899,327 shares issued and outstanding pro forma as adjusted		857,770	968,555
Distributions in excess of net income		(243,037)	(243,037)
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total stockholders' equity		714,101	824,886
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total capitalization	\$	1,139,401	\$ 1,400,186
		<hr/>	<hr/>

(1) At November 18, 2003, our outstanding indebtedness under our \$250 million acquisition credit facility was \$82.1 million.

S-15

DESCRIPTION OF NOTES

The following description of some of the particular terms of the notes offered by this prospectus supplement supplements and, to the extent inconsistent with the accompanying prospectus, replaces the description of the general terms and provisions of the debt securities set forth in the accompanying prospectus. The following statements relating to the notes and the Indenture (as defined below) are summaries of provisions contained in the notes and the Indenture and do not purport to be complete. These statements are qualified in their entirety by reference to the provisions of the notes and the Indenture, including the definitions in the notes and Indenture of certain terms. Unless otherwise expressly stated or the context otherwise requires, all references to the "Company," "Realty Income," "our," "we," and "us" appearing under this caption and under the caption "Description of Debt Securities" in the accompanying prospectus mean Realty Income Corporation excluding its subsidiaries. Other capitalized terms used under this caption, but not otherwise defined, shall have the meanings given to them in the accompanying prospectus or, if not defined in the prospectus, in the Indenture.

The notes constitute debt securities (which are more fully described in the accompanying prospectus) to be issued pursuant to an indenture dated as of October 28, 1998 (the "Indenture"), between Realty Income and The Bank of New York, as trustee (the "Trustee"). The terms of the notes include those provisions contained in the Indenture and those made part of the Indenture by reference to the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended (the "TIA"). The notes are subject to all those terms, and investors are referred to the Indenture and the TIA for a statement of those terms.

General

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

The notes will be a separate series of debt securities under the Indenture, limited initially in aggregate principal amount to \$150 million. The Indenture does not limit the amount of debt securities that we may issue under the Indenture, and we may issue debt securities in one or more series up to the aggregate amount authorized by us for each series. We may, without the consent of the holders of the notes, re-open this series of notes and issue additional notes of this series under the Indenture in addition to the \$150 million of notes authorized as of the date of this prospectus supplement. Any such additional notes shall be part of the same series of debt securities issued under the Indenture as the notes offered by this prospectus supplement. The notes will be senior unsecured obligations of Realty Income and will rank equally with all other existing and future senior unsecured indebtedness of Realty Income.

The notes will be effectively subordinated to all indebtedness and other liabilities (including guarantees) of our subsidiaries from time to time outstanding and will also be subordinated to any secured indebtedness we may issue to the extent of any collateral pledged as security therefor. As of September 30, 2003, our subsidiaries had outstanding indebtedness and other liabilities (excluding liabilities owed to us and other intercompany liabilities and subsidiary guarantees of borrowings outstanding under our \$250 million credit facility) aggregating approximately \$900,000 and we had \$95.3 million of indebtedness outstanding under our \$250 million credit facility which has been guaranteed by our subsidiaries (other than Crest Net). See "Risk Factors Although these notes are referred to as "senior notes", they will be effectively subordinated to all liabilities of our subsidiaries and subordinated to our secured indebtedness to the extent of the assets securing that indebtedness." Although the Indenture and other debt instruments to which we are a party limit our ability and the ability of our subsidiaries to incur additional indebtedness, both we and our subsidiaries have the right to incur substantial additional secured and unsecured indebtedness.

The notes will be issued only in fully registered form without interest coupons, in denominations of \$1,000 and integral multiples of \$1,000. The notes will be evidenced by a global note (the "Global Note") in book-entry form, except under the limited circumstances described below under " Book-Entry System." Notices or demands to or upon Realty Income in respect of the notes and the

S-16

Indenture may be served and, if notes are issued in definitive certificated form, notes may be surrendered for payment, registration of transfer or exchange, at the office or agency of Realty Income maintained for such purpose in the Borough of Manhattan, The City of New York, which shall initially be the corporate trust office of the Trustee, which on the date of this prospectus supplement is located at The Bank of New York, Attention: Corporate Trust Administration, 101 Barclay Street, Floor 8W, New York, New York 10286.

Reference is made to the section titled "Description of Debt Securities Certain Covenants" in the accompanying prospectus and " Additional Covenants of Realty Income" below for a description of certain covenants applicable to the notes. Compliance with these covenants generally may be waived if the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding notes consent to such waiver. In addition, the defeasance and covenant defeasance provisions of the Indenture described under "Description of Debt Securities Discharge, Defeasance and Covenant Defeasance" in the accompanying prospectus will apply to the notes; covenant defeasance will be applicable with respect to the covenants described in the accompanying prospectus under "Description of Debt Securities Certain Covenants" (except the covenant requiring Realty Income to preserve and keep in full force and effect its corporate existence) and the covenants described below under " Additional Covenants of Realty Income."

Except as described under "Description of Debt Securities Merger, Consolidation or Sale of Assets" in the accompanying prospectus or " Additional Covenants of Realty Income" below, the Indenture does not contain any provisions that would afford holders of the notes protection in the event of (1) a highly leveraged or similar transaction involving Realty Income, (2) a change of control or management of Realty Income, or (3) a reorganization, restructuring, merger or similar transaction involving Realty Income that may adversely affect the holders of the notes. In addition, subject to the limitations set forth under "Description of Debt Securities Merger, Consolidation or Sale of Assets" in the accompanying prospectus, Realty Income may, in the future, enter into certain transactions such as the sale of all or substantially all of its assets or the merger or consolidation of Realty Income with another entity that would increase the amount of Realty Income's indebtedness or substantially reduce or eliminate Realty Income's assets, which may have an adverse affect on Realty Income's ability to service its indebtedness, including the notes.

Realty Income has no present intention of engaging in a highly leveraged or similar transaction involving Realty Income. In addition, certain restrictions on ownership and transfers of Realty Income's stock designed to preserve its status as a REIT may act to prevent or hinder any such transaction or change of control.

Interest and Maturity

The notes will mature on November 15, 2015 (the "Maturity Date"). The notes are not entitled to the benefit of any sinking fund payments. The notes are subject to redemption at Realty Income's option and are not subject to repayment or repurchase by Realty Income at the option of the Holders (as defined below). See " Optional Redemption" below.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

The notes will bear interest at the rate per year set forth on the cover page of this prospectus supplement from November 24, 2003 or from the most recent Interest Payment Date (as defined below) to which interest has been paid, payable semi-annually in arrears on May 15 and November 15 of each year (the "Interest Payment Dates"), commencing May 15, 2004, to the persons in whose names the notes are registered in the security register applicable to the notes (the "Holders") at the close of business on May 1 or November 1 (the "Regular Record Dates"), as the case may be, immediately before the Interest Payment Dates regardless of whether such Regular Record Date is a Business Day. Interest on the notes will be computed on the basis of a 360-day year of twelve 30-day months.

S-17

If any Interest Payment Date, the Maturity Date, any date fixed for redemption or any other day on which the principal of, premium, if any, or interest on a note becomes due and payable falls on a day that is not a Business Day, the required payment shall be made on the next Business Day as if it were made on the date the payment was due and no interest will accrue on the amount so payable for the period from and after such Interest Payment Date, Maturity Date, redemption date or other date, as the case may be.

Ratings

The notes are expected to be rated "BBB" by Fitch Ratings, "Baa2" by Moody's Investors Service and "BBB" by Standard & Poor's Rating Services. The rating of the notes should be evaluated independently from similar ratings on other types of securities. In addition, the credit ratings on the notes are subject to ongoing evaluation by credit rating agencies, and we cannot assure you that any such rating will not be changed or withdrawn by a rating agency in the future if, in its judgment, circumstances warrant. Moreover, a rating is not a recommendation to buy, sell or hold the notes, inasmuch as such rating does not comment as to market price or suitability for a particular investor.

Additional Covenants of Realty Income

Reference is made to the section titled "Description of Debt Securities Certain Covenants" in the accompanying prospectus for a description of certain covenants applicable to the notes. In addition to the foregoing, the following covenants of Realty Income will apply to the notes for the benefit of the Holders of the notes:

Limitation on Incurrence of Total Debt. Realty Income will not, and will not permit any Subsidiary to, incur any Debt, other than Intercompany Debt, if, immediately after giving effect to the incurrence of such additional Debt and the application of the proceeds therefrom on a pro forma basis, the aggregate principal amount of all outstanding Debt of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries on a consolidated basis determined in accordance with GAAP is greater than 60% of the sum of (1) Realty Income's Total Assets as of the end of the latest fiscal quarter covered in Realty Income's Annual Report on Form 10-K or Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q, as the case may be, most recently filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (or, if such filing is not required under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"), with the Trustee) prior to the incurrence of such additional Debt and (2) the increase, if any, in Total Assets from the end of such quarter including, without limitation, any increase in Total Assets caused by the application of the proceeds of such additional Debt (such increase together with Realty Income's Total Assets is referred to as the "Adjusted Total Assets").

Limitation on Incurrence of Secured Debt. Realty Income will not, and will not permit any Subsidiary to, incur any Secured Debt, other than Intercompany Debt, if, immediately after giving effect to the incurrence of such additional Secured Debt and the application of the proceeds therefrom on a pro forma basis, the aggregate principal amount of all outstanding Secured Debt of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries on a consolidated basis determined in accordance with GAAP is greater than 40% of Realty Income's Adjusted Total Assets.

Debt Service Coverage. Realty Income will not, and will not permit any Subsidiary to, incur any Debt, other than Intercompany Debt, if the ratio of Consolidated Income Available for Debt Service to the Annual Debt Service Charge for the period consisting of the four consecutive fiscal quarters most recently ended prior to the date on which such additional Debt is to be incurred is less than 1.5 to 1.0, on a pro forma basis after giving effect to the incurrence of such Debt and the application of the proceeds therefrom, and calculated on the assumption that (1) such Debt and any other Debt incurred by Realty Income or any of its Subsidiaries since the first day of such four-quarter period and the application of the proceeds therefrom (including to refinance other Debt since the first day of such

S-18

four-quarter period) had occurred on the first day of such period, (2) the repayment or retirement of any other Debt of Realty Income or any of its Subsidiaries since the first day of such four-quarter period had occurred on the first day of such period (except that, in making such

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

computation, the amount of Debt under any revolving credit facility, line of credit or similar facility shall be computed based upon the average daily balance of such Debt during such period), and (3) in the case of any acquisition or disposition by Realty Income or any Subsidiary of any asset or group of assets since the first day of such four-quarter period, including, without limitation, by merger, stock purchase or sale, or asset purchase or sale, such acquisition or disposition had occurred on the first day of such period with the appropriate adjustments with respect to such acquisition or disposition being included in such pro forma calculation. If the Debt giving rise to the need to make the foregoing calculation or any other Debt incurred after the first day of the relevant four-quarter period bears interest at a floating rate then, for purposes of calculating the Annual Debt Service Charge, the interest rate on such Debt shall be computed on a pro forma basis as if the average interest rate which would have been in effect during the entire such four-quarter period had been the applicable rate for the entire such period.

Maintenance of Total Unencumbered Assets. Realty Income will maintain at all times Total Unencumbered Assets of not less than 150% of the aggregate outstanding principal amount of the Unsecured Debt of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries, computed on a consolidated basis in accordance with GAAP.

As used herein:

"Annual Debt Service Charge" as of any date means the amount which is expensed in any 12-month period for interest on Debt of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries.

"Business Day" means any day, other than a Saturday or a Sunday, that is not a day on which banking institutions in The City of New York are authorized or required by law, regulation or executive order to close.

"Consolidated Income Available for Debt Service" for any period means Consolidated Net Income plus, without duplication, amounts which have been deducted in determining Consolidated Net Income during such period for (1) Consolidated Interest Expense, (2) provisions for taxes of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries based on income, (3) amortization (other than amortization of debt discount) and depreciation, (4) provisions for losses from sales or joint ventures, (5) provisions for impairment losses, (6) increases in deferred taxes and other non-cash charges, (7) charges resulting from a change in accounting principles, and (8) charges for early extinguishment of debt, and less, without duplication, amounts which have been added in determining Consolidated Net Income during such period for (a) provisions for gains from sales or joint ventures, and (b) decreases in deferred taxes and other non-cash items.

"Consolidated Interest Expense" for any period, and without duplication, means all interest (including the interest component of rentals on capitalized leases, letter of credit fees, commitment fees and other like financial charges) and all amortization of debt discount on all Debt (including, without limitation, payment-in-kind, zero coupon and other like securities) but excluding legal fees, title insurance charges, other out-of-pocket fees and expenses incurred in connection with the issuance of Debt and the amortization of any such debt issuance costs that are capitalized, all determined for Realty Income and its Subsidiaries on a consolidated basis in accordance with GAAP.

"Consolidated Net Income" for any period means the amount of consolidated net income (or loss) of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries for such period determined on a consolidated basis in accordance with GAAP.

"Debt" means any indebtedness of Realty Income or any Subsidiary, whether or not contingent, in respect of (1) money borrowed or evidenced by bonds, notes, debentures or similar instruments, (2) indebtedness secured by any mortgage, pledge, lien, charge, encumbrance, trust deed, deed of trust,

S-19

deed to secure debt, security agreement or any security interest existing on property owned by Realty Income or any Subsidiary, (3) letters of credit or amounts representing the balance deferred and unpaid of the purchase price of any property except any such balance that constitutes an accrued expense or trade payable or (4) any lease of property by Realty Income or any Subsidiary as lessee that is reflected on Realty Income's consolidated balance sheet as a capitalized lease in accordance with GAAP, in the case of items of indebtedness under (1) through (3) above to the extent that any such items (other than letters of credit) would appear as liabilities on Realty Income's consolidated balance sheet in accordance with GAAP, and also includes, to the extent not otherwise included, any obligation of Realty Income or any Subsidiary to be liable for, or to pay, as obligor, guarantor or otherwise (other than for purposes of collection in the ordinary course of business), indebtedness of another person (other than Realty Income or any Subsidiary) of the type referred to in (1), (2), (3) or (4) above (it being understood that Debt shall be deemed to be incurred by Realty Income or any Subsidiary whenever Realty Income or such Subsidiary shall create, assume, guarantee or otherwise become liable in respect thereof).

"Executive Group" means, collectively, those individuals holding the offices of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Chief Executive Officer, President, Chief Operating Officer, or any Vice President of Realty Income.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

"GAAP" means generally accepted accounting principles, as in effect from time to time, as used in the United States applied on a consistent basis.

"Intercompany Debt" means indebtedness owed by Realty Income or any Subsidiary solely to Realty Income or any Subsidiary.

"Secured Debt" means Debt secured by any mortgage, lien, charge, encumbrance, trust deed, deed of trust, deed to secure debt, security agreement, pledge, conditional sale or other title retention agreement, capitalized lease, or other security interest or agreement granting or conveying security title to or a security interest in real property or other tangible assets.

"Subsidiary" means (1) any corporation, partnership, joint venture, limited liability company or other entity the majority of the shares, if any, of the non-voting capital stock or other equivalent ownership interests of which (except directors' qualifying shares) are at the time directly or indirectly owned by Realty Income, and the majority of the shares of the voting capital stock or other equivalent ownership interests of which (except for directors' qualifying shares) are at the time directly or indirectly owned by Realty Income, any other Subsidiary or Subsidiaries, and/or one or more individuals of the Executive Group (or, in the event of death or disability of any of such individuals, his/her respective legal representative(s), or such individuals' successors in office as an officer of Realty Income), and (2) any other entity the accounts of which are consolidated with the accounts of Realty Income. The foregoing definition of "Subsidiary" shall only be applicable with respect to the covenants and other definitions set forth herein under this caption "Additional Covenants of Realty Income" and, insofar as the provisions described in the accompanying Prospectus under "Description of Debt Securities Merger, Consolidation or Sale of Assets" apply to the notes, the foregoing definition of Subsidiary, as used under the caption "Description of Debt Securities Merger, Consolidation or Sale of Assets," shall be applicable instead of the definition of "Subsidiary" set forth in the accompanying Prospectus.

"Total Assets" as of any date means the sum of (1) Undepreciated Real Estate Assets and (2) all other assets of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries determined on a consolidated basis in accordance with GAAP (but excluding accounts receivable and intangibles).

"Total Unencumbered Assets" as of any date means Total Assets minus the value of any properties of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries that are encumbered by any mortgage, charge, pledge, lien, security interest, trust deed, deed of trust, deed to secure debt, security agreement, or other

S-20

encumbrance of any kind (other than those relating to Intercompany Debt), including the value of any stock of any Subsidiary that is so encumbered determined on a consolidated basis in accordance with GAAP. For purposes of this definition, the value of each property shall be equal to the purchase price or cost of each such property and the value of any stock subject to any encumbrance shall be determined by reference to the value of the properties owned by the issuer of such stock as aforesaid.

"Undepreciated Real Estate Assets" as of any date means the amount of real estate assets of Realty Income and its Subsidiaries on such date, before depreciation and amortization, determined on a consolidated basis in accordance with GAAP.

"Unsecured Debt" means Debt of Realty Income or any Subsidiary that is not Secured Debt.

Optional Redemption

The notes will be redeemable at any time in whole, or from time to time in part, at the option of Realty Income on any date at a redemption price equal to the greater of:

- (a) 100% of the principal amount of the notes to be redeemed, and
- (b) the sum of the present values of the remaining scheduled payments of principal of and interest on the notes to be redeemed (exclusive of interest accrued to the applicable redemption date) discounted to such redemption date on a semiannual basis, assuming a 360-day year consisting of twelve 30-day months, at the Treasury Rate plus 25 basis points,

plus, in the case of both clauses (a) and (b) above, accrued and unpaid interest on the principal amount of the notes being redeemed to such redemption date. Notwithstanding the foregoing, installments of interest on notes that are due and payable on an Interest Payment Date falling on or prior to the relevant redemption date will be payable to the persons who were the Holders of the notes (or one or more predecessor notes) registered as such at the close of business on the relevant Regular Record Dates according to their terms and the provisions of the Indenture.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

"Treasury Rate" means, with respect to any redemption date for the notes:

- (a) the yield, under the heading that represents the average for the immediately preceding week, appearing in the most recently published statistical release designated "H.15(519)" or any successor publication which is published weekly by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and which establishes yields on actively traded United States Treasury securities adjusted to constant maturity under the caption "Treasury Constant Maturities," for the maturity corresponding to the Comparable Treasury Issue (if no maturity is within three months before or after the Final Maturity Date of the notes, yields for the two published maturities most closely corresponding to the Comparable Treasury Issue shall be determined and the Treasury Rate shall be interpolated or extrapolated from such yields on a straight-line basis, rounding to the nearest month) or
- (b) if such release (or any successor release) is not published during the week preceding the calculation date or does not contain such yields, the rate per annum equal to the semiannual equivalent yield to maturity of the Comparable Treasury Issue, calculated using a price for the Comparable Treasury Issue (expressed as a percentage of its principal amount) equal to the Comparable Treasury Price for such redemption date.

The Treasury Rate shall be calculated on the third Business Day preceding the applicable redemption date.

"Comparable Treasury Issue" means, with respect to any redemption date for the notes, the United States Treasury security selected by the Independent Investment Banker as having a maturity comparable to the remaining term of the notes to be redeemed that would be utilized, at the time of

S-21

selection and in accordance with customary financial practice, in pricing new issues of corporate debt securities of comparable maturity to the remaining term of the notes to be redeemed.

"Independent Investment Banker" means, with respect to any redemption date for the notes, Banc of America Securities LLC and its successors or Citigroup Global Markets Inc. and its successors (whichever shall be appointed by the Trustee after consultation with Realty Income) or, if both such firms or the respective successors, if any, to such firms, as the case may be, are unwilling or unable to select the Comparable Treasury Issue, an independent investment banking institution of national standing appointed by the Trustee after consultation with Realty Income.

"Comparable Treasury Price" means, with respect to any redemption date for the notes:

- (a) the average of four Reference Treasury Dealer Quotations for such redemption date, after excluding the highest and lowest such Reference Treasury Dealer Quotations, or
- (b) if the Trustee obtains fewer than four but more than one such Reference Treasury Dealer Quotations for such redemption date, the average of all such quotations, or
- (c) if the Trustee obtains only one such Reference Treasury Dealer Quotation for such redemption date, that Reference Treasury Dealer Quotation.

"Reference Treasury Dealer" means with respect to any redemption date for the notes, Banc of America Securities LLC and Citigroup Global Markets Inc. and their respective successors (provided, however, that if any such firm or any such successor, as the case may be, ceases to be a primary U.S. Government securities dealer in The City of New York (a "Primary Treasury Dealer"), the Trustee, after consultation with Realty Income, shall substitute therefor another Primary Treasury Dealer) and two other Primary Treasury Dealers selected by the Trustee after consultation with Realty Income.

"Reference Treasury Dealer Quotations" means, with respect to each Reference Treasury Dealer and any redemption date for the notes, the average, as determined by the Trustee, of the bid and asked prices for the Comparable Treasury Issue (expressed in each case as a percentage of

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

its principal amount) quoted in writing to the Trustee by such Reference Treasury Dealer at 5:00 p.m., New York City time, on the third Business Day preceding such redemption date.

"Final Maturity Date" means November 15, 2015.

Notice of any redemption by Realty Income will be mailed at least 30 days but not more than 60 days before any redemption date to each holder of notes to be redeemed. If less than all of the outstanding notes are to be redeemed, the notes to be redeemed shall be selected by the Trustee by such method as the Trustee shall deem fair and appropriate.

Unless Realty Income defaults in payment of the redemption price, on and after any redemption date interest will cease to accrue on the notes or portions thereof called for redemption.

Book-Entry System

The following are summaries of certain rules and operating procedures of The Depository Trust Company, or DTC, that affect the payment of principal, premium, if any, and interest and transfers of interests in the Global Note. Upon issuance, the notes will only be issued in the form of a Global Note which will be deposited with, or on behalf of, DTC and registered in the name of Cede & Co., as nominee of DTC. Unless and until it is exchanged in whole or in part for notes in definitive form under the limited circumstances described below, a Global Note may not be transferred except as a whole (1) by DTC to a nominee of DTC, (2) by a nominee of DTC to DTC or another nominee of DTC or (3) by DTC or any such nominee to a successor of DTC or a nominee of such successor.

Ownership of beneficial interests in a Global Note will be limited to persons that have accounts with DTC for such Global Note ("participants") or persons that may hold interests through

S-22

participants. Upon the issuance of a Global Note, DTC will credit, on its book-entry registration and transfer system, the participants' accounts with the respective principal amounts of the notes represented by such Global Note beneficially owned by participants. Ownership of beneficial interests in the Global Note will be shown on, and the transfer of such ownership interests will be effected only through, records maintained by DTC (with respect to interests of participants) and on the records of participants (with respect to interests of persons holding through participants). The laws of some states may require that certain purchasers of securities take physical delivery of the securities in definitive form. These laws may limit or impair the ability to own, transfer or pledge beneficial interests in the Global Note.

So long as DTC or its nominee is the registered owner of a Global Note, DTC or its nominee, as the case may be, will be considered the sole owner or Holder of the notes represented by the Global Note for all purposes under the Indenture. Except as set forth below, owners of beneficial interests in a Global Note will not be entitled to have notes represented by the Global Note registered in their names, will not receive or be entitled to receive physical delivery of the notes in certificated form and will not be considered the registered owners or Holders thereof under the Indenture. Accordingly, each person owning a beneficial interest in a Global Note must rely on the procedures of DTC and, if such person is not a participant, on the procedures of the participant through which such person owns its interest, to exercise any rights of a Holder under the Indenture. Realty Income understands that under existing industry practices, if Realty Income requests any action of Holders or if an owner of a beneficial interest in a Global Note desires to give or take any action that a Holder is entitled to give or take under the Indenture, DTC would authorize the participants holding the relevant beneficial interests to give or take such action, and such participants would authorize beneficial owners owning through such participants to give or take such action or would otherwise act upon the instructions of beneficial owners holding through them.

Principal, premium, if any, and interest payments on interests represented by a Global Note will be made to DTC or its nominee, as the case may be, as the registered owner of such Global Note. None of Realty Income, the Trustee or any other agent of Realty Income or agent of the Trustee will have any responsibility or liability for any aspect of the records relating to or payments made on account of beneficial ownership of interests in the Global Notes or for maintaining, supervising or reviewing any records relating to beneficial ownership interests. Realty Income expects that DTC, upon receipt of any payment of principal, premium, if any, or interest in respect of a Global Note, will immediately credit participants' accounts with payments in amounts proportionate to their respective beneficial interests in such Global Note as shown on the records of DTC. Realty Income also expects that payments by participants to owners of beneficial interests in the Global Note held through such participants will be governed by standing customer instructions and customary practice, as is now the case with securities held for the accounts of customers in bearer form or registered in "street name," and will be the responsibility of such participants.

The Indenture will provide that if (1) DTC notifies Realty Income that it is unwilling or unable to continue as depository or if DTC ceases to be a clearing agency registered as such under the Exchange Act at any time when the depository is required to be so registered in order to act

as depositary for the notes and a successor depositary is not appointed within 90 days after Realty Income receives such notice or learns of such ineligibility, (2) Realty Income determines that the notes shall no longer be represented by a Global Note and executes and delivers to the Trustee an officers' certificate to that effect or (3) an Event of Default with respect to the notes has occurred and is continuing and beneficial owners representing a majority in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding notes advise DTC to cease acting as depositary for the notes, Realty Income will issue the notes in definitive form in exchange for interests in the Global Note. Any notes issued in definitive form in exchange for interests in the Global Note will be registered in such name or names, and will be issued in denominations of \$1,000 and such integral multiples of \$1,000, as DTC shall instruct the Trustee. It is

S-23

expected that such instructions will be based upon directions received by DTC from participants with respect to ownership of beneficial interests in the Global Note.

DTC has advised Realty Income that DTC is a limited-purpose trust company organized under the Banking Law of the State of New York, a member of the Federal Reserve System, a "clearing corporation" within the meaning of the New York Uniform Commercial Code, and a "clearing agency" registered pursuant to the provisions of Section 17A of the Exchange Act. DTC was created to hold securities of its participants and to facilitate the clearance and settlement of transactions among its participants in these securities through electronic book-entry changes in accounts of the participants, thereby eliminating the need for physical movement of securities certificates. DTC's participants include securities brokers and dealers, banks, trust companies, clearing corporations and certain other organizations, some of which (and/or their representatives) own DTC. Access to the DTC book-entry system is also available to others, such as banks, brokers and dealers and trust companies that clear through or maintain a custodial relationship with a participant, either directly or indirectly.

Same-Day Settlement and Payment

Settlement for the notes will be made by the underwriters in immediately available funds. All payments of principal, premium, if any, and interest in respect of the Global Note will be made by Realty Income by wire transfer of immediately available funds to an account maintained in the United States.

If notes are issued in definitive certificated form under the limited circumstances described above, payments of interest on the certificated notes may be made, at our option, by check mailed to the addresses of the persons entitled thereto, as such addresses appear in the register for the notes, or by wire transfer to accounts maintained by the payees in the United States; provided, however, that a Holder of \$5 million or more in aggregate principal amount of notes in definitive certificated form will be entitled to receive payments of interest due on any Interest Payment Date by wire transfer of immediately available funds to an account maintained by such Holder in the United States so long as such Holder has given appropriate wire transfer instructions to the Trustee or a paying agent at least 15 calendar days prior to the applicable Interest Payment Date. Any such wire transfer instructions will remain in effect until revoked by such Holder or until such person ceases to be a Holder of \$5 million or more in aggregate principal amount of notes in definitive certificated form.

Payments of principal of and premium, if any, and interest on notes in definitive certificated form that are due and payable on the Maturity Date, any redemption date or any other date on which principal of such notes is due and payable will be made by wire transfer of immediately available funds to accounts maintained by the Holders thereof in the United States, so long as such Holders have given appropriate wire transfer instructions to the Trustee or a paying agent, against surrender of such notes to the Trustee or a paying agent; provided that installments of interest that are due and payable on any Interest Payment Date falling on or prior to such Maturity Date, redemption date or other date on which principal of such notes is payable will be paid in the manner described in the preceding paragraph to the persons who were the Holders of such notes (or one or more predecessor notes) registered as such at the close of business on the relevant Regular Record Dates according to the terms and provisions of the Indenture.

The notes will trade in DTC's Same-Day Funds Settlement System until maturity or until the notes are issued in certificated form, and secondary market trading activity in the notes will therefore be required by DTC to settle in immediately available funds. Realty Income expects that secondary trading in the certificated securities, if any, will also be settled in immediately available funds. No assurance can be given as to the effect, if any, of settlement in immediately available funds on trading activity in the notes.

S-24

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

The following is a general summary of the United States federal income and estate tax considerations anticipated to be material to purchasers of the notes, except that the information appearing below under "New Legislation Related to the Accompanying Prospectus" and "Proposed Legislation Related to the Accompanying Prospectus" is a summary of some federal income tax considerations related to our REIT election that supplements the information appearing in the accompanying prospectus under "United States Federal Income Tax Considerations Related to our REIT Election." The information in this section is based on:

the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code");

current, temporary and proposed Treasury Regulations promulgated under the Code;

the legislative history of the Code;

current administrative interpretations and practices of the Internal Revenue Service; and

court decisions;

in each case, as of the date of this prospectus supplement. In addition, the administrative interpretations and practices of the Internal Revenue Service include its practices and policies as expressed in private letter rulings which are not binding on the Internal Revenue Service, except with respect to the particular taxpayers who requested and received these rulings. Future legislation, Treasury Regulations, administrative interpretations and practices and/or court decisions may adversely affect the tax considerations contained in this discussion. Any change could apply retroactively to transactions preceding the date of the change.

This summary does not purport to deal with all aspects of United States federal income taxation that may affect particular holders of our notes in light of their individual circumstances or holders subject to special treatment under the United States federal income tax laws, including:

insurance companies;

tax-exempt organizations;

financial institutions or broker-dealers;

traders in securities that elect to mark to market;

holders owning notes as part of a "straddle," "hedge" or "conversion transaction;"

holders whose functional currency is not the United States dollar;

holders subject to the alternative minimum tax;

persons deemed to sell the notes under the constructive sale provisions of the Code;

"S" corporations;

expatriates;

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

REITs or regulated investment companies; and

holders who acquired our notes as compensation.

If a partnership holds notes, the tax treatment of a partner in the partnership will generally depend upon the status of the partner and the activities of the partnership. If you are a partner of a partnership holding our notes, you should consult your tax advisor regarding the tax consequences of the ownership and disposition of the notes.

S-25

This summary assumes that you hold the notes as capital assets and purchase the notes upon their initial issuance at the price set forth on the cover of this prospectus supplement. In addition, this summary does not consider the effect of any foreign, state, local or other tax laws that may be applicable to us or a purchaser of our notes. We have not requested, and do not plan to request, any rulings from the Internal Revenue Service concerning our tax treatment. The statements in this prospectus supplement are not binding on the Internal Revenue Service or any court. As a result, we cannot assure you that the tax considerations or opinions described in this discussion will not be challenged by the Internal Revenue Service or, if so challenged, will be sustained by a court.

This discussion does not address any aspects of federal income taxation relating to Realty Income or its election to be taxed as a REIT. A summary of certain United States federal income tax considerations to Realty Income is provided in the accompanying prospectus, which you should read in connection with this discussion. You are urged to consult your tax advisor regarding the tax consequences to you of:

the acquisition, ownership and sale or other disposition of the notes offered under this prospectus supplement, including the federal, state, local, foreign and other tax consequences;

our election to be taxed as a REIT for federal income tax purposes; and

potential changes in the tax laws.

Consequences to United States Holders

As used in this section, the term "United States holder" means a beneficial owner of a note that is, for United States federal income tax purposes:

a citizen or resident of the United States;

a corporation or partnership, including an entity treated as a corporation or partnership for United States federal income tax purposes, created or organized in or under the laws of the United States or any State thereof or the District of Columbia, unless, in the case of a partnership, Treasury Regulations are adopted that provide otherwise;

an estate the income of which is subject to United States federal income taxation regardless of its source; or

a trust whose administration is subject to the primary supervision of a United States court and which has one or more United States persons who have the authority to control all substantial decisions of such trust.

Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, to the extent provided in Treasury Regulations, trusts in existence on August 20, 1996 and treated as United States persons prior to such date, that elect to be treated as United States persons, shall also be considered United States holders.

Stated Interest.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

Stated interest on the notes generally will be taxable to you as ordinary income from domestic sources at the time it is paid or accrues in accordance with your method of accounting for tax purposes.

If we call the notes for redemption, we may be obligated to pay additional amounts in excess of stated principal and interest. We intend to take the position that the notes should not be treated as contingent payment debt instruments because of this additional payment. Assuming such position is respected, a United States holder would be required to include in income the amount of any such additional payment at the time such payment is received or accrued in accordance with such United States holder's method of accounting for United States federal income tax purposes. If the Internal Revenue Service successfully challenged this position, and the notes were treated as contingent payment

S-26

debt instruments, United States holders could be required to accrue interest income at a rate higher than the stated interest rate on the notes and to treat as ordinary income, rather than capital gain, any gain recognized on a sale, exchange or redemption of a note. United States holders are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding the potential application to the notes of the contingent payment debt instrument rules and the consequences thereof.

Sale, Exchange or Other Taxable Disposition of Notes.

You will generally recognize gain or loss upon the sale, exchange, redemption, retirement or other taxable disposition of a note equal to the difference between the amount realized upon the sale, exchange, redemption (including, in the case of a note not treated as a contingent payment debt instrument, any additional amounts received or accrued), retirement or other disposition (less an amount attributable to any accrued stated interest not previously included in income, which will be taxable as interest income) and your adjusted tax basis in the note. Your adjusted tax basis in a note will generally equal the amount you paid for the note. Assuming a note is not a contingent payment debt instrument, any gain or loss recognized on a disposition of the note will be capital gain or loss. If you are an individual and have held the note for more than one year, such capital gain will generally be subject to tax at a maximum rate of 15%. Your ability to deduct capital losses may be limited.

Backup Withholding and Information Reporting.

Payments of interest, premium, if any, and principal on the notes and the proceeds received upon the sale or other disposition of such notes may be subject to information reporting and backup withholding tax. Payments to certain holders (including, among others, corporations and certain tax-exempt organizations) are generally not subject to information reporting or backup withholding. If you are a non-corporate United States holder, payments to you generally will be subject to information reporting and backup withholding tax if you:

fail to furnish your taxpayer identification number ("TIN"), which, if you are an individual, is ordinarily your social security number;

furnish an incorrect TIN;

are notified by the Internal Revenue Service that you have failed to properly report payments of interest or dividends; or

fail to certify, under penalties of perjury, that you have furnished a correct TIN and that the Internal Revenue Service has not notified you that you are subject to backup withholding.

The amount of any reportable payments, including interest, made to you (unless you are an exempt recipient) and the amount of tax withheld, if any, with respect to such payments will be reported to you and to the Internal Revenue Service for each calendar year.

You should consult your tax advisor regarding your qualification for an exemption from backup withholding and information reporting and the procedures for obtaining such an exemption, if applicable. The backup withholding tax is not an additional tax, and you may use amounts withheld as a credit against your United States federal income tax liability or may claim a refund as long as you timely provide certain information to the Internal Revenue Service.

Non-United States Holders

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

The following is a summary of the United States federal income and estate tax consequences that will apply to you if you are a non-United States holder of notes. The term "non-United States holder" means a beneficial owner of a note that is not a United States holder.

S-27

Special rules may apply to certain non-United States holders such as "controlled foreign corporations," "passive foreign investment companies" and "foreign personal holding companies." Such entities are encouraged to consult their tax advisors to determine the United States federal, state, local and other tax consequences that may be relevant to them.

Payment of Interest.

The 30% United States federal withholding tax will not apply to any payment to you of principal or interest on a note provided that:

you do not actually or constructively own 10% or more of the total combined voting power of all classes of our stock that are entitled to vote within the meaning of Section 871(h)(3) of the Code;

you are not a controlled foreign corporation that is related to us through stock ownership;

you are not a bank whose receipt of interest on a note is described in Section 881(c)(3)(A) of the Code; and

(a) you provide your name and address, and certify, under penalties of perjury, that you are not a United States person (which certification may be made on an Internal Revenue Service Form W-8BEN (or a successor form)) or (b) a securities clearing organization, bank, or other financial institution that holds customers' securities in the ordinary course of its business holds the note on your behalf and certifies, under penalties of perjury, that it has received Internal Revenue Service Form W-8BEN from you or from another qualifying financial institution intermediary, and, in certain circumstances, provides a copy of the Internal Revenue Service Form W-8BEN. If you hold your notes through certain foreign intermediaries or certain foreign partnerships, such foreign intermediaries or partnerships must also satisfy the certification requirements of applicable Treasury Regulations.

If you cannot satisfy the requirements described above, payments of interest will be subject to the 30% United States federal withholding tax, unless you provide us with a properly executed (1) Internal Revenue Service Form W-8BEN claiming an exemption from or reduction in withholding under the benefit of an applicable tax treaty or (2) Internal Revenue Service Form W-8ECI stating that interest paid on the note is not subject to withholding tax because it is effectively connected with your conduct of a trade or business in the United States. Alternative documentation may be applicable in certain circumstances.

If you are engaged in a trade or business in the United States and interest on a note is effectively connected with the conduct of that trade or business, you will be required to pay United States federal income tax on that interest on a net income basis (although you will be exempt from the 30% withholding tax provided the certification requirement described above is met) in the same manner as if you were a United States person as defined under the Code, except as otherwise provided by an applicable tax treaty. In addition, if you are a foreign corporation, you may be required to pay a branch profits tax equal to 30% (or lower applicable treaty rate) of your earnings and profits for the taxable year, subject to adjustments, that are effectively connected with your conduct of a trade or business in the United States. For this purpose, interest will be included in the earnings and profits of such foreign corporation.

If we call the notes for redemption, we may be obligated to make additional payments in excess of stated principal and interest. Such payments may be treated as interest, subject to the rules described above, additional amounts paid for the notes, subject to the rules described below under "Sale, Exchange or Other Taxable Disposition of Notes," or as other income subject to the United States federal withholding tax. A non-United States Holder that is subject to the withholding tax should consult its tax advisors as to whether it can obtain a refund for all or a portion of the withholding tax.

S-28

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

Sale, Exchange or Other Taxable Disposition of Notes.

Any gain realized upon the sale, exchange, redemption, retirement or other taxable disposition of a note (except with respect to accrued and unpaid interest, which would be taxable as described above) generally will not be subject to United States federal income tax unless:

that gain is effectively connected with your conduct of a trade or business in the United States;

you are an individual who is present in the United States for 183 days or more in the taxable year of that disposition, and certain other conditions are met; or

you are subject to Code provisions applicable to certain United States expatriates.

If you are a holder described in the first bullet point above, you generally will be required to pay United States federal income tax on the net gain derived from the sale, except as otherwise required by an applicable tax treaty. If you are a corporation, any such effectively connected gain received by you may also, under certain circumstances, be subject to the branch profits tax at a 30% rate (or such lower rate as may be prescribed under an applicable United States income tax treaty). If you are described in the second bullet point above, you will be subject to a flat 30% United States federal income tax on the gain derived from the sale, which may be offset by United States source capital losses, even though you are not considered a resident of the United States. If you are a holder described in the third bullet point above, we encourage you to consult your tax advisor to determine the United States federal, state, local and other tax consequences that may be relevant to you.

United States Federal Estate Tax.

The United States federal estate tax will not apply to the notes owned by you at the time of your death, provided that (1) you do not own actually or constructively 10% or more of the total combined voting power of all classes of our voting stock (within the meaning of the Code and the Treasury Regulations) and (2) interest on the note would not have been, if received at the time of your death, effectively connected with your conduct of a trade or business in the United States.

Backup Withholding and Information Reporting.

Backup withholding will likely not apply to payments of principal or interest made by us or our paying agents, in their capacities as such, to a non-United States holder of a note if the holder is exempt from withholding tax on interest as described above. However, information reporting on Internal Revenue Service Form 1042-S may still apply with respect to interest payments.

Payments of the proceeds from a disposition by a non-United States holder of a note made to or through a foreign office of a broker will not be subject to information reporting or backup withholding, except that information reporting (but generally not backup withholding) may apply to those payments if the broker is:

a United States person;

a controlled foreign corporation for United States federal income tax purposes;

a foreign person 50% or more of whose gross income is effectively connected with a United States trade or business for a specified three-year period; or

a foreign partnership, if at any time during its tax year, one or more of its partners are United States persons, as defined in Treasury Regulations, who in the aggregate hold more than 50% of the income or capital interest in the partnership or if, at any time during its tax year, the foreign partnership is engaged in a United States trade or business.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

Payment of the proceeds from a disposition by a non-United States holder of a note made to or through the United States office of a broker is generally subject to information reporting and backup withholding unless the holder or beneficial owner certifies as to its taxpayer identification number or otherwise establishes an exemption from information reporting and backup withholding.

Non-United States holders should consult their tax advisors regarding application of withholding and backup withholding in their particular circumstance and the availability of and procedure for obtaining an exemption from withholding and backup withholding under current Treasury Regulations. In this regard, the current Treasury Regulations provide that a certification may not be relied on if we or our agent (or other payor) knows or has reason to know that the certification may be false. Any amounts withheld under the backup withholding rules from a payment to a non-United States holder will be allowed as a credit against the holder's United States federal income tax liability or may be refunded, provided the required information is furnished in a timely manner to the Internal Revenue Service.

Other Tax Consequences

State, local and foreign tax laws may differ substantially from the corresponding federal tax laws, and this discussion does not purport to describe any aspect of the tax laws of any state, local or foreign jurisdiction. If you are considering the purchase of notes, you should consult your tax advisor concerning the application of United States federal income and other tax laws to your particular situation, as well as any consequences of the purchase, ownership and disposition of the notes arising under the laws of any state, local or foreign taxing jurisdiction.

New Legislation Related to the Accompanying Prospectus

The maximum tax rate of non-corporate taxpayers for (i) capital gains, including "capital gain dividends," has generally been reduced from 20% to 15% (for taxable years ending on or after May 6, 2003, although certain amounts in 2003 may continue to be taxed at a 20% rate and, depending on the characteristics of the assets which produced these gains and on designations which we may make, certain capital gain dividends may be taxed at a 25% rate) and (ii) dividends has generally been reduced from 38.6% to 15% (for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2002). In general, dividends payable by REITs are not eligible for the reduced tax rate on corporate dividends, except to the extent the REIT's dividends are attributable to dividends received from taxable corporations (such as our taxable REIT subsidiaries), to income that was subject to tax at the corporate/REIT level (for example, if we distribute taxable income that we retained and paid tax on in the prior taxable year) or to dividends properly designated by us as "capital gain dividends." Although these tax rate changes do not adversely affect the taxation of REITs or dividends paid by REITs, the more favorable treatment of regular corporate dividends could cause investors who are individuals to consider stocks of other corporations that pay dividends as more attractive relative to stocks of REITs. The currently applicable provisions of the United States federal income tax laws relating to the 15% tax rate are currently scheduled to "sunset" or revert back to the provisions of prior law effective for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2008, at which time the capital gains tax rate will be increased to 20% and the rate applicable to dividends will be increased to the tax rate then applicable to ordinary income. In addition, as a result of this new legislation, if we fail to qualify as a REIT, all distributions to stockholders will be taxable as regular corporate dividends (rather than ordinary income, as set forth in the accompanying prospectus under the heading "United States Federal Income Tax Considerations Related to Our REIT Election Failure to Qualify") to the extent of our current and accumulated earnings and profits.

Proposed Legislation Related to the Accompanying Prospectus

Recently, legislation was introduced in the United States House of Representatives and Senate that would amend certain rules relating to REITs. As of the date hereof, this proposed legislation has not

S-30

been enacted into law. The proposed legislation would, among other things, include the following changes:

As discussed in the accompanying prospectus under "United States Federal Income Tax Considerations Related to Our REIT Election Taxation of the Company Asset Tests," we may not own more than 10% by vote or value of any one issuer's securities. If we fail to meet this test at the end of any quarter and such failure is not cured within 30 days thereafter, we would fail to qualify as a REIT. Under the proposal, after the 30 day cure period, a REIT could dispose of sufficient assets to cure such a violation that does not exceed the lesser of 1% of the REIT's assets at the end of the relevant quarter or \$10,000,000. For violations due to reasonable cause that are larger than this amount, the proposed legislation would permit the REIT to avoid disqualification as a REIT, after the 30 day cure period, by taking steps including the disposition of sufficient assets to meet the asset test and paying a tax equal to the greater of \$50,000 or the highest corporate tax rate multiplied by the net income generated by the non-qualifying assets.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

The proposed legislation also would change the formula for calculating the tax imposed for certain violations of the 75% and 95% gross income tests described in the accompanying prospectus under "United States Federal Income Tax Considerations Related to Our REIT Election Taxation of the Company Income Tests" and would make certain changes to the requirements for availability of the applicable relief provisions for failure to meet such tests.

The proposed legislation would clarify a rule regarding our ability to enter into leases with our taxable REIT subsidiaries.

As discussed in the accompanying prospectus under "United States Federal Income Tax Considerations Related to Our REIT Election Taxation of the Company Penalty Tax," amounts received by a REIT for services customarily furnished or rendered in connection with the rental of real property are excluded from treatment as "redetermined rents" and therefore avoid the 100% penalty tax. The proposed legislation would eliminate this exclusion.

The foregoing is a non-exhaustive list of changes that would be made by the proposed legislation. The provisions contained in this proposed legislation relating to our ability to enter into leases with our taxable REIT subsidiaries would apply to taxable years ending after December 31, 2000, and the remaining provisions described above generally would apply to taxable years beginning after the date the proposed legislation is enacted.

As of the date hereof, it is not possible to predict with any certainty whether the proposed legislation discussed above will be enacted in its current form.

S-31

UNDERWRITING

Subject to the terms and conditions of the underwriting agreement, the underwriters named below have severally agreed to purchase from us, and we have agreed to sell, the principal amount of notes listed opposite their names below at the public offering price less the underwriting discount set forth on the cover page of this prospectus supplement:

Underwriters	Principal Amount of Notes
Banc of America Securities LLC	\$ 52,500,000
Citigroup Global Markets Inc.	52,500,000
Credit Suisse First Boston LLC	10,500,000
Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated	10,500,000
Wachovia Capital Markets, LLC	10,500,000
A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc.	4,500,000
BNY Capital Markets, Inc.	3,000,000
Banc One Capital Markets, Inc.	3,000,000
Wells Fargo Brokerage Services, LLC	3,000,000
Total	 \$ 150,000,000

The underwriting agreement provides that the obligations of the several underwriters to purchase the notes offered hereby are subject to certain conditions and that the underwriters will purchase all of the notes offered by this prospectus supplement if any of these notes are purchased.

We have been advised by the representatives of the underwriters that the underwriters propose to offer the notes directly to the public at the public offering price set forth on the cover page of this prospectus supplement and to certain dealers at such price less a concession not in excess of 0.400% of the principal amount of the notes. The underwriters may allow, and such dealers may reallow, a concession not in excess of 0.250% of the principal amount of the notes to certain other dealers. After the initial public offering, the underwriters may change the offering price and other selling terms.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

We estimate that our share of total expenses of this offering, excluding the underwriting discount, will be approximately \$350,000.

We have agreed to indemnify the underwriters against certain liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act of 1933, and to contribute to payments the underwriters may be required to make in respect of any of these liabilities.

The notes are a new issue of securities with no established trading market. The notes will not be listed on any securities exchange or on any automated dealer quotation system. The underwriters may make a market in the notes after completion of the offering, but will not be obligated to do so and may discontinue any market-making activities at any time without notice. No assurance can be given as to the liquidity of the trading market for the notes or that an active trading market for the notes will develop. If an active trading market for the notes does not develop, the market price and liquidity of the notes may be adversely affected.

In connection with the offering of the notes, the underwriters may engage in transactions that stabilize, maintain or otherwise affect the price of the notes. Specifically, the underwriters may over allot in connection with the offering, creating a short position. In addition, the underwriters may bid for, and purchase, the notes in the open market to cover short positions or to stabilize the price of the notes. Any of these activities may stabilize or maintain the market price of the notes above independent market levels, but no representation is made hereby that the underwriters will engage in any of those transactions or of the magnitude of any effect that the transactions described above may have on the

S-32

market price of the notes. The underwriters will not be required to engage in these activities, and if they engage in these activities, they may end any of these activities at any time without notice.

The underwriters and/or their affiliates have provided and in the future may continue to provide investment banking, commercial banking and other financial services, including the provision of credit facilities, to us in the ordinary course of business for which they have received and will receive compensation. In particular, affiliates of some of the underwriters participating in this offering are lenders under our \$250 million credit facility and, as such, will receive a portion of the proceeds of this offering through the repayment of borrowings under the credit facility if the proceeds of this offering are used to repay such borrowings.

LEGAL MATTERS

Certain legal matters with respect to the securities offered hereby will be passed upon for us by Latham & Watkins LLP, Costa Mesa, California. Certain legal matters relating to Maryland law will be passed upon for us by Venable LLP, Baltimore, Maryland. Sidley Austin Brown & Wood LLP, San Francisco, California will act as counsel for the underwriters. William J. Cernius, a partner of Latham & Watkins LLP, beneficially owns 3,469 shares of our common stock. Eric S. Haueter, a partner of Sidley Austin Brown & Wood LLP, beneficially owns approximately 3,567 shares of our common stock and \$20,000 aggregate principal amount of our 8¹/₄% Monthly Income Senior Notes due 2008. Paul C. Pringle, a partner of Sidley Austin Brown & Wood LLP, beneficially owns approximately 22,402 shares of our common stock.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements and financial statement schedule of Realty Income Corporation and subsidiaries as of December 31, 2002 and 2001, and for each of the years in the three-year period ended December 31, 2002, have been incorporated by reference herein and in the accompanying prospectus in reliance upon the report of KPMG LLP, independent accountants, incorporated by reference herein and therein, and upon the authority of said firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

As described in the accompanying prospectus under the caption "Incorporation of Information We File with the SEC," we have incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus specified documents that we have filed or may file with the SEC under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, including our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ending December 31, 2002, our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2003, June 30, 2003 and September 30, 2003, and our Current Reports filed on Form 8-K dated March 5, 2003 (filed with the SEC on March 7, 2003) and October 16, 2003 (filed with the SEC on October 22, 2003). However, no document that we have "furnished" or may in the future "furnish" with the SEC pursuant to the Exchange Act shall be incorporated by reference into this prospectus supplement or the accompanying prospectus.

PROSPECTUS

**\$500,000,000
REALTY INCOME CORPORATION
DEBT SECURITIES, PREFERRED STOCK AND COMMON STOCK**

Realty Income Corporation may from time to time offer in one or more series (1) our debt securities, (2) shares of our preferred stock, \$1.00 par value per share, or (3) shares of our common stock, \$1.00 par value per share, with an aggregate public offering price of up to \$500,000,000 on terms to be determined at the time of the offering. Our debt securities, our preferred stock and our common stock (collectively referred to as our securities), may be offered, separately or together, in separate series, in amounts, at prices and on terms that will be set forth in one or more prospectus supplements to this prospectus.

The specific terms of the securities with respect to which this prospectus is being delivered will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement and will include, where applicable:

in the case of our debt securities, the specific title, aggregate principal amount, currency, form (which may be registered, bearer, certificated or global), authorized denominations, maturity, rate (or manner of calculating the rate) and time of payment of interest, terms for redemption at our option or repayment at the holder's option, terms for sinking fund payments, terms for conversion into shares of our preferred stock or common stock, covenants and any initial public offering price;

in the case of our preferred stock, the specific designation, preferences, conversion and other rights, voting powers, restrictions, limitations as to transferability, dividends and other distributions and terms and conditions of redemption and any initial public offering price; and

in the case of our common stock, any initial public offering price.

In addition, the specific terms may include limitations on actual, beneficial or constructive ownership and restrictions on transfer of the securities, in each case as may be appropriate to preserve our status as a real estate investment trust, or REIT, for federal income tax purposes. The applicable prospectus supplement will also contain information, where applicable, about United States federal income tax considerations, and any exchange listing of the securities covered by the prospectus supplement.

Our common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "O." On December 19, 2002, the last reported sale price of the common stock was \$35.19 per share.

Our securities may be offered directly, through agents designated from time to time by us, or to or through underwriters or dealers. If any agents or underwriters are involved in the sale of any of our securities, their names, and any applicable purchase price, fee, commission or discount arrangement between or among them, will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. None of our securities may be sold without delivery of the applicable prospectus supplement describing the method and terms of the offering of those securities.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is January 2, 2003.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this Prospectus	2
The Company	3
Use of Proceeds	4
Ratios of Earnings to Fixed Charges	5
Forward-Looking Statements	6
Description of Debt Securities	7
Description of Common Stock	19
General Description of Preferred Stock	22
Restrictions on Ownership and Transfers of Stock	29
United States Federal Income Tax Considerations Related to Our REIT Election	32
Plan of Distribution	43
Stockholder Rights Plan	43
Experts	44
Legal Matters	44
Where You Can Find More Information	45
Incorporation of Information We File with the SEC	45

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a registration statement that we filed with the SEC utilizing a "shelf" registration process. Under this shelf registration process, we may sell any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings up to a total dollar amount of \$500,000,000. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we sell securities, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will contain specific information about the terms of that offering. The prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. You should read both this prospectus and any prospectus supplement together with additional information described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information."

As allowed by SEC rules, this prospectus does not contain all the information you can find in the registration statement or the exhibits to the registration statement. For further information, we refer you to the registration statement, including its exhibits and schedules. Statements contained in this prospectus about the provisions or contents of any contract, agreement or any other document referred to are not necessarily complete. For each of these contracts, agreements or documents filed as an exhibit to the registration statement, we refer you to the actual exhibit for a more complete description of the matters involved. You should not assume that the information in this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement is accurate as of any date other than the date on the front of those documents. For further information about us or the securities offered under this prospectus, you should refer to the registration statement, which you can obtain from the SEC as described below under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information."

All references to "Realty Income" "our" and "we" in this prospectus mean Realty Income Corporation and its wholly-owned subsidiaries and other entities controlled by Realty Income Corporation except where it is clear from the context that the term means only the issuer, Realty Income Corporation.

2

THE COMPANY

Realty Income Corporation, the Monthly Dividend Company ® a Maryland corporation ("Realty Income," the "Company," "our" or "we") was organized to operate as an equity real estate investment trust ("REIT"). Over the past 33 years Realty Income and its predecessors have been acquiring and owning freestanding retail properties that generate rental revenue under long-term (primarily 15 to 20 years) lease agreements. Our monthly distributions are supported by the cash flow from 1,199 retail properties leased to regional and national retail chains.

We are a fully integrated, self-administered real estate company with in-house acquisition, leasing, legal, retail and real estate research, portfolio management and capital markets expertise.

Our primary business objective is to generate dependable monthly distributions from a consistent and predictable level of funds from operations ("FFO") per share. Additionally, we seek to increase distributions to stockholders and FFO per share through both active portfolio management and the acquisition of additional properties.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

Our portfolio management focus includes:

Contractual rent increases on existing leases;

Rental increases at the termination of existing leases when market conditions permit; and

The active management of our property portfolio, including re-leasing of vacant properties and selective sales of properties.

Our acquisition of additional properties adheres to a focused strategy of primarily acquiring properties that are:

Freestanding, single-tenant, retail locations;

Leased to regional and national retail chains; and

Under long-term, net-lease agreements.

As of September 30, 2002, we owned a diversified portfolio:

Of 1,199 retail properties;

With an occupancy rate of 98.2%, or 1,178, of the 1,199 properties;

Leased to 80 different retail chains;

Doing business in 24 separate retail industries;

Located in 48 states;

With approximately 9.9 million square feet of leasable space; and

With an average leasable retail space of 8,200 square feet.

Of the 1,199 properties in the portfolio, 1,194, or 99.6%, are single-tenant retail properties with the remaining five being multi-tenant properties. As of September 30, 2002, 1,173, or 98.2%, of the 1,194 single-tenant properties were leased with a weighted average remaining lease term (excluding extension options) of approximately 10.2 years.

In addition to our real estate portfolio, at September 30, 2002 our subsidiary, Crest Net Lease, Inc. ("Crest Net") had invested \$9.9 million in a portfolio of 10 retail properties located in six states. These properties are held for sale.

We typically acquire, and then lease back, retail store locations from chain store operators, providing capital to the operators for continued expansion and other corporate purposes. Our

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

acquisition and investment activities are concentrated in well-defined target markets and generally focus on middle-market retailers providing goods and services that satisfy basic consumer needs.

Our net-lease agreements generally:

Are for initial terms of 15 to 20 years;

Require the tenant to pay minimum monthly rents and property operating expenses (taxes, insurance and maintenance); and

Provide for future rent increases (typically subject to ceilings) based on increases in the consumer price index, fixed increases, or additional rent calculated as a percentage of the tenants' gross sales above a specified level.

We believe that the long-term ownership of an actively managed, diversified portfolio of retail properties under long-term, net-lease agreements can produce consistent, predictable income. We also believe that a portfolio of long-term leases that require tenants to be responsible for property expenses generally produces a more predictable income stream than many other types of real estate portfolios, while continuing to offer the potential for growth in rental income.

Our net-leased retail properties are primarily leased to regional and national retail chain store operators. Generally, our properties contain single-story buildings and adequate parking on site to accommodate peak retail traffic periods. The properties tend to be on major thoroughfares with relatively high traffic counts and adequate access, egress and proximity to a sufficient population base to constitute a suitable market or trade area for the retailer's business.

We provide sale-leaseback financing primarily to less than investment grade retail chains. From 1970 through December 31, 2001, we acquired and leased back to regional and national retail chains 1,158 properties (including 83 properties that have been sold) and collected approximately 98% of the original contractual rent obligations on those properties (this information is updated annually at the end of each year.) We believe that within this market we can achieve an attractive risk-adjusted return on the financing we provide to retailers.

Our principal executive offices are located at 220 West Crest Street, Escondido, California 92025 and our telephone number is (760) 741-2111.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless otherwise described in the applicable prospectus supplement, we intend to use the net proceeds from the sale of our securities for general corporate purposes, which may include, among other things, the repayment of indebtedness, the development and acquisition of additional properties and other acquisition transactions, and the expansion and improvement of certain properties in our portfolio.

4

RATIOS OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

The following table sets forth ratios of earnings to fixed charges for the periods shown. The ratios of earnings to fixed charges were computed by dividing earnings by fixed charges. For this purpose, earnings consist of net income before interest expense. Fixed charges consist of interest costs (including capitalized interest) and the amortization of debt issuance costs. In computing the ratios of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends, preferred stock dividends consist of dividends on our 9.375% Class B cumulative redeemable preferred stock and 9.50% Class C cumulative redeemable preferred stock.

	Year Ended December 31,					Nine Months Ended September 30, 2002
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges	5.1	3.8	2.7	2.6	3.5	4.3

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

	Year Ended December 31,					Nine Months Ended September 30, 2002
Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends	5.1	3.8	2.3	2.0	2.6	
	5					
						3.0

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act and Section 21E of the Exchange Act. When used in this prospectus, the words estimated, anticipated and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements are subject to risks, uncertainties, and assumptions about Realty Income Corporation, including, among other things:

Our anticipated growth strategies;

Our intention to acquire additional properties;

Our intention to sell properties;

Our intention to re-lease vacant properties;

Anticipated trends in our business, including trends in the market for long-term net leases of freestanding, single-tenant retail properties;

Future expenditures for development projects; and

Profitability of our subsidiary, Crest Net Lease, Inc.

Future events and actual results, financial and otherwise, may differ materially from the results discussed in the forward-looking statements. In particular, some of the factors that could cause actual results to differ materially are:

Our continued qualification as a real estate investment trust;

General business and economic conditions;

Competition;

Interest rates;

Accessibility of debt and equity capital markets;

Other risks inherent in the real estate business including tenant defaults, potential liability relating to environmental matters and illiquidity of real estate investments; and

Acts of terrorism and war.

Additional factors that may cause risks and uncertainties include those discussed in the sections entitled "Business" and "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" in the Company's Annual Report on Form 10-K, as amended by the 10-K/A filed on December 19, 2002, for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2001.

Readers are cautioned not to place undue reliance on forward-looking statements, which speak only as of the date that this prospectus was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. We undertake no obligation to publicly release the results of any revisions to these forward-looking statements that may be made to reflect events or circumstances after the date of this prospectus or to reflect the occurrence of unanticipated events. In light of these risks and uncertainties, the forward-looking events discussed in this prospectus might not occur.

6

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

General

This prospectus describes certain general terms and provisions of our debt securities. When we offer to sell a particular series of debt securities, we will describe the specific terms of the series in a prospectus supplement or a pricing supplement. We will also indicate in the supplement whether the general terms and provisions described in this prospectus apply to a particular series of debt securities. Our debt securities will be our direct obligations and they may be secured or unsecured, senior or subordinated indebtedness. We may issue our debt securities under one or more indentures and each indenture will be dated on or before the issuance of the debt securities to which it relates. Additionally, each indenture must be in the form filed as an exhibit to the Registration Statement containing this prospectus or in a form incorporated by reference to this prospectus in a post-effective amendment to the Registration Statement or a Form 8-K. The form of indenture is subject to any amendments or supplements that may be adopted from time to time. We will enter into each indenture with a trustee and the trustee for each indenture may be the same. The indenture will be subject to, and governed by, the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended. Because this description of debt securities is a summary, it does not contain all the information that may be important to you. You should read all provisions of our indenture and our debt securities to assure that you have all the important information you need to make any required decisions. All capitalized terms used, but not defined, in this section shall have the meanings set forth in the applicable indenture.

Terms

The particular terms of any series of our debt securities will be described in a prospectus supplement. Additionally, any applicable modifications of or additions to the general terms of our debt securities described in this prospectus and in the applicable indenture will also be described in a prospectus supplement. Accordingly, for a description of the terms of any series of our debt securities, you must refer to both the prospectus supplement relating to those debt securities and the description of the debt securities set forth in this prospectus. If any particular terms of our debt securities described in a prospectus supplement differ from any of the terms described in this prospectus, then those terms as set forth in the relevant prospectus supplement will control.

Except as set forth in any prospectus supplement, our debt securities may be issued without limit as to aggregate principal amount, in one or more series, in each case as established from time to time by our Board of Directors, a committee of the Board of Directors or as set forth in the applicable indenture or one or more supplements to the indenture. All of our debt securities of one series need not be issued at the same time, and unless otherwise provided, a series may be reopened for issuance of additional debt securities without the consent of the holders of the debt securities of that series.

Each indenture will provide that we may, but need not, designate more than one trustee for the indenture, each with respect to one or more series of our debt securities. Any trustee under an indenture may resign or be removed with respect to one or more series of our debt securities, and a successor trustee may be appointed to act with respect to that series. If two or more persons are acting as trustee to different series of our debt securities, each trustee shall be a trustee of a trust under the applicable indenture separate and apart from the trust administered by any other trustee and, except as otherwise indicated in this prospectus, any action taken by a trustee may be taken by that trustee with respect to, and only with respect to, the one or more series of debt securities for which it is trustee under the applicable indenture.

This summary sets forth certain general terms and provisions of the indenture and our debt securities. For a detailed description of a specific series of debt securities, you should consult the

prospectus supplement for that series. The prospectus supplement will contain all of the following information:

- (1) the title of those debt securities;
- (2) the aggregate principal amount of those debt securities and any limit on the aggregate principal amount;
- (3) the price (expressed as a percentage of the principal amount of those debt securities) at which those debt securities will be issued and, if other than the principal amount of those debt securities, the portion of the principal amount payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity thereof, or (if applicable) the portion of the principal amount of those debt securities that is convertible into common stock or preferred stock, or the method by which any convertible portion of those debt securities shall be determined;
- (4) if those debt securities are convertible, the terms on which they are convertible, including the initial conversion price or rate and conversion period and, in connection with the preservation of our status as a REIT, any applicable limitations on the ownership or transferability of the common stock or the preferred stock into which those debt securities are convertible;
- (5) the date or dates, or the method for determining the date or dates, on which the principal of those debt securities will be payable;
- (6) the rate or rates (which may be fixed or variable), or the method by which the rate or rates shall be determined, at which those debt securities will bear interest, if any;
- (7) the date or dates, or the method for determining the date or dates, from which any interest will accrue, the dates upon which that interest will be payable, the record dates for payment of that interest, or the method by which any of those dates shall be determined, the persons to whom that interest shall be payable, and the basis upon which that interest shall be calculated if other than that of a 360-day year of twelve 30-day months;
- (8) the place or places where the principal of (and premium, if any) and interest, if any, on debt securities will be payable, where debt securities may be surrendered for conversion or registration of transfer or exchange and where notices or demands to or upon us relating to debt securities and the indenture may be served;
- (9) the period or periods, if any, within which, the price or prices at which and the terms and conditions upon which those debt securities may be redeemed, as a whole or in part, at our option;
- (10) our obligation, if any, to redeem, repay or purchase those debt securities pursuant to any sinking fund or analogous provision or at the option of a holder of those debt securities, and the period or periods within which, the price or prices at which and the terms and conditions upon which those debt securities will be redeemed, repaid or purchased, as a whole or in part, pursuant to this obligation;
- (11) if other than U.S. dollars, the currency or currencies in which those debt securities are denominated and payable, which may be a foreign currency or units of two or more foreign currencies or a composite currency or currencies, and the terms and conditions relating thereto;
- (12) whether the amount of payments of principal of (and premium, if any) or interest, if any, on those debt securities may be determined with reference to an index, formula or other method (which index, formula or method may, but need not, be based on a currency, currencies, currency unit or units or composite currency or currencies) and the manner in which those amounts shall be determined;

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

(13) whether those debt securities will be issued in certificated and/or book-entry form, and, if in book-entry form, the identity of the depository for those debt securities;

(14) whether those debt securities will be in registered or bearer form and, if in registered form, the denominations thereof if other than \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof and, if in bearer form, the denominations thereof and terms and conditions relating thereto;

(15) the applicability, if any, of the defeasance and covenant defeasance provisions described herein or set forth in the applicable indenture, or any modification of the indenture;

(16) any deletions from, modifications of or additions to the events of default or our covenants with respect to those debt securities;

(17) whether and under what circumstances we will pay any additional amounts on those debt securities in respect of any tax, assessment or governmental charge and, if so, whether we will have the option to redeem those debt securities in lieu of making this payment;

(18) the subordination provisions, if any, relating to those debt securities;

(19) the provisions, if any, relating to any security provided for those debt securities; and

(20) any other terms of those debt securities.

If the applicable prospectus supplement provides, we may issue the debt securities at a discount below their principal amount and provide for less than the entire principal amount of the debt securities to be payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity thereof ("Original Issue Discount Securities"). In those cases, any material U.S. federal income tax, accounting and other considerations applicable to Original Issue Discount Securities will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Denominations, Interest, Registration and Transfer

Unless otherwise described in the applicable prospectus supplement, the debt securities of any series will be issuable in denominations of \$1,000 and integral multiples of \$1,000.

Unless otherwise described in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will pay the principal of (and premium, if any) and interest on any series of debt securities at the applicable trustee's corporate trust office, the address of which will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement; provided, however, that, unless otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, we may make interest payments (1) by check mailed to the address of the person entitled to the payment as that address appears in the applicable register for those debt securities, or (2) by wire transfer of funds to the person at an account maintained within the United States.

Subject to certain limitations imposed on debt securities issued in book-entry form, the debt securities of any series will be exchangeable for any authorized denomination of other debt securities of the same series and of a like aggregate principal amount and tenor upon surrender of those debt securities at the office of any transfer agent we designate for that purpose. In addition, subject to certain limitations imposed on debt securities issued in book-entry form, the debt securities of any series may be surrendered for conversion or registration of transfer thereof at the office of any transfer agent we designate for that purpose. Every debt security surrendered for conversion, registration of transfer or exchange shall be duly endorsed or accompanied by a written instrument of transfer and the person requesting that transfer must provide evidence of title and identity satisfactory to us and the applicable transfer agent. No service charge will be made for any registration of transfer or exchange of any debt securities, but we may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge payable in connection therewith. We may at any time rescind the designation of any transfer agent appointed with respect to the debt securities of any series or approve a change in

the location through which any transfer agent acts, except that we will be required to maintain a transfer agent in each place of payment for that series. We may at any time designate additional transfer agents with respect to any series of debt securities.

Neither we nor any trustee shall be required to

issue, register the transfer of or exchange debt securities of any series if that debt security may be among those selected for redemption during a period beginning at the opening of business 15 days before the mailing or first publication, as the case may be, of notice of redemption of those debt securities and ending at the close of business on

1. the day of mailing of the relevant notice of redemption if the debt securities of that series are issuable only in registered form, or
2. the day of the first publication of the relevant notice of redemption if the debt securities of that series are issuable in bearer form, or
3. the day of mailing of the relevant notice of redemption if those debt securities are issuable in registered form and there is no publication; or

register the transfer of or exchange any debt security in registered form, or portion thereof, so selected for redemption, in whole or in part, except the unredeemed portion of any debt security being redeemed in part; or

exchange any debt security in bearer form so selected for redemption, except in exchange for a debt security of that series in registered form that is simultaneously surrendered for redemption; or

issue, register the transfer of or exchange any debt security that has been surrendered for repayment at the holder's option, except the portion, if any, of that debt security not to be so repaid.

Merger, Consolidation or Sale of Assets

Each indenture will provide that we will not consolidate with, sell, lease or convey all or substantially all of our assets to, or merge with or into, any person unless

either we shall be the continuing entity, or the successor person (if not us) formed by or resulting from the consolidation or merger or which shall have received the transfer of the assets shall be a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the United States or any State thereof and shall expressly assume (1) our obligation to pay the principal of (and premium, if any) and interest on all the debt securities issued under the indenture and (2) the due and punctual performance and observance of all the covenants and conditions contained in the indenture and in the debt securities;

immediately after giving effect to the transaction and treating any indebtedness that becomes our obligation or the obligation of any Subsidiary as a result of the transaction as having been incurred, and treating any liens on any property or assets of ours or any Subsidiary that are incurred, created or assumed as a result of the transaction as having been created, incurred or assumed, by us or the Subsidiary at the time of the transaction, no event of default under the indenture, and no event that, after notice or the lapse of time, or both, would become an event of default, shall have occurred and be continuing; and

an officers' certificate and legal opinion covering these conditions shall be delivered to the trustee.

Certain Covenants

Existence. Except as permitted under the heading above, entitled " Merger, Consolidation or Sale of Assets," we will be required under each indenture to do or cause to be done all things necessary to preserve and keep in full force and effect our corporate existence, all material rights (by charter, by-laws and statute) and all material franchises; provided, however, that we shall not be required to preserve any right or franchise if our Board of Directors determines that the preservation thereof is no longer desirable in the conduct of our business.

Maintenance of Properties. Each indenture will require us to cause all of our material properties used or useful in the conduct of our business or the business of any Subsidiary to be maintained and kept in good condition, repair and working order and supplied with all necessary

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

equipment and will require us to cause to be made all necessary repairs, renewals, replacements, betterments and improvements to those properties, as in our judgment may be necessary so that the business carried on in connection with those properties may be properly and advantageously conducted at all times; provided, however, that we and our Subsidiaries shall not be prevented from selling or otherwise disposing of these properties for value in the ordinary course of business.

Insurance. Each indenture will require us and each of our Subsidiaries to keep in force upon all of our properties and operations policies of insurance carried with responsible companies in amounts and covering all risks as shall be customary in the industry in accordance with prevailing market conditions and availability.

Payment of Taxes and Other Claims. Each indenture will require us to pay or discharge or cause to be paid or discharged, before the same shall become delinquent, (a) all taxes, assessments and governmental charges levied or imposed on us, our income, profits or property, or any Subsidiary, its income, profits or property and (b) all lawful claims for labor, materials and supplies that, if unpaid, might by law become a lien upon our property or the property of any Subsidiary; provided, however, that we shall not be required to pay or discharge or cause to be paid or discharged any tax, assessment, charge or claim the amount, applicability or validity of which we are contesting in good faith through appropriate proceedings.

Provisions of Financial Information. Whether or not we are subject to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act, we will be required by each indenture, within 15 days after each of the respective dates by which we would have been required to file annual reports, quarterly reports and other documents with the Commission if we were subject to those Sections of the Exchange Act to:

transmit by mail to all holders of debt securities issued under the indenture, as their names and addresses appear in the applicable register for those debt securities, without cost to the holders, copies of the annual reports, quarterly reports and other documents that we would have been required to file with the Commission pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act if we were subject to those Sections;

file with the applicable trustee copies of the annual reports, quarterly reports and other documents that we would have been required to file with the Commission pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act if we were subject to those Sections; and

supply promptly, upon written request and payment of the reasonable cost of duplication and delivery, copies of these documents to any prospective holder of the debt securities.

Except as may otherwise be provided in the prospectus supplement relating to any series of debt securities, the term "Subsidiary", as used in the indenture means any other Person of which more than 50% of (a) the equity or other ownership interests or (b) the total voting power of shares of capital stock or other ownership interests entitled (without regard to the occurrence of any contingency) to

vote in the election of directors, managers, trustees or general or managing partners thereof is at the time owned by us or one or more of our Subsidiaries or a combination thereof.

Additional Covenants. If we make any additional covenants with respect to any series of debt securities, those covenants will be set forth in the prospectus supplement relating to those debt securities.

Events of Default, Notice and Waiver

Unless otherwise provided in the applicable indenture, each indenture will provide that the following events are "events of default" for any series of debt securities issued under it:

- (1) default for 30 days in the payment of any installment of interest on any Debt Security of that series;
- (2) default in the payment of the principal of (or premium, if any, on) any Debt Security of that series when due, whether at stated maturity or by declaration of acceleration, notice of redemption, notice of option to elect repayment or otherwise;

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

(3) default in making any sinking fund payment as required for any Debt Security of that series;

(4) default in the performance of any of our other covenants contained in the indenture (other than a covenant added to the indenture solely for the benefit of a series of debt securities issued thereunder other than that series), which continues for 60 days after we receive written notice from the trustee or the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series;

(5) default under any bond, debenture, note or other evidence of indebtedness for money borrowed by us or any of our Subsidiaries (including obligations under leases required to be capitalized on the balance sheet of the lessee under generally accepted accounting principles, but not including any indebtedness or obligations for which recourse is limited to property purchased) in an aggregate principal amount in excess of \$25,000,000 or under any mortgage, indenture or instrument under which there may be issued or by which there may be secured or evidenced any indebtedness for money borrowed by us or any of our Subsidiaries (including such leases, but not including such indebtedness or obligations for which recourse is limited to property purchased) in an aggregate principal amount in excess of \$25,000,000, whether the indebtedness exists at the date of the relevant indenture or shall thereafter be created, which default shall have resulted in the indebtedness becoming or being declared due and payable prior to the date on which it would otherwise have become due and payable or which default shall have resulted in the obligation being accelerated, without the acceleration having been rescinded or annulled;

(6) certain events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization with respect to us or any of our Significant Subsidiaries; or

(7) any other Event of Default provided with respect to a particular series of debt securities.

The term "Significant Subsidiary" as used above has the meaning ascribed to the term in Rule 1-02 of Regulation S-X promulgated under the Securities Act, as the Regulation was in effect on January 1, 1996.

If an event of default under any indenture with respect to debt securities of any series at the time outstanding occurs and is continuing, then the applicable trustee or the holders of not less than 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series may declare the principal amount (or, if the debt securities of that series are Original Issue Discount Securities or Indexed Securities, that portion of the principal amount as may be specified in the terms thereof) of all the debt securities of

12

that series to be due and payable immediately by written notice thereof to us (and to the applicable trustee if given by the holders). However, at any time after the declaration of acceleration with respect to debt securities of a series has been made, but before a judgment or decree for payment of the money due has been obtained by the applicable trustee, the holders of not less than a majority of the principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series may rescind and annul the declaration and its consequences if:

we shall have deposited with the applicable trustee all required payments of the principal of (and premium, if any) and interest on the debt securities of that series (other than principal which has become due solely as a result of the acceleration), plus certain fees, expenses, disbursements and advances of the applicable trustee; and

all events of default, other than the nonpayment of accelerated principal (or specified portion thereof), premium, if any, and interest with respect to debt securities of that series have been cured or waived as provided in the indenture.

Each indenture will also provide that the holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may waive any past default with respect to that series and its consequences, except:

a default in the payment of the principal of (or premium, if any) or interest on any Debt Security of that series; or

a default in respect of a covenant or provision contained in the indenture that cannot be modified or amended without the consent of the holder of each outstanding Debt Security of the series affected by the default.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

Each indenture will require each trustee to give notice of a default under the indenture to the holders of debt securities within 90 days unless the default shall have been cured or waived, subject to certain exceptions; provided, however, that the trustee may withhold notice to the holders of any series of debt securities of any default with respect to that series (except a default in the payment of the principal of (or premium, if any) or interest on any debt security of that series or in the payment of any sinking fund installment in respect of any debt security of that series) if specified Responsible Officers of the trustee consider a withholding to be in those holders' interest.

Each indenture will provide that no holders of debt securities of any series may institute any proceedings, judicial or otherwise, with respect to the indenture or for any remedy thereunder, except in the case of failure of the trustee, for 60 days, to act after it has received a written request to institute proceedings in respect of an event of default from the holders of not less than 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series, as well as an offer of indemnity reasonably satisfactory to it, and no direction inconsistent with the written request has been given to the trustee during the 60-day period by holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series. This provision will not prevent, however, any holder of debt securities from instituting suit for the enforcement of payment of the principal of (and premium, if any) and interest on those debt securities at the respective due dates thereof.

Each indenture will provide that, subject to provisions in the Trust Indenture Act of 1939 relating to its duties in case of default, the trustee is under no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under the indenture at the request or direction of any holders of any series of the debt securities then outstanding under the indenture, unless those holders shall have offered to the trustee reasonable security or indemnity. The holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series shall have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the trustee, or of exercising any trust or power conferred upon the trustee; provided that the direction shall not conflict with any rule of law or the indenture, and provided further that the trustee may refuse to follow any direction that may involve the trustee in

13

personal liability or that may be unduly prejudicial to the holders of debt securities of that series not joining in the direction to the trustee.

Within 120 days after the close of each fiscal year, we will be required to deliver to the trustee a certificate, signed by one of several specified officers, stating whether or not the officer has knowledge of any default under the indenture and, if so, specifying each default and the nature and status thereof.

Modification of the Indenture

Modifications and amendments of any indenture will be permitted with the consent of the holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of all outstanding debt securities of each series issued under the indenture affected by the modification or amendment; provided, however, that no modification or amendment may, without the consent of the holder of each debt security affected thereby,

change the stated maturity of the principal of, or any installment of principal of, or interest (or premium, if any) on, any debt security;

reduce the principal amount of, or the rate or amount of interest on, or any premium payable on redemption of, any debt security, or reduce the amount of principal of an Original Issue Discount Security that would be due and payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity of the Original Issue Discount Security or would be provable in bankruptcy, or adversely affect any right of repayment at the option of the holder of any debt security (or reduce the amount of premium payable upon any repayment);

change the place of payment, or the coin or currency, for payment of principal of (or premium, if any) or interest on any debt security;

impair the right to institute suit for the enforcement of any payment on or with respect to any debt security when due;

reduce the above-stated percentage of outstanding debt securities of any series necessary to modify or amend the indenture to waive compliance with certain provisions of the indenture or certain defaults and consequences under the indenture or to reduce the quorum or voting requirements set forth in the indenture; or

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

modify any of the foregoing provisions or any of the provisions relating to the waiver of certain past defaults or certain covenants, except to increase the required percentage to effect the action or to provide that certain other provisions may not be modified or waived without the consent of the holder of each outstanding debt security affected thereby.

The holders of a majority in aggregate principal amount of outstanding debt securities of any series may, on behalf of all holders of debt securities of that series waive, insofar as that series is concerned, our compliance with certain restrictive covenants in the applicable indenture.

We, along with the trustee, shall be permitted to modify and amend an indenture without the consent of any holder of debt securities for any of the following purposes:

to evidence the succession of another person to our obligations under the indenture;

to add to our covenants for the benefit of the holders of all or any series of debt securities or to surrender any right or power conferred upon us in the indenture;

to add events of default for the benefit of the holders of all or any series of debt securities;

to add or change any provisions of the indenture to facilitate the issuance of, or to liberalize certain terms of, debt securities in bearer form, or to permit or facilitate the issuance of debt

14

securities in uncertificated form, provided that this action shall not adversely affect the interests of the holders of the debt securities of any series in any material respect;

to change or eliminate any provisions of the indenture, provided that any such change or elimination does not apply to any outstanding debt securities of a series created prior to the date of the amendment or supplement that are entitled to the benefit of that provision;

to secure the debt securities;

to establish the form or terms of debt securities of any series, including the provisions and procedures, if applicable, for the conversion of debt securities into common stock or preferred stock;

to provide for the acceptance of appointment by a successor trustee or facilitate the administration of the trusts under the indenture by more than one trustee;

to cure any ambiguity, defect or inconsistency in the indenture or to make any other provisions with respect to matters or questions arising under the indenture, provided, however, that this action shall not adversely affect the interests of holders of debt securities of any series in any material respect; or

to supplement any of the provisions of the indenture to the extent necessary to permit or facilitate defeasance, covenant defeasance and discharge of any series of debt securities, provided, however, that this action shall not adversely affect the interests of the holders of the debt securities of any series in any material respect.

Each indenture will provide that in determining whether the holders of the requisite principal amount of outstanding debt securities of a series have given any request, demand, authorization, direction, notice, consent or waiver described in the indenture or whether a quorum is

present at a meeting of holders of debt securities,

the principal amount of an Original Issue Discount Security that shall be deemed to be outstanding shall be the amount of the principal of that security that would be due and payable as of the date of the determination upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity thereof;

the principal amount of any debt security denominated in a foreign currency that shall be deemed outstanding shall be the U.S. dollar equivalent, determined on the issue date for the debt security, of the principal amount (or, in the case of an Original Issue Discount Security, the U.S. dollar equivalent on the issue date of the debt security of the amount determined as provided in (a) above);

the principal amount of an Indexed Security that shall be deemed outstanding shall be the principal face amount of the Indexed Security at original issuance, unless otherwise provided with respect to the Indexed Security in the applicable indenture; and

debt securities owned by us or any other obligor upon the debt securities or any affiliate of ours or of the other obligor shall be disregarded.

Each indenture will contain provisions for convening meetings of the holders of debt securities of a series. A meeting may be permitted to be called at any time by the trustee, and also, upon our request or request of the holders of at least 10% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of a series, in any case upon notice given as provided in the indenture. Except for any consent or waiver that must be given by the holder of each debt security affected thereby, any resolution presented at a meeting or at an adjourned meeting duly reconvened at which a quorum is present, may be adopted by the affirmative vote of the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series; provided, however, that, except as referred to above, any resolution with respect to any request, demand, authorization, direction, notice, consent, waiver or other action that may be made,

15

given or taken by the holders of a specified percentage, which is less than a majority, in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of the series may be adopted at a meeting or adjourned meeting duly reconvened at which a quorum is present by the affirmative vote of the holders of the specified percentage in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series. Any resolution passed or decision taken at any meeting of holders of debt securities of any series duly held in accordance with the indenture will be binding on all holders of debt securities of that series. The persons holding or representing a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of a series shall constitute a quorum for a meeting of holders of that series; provided, however, that if any action is to be taken at a meeting with respect to a consent or waiver that may be given by the holders of not less than a specified percentage in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series, the persons holding or representing the specified percentage in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series will constitute a quorum.

Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions, each indenture will provide that if any action is to be taken at a meeting of holders of debt securities of any series with respect to any request, demand, authorization, direction, notice, consent, waiver or other action that the indenture expressly provides may be made, given or taken by the holders of that series and one or more additional series: (a) there shall be no minimum quorum requirement for the meeting and (b) the principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of all those series that are entitled to vote in favor of the request, demand, authorization, direction, notice, consent, waiver or other action shall be taken into account in determining whether the request, demand, authorization, direction, notice, consent, waiver or other action has been made, given or taken under the indenture.

Discharge, Defeasance and Covenant Defeasance

Unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, upon our request any indenture shall cease to be of further effect with respect to any series of debt securities issued under the indenture specified in our request (except as to certain limited provisions of the indenture which shall survive) when either (a) all debt securities of that series have been delivered to the trustee for cancellation or (b) all debt securities of that series have become due and payable or will become due and payable within one year (or are scheduled for redemption within one year) and we have irrevocably deposited with the applicable trustee, in trust, funds in the currency or currencies, currency unit or units or composite currency or currencies in which those debt securities are payable an amount sufficient to pay the entire indebtedness on those debt securities in

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

respect of principal (and premium, if any) and interest to the date of the deposit (if those debt securities have become due and payable) or to the stated maturity or redemption date, as the case may be.

Each indenture will provide that, unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we may elect either to:

defeasance and be discharged from any and all obligations with respect to any series of debt securities (except for the obligation to pay additional amounts, if any, upon the occurrence of certain events of tax with respect to payments on the debt securities and the obligations to register the transfer or exchange of the debt securities, to replace temporary or mutilated, destroyed, lost or stolen debt securities, to maintain an office or agency in respect of the debt securities and to hold money for payment in trust) ("defeasance"); or

be released from our obligations with respect to certain covenants (which will be described in the relevant prospectus supplement) applicable to the debt securities under the applicable indenture (which may include, subject to a limited exception, the covenants described under " Certain Covenants"), and any omission to comply with these obligations shall not constitute a default or an event of default with respect to those debt securities ("covenant defeasance"),

16

in either case upon our irrevocable deposit with the applicable trustee, in trust, of an amount, in the currency or currencies, currency unit or units or composite currency or currencies in which those debt securities are payable at stated maturity, or Government Obligations (as defined below), or both, applicable to those debt securities that through the scheduled payment of principal and interest in accordance with their terms will provide money in an amount sufficient to pay the principal of (and premium, if any) and interest on those debt securities, and any mandatory sinking fund or analogous payments on those debt securities, on the scheduled due dates.

A trust may only be established if, among other things, we have delivered to the applicable trustee an opinion of counsel (as specified in the applicable indenture) to the effect that the holders of those debt securities will not recognize income, gain or loss for U.S. federal income tax purposes as a result of the defeasance or covenant defeasance and will be subject to U.S. federal income tax on the same amounts, in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the defeasance or covenant defeasance had not occurred. Additionally, in the case of defeasance, an opinion of counsel must refer to and be based on a ruling of the Internal Revenue Service (the "IRS") or a change in applicable U.S. federal income tax law occurring after the date of the applicable indenture. In the event of defeasance, the holders of those debt securities will thereafter be able to look only to the trust fund for payment of principal (and premium, if any) and interest.

"Government Obligations" means securities that are (a) direct obligations of the United States of America or the government which issued the foreign currency in which the debt securities of a particular series are payable, for the payment of which its full faith and credit is pledged, or (b) obligations of a person controlled or supervised by and acting as an agency or instrumentality of the United States of America or the government which issued the foreign currency in which the debt securities of that series are payable, the payment of which is unconditionally guaranteed as a full faith and credit obligation by the United States of America or the other government, which, in either case, are not callable or redeemable at the option of the issuer thereof, and shall also include a depository receipt issued by a bank or trust company as custodian with respect to any Government Obligation or a specific payment of interest on or principal of any Government Obligation held by a custodian for the account of the holder of a depository receipt; provided, however, that (except as required by law) the custodian is not authorized to make any deduction from the amount payable to the holder of the depository receipt from any amount received by the custodian in respect of the Government Obligation or the specific payment of interest on or principal of the Government Obligation evidenced by the depository receipt.

Unless otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, if after we have deposited funds and/or Government Obligations to effect defeasance or covenant defeasance with respect to debt securities of any series,

the holder of a debt security of that series is entitled to, and does, elect pursuant to the applicable indenture or the terms of that debt security to receive payment in a currency, currency unit or composite currency other than that in which the deposit has been made in respect of that debt security or

a Conversion Event (as defined below) occurs in respect of the currency, currency unit or composite currency in which the deposit has been made,

then the indebtedness represented by that debt security will be deemed to have been, and will be, fully discharged and satisfied through the payment of the principal of (and premium, if any) and interest on that debt security as they become due out of the proceeds yielded by converting the amount so deposited in respect of that debt security into the currency, currency unit or composite currency in

17

which the debt security becomes payable as a result of the election or Conversion Event based on the applicable market exchange rate. "Conversion Event" means the cessation of use of:

a currency, currency unit or composite currency both by the government of the country which issued the currency and for the settlement of transactions by a central bank or other public institution of or within the international banking community;

the ECU both within the European Monetary System and for the settlement of transactions by public institutions of or within the European Communities; or

any currency unit or composite currency other than the ECU for the purposes for which it was established.

In the event we effect a covenant defeasance with respect to any debt securities and those debt securities are declared due and payable because of the occurrence of any event of default, other than the event of default described in clause 4 under "Events of Default, Notice and Waiver" with respect to the specified covenants in the applicable indenture (which covenants would no longer be applicable to those debt securities) or clause 7 thereunder with respect to any other covenant as to which there has been covenant defeasance, the amount in currency, currency unit or composite currency in which those debt securities are payable, and Government Obligations on deposit with the applicable trustee, may not be sufficient to pay amounts due on those debt securities at the time of the acceleration resulting from the event of default. We would, however, remain liable to make payment of the amounts due at the time of acceleration.

The applicable prospectus supplement may further describe the provisions, if any, permitting the defeasance or covenant defeasance, including any modifications to the provisions described above, with respect to the debt securities of or within a particular series.

Conversion Rights

The terms and conditions, if any, upon which the debt securities are convertible into common stock or preferred stock will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to those debt securities. The terms will include whether the debt securities are convertible into common stock or preferred stock, the conversion price (or manner of calculation thereof), the conversion period, provisions as to whether conversion will be at our option or the option of the holders, the events requiring an adjustment of the conversion price and provisions affecting conversion in the event of the redemption of the debt securities and any restrictions on conversion, including restrictions directed at maintaining our REIT status.

Unclaimed Payments

We will be repaid for all amounts we pay to a paying agent or a trustee for the payment of the principal of or any premium or interest on any debt security that remains unclaimed at the end of two years after the principal, premium or interest has become due and payable, and the holder of that debt security may look only to us for payment of the principal, premium or interest.

Global Securities

The debt securities of a series may be issued in whole or in part in the form of one or more global securities (the "Global Securities") that will be deposited with, or on behalf of, a depositary identified in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to that series. Global Securities may be issued in either registered or bearer form and in either temporary or permanent form. The specific terms of the depositary arrangement with respect to a series of debt securities will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to that series.

18

DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK

We have authority to issue 100,000,000 shares of our common stock, \$1.00 par value per share. As of December 19, 2002, we had outstanding 34,871,617 shares of our common stock.

General

The following description of our common stock sets forth certain general terms and provisions of our common stock to which any prospectus supplement may relate, including a prospectus supplement providing that our common stock will be issuable upon conversion of our debt securities or our preferred stock. The statements below describing our common stock are in all respects subject to and qualified in their entirety by reference to the applicable provisions of our charter and Bylaws.

Terms

Subject to the preferential rights of any other shares or series of stock and to the provisions of our charter regarding the restrictions on transfer of stock, holders of our common stock are entitled to receive dividends when, as and if authorized and declared by our board of directors out of assets legally available therefor. Payment and authorization of dividends on our common stock and purchases of those shares by us may be subject to certain restrictions if we fail to pay dividends on the preferred stock. If we were to experience liquidation, dissolution or winding up, holders of our common stock would be entitled to share equally and ratably in any assets available for distribution to them, after payment or adequate provision for payment of our debts and other liabilities and the preferential amounts owing with respect to any of our outstanding preferred stock.

Subject to the provisions of our charter regarding the restrictions on transfer of stock, each outstanding share of our common stock entitles the holder to one vote on all matters submitted to a vote of stockholders, including the election of directors and, except as provided with respect to any other class or series of stock, the holders of such shares will possess the exclusive voting power. Our board of directors is divided into three classes of directors. The terms of the Class I, Class II and Class III directors will expire in 2004, 2005 and 2003, respectively. Each class is chosen for three-year terms upon the expiration of their current terms and each year one class of directors will be elected by the stockholders. The staggered terms of directors may reduce the possibility of a tender offer or an attempt to change control of us even though a tender offer or change in control might be in the best interest of the stockholders.

Holders of our common stock do not have cumulative voting rights in the election of directors, which means that holders of more than 50% of all the shares of our common stock voting for the election of directors can elect all the directors of the class standing for election at the time if they choose to do so and the holders of the remaining shares cannot elect any directors of that class. Holders of shares of common stock do not have preemptive rights, which means they have no right under the Charter, Bylaws, or Maryland law to acquire any additional shares of common stock that may be issued by us at a subsequent date. Holders of shares of common stock have no preference, conversion, exchange, sinking fund, or redemption rights. Under Maryland law, stockholders generally are not liable for the corporation's debts or obligations. All shares of common stock now outstanding are, and additional shares of common stock offered will be when issued, fully paid and nonassessable.

Under the Maryland General Corporation Law or MGCL, a Maryland corporation generally cannot dissolve, amend its charter, merge, sell all or substantially all of its assets, engage in a share exchange or engage in similar transactions outside the ordinary course of business unless approved by the affirmative vote of stockholders holding at least two thirds of the shares entitled to vote on the matter unless a lesser percentage (but not less than a majority of all of the votes entitled to be cast on the matter) is set forth in the corporation's charter. Our charter provides that any such action shall be

effective if approved by the affirmative vote of holders of shares entitled to cast a majority of all the votes entitled to be cast on the matter.

Our charter authorizes our board of directors to reclassify any unissued shares of our common stock into other classes or series of stock and to establish the number of shares in each class or series and to set the preferences, conversion and other rights, voting powers, restrictions, limitations as to dividends or other distributions, qualifications or terms or conditions of redemption for each such class or series.

Maryland Business Combination Law

Under the MGCL, certain "business combinations" (including certain issuances of equity securities) between a Maryland corporation and any person who beneficially owns ten percent or more of the voting power of the corporation's shares, or an affiliate or associate of the corporation who beneficially owned ten percent or more of the voting power at any time within the preceding two years, in each case referred to as an interested stockholder, or an affiliate thereof are prohibited for five years after the most recent date on which the interested stockholder becomes an interested stockholder. Thereafter, any such business combination must be approved by two super-majority stockholder votes unless, among other conditions, the corporation's common stockholders receive a minimum price (as defined in the MGCL) for their shares and the consideration is received in cash or in the same form as previously paid by the interested stockholder for its common shares. The business combination provisions of the MGCL do not apply, however, to business combinations that are approved or exempted by the Board of Directors prior to the time that the interested stockholder becomes an interested stockholder. These provisions of the MGCL may delay, defer or prevent a transaction or a change in control of us that might involve a premium price for the common stock or otherwise be in the best interests of the stockholders.

Maryland Control Share Acquisitions Law

The MGCL provides that "control shares" of a Maryland corporation acquired in a "control share acquisition" have no voting rights except to the extent approved by a vote of two-thirds of the votes entitled to be cast on the matter, excluding shares of stock owned by the acquiror or by officers or directors who are employees of the corporation. "Control Shares" are shares of stock which, if aggregated with all other such shares of stock previously acquired by the acquiror or in respect of which the acquiror is able to exercise or direct the exercise of voting power (except solely by virtue of a revocable proxy), would entitle the acquiror to exercise voting power in electing directors within one of the following ranges of voting power; (1) one-tenth or more but less than one third, (2) one-third or more but less than a majority, or (3) a majority or more of all voting power. Control shares do not include shares the acquiring person is then entitled to vote as a result of having previously obtained stockholder approval. A "control share acquisition" means the acquisition of control shares, subject to certain exceptions.

A person who has made or proposes to make a control share acquisition, upon satisfaction of certain conditions (including an undertaking to pay expenses), may compel the board of directors of the corporation to call a special meeting of stockholders to be held within 50 days of demand to consider the voting rights of the shares. If no request for a meeting is made, the corporation may itself present the question at any stockholders meeting.

If voting rights are not approved at the meeting or if the acquiring person does not deliver an acquiring person statement as required by the statute, then, subject to certain conditions and limitations, the corporation may redeem any and all of the control shares (except those for which the voting rights have previously been approved) for fair value determined, without regard to the absence of voting rights for the control shares, as of the date of the last control share acquisition by the

acquiror or of any meeting of stockholders at which the voting rights of such shares are considered and not approved. If voting rights for control shares are approved at a stockholders meeting and the acquiror becomes entitled to vote a majority of the shares entitled to vote, all other stockholders may exercise appraisal rights. The fair value of the shares as determined for purposes of such appraisal rights may not be less than the highest price per share paid by the acquiror in the control share acquisition.

"Control share acquisition" does not include (1) shares acquired in a merger, consolidation or share exchange if the corporation is a party to the transaction or (b) acquisitions exempted by the charter or bylaws of the corporation, adopted at anytime before the acquisition of the shares.

As permitted by the MGCL, the Bylaws contain a provision exempting the Company from the control share acquisition statute any and all acquisitions by any person of the Company's share of stock. There can be no assurance that such provision will not be amended or eliminated by the Board of Directors at any time in the future.

Restrictions on Ownership

For us to qualify as a REIT under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, not more than 50% in value of our outstanding stock may be owned, actually or constructively, by five or fewer individuals (defined in the Code to include certain entities) during the last half of a taxable year. To assist us in meeting this requirement and certain other requirements relating to our tax status as a REIT, we may take certain actions to limit the actual, beneficial or constructive ownership by a single person or entity of our outstanding equity securities.

Transfer Agent

The registrar and transfer agent for our common stock is The Bank of New York.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK

We are authorized to issue 20,000,000 shares of preferred stock, \$1.00 par value per share. As of December 19, 2002, we had outstanding 2,745,700 shares of 9.375% Class B cumulative redeemable preferred stock and 1,380,000 shares of 9.5% Class C cumulative redeemable preferred stock.

General

The following description of our preferred stock sets forth certain general terms and provisions of our preferred stock to which any prospectus supplement may relate. The statements below describing our preferred stock are in all respects subject to and qualified in their entirety by reference to the applicable provisions of our Charter (including any applicable articles supplementary designating terms of a series of preferred stock) and our Bylaws. You should review the articles supplementary for the Class B cumulative redeemable preferred stock and the articles supplementary for the Class C cumulative redeemable preferred stock, copies of which may be obtained as described below under "Where You Can Find More Information."

Our charter authorizes our board of directors to classify any unissued shares of preferred stock and to reclassify any previously classified but unissued shares of any class or series, as authorized by our board of directors. Prior to issuance of shares of each series, our board is required by the MGCL and our charter to set, subject to the provisions of our charter regarding the restrictions on transfer of stock, the terms, preferences, conversion or other rights, voting powers, restrictions, limitations as to dividends or other distributions, qualifications and terms or conditions of redemption for each such series. Thus, the board could authorize the issuance of shares of preferred stock with terms and conditions which could have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a transaction or a change in control of us that might involve a premium price for holders of our common stock or otherwise be in their best interest. We have no present plans to issue any additional preferred stock. Any additional preferred stock will, when issued, be fully paid and nonassessable and will have no preemptive rights. The following discussion is applicable to any additional preferred stock that we may issue.

You should refer to the prospectus supplement relating to the preferred stock offered thereby for specific terms of and other information concerning the preferred stock, including:

- (1) the title of the preferred stock;
- (2) the number of shares of the preferred stock offered, the liquidation preference per share and the offering price of the preferred stock;
- (3) the dividend rate(s), period(s) and/or payment date(s) or method(s) of calculation thereof applicable to the preferred stock;
- (4) whether the preferred stock is cumulative or not and, if cumulative, the date from which dividends on the preferred stock shall accumulate;
- (5) the procedures for any auction and remarketing, if any, for the preferred stock;
- (6) the provision for a sinking fund, if any, for the preferred stock;
- (7) any voting rights of the preferred stock;
- (8) the provision for redemption, if applicable, of the preferred stock;
- (9) any listing of the preferred stock on any securities exchange;
- (10) the terms and conditions, if applicable, upon which the preferred stock will be convertible into common stock, including the conversion price (or manner of calculation thereof);

(11) a discussion of federal income tax considerations applicable to the preferred stock;

22

(12) any limitations on actual, beneficial or constructive ownership and restrictions on transfer, in each case as may be appropriate to preserve our REIT status;

(13) the relative ranking and preferences of the preferred stock as to dividend rights and rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs;

(14) whether liquidation preferences on preferred stock will be counted as liabilities of ours in determining whether distributions to junior stockholders can be made under the MGCL;

(15) any limitations on issuance of any series or class of preferred stock ranking senior to or on a parity with such series or class of preferred stock as to dividend rights and rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs; and

(16) any other specific terms, preferences, rights, limitations or restrictions of the preferred stock.

Rank

Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, the preferred stock will, with respect to dividend rights and rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs rank:

senior to all classes or series of common stock and to all equity securities ranking junior to the preferred stock with respect to dividend rights or rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up;

on a parity with all equity securities issued by us the terms of which specifically provide that such equity securities rank on a parity with the preferred stock with respect to dividend rights or rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs; and

junior to all equity securities issued by us the terms of which specifically provide that such equity securities rank senior to the preferred stock with respect to dividend rights or rights upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs.

For these purposes, the term "equity securities" does not include convertible debt securities.

Dividends

Holders of shares of our preferred stock of each series or class shall be entitled to receive, when, as and if authorized by our board of directors and declared, out of our assets legally available for payment, cash dividends at rates and on dates as will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. Each dividend shall be payable to holders of record as they appear on our stock transfer books on the record dates as shall be fixed by our board of directors.

Dividends on any series or class of our preferred stock may be cumulative or noncumulative, as provided in the applicable prospectus supplement. Dividends, if cumulative, will be cumulative from and after the date set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. If our board of directors fails to authorize a dividend payable on a dividend payment date on any series or class of preferred stock for which dividends are noncumulative, then the holders of such series or class of preferred stock will have no right to receive a dividend in respect of the dividend period ending on that dividend payment date, and we will have no obligation to pay the dividend accrued for such period, whether or not dividends on such series or class are declared or paid for any future period.

If any shares of preferred stock of any series or class are outstanding, no full dividends shall be authorized or paid or set apart for payment on the preferred stock of any other series or class ranking,

as to dividends, on a parity with or junior to the preferred stock of that series or class for any period unless:

the series or class of preferred stock has a cumulative dividend, then full cumulative dividends have been or contemporaneously are authorized and paid or authorized and a sum sufficient for the payment thereof is set apart for such payment on the preferred stock of such series or class for all past dividend periods and the then current dividend period; or

the series or class of preferred stock does not have a cumulative dividend, then full dividends for the then current dividend period have been or contemporaneously are authorized and paid or authorized and a sum sufficient for the payment thereof is set apart for the payment on the preferred stock of such series or class.

When dividends are not paid in full (or a sum sufficient for the full payment is not set apart) upon the shares of preferred stock of any series or class and the shares of any other series or class of preferred stock ranking on a parity as to dividends with the preferred stock of that series or class, then all dividends authorized on shares of preferred stock of that series or class and any other series or class of preferred stock ranking on a parity as to dividends with that preferred stock shall be authorized pro rata so that the amount of dividends authorized per share on the preferred stock of that series or class and such other series or class of preferred stock shall in all cases bear to each other the same ratio that accrued dividends per share on the shares of preferred stock of such series or class (which shall not include any accumulation in respect of unpaid dividends for prior dividend periods if the preferred stock does not have a cumulative dividend) and such other series or class of preferred stock bear to each other. No interest, or sum of money in lieu of interest, shall be payable in respect of any dividend payment or payments on preferred stock of such series or class that may be in arrears.

Except as provided in the immediately preceding paragraph, unless: if that series or class of preferred stock has a cumulative dividend, full cumulative dividends on the preferred stock of such series or class have been or contemporaneously are authorized and paid or authorized and a sum sufficient for the payment thereof is set apart for payment for all past dividend periods and the then current dividend period; and if that series or class of preferred stock does not have a cumulative dividend, full dividends on the preferred stock of such series or class have been or contemporaneously are authorized and paid or authorized and a sum sufficient for the payment thereof is set apart for payment for the then current dividend period, then no dividends (other than in the common stock or other stock of ours ranking junior to the preferred stock of that series or class as to dividends and upon liquidation) shall be authorized or paid or set aside for payment nor shall any other distribution be authorized or made on the common stock or any other stock of ours ranking junior to or on a parity with the preferred stock of that series or class as to dividends or upon liquidation, nor shall the common stock or any other stock of ours ranking junior to or on a parity with the preferred stock of that series or class as to dividends or upon liquidation be redeemed, purchased or otherwise acquired for any consideration (or any amounts be paid to or made available for a sinking fund for the redemption of any shares of any such stock) by us (except by conversion into or exchange for other stock of ours ranking junior to the preferred stock of that series or class as to dividends and upon liquidation).

Any dividend payment made on shares of a series or class of preferred stock shall first be credited against the earliest accrued but unpaid dividend due with respect to shares of that series or class that remains payable.

Redemption

If the applicable prospectus supplement so states, the shares of preferred stock will be subject to mandatory redemption or redemption at our option, as a whole or in part, in each case on the terms, at the times and at the redemption prices set forth in that prospectus supplement.

The prospectus supplement relating to a series or class of preferred stock that is subject to mandatory redemption will specify the number of shares of that preferred stock that shall be redeemed by us in each year commencing after a date to be specified, at a redemption price per share to be specified, together with an amount equal to all accumulated and unpaid dividends thereon (which shall not, if such preferred stock does not have a cumulative dividend, include any accumulation in respect of unpaid dividends for prior dividend periods) to the date of redemption. The redemption price may be payable in cash or other property, as specified in the applicable prospectus supplement. If the redemption price for

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

preferred stock of any series or class is payable only from the net proceeds of the issuance of our stock, the terms of that preferred stock may provide that, if no such stock shall have been issued or to the extent the net proceeds from any issuance are insufficient to pay in full the aggregate redemption price then due, that preferred stock shall automatically and mandatorily be converted into shares of our applicable stock pursuant to conversion provisions specified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, unless:

if the series or class of preferred stock has a cumulative dividend, full cumulative dividends on all outstanding shares of such series or class of preferred stock have been or contemporaneously are authorized and paid or authorized and a sum sufficient for the payment thereof is set apart for payment for all past dividend periods and the then current dividend period; and

if the series or class of preferred stock does not have a cumulative dividend, full dividends on the preferred stock of that series or class have been or contemporaneously are authorized and paid or authorized and a sum sufficient for the payment thereof is set apart for payment for the then current dividend period, then no shares of that series or class of preferred stock shall be redeemed unless all outstanding shares of preferred stock of that series or class are simultaneously redeemed; provided, however, that the foregoing shall not prevent the purchase or acquisition of shares of preferred stock of that series or class to preserve our REIT status or pursuant to a purchase or exchange offer made on the same terms to holders of all outstanding shares of preferred stock of that series or class.

If fewer than all the outstanding shares of preferred stock of any series or class are to be redeemed, the number of shares to be redeemed will be determined by us and those shares may be redeemed pro rata from the holders of record of those shares in proportion to the number of those shares held by such holders (with adjustments to avoid redemption of fractional shares) or any other equitable method determined by us.

Notice of redemption will be mailed at least 30, but not more than 60, days before the redemption date to each holder of record of a share of preferred stock of any series or class to be redeemed at the address shown on our stock transfer books. Each notice shall state:

The redemption date;

The number of shares and series or class of the preferred stock to be redeemed;

The redemption price;

The place or places where certificates for the preferred stock are to be surrendered for payment of the redemption price;

That dividends on the shares to be redeemed will cease to accumulate on the redemption date; and

The date on which the holder's conversion rights, if any, as to that shares shall terminate.

If fewer than all the shares of preferred stock of any series or class are to be redeemed, the notice mailed to each holder thereof shall also specify the number of shares of preferred stock to be

redeemed from each holder and, upon redemption, a new certificate shall be issued representing the unredeemed shares without cost to the holder thereof. If notice of redemption of any shares of preferred stock has been given and if the funds necessary for the redemption have been set aside by us in trust for the benefit of the holders of any shares of preferred stock so called for redemption, then from and after the redemption date dividends will cease to accrue on the shares of preferred stock, the shares of preferred stock shall no longer be deemed outstanding and all rights of the holders of the shares will terminate, except the right to receive the redemption price. In order to facilitate the redemption of shares

of preferred stock of any series or class, the board of directors may fix a record date for the determination of shares of the series or class of preferred stock to be redeemed.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the persons who were holders of record of shares of any class or series of preferred stock at the close of business on a record date for the payment of dividends will be entitled to receive the dividend payable on the corresponding dividend payment date notwithstanding the redemption of those shares after the record date and on or prior to the dividend payment date or our default in the payment of the dividend due on that dividend payment date. In that case, the amount payable on the redemption of those shares of preferred stock will not include that dividend. Except as provided in the preceding sentence and except to the extent that accrued and unpaid dividends are payable as part of the redemption price, we will make no payment or allowance for unpaid dividends, whether or not in arrears, on shares of preferred stock called for redemption.

Subject to applicable law and the limitation on purchases when dividends on a series or class of preferred stock are in arrears, we may, at any time and from time to time, purchase any shares of such series or class of preferred stock in the open market, by tender or by private agreement.

Liquidation Preference

Upon any voluntary or involuntary liquidation or dissolution of us or winding up of our affairs, then, before any distribution or payment will be made to the holders of common stock or any other series or class of stock ranking junior to any series or class of the preferred stock in the distribution of assets upon any liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs, the holders of that series or class of preferred stock shall be entitled to receive out of our assets legally available for distribution to shareholders liquidating distributions in the amount of the liquidation preference per share (set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement), plus an amount equal to all dividends accrued and unpaid thereon (which shall not include any accumulation in respect of unpaid dividends for prior dividend periods if the preferred stock does not have a cumulative dividend). After payment of the full amount of the liquidating distributions to which they are entitled, the holders of preferred stock will have no right or claim to any of our remaining assets. If, upon any such voluntary or involuntary liquidation, dissolution or winding up, the legally available assets are insufficient to pay the amount of the liquidating distributions on all outstanding shares of any series or class of preferred stock and the corresponding amounts payable on all shares of other classes or series of stock of the Company ranking on a parity with that series or class of preferred stock in the distribution of assets upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up, then the holders of that series or class of preferred stock and all other such classes or series of capital stock shall share ratably in any such distribution of assets in proportion to the full liquidating distributions to which they would otherwise be respectively entitled.

If liquidating distributions shall have been made in full to all holders of any series or class of preferred stock, our remaining assets will be distributed among the holders of any other classes or series of stock ranking junior to that series or class of preferred stock upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up, according to their respective rights and preferences and in each case according to their respective number of shares. For those purposes, the consolidation or merger of us with or into any other entity, or the sale, lease, transfer or conveyance of all or substantially all of our property or business, shall not be deemed to constitute a liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs.

Voting Rights

Except as may be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement, whenever dividends on any shares of preferred stock shall be in arrears for six or more quarterly dividend periods, whether or not consecutive, the number of directors constituting our Board of Directors will be automatically increased by two and the holders of such series or class of preferred stock (voting separately as a class with all other classes or series of preferred stock upon which like voting rights have been conferred and are exercisable in the election of those two directors) will be entitled to vote for the election of a total of two additional directors to our Board of Directors at a special meeting called by Realty Income at the request of the holders of record of at least 10% of the outstanding shares of any class or series of preferred stock upon which voting rights have been conferred and are exercisable (unless the request is received less than 90 days before the date fixed for the next annual or special meeting of shareholders, in which case the vote will be held at the earlier of the next annual or special meeting of shareholders), and at each subsequent annual meeting until all dividends accumulated on those shares of preferred stock for all past dividend periods and the then current dividend period shall have been fully paid or declared and a sum sufficient for the payment thereof set aside for payment. In that case, the right of the preferred stock to elect those two directors will cease and the term of office of the two directors will automatically terminate and the number of directors constituting the Board of Directors will be reduced accordingly.

If a special meeting is not called by us within 30 days after a request from the holders of preferred stock as described above, then the holders of record of at least 10% of the outstanding shares of any class or series of preferred stock upon which voting rights have been conferred and are exercisable may designate a holder to call the meeting at our expense.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

So long as any shares of any class or series of preferred stock remain outstanding, we shall not, without the consent or the affirmative vote of the holders of at least two-thirds of the shares of any class or series of preferred stock outstanding that is affected by the following at the time given in person or by proxy, either in writing or at a meeting (with each series or class of preferred stock that is affected by the following voting separately as a class):

Authorize, create or issue, or increase the authorized or issued amount of, any class or series of stock ranking prior to that series or class of preferred stock with respect to payment of dividends or the distribution of assets on liquidation, dissolution or winding up, or reclassify any of our authorized stock into any such shares, or create, authorize or issue any obligation or security convertible into, exchangeable or exercisable for, or evidencing the right to purchase any such shares;

Amend, alter or repeal any of the provisions of our charter, including the articles supplementary for such series or class of preferred stock, so as to materially and adversely affect any right, preference, privilege or voting power of such series or class of preferred stock or the holders thereof; or

Enter into any share exchange that affects such series or class of preferred stock or consolidate with or merge into any other entity, or permit any other entity to consolidate with or merge into us, unless in each such case described in this clause each share of such series or class of preferred stock remains outstanding without a material adverse change to its terms and rights or is converted into or exchanged for preferred stock of the surviving or resulting entity having preferences, rights, dividends, voting powers, restrictions, limitations as to dividends, qualifications and terms and conditions of redemption identical to those of such series or class of preferred stock;

provided that any amendment to our charter to authorize any increase in the amount of the authorized preferred stock or common stock or the issuance of any other class or series of preferred stock or any

27

increase in the amount of authorized or outstanding shares of such series or class or any other series or class of preferred stock in each case ranking on a parity with or junior to the preferred stock of such series or class with respect to payment of dividends and the distribution of assets upon liquidation, dissolution and winding up, shall not be deemed to materially and adversely affect any right, preference, privilege or voting power of the series or class of preferred stock or the holders thereof.

The foregoing voting provisions will not apply if, at or prior to the time when the act with respect to which the vote would otherwise be required shall be effected, all outstanding shares of such series or class of preferred stock shall have been redeemed or called for redemption upon proper notice and sufficient funds shall have been deposited in trust to effect the redemption.

Conversion Rights

The terms and conditions, if any, upon which shares of any series or class of preferred stock are convertible into shares of common stock will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. The terms will include the number of shares of common stock into which the preferred stock is convertible, the conversion price (or manner of calculation thereof), the conversion period, provisions as to whether conversion will be at the option of the holders of the preferred stock or us, the events requiring an adjustment of the conversion price and provisions affecting conversion in the event of the redemption of the preferred stock.

Restrictions on Ownership

For us to qualify as a REIT under the Code, not more than 50% in value of our outstanding capital stock may be owned, actually or constructively, by five or fewer individuals (defined in the Code to include certain entities) during the last half of a taxable year. To assist us in meeting this requirement and certain other requirements relating to our tax status as a REIT, we may take certain actions to limit the actual, beneficial or constructive ownership by a single person or entity of our outstanding equity securities.

Transfer Agent

The transfer agent and registrar for any series or class of preferred stock will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement.

RESTRICTIONS ON OWNERSHIP AND TRANSFERS OF STOCK

Internal Revenue Code Requirements

To maintain our REIT status under the Code, no more than 50% in value of our outstanding shares of stock may be owned, actually or constructively, by five or fewer individuals (as defined in the Code to include certain entities) during the last half of a taxable year. In addition, if we, or an owner of 10% or more of us, actually or constructively owns 10% or more of a tenant of ours (or a tenant of any partnership in which we are a partner), the rent received by us (either directly or through any such partnership) from that tenant will not be qualifying income for purposes of the REIT gross income tests of the Code. A REIT's stock must also be beneficially owned by 100 or more persons during at least 335 days of a taxable year of twelve months or during a proportionate part of a shorter taxable year.

Transfer Restrictions in Charter

Because we expect to continue to qualify as a REIT, our charter contains restrictions on the ownership and transfer of common stock which are intended to assist us in complying with applicable Code requirements. Our charter provides that, subject to certain specified exceptions, no person or entity may own, or be deemed to own by virtue of the applicable constructive ownership provisions of the Code, more than 9.8% (by number or value, whichever is more restrictive) of the outstanding shares of common stock, appropriately referred to as the ownership limit. The constructive ownership rules of the Code are complex, and may cause shares of common stock owned actually or constructively by a group of related individuals and/or entities to be constructively owned by one individual or entity. As a result, the acquisition of less than 9.8% of the shares of common stock (or the acquisition of an interest in an entity that owns, actually or constructively, common stock) by an individual or entity, could nevertheless cause that individual or entity, or another individual or entity, to constructively own more than 9.8% of our outstanding common stock and thus violate the ownership limit, or any other limit as provided in our charter or as otherwise permitted by our board of directors. Our board of directors may, but in no event is required to, exempt from the ownership limit a particular stockholder if it determines that such ownership will not jeopardize our status as a REIT. As a condition of such exemption, the board of directors may require a ruling from the Internal Revenue Service or an opinion of counsel satisfactory to it and/or undertakings or representations from the applicant with respect to preserving the our REIT status.

Our charter further prohibits (1) any person from actually or constructively owning shares of our stock that would result in our being "closely held" under Section 856(h) of the Code or otherwise cause us to fail to qualify as a REIT, and (2) any person from transferring shares of our stock if such transfer would result in shares of our stock being beneficially owned by fewer than 100 persons (determined without reference to any rules of attribution).

Any person who acquires or attempts to acquire actual or constructive ownership of shares of our stock that will violate any of the foregoing restrictions on transferability and ownership is required to give notice to us immediately and provide us with such other information as we may request in order to determine the effect of such transfer on our status as a REIT. The foregoing restrictions on transferability and ownership will not apply if our Board of Directors determines that it is no longer in our best interest to attempt to qualify, or to continue to qualify, as a REIT and such determination is approved by a two thirds vote of our stockholders as required by our charter. Except as otherwise described above, any change in the ownership limit would require an amendment to the charter.

Effect of Violation of Transfer Provisions

According to our charter, if any purported transfer of common stock or any other event would otherwise result in any person violating the ownership limit or such other limit as provided in the

charter or as otherwise permitted by our board of directors, or result in our being "closely held" under Section 856(h) of the Code or otherwise cause us to fail to qualify as a REIT, then the number of shares that would otherwise cause such violation or result will be transferred automatically to a trust, the beneficiary of which will be a qualified charitable organization selected by us as beneficiary. Such automatic transfer shall be deemed to be effective as of the close of business on the business day prior to the date of such violative transfer. Within 20 days of

receiving notice from us of the transfer of shares to the trust, the trustee of the trust (who shall be designated by us and be unaffiliated with us and any prohibited transferee or prohibited owner) will be required to sell such shares to a person or entity who could own the shares without violating the ownership limit, or any other limit as provided in our charter or as otherwise permitted by our board of directors, and distribute to the prohibited transferee or prohibited owner, as applicable, an amount equal to the lesser of the price paid by the prohibited transferee or prohibited owner for such shares or the net sales proceeds received by the trust for such shares.

In the case of any event other than a transfer, or in the case of a transfer for no consideration (such as a gift), the trustee will be required to sell such shares to a qualified person or entity and distribute to the prohibited owner an amount equal to the lesser of the market price (described in our charter) of such shares as of the date of such event or the net sales proceeds received by the trust for such shares. In either case, any proceeds in excess of the amount distributable to the prohibited transferee or prohibited owner, as applicable, will be distributed to the beneficiary. Prior to a sale of any such shares by the trust, the trustee will be entitled to receive, in trust for the beneficiary, all dividends and other distributions paid by us with respect to such excess shares, and also will be entitled to exercise all voting rights with respect to such shares.

Subject to Maryland law, effective as of the date that such shares have been transferred to the trust, the trustee shall have the authority (at the trustee's sole discretion) (1) to rescind as void any vote cast by a prohibited transferee or prohibited owner, as applicable, prior to the discovery by us that such shares have been transferred to the trust and (2) to recast such vote in accordance with the desires of the trustee acting for the benefit of the beneficiary. However, if we have already taken irreversible corporate action, then the trustee shall not have the authority to rescind and recast that vote. Any dividend or other distribution paid to the prohibited transferee or prohibited owner (prior to the discovery by us that such shares had been automatically transferred to a trust as described above) will be required to be repaid to the trustee upon demand for distribution to the beneficiary. In the event that the transfer to the trust as described above is not automatically effective (for any reason) to prevent violation of the ownership limit or any other limit as provided in our charter or as otherwise permitted by our board of directors, then our charter provides that the transfer of the excess shares will be void.

In addition, shares of our stock held in the trust shall be deemed to have been offered for sale to us, or our designee, at a price per share equal to the lesser of (1) the price per share in the transaction that resulted in such transfer to the trust (or, in the case of a devise or gift, the market price at the time of such devise or gift) and (2) the market price on the date we or our designee, accepts such offer. We shall have the right to accept such offer until the trustee has sold the shares of stock held in the trust. Upon such a sale to us, the interest of the beneficiary in the shares sold shall terminate and the trustee shall distribute the net proceeds of the sale to the prohibited transferee or prohibited owner.

If any purported transfer of shares of common stock would cause us to be beneficially owned by fewer than 100 persons, such transfer will be null and void in its entirety and the intended transferee will acquire no rights to the stock.

All certificates representing shares of our common stock will bear a legend referring to the restrictions described above. The foregoing ownership limitations could delay, defer or prevent a

transaction or a change in control of Realty Income that might involve a premium price for the common stock or otherwise be in the best interest of stockholders.

Compliance with Treasury Regulations

As set forth in the Treasury Regulations, every owner of a specified percentage (or more) of the outstanding shares of our common stock must file a completed questionnaire with us containing information regarding their ownership of such shares. Under current Treasury Regulations, the percentage will be set between 0.5% and 5.0%, depending upon the number of record holders of our shares of common stock. Under our charter, each stockholder shall upon demand be required to disclose to us in writing such information as we may request in order to determine the effect, if any, of such stockholder's actual and constructive ownership of common stock on our status as a REIT and to ensure compliance with the ownership limit, or any other limit as provided in our charter or as otherwise permitted by our board of directors.

RELATED TO OUR REIT ELECTION

The following is a summary of the federal income tax considerations related to our REIT election which are anticipated to be material to purchasers of the securities offered by this prospectus. This summary is based on current law, is for general information only and is not tax advice. Your tax treatment will vary depending upon the terms of the specific securities that you acquire, as well as your particular situation. This discussion does not attempt to address any aspects of federal income taxation relevant to your ownership of the securities offered by this prospectus. Instead, the material federal income tax considerations relevant to your ownership of the securities offered by this prospectus may be provided in the applicable prospectus supplement that relates to those securities.

The information in this section is based on:

the Internal Revenue Code;

current, temporary and proposed Treasury regulations promulgated under the Internal Revenue Code;

the legislative history of the Internal Revenue Code;

current administrative interpretations and practices of the Internal Revenue Service; and

court decisions

in each case, as of the date of this prospectus. In addition, the administrative interpretations and practices of the Internal Revenue Service include its practices and policies as expressed in private letter rulings which are not binding on the Internal Revenue Service, except with respect to the particular taxpayers who requested and received these rulings. Future legislation, Treasury regulations, administrative interpretations and practices and/or court decisions may adversely affect the tax considerations contained in this discussion. Any change could apply retroactively to transactions preceding the date of the change. We have not requested, and do not plan to request, any rulings from the Internal Revenue Service concerning our tax treatment, and the statements in this prospectus are not binding on the Internal Revenue Service or any court. Thus, we can provide no assurance that the tax considerations contained in this discussion will not be challenged by the Internal Revenue Service or if challenged, will be sustained by a court.

The summary below does not consider the effect of any foreign, state, local or other tax laws that may be applicable to us or a purchaser of our securities. You are urged to consult the applicable prospectus supplement, as well as your tax advisor, regarding the tax consequences to you of:

the acquisition, ownership and sale or other disposition of the securities offered under this prospectus, including the federal, state, local, foreign and other tax consequences;

our election to be taxed as a REIT for federal income tax purposes; and

potential changes in the tax laws.

Taxation of the Company

General. We elected to be taxed as a REIT under Sections 856 through 860 of the Internal Revenue Code, commencing with our taxable year ending December 31, 1994. We believe we have been organized and have operated in a manner which allows us to qualify for taxation as a REIT under the Internal Revenue Code commencing with our taxable year ending December 31, 1994. However, our qualification and taxation as a REIT depend upon our ability to meet the various qualification tests imposed under the Internal Revenue Code. Accordingly, we cannot assure you that we have operated

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

or will continue to operate in a manner so as to qualify or remain qualified as a REIT. See " Failure to Qualify."

The sections of the Internal Revenue Code and the corresponding Treasury regulations that relate to the qualification and operation of a REIT are highly technical and complex. This summary is qualified in its entirety by the applicable Code provisions, rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, and administrative and judicial interpretations thereof.

As a condition to the closing of each offering of equity securities offered under this prospectus, except as otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, our tax counsel will render an opinion to the underwriters of that offering to the effect that, commencing with our taxable year ending December 31, 1994, we have been organized and have operated in conformity with the requirements for qualification and taxation as a REIT, and our proposed method of operation will enable us to continue to meet the requirements for qualification and taxation as a REIT under the Internal Revenue Code. It must be emphasized that this opinion will be based on various assumptions and representations as to factual matters, including representations to be made by us in one or more factual certificates to be provided by one or more of our officers. Our tax counsel will have no obligation to update its opinion subsequent to its date. In addition, this opinion will be based upon our factual representations set forth in this prospectus and in the applicable prospectus supplement. Moreover, our qualification and taxation as a REIT depends upon our ability to meet the various qualification tests imposed under the Internal Revenue Code discussed below, including through actual annual operating results, asset diversification, distribution levels and diversity of stock ownership, the results of which have not been and will not be reviewed by our tax counsel. Accordingly, no assurance can be given that our actual results of operation for any particular taxable year will satisfy those requirements. Further, the anticipated income tax treatment described in this prospectus may be changed, perhaps retroactively, by legislative, administrative or judicial action at any time.

If we qualify for taxation as a REIT, we generally will not be required to pay federal corporate income taxes on our net income that is currently distributed to our stockholders. This treatment substantially eliminates the "double taxation" that ordinarily results from investment in a corporation. Double taxation means taxation once at the corporate level when income is earned and once again at the stockholder level when this income is distributed. We will be required to pay federal income tax, however, as follows:

We will be required to pay tax at regular corporate rates on any undistributed "REIT taxable income," including undistributed net capital gains.

We may be required to pay the "alternative minimum tax" on our items of tax preference.

If we have: (a) net income from the sale or other disposition of "foreclosure property" which is held primarily for sale to customers in the ordinary course of business; or (b) other nonqualifying income from foreclosure property, we will be required to pay tax at the highest corporate rate on this income. Foreclosure property is generally defined as property acquired through foreclosure or after a default on a loan secured by the property or a lease of the property.

We will be required to pay a 100% tax on any net income from prohibited transactions. Prohibited transactions are, in general, sales or other taxable dispositions of property, other than foreclosure property, held primarily for sale to customers in the ordinary course of business.

If we fail to satisfy the 75% gross income test or the 95% gross income test discussed below, but nonetheless maintain our qualification as a REIT because certain other requirements are met, we will be subject to a tax equal to (a) the greater of (1) the amount by which 75% of our gross income exceeds the amount qualifying under the 75% gross income test described below and (2) the amount by which 90% of our gross income exceeds the amount qualifying under the 95%

33

gross income test described below, multiplied by (b) a fraction intended to reflect our profitability.

We will be required to pay a 4% excise tax to the extent we fail to distribute during each calendar year at least the sum of (a) 85% of our REIT ordinary income for the year, (b) 95% of our REIT capital gain net income for the year, and (c) any undistributed taxable income from prior periods.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

If we acquire any asset from a corporation which is or has been a C corporation in a transaction in which the basis of the asset in our hands is determined by reference to the basis of the asset in the hands of the C corporation, and we subsequently recognize gain on the disposition of the asset during the ten-year period beginning on the date on which we acquired the asset, then we will be required to pay tax at the highest regular corporate tax rate on this gain to the extent of the excess of (a) the fair market value of the asset over (b) our adjusted basis in the asset, in each case determined as of the date on which we acquired the asset. A C corporation is generally defined as a corporation required to pay full corporate-level tax. The results described in this paragraph with respect to the recognition of gain assume that we will make or refrain from making an election under the Treasury regulations under Section 337 of the Internal Revenue Code, depending upon the time of the acquisition.

We will be required to pay a 100% tax on any "redetermined rents," "redetermined deductions" or "excess interest." In general, redetermined rents are rents from real property that are overstated as a result of services furnished by any of our "taxable REIT subsidiaries" to any of our tenants. Redetermined deductions and excess interest represent amounts that are deducted by any of our taxable REIT subsidiaries for amounts paid to us that are in excess of the amounts that would have been deducted based on arm's-length terms. See "Taxation of the Company *Ownership of Interests in Taxable REIT Subsidiaries*" and "Penalty Tax."

Requirements for Qualification as a REIT. The Internal Revenue Code defines a REIT as a corporation, trust or association:

- (1) that is managed by one or more trustees or directors;
- (2) that issues transferable shares or transferable certificates to evidence beneficial ownership;
- (3) that would be taxable as a domestic corporation but for Sections 856 through 860 of the Internal Revenue Code;
- (4) that is not a financial institution or an insurance company within the meaning of the Internal Revenue Code;
- (5) that is beneficially owned by 100 or more persons;
- (6) not more than 50% in value of the outstanding stock of which is owned, actually or constructively, by five or fewer individuals, including specified entities, during the last half of each-taxable year; and
- (7) that meets other tests, described below, regarding the nature of its income and assets and the amount of its distributions.

The Internal Revenue Code provides that all of conditions (1) to (4) must be met during the entire taxable year and that condition (5) must be met during at least 335 days of a taxable year of 12 months, or during a proportionate part of a taxable year of less than 12 months. Conditions (5) and (6) do not apply until after the first taxable year for which an election is made to be taxed as a REIT. For purposes of condition (6), pension funds and other specified tax-exempt entities generally are treated as individuals, except that a "look-through" exception applies with respect to pension funds.

34

We believe that we have satisfied conditions (1) through (7) during the relevant time periods. In addition, our charter provides for restrictions regarding ownership and transfer of shares. These restrictions are intended to assist us in continuing to satisfy the share ownership requirements described in (5) and (6) above. These ownership and transfer restrictions are described in "Restrictions on Ownership and Transfer of Capital Stock" in this prospectus. These restrictions, however, may not ensure that we will, in all cases, be able to satisfy the share ownership requirements described in (5) and (6) above. If we fail to satisfy these share ownership requirements, except as provided in the next sentence, our status as a REIT will terminate. If, however, we comply with the rules contained in the Treasury regulations that require us to ascertain the actual ownership of our shares, and we do not know, or would not have known through the exercise of reasonable diligence, that we failed to meet the requirement described in condition (6) above, we will be treated as having met this requirement. See "Failure to Qualify."

In addition, we may not maintain our status as a REIT unless our taxable year is the calendar year. We have and will continue to have a calendar taxable year.

Ownership of a Partnership Interest. We own and operate one or more properties through a partnership. Treasury regulations provide that if we are a partner in a partnership, we will be deemed to own our proportionate share of the assets of the partnership. Also, we will be deemed to be entitled to our proportionate share of the income of the partnership. The character of the assets and gross income of the partnership retains

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

the same character in our hands for purposes of Section 856 of the Internal Revenue Code, including satisfying the gross income tests and the asset tests. In addition, for these purposes, the assets and items of income of any partnership in which we own a direct or indirect interest include the partnership's share of assets and items of income of any partnership in which it owns an interest. We have included a brief summary of the rules governing the federal income taxation of partnerships and their partners below in " Tax Aspects of Partnerships." The treatment described above also would apply with respect to the ownership of interests in limited liability companies or other entities that are treated as partnerships for tax purposes. We have direct control of the partnership in which we are a partner, and intend to continue to operate it in a manner consistent with the requirements for qualification as a REIT.

Ownership of Interests in Qualified REIT Subsidiaries. We own and operate a number of properties through our wholly-owned subsidiary that we believe will be treated as a "qualified REIT subsidiary" under the Internal Revenue Code, and we may own additional qualified REIT subsidiaries in the future. A corporation will qualify as a qualified REIT subsidiary if we own 100% of its outstanding stock and if we do not elect with the subsidiary to treat it as a "taxable REIT subsidiary," described below. A corporation that is a qualified REIT subsidiary is not treated as a separate corporation, and all assets, liabilities and items of income, deduction and credit of a qualified REIT subsidiary are treated as assets, liabilities and items of income, deduction and credit (as the case may be) of the parent REIT for all purposes under the Internal Revenue Code (including all REIT qualification tests). Thus, in applying the requirements described in this prospectus, the subsidiaries in which we own a 100% interest (other than any taxable REIT subsidiaries) will be ignored, and all assets, liabilities and items of income, deduction and credit of such subsidiaries will be treated as our assets, liabilities and items of income, deduction and credit. A qualified REIT subsidiary is not subject to federal income tax and our ownership of the stock of such a subsidiary will not violate the REIT asset tests, described below under " Asset Tests."

Ownership of Interests in Taxable REIT Subsidiaries. A taxable REIT subsidiary is a corporation other than a REIT in which a REIT directly or indirectly holds stock and that has made a joint election with the REIT to be treated as a taxable REIT subsidiary. A taxable REIT subsidiary also includes any corporation other than a REIT with respect to which a taxable REIT subsidiary owns, directly or indirectly, securities possessing more than 35% of the total voting power or value of the outstanding securities of such corporation. A taxable REIT subsidiary may generally engage in any

35

business, including the provision of customary or noncustomary services to tenants of its parent REIT, except that a taxable REIT subsidiary may not directly or indirectly operate or manage a lodging or health care facility or directly or indirectly provide to any other person (under a franchise, license or otherwise) rights to any brand name under which any lodging or health care facility is operated. A taxable REIT subsidiary is subject to federal income tax, and state and local income tax where applicable, as a regular C corporation. In addition, a taxable REIT subsidiary may be prevented from deducting interest on debt that is directly or indirectly funded by its parent REIT if certain tests regarding the taxable REIT subsidiary's debt-to-equity ratio and interest expense are satisfied. Crest Net Lease is our wholly-owned subsidiary. We have jointly elected with Crest Net Lease to have it be treated as a taxable REIT subsidiary, and we may own interests in other taxable REIT subsidiaries in the future. See " Asset Tests."

Income Tests. We must satisfy two gross income requirements annually to maintain our qualification as a REIT:

First, each taxable year we must derive directly or indirectly at least 75% of our gross income, excluding gross income from prohibited transactions, from (a) certain investments relating to real property or mortgages on real property, including "rents from real property" and, in some circumstances, interest, or (b) some types of temporary investments; and

Second, each taxable year we must derive at least 95% of our gross income, excluding gross income from prohibited transactions, from (a) the real property investments described above, and (b) dividends, interest and gain from the sale or disposition of stock or securities.

For these purposes, the term "interest" generally does not include any amount received or accrued, directly or indirectly, if the determination of all or some of the amount depends in any way on the income or profits of any person. An amount received or accrued generally will not be excluded from the term "interest," however, solely by reason of being based on a fixed percentage or percentages of receipts or sales.

Rents we receive from a tenant will qualify as "rents from real property" for the purpose of satisfying the gross income requirements for a REIT described above only if all of the following conditions are met:

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

The amount of rent must not be based in whole or in part on the income or profits of any person. However, an amount we receive or accrue generally will not be excluded from the term "rents from real property" solely by reason of being based on a fixed percentage or percentages of receipts or sales;

We, or an actual or constructive owner of 10% or more of our stock, must not actually or constructively own 10% or more of the interests in the assets or net profits of the tenant, or, if the tenant is a corporation, 10% or more of the total combined voting power of all classes of stock entitled to vote or 10% or more of the total value of all classes of stock of the tenant. Rents received from such tenant that is a taxable REIT subsidiary, however, will not be excluded from the definition of "rents from real property" if at least 90% of the space at the property to which the rents relate is leased to third parties, and the rents paid by the taxable REIT subsidiary are comparable to rents paid by our other tenants for comparable space;

Rent attributable to personal property, leased in connection with a lease of real property, is not greater than 15% of the total rent received under the lease. If this requirement is not met, then the portion of rent attributable to personal property will not qualify as "rents from real property;" and

We generally must not operate or manage the property or furnish or render services to the tenants of the property, subject to a 1% *de minimis* exception, other than through an

36

independent contractor from whom we derive no revenue. We may, however, directly perform certain services that are "usually or customarily rendered" in connection with the rental of space for occupancy only and are not otherwise considered "rendered to the occupant" of the property. Examples of such services include the provision of light, heat, or other utilities, trash removal and general maintenance of common areas. In addition, we may employ a taxable REIT subsidiary, which may be wholly or partially owned by us, to provide both customary and non-customary services to our tenants without causing the rent we receive from those tenants to fail to qualify as "rents from real property." Any amounts we receive from a taxable REIT subsidiary with respect to the taxable REIT subsidiary's provision of non-customary services will, however, be nonqualified income under the 75% gross income test and, except to the extent received through the payment of dividends, the 95% REIT gross income test.

We generally do not intend to receive rent which fails to satisfy any of the above conditions. Notwithstanding the foregoing, we may have taken and may continue to take actions which fail to satisfy one or more of the above conditions to the extent that we determine, based on the advice of our tax counsel, that those actions will not jeopardize our status as a REIT.

We believe that the aggregate amount of our nonqualifying income, from all sources, in any taxable year will not exceed the limit on nonqualifying income under the gross income tests. If we fail to satisfy one or both of the 75% or 95% gross income tests for any taxable year, we may nevertheless qualify as a REIT for the year if we are entitled to relief under the Internal Revenue Code. Generally, we may avail ourselves of the relief provisions if:

our failure to meet these tests was due to reasonable cause and not due to willful neglect;

we attach a schedule of the sources of our income to our federal income tax return; and

any incorrect information on the schedule was not due to fraud with intent to evade tax.

It is not possible, however, to state whether in all circumstances we would be entitled to the benefit of these relief provisions. For example, if we fail to satisfy the gross income tests because nonqualifying income that we intentionally accrue or receive exceeds the limits on nonqualifying income, the Internal Revenue Service could conclude that our failure to satisfy the tests was not due to reasonable cause. If these relief provisions do not apply to a particular set of circumstances, we will not qualify as a REIT. As discussed above in "Taxation of the Company *General*," even if these relief provisions apply, and we retain our status as a REIT, a tax would be imposed with respect to our nonqualifying income. We may not always be able to maintain compliance with the gross income tests for REIT qualification despite our periodic monitoring of our income.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

Penalty Tax. Any redetermined rents, redetermined deductions or excess interest we generate will be subject to a 100% penalty tax. In general, redetermined rents are rents from real property that are overstated as a result of services furnished by our taxable REIT subsidiary to any of our tenants, and redetermined deductions and excess interest represent amounts that are deducted by a taxable REIT subsidiary for amounts paid to us that are in excess of the amounts that would have been deducted based on arm's-length negotiations. Rents we receive will not constitute redetermined rents if they qualify for the safe harbor provisions contained in the Internal Revenue Code. Safe harbor provisions are provided where generally:

Amounts are received by a REIT for services customarily furnished or rendered in connection with the rental of real property;

Amounts are excluded from the definition of impermissible tenant service income as a result of satisfying the 1% *de minimis* exception;

The taxable REIT subsidiary renders a significant amount of similar services to unrelated parties and the charges for such services are substantially comparable;

37

Rents paid to the REIT by tenants who are not receiving services from the taxable REIT subsidiary are substantially comparable to the rents paid by the REIT's tenants leasing comparable space who are receiving such services from the taxable REIT subsidiary and the charge for the services is separately stated; or

The taxable REIT subsidiary's gross income from the service is not less than 150% of the subsidiary's direct cost in furnishing or rendering the service.

Prohibited Transaction Income. Any gain that we realize on the sale of any property held as inventory or other property held primarily for sale to customers in the ordinary course of business will be treated as income from a prohibited transaction that is subject to a 100% penalty tax. Our gain would include our share of any gain realized by any partnership, limited liability company or qualified REIT subsidiary in which we own an interest. This prohibited transaction income may also adversely affect our ability to satisfy the income tests for qualification as a REIT. Under existing law, whether property is held as inventory or primarily for sale to customers in the ordinary course of a trade or business depends on all the facts and circumstances surrounding the particular transaction. We intend to hold our properties for investment with a view to long-term appreciation and to engage in the business of acquiring, developing and owning our properties. We have made and may in the future make occasional sales of the properties as are consistent with our investment objectives. We do not intend to enter into any sales that are prohibited transactions. The Internal Revenue Service may contend, however, that one or more of these sales is subject to the 100% penalty tax.

We have disposed of, and may in the future dispose of, properties in transactions intended to qualify as like-kind exchanges under the Code, resulting in the deferral of gain for federal income tax purposes. The failure of any such transaction to qualify as a like kind exchange could subject us to federal income tax, possibly including the 100% prohibited transaction tax, depending on the facts and circumstances surrounding the particular transaction.

Asset Tests. At the close of each quarter of our taxable year, we also must satisfy four tests relating to the nature and diversification of our assets:

First, at least 75% of the value of our total assets, including assets held by our qualified REIT subsidiary and our allocable share of the assets held by any partnership or other entity treated like a partnership for federal income purposes in which we own an interest, must be represented by real estate assets, cash, cash items and government securities. For purposes of this test, the term "real estate assets" generally means real property (including interests in real property and interests in mortgages on real property) and shares (or transferable certificates of beneficial interest) in other REITs, as well as any stock or debt instrument attributable to the investment of the proceeds of a stock offering or a public debt offering with a term of at least five years, but only for the one-year period beginning on the date the REIT receives such proceeds;

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

Second, not more than 25% of the value of our total assets may be represented by securities, other than those securities included in the 75% asset test;

Third, of the securities included in the 25% asset test, the value of any one issuer's securities may not exceed 5% of the value of our total assets, and we may not own more than 10% by vote or value of any one issuer's outstanding securities. For years prior to 2001, the 10% limit applies only with respect to voting securities of any issuer and not to the value of the securities of any issuer; and

Fourth, not more than 20% of the value of our total assets may be represented by the securities of one or more taxable REIT subsidiaries. The 10% value limitation and the 20% asset test are part of recently enacted legislation and are effective for taxable years ending after December 31, 2000.

38

We own 100% of the outstanding stock of Crest Net Lease. Crest Net Lease elected, together with us, to have it be treated as a taxable REIT subsidiary. So long as Crest Net Lease qualifies as a taxable REIT subsidiary, we will not be subject to the 5% asset test, 10% voting securities limitation or 10% value limitation with respect to our ownership of securities in Crest Net Lease. We or Crest Net Lease may acquire securities in other taxable REIT subsidiaries in the future. We believe that the aggregate value of our taxable REIT subsidiaries will not exceed 20% of the aggregate value of our gross assets. With respect to each issuer in which we currently own an interest that does not qualify as a REIT, a qualified REIT subsidiary or a taxable REIT subsidiary, we believe that (1) the value of the securities of any such issuer has not exceeded 5% of the total value of our assets and (2) our ownership of the securities of any such issuer has complied with the 10% voting securities limitation and 10% value limitation. No independent appraisals have been obtained to support these conclusions. In addition, there can be no assurance that the Internal Revenue Service will not disagree with our determinations of value.

The asset tests must be satisfied not only on the date that we (directly or through our partnership) acquire securities in the applicable issuer, but also each time we increase our ownership of securities of such issuer, including as a result of increasing our interest in a partnership or limited liability company which owns such securities. For example, our indirect ownership of securities of an issuer may increase as a result of our acquisition of or capital contributions to a partnership or limited liability company. After initially meeting the asset tests at the close of any quarter, we will not lose our status as a REIT for failure to satisfy the asset tests at the end of a later quarter solely by reason of changes in asset values. If we fail to satisfy an asset test because we acquire securities or other property during a quarter (including as a result of an increase in our interests in a partnership or limited liability company), we can cure this failure by disposing of sufficient nonqualifying assets within 30 days after the close of that quarter. Although we believe that we have satisfied the asset tests and plan to take steps to ensure that we satisfy such tests for any quarter with respect to which testing is to occur, there can be no assurance that such steps will always be successful or will not require a reduction in our overall interest in an issuer (including in a taxable REIT subsidiary). If we fail to timely cure any noncompliance with the asset tests, we would cease to qualify as a REIT.

Annual Distribution Requirements. To maintain our qualification as a REIT, we are required to distribute dividends, other than capital gain dividends, to our stockholders in an amount at least equal to the sum of:

90% (95% for taxable years beginning before January 1, 2001) of our "REIT taxable income"; and

90% (95% for taxable years beginning before January 1, 2001) of our after tax net income, if any, from foreclosure property; minus

the excess of the sum of specified items of our noncash income items over 5% of "REIT taxable income" as described below.

Our "REIT taxable income" is computed without regard to the dividends paid deduction and our net capital gain. In addition, for purposes of this test, non-cash income means income attributable to leveled stepped rents, original issue discount on purchase money debt, or a like-kind exchange that is later determined to be taxable.

In addition, if we dispose of any asset we acquired from a corporation which is or has been a C corporation in a transaction in which our basis in the asset is determined by reference to the basis of the asset in the hands of that C corporation, within the ten-year period following our acquisition of such asset, we would be required to distribute at least 90% (95% for taxable years beginning before January 1, 2001) of the

after-tax gain, if any, we recognized on the disposition of the asset, to the

extent that gain does not exceed the excess of (a) the fair market value of the asset on the date we acquired the asset over (b) our adjusted basis in the asset on the date we acquired the asset.

We must pay these distributions in the taxable year to which they relate, or in the following taxable year if they are declared before we timely file our tax return for that year and paid on or before the first regular dividend payment following their declarations. Except as provided below, these distributions are taxable to our stockholders, other than tax-exempt entities in the year in which paid. This is so even though these distributions relate to the prior year for purposes of our 90% distribution requirement. The amount distributed must not be preferential. To avoid being preferential, every stockholder of the class of stock to which a distribution is made must be treated the same as every other stockholder of that class, and no class of stock may be treated other than according to its dividend rights as a class. To the extent that we do not distribute all of our net capital gain or distribute at least 90% (95% for taxable years beginning before January 1, 2001), but less than 100%, of our "REIT taxable income," as adjusted, we will be required to pay tax on the undistributed amount at regular ordinary and capital gain corporate tax rates. We believe we have made, and intend to continue to make, timely distributions sufficient to satisfy these annual distribution requirements.

We expect that our "REIT taxable income" will be less than our cash flow because of depreciation and other non-cash charges included in computing our "REIT taxable income." Accordingly, we anticipate that we will generally have sufficient cash or liquid assets to enable us to satisfy our distribution requirements. We may not have sufficient cash or other liquid assets to meet these distribution requirements, however, because of timing differences between the actual receipt of income and actual payment of deductible expenses, and the inclusion of income and deduction of expenses in determining our taxable income. If these timing differences occur, we may need to arrange for short-term, or possibly long-term, borrowings or need to pay dividends in the form of taxable stock dividends in order to meet the distribution requirements.

We may be able to rectify an inadvertent failure to meet the 90% distribution requirement for a year by paying "deficiency dividends" to stockholders in a later year, which we may include in our deduction for dividends paid for the earlier year. Thus, we may be able to avoid being taxed on amounts distributed as deficiency dividends. However, we will be required to pay interest based upon the amount of any deduction taken for deficiency dividends.

In addition, we will be required to pay a 4% excise tax on the excess of our required distribution for a calendar year over the amounts we actually distribute for such year. The amount of our required distribution during each calendar year (or in the case of distributions with declaration and record dates falling in the last three months of the calendar year, by the end of January immediately following such year) equals the sum of 85% of our REIT ordinary income for such year, 95% of our REIT capital gain net income for the year and any undistributed taxable income from prior periods. Any REIT taxable income and net capital gain on which this excise tax is imposed for any year will be treated as an amount distributed during that year for purposes of calculating such tax.

Distributions with declaration and record dates falling in the last three months of the calendar year, which are paid to our stockholders by the end of January immediately following that year, will be treated for federal income tax purposes as having been paid on December 31 of the prior year.

Failure to Qualify

If we fail to qualify for taxation as a REIT in any taxable year, and the relief provisions of the Internal Revenue Code do not apply, we will be required to pay tax, including any alternative minimum tax, on our taxable income at regular corporate rates. Distributions to stockholders in any year in which we fail to qualify as a REIT will not be deductible by us and we will not be required to distribute any amounts to our stockholders. As a result, we anticipate that our failure to qualify as a REIT would reduce the cash available for distribution by us to our stockholders. In addition, if we fail to qualify as

a REIT, all distributions to stockholders will be taxable at ordinary income rates to the extent of our current and accumulated earnings and profits. In this event, corporate distributees may be eligible for the dividends-received deduction. Unless entitled to relief under specific statutory provisions, we will also be disqualified from taxation as a REIT for the four taxable years following the year in which we lose our qualification. It is not possible to state whether in all circumstances we would be entitled to this statutory relief.

Tax Aspects of Partnerships

General. We currently own an interest in a partnership and may own interests in additional partnerships in the future. Our ownership interest in this partnership involves special tax considerations. These special tax considerations include, for example, the possibility that the Internal Revenue Service might challenge the status of the partnership in which we own an interest as a partnership, as opposed to an association taxable as a corporation, for federal income tax purposes. If a partnership in which we own an interest were treated as an association, it would be taxable as a corporation and therefore be subject to an entity-level tax on its income. In this situation, the character of our assets and items of gross income would change, and could prevent us from satisfying the REIT asset tests or the REIT income tests. This, in turn, would prevent us from qualifying as a REIT. In addition, a change in the tax status of one or more of the partnerships in which we own an interest might be treated as a taxable event. If so, we might incur a tax liability without any related cash distributions.

Treasury regulations that apply for tax periods beginning on or after January 1, 1997, provide that a domestic business entity not otherwise organized as a corporation and that has at least two members may elect to be treated as a partnership for federal income tax purposes. Unless it elects otherwise, an eligible entity in existence prior to January 1, 1997, will have the same classification for federal income tax purposes that it claimed under the entity classification Treasury regulations in effect prior to this date. In addition, an eligible entity that did not exist or did not claim a classification prior to January 1, 1997, will be classified as a partnership for federal income tax purposes unless it elects otherwise. The partnership in which we own an interest intends to claim classification as a partnership under these Treasury regulations. As a result, we believe that this partnership will be classified as a partnership for federal income tax purposes. The treatment described above would also apply with respect to our ownership of interests in limited liability companies that are treated as partnerships for tax purposes.

Allocations of Income, Gain, Loss and Deduction. A partnership or limited liability company agreement will generally determine the allocation of income and losses among partners or members. These allocations, however, will be disregarded for tax purposes if they do not comply with the provisions of Section 704(b) of the Internal Revenue Code and the Treasury regulations. Generally, Section 704(b) of the Internal Revenue Code and the related Treasury regulations require that partnership and limited liability company allocations respect the economic arrangement of the partners and members. If an allocation is not recognized for federal income tax purposes, the relevant item will be reallocated according to the partners' or members' interests in the partnership or limited liability company. This reallocation will be determined by taking into account all of the facts and circumstances relating to the economic arrangement of the partners or members with respect to such item. The allocations of taxable income and loss in the partnership in which we own an interest are intended to comply with the requirements of Section 704(b) of the Internal Revenue Code and the Treasury regulations thereunder.

Tax Allocations With Respect to the Properties. Under Section 704(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, income, gain, loss and deduction attributable to appreciated or depreciated property that is contributed to a partnership or limited liability company in exchange for an interest in the partnership or limited liability company must be allocated in a manner so that the contributing partner or member is charged with the unrealized gain or benefits from the unrealized loss associated with the property at the time of the contribution. The amount of the unrealized gain or unrealized loss is generally equal to

the difference between the fair market value or book value and the adjusted tax basis of the contributed property at the time of contribution. These allocations are solely for federal income tax purposes. These allocations do not affect the book capital accounts or other economic or legal arrangements among the partners or members. The partnership in which we own an interest was formed by way of contributions of appreciated property. The partnership agreement requires that allocations be made in a manner consistent with Section 704(c) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Other Tax Consequences

We may be required to pay tax in various state or local jurisdictions, including those in which we transact business. Our state and local tax treatment may not conform to the federal income tax consequences discussed above. Consequently, you should consult your tax advisors regarding the effect of state and local tax laws on an investment in the Company.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

We may sell the securities to one or more underwriters for public offering and sale by them or may sell the securities to investors directly or through agents. Any such underwriter or agent involved in the offer and sale of the Securities will be named in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Underwriters may offer and sell the securities at a fixed price or prices, which may be changed, at prices relating to the prevailing market prices at the time of sale or at negotiated prices. We also may, from time to time, authorize underwriters acting as our agents to offer and sell the securities upon the terms and conditions as are set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. In connection with the sale of securities, underwriters may be deemed to have received compensation from us in the form of underwriting discounts or commissions and may also receive commissions from purchasers of securities for whom they may act as agent. Underwriters may sell securities to or through dealers, and such dealers may receive compensation in the form of discounts, concessions or commissions from the underwriters and/or commissions from the purchasers for whom they may act as agent. Any underwriting compensation paid by us to underwriters or agents in connection with the offering of Securities, and any discounts, concessions or commissions allowed by underwriters to participating dealers, will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. Underwriters, dealers and agents participating in the distribution of the securities may be deemed to be underwriters, and any discounts and commissions received by them and any profit realized by them on resale of the securities may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions, under the Securities Act. Any such underwriter or agent will be identified, and such compensation received from us will be described, in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Underwriters, dealers and agents may be entitled, under agreements entered into with us, to indemnification against and contribution toward certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act.

Certain of the underwriters, dealers and agents and their affiliates may be customers of, engage in transactions with and perform services for us and our subsidiaries in the ordinary course of business.

Unless otherwise specified in the related prospectus supplement, each series of securities will be a new issue with no established trading market, other than the common stock. Our common stock is currently listed on the NYSE. Unless otherwise specified in the related prospectus supplement, any shares of common stock sold pursuant to a prospectus supplement will be listed on the NYSE, subject to official notice of issuance. We may elect to list any series of debt securities or preferred stock on an exchange or Nasdaq, but are not obligated to do so. It is possible that one or more underwriters may make a market in a series of securities, but will not be obligated to do so and may discontinue any market making at any time without notice. Therefore, there can be no assurance as to the liquidity of, or the trading market for, the securities.

STOCKHOLDER RIGHTS PLAN

On June 10, 1998, our Board of Directors declared a dividend distribution of one preferred share purchase right, or right, for each outstanding share of our common stock to stockholders of record at the close of business on July 1, 1998. When exercisable, each right entitles the registered holder to purchase from us one one-hundredth ($1/100^{\text{th}}$) of a share of our Class A Junior Participating Preferred Stock, or Class A Preferred Stock, at a price of \$104.50 per one one-hundredth of a Class A Preferred share, subject to adjustment. Initially, the rights will be attached to all outstanding shares of our common stock, and no separate rights certificates will be distributed. Our Board of Directors also authorized the issuance of one right with respect to each share of our common stock that we issue between June 10, 1998 and the earliest of the Distribution Date, the Redemption Date and the Final Expiration Date (all as defined in the Rights Agreement, dated as of June 25, 1998 between us and

43

The Bank of New York). Each share of our common stock offered hereby will have upon issuance one right attached.

The rights will become exercisable and will detach from our common stock upon the earlier of (1) the tenth day after the public announcement that any person or group has acquired beneficial ownership of 15% or more of our common stock, or (2) the tenth business day after any person or group commences, or announces an intention to commence, a tender or exchange offer which, if consummated, would result in the beneficial ownership by a person or group of 15% or more of our common stock; the earlier of (1) and (2) is referred to as the Distribution Date. If a person or group acquires beneficial ownership of 15% or more of our outstanding common stock (except pursuant to certain cash tender offers for all outstanding common stock approved by our Board of Directors) or if we are the surviving corporation in a merger and our common stock is not changed or exchanged, each right will entitle the holder, subject to exceptions, to purchase, at the right's then current exercise price, that number of shares of our common stock having a market value equal to twice the exercise price. Similarly, if after the rights become exercisable, we merge or consolidate with, or sell 50% or more of our assets or earning power to, another person, each right will then entitle the holder to purchase, at the right's then current exercise price, that number of shares of the stock of the acquiring company which at the time of such transaction would have a market value equal to twice the exercise price.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

The rights may be redeemed in whole, but not in part, at a price of \$0.01 per right by our Board of Directors prior to the time that a person or group has acquired beneficial ownership of 15% or more of our outstanding common stock. The Board of Directors may, under certain circumstances, extend the period during which the rights are redeemable or postpone the Distribution Date. The rights will expire on July 1, 2008, unless earlier redeemed.

For a more complete summary of the terms of the rights, the Rights Agreement and the Class A Preferred Stock, you should review the information in our Form 8-A filed with the SEC on June 26, 1998, which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus. The summary of selected provisions of the rights, the Rights Agreement and the Class A Preferred Stock appearing above and in the Form 8-A is not complete, and those summaries are qualified in their entirety by reference to the Rights Agreement and the articles supplementary establishing the Class A Preferred Stock. You should review the Rights Agreement and the articles supplementary for the Class A Preferred Stock, copies of which may be obtained as described below under "Where You Can Find More Information."

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements and financial statement schedule of Realty Income Corporation and subsidiaries as of December 31, 2001 and 2000, and for each of the years in the three-year period ended December 31, 2001, have been incorporated by reference herein in reliance upon the reports of KPMG LLP, independent accountants, incorporated by reference herein, and upon the authority of said firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the securities will be passed upon for us by Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP and Latham & Watkins LLP.

44

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy any reports, statements or other information that we have filed at the SEC's public reference rooms. You may read and copy any document we file with the SEC at its public reference facilities at 450 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20549. You may also obtain copies of this information by mail from the public reference section of the SEC, 450 Fifth Street, N.W., Room 1024, Washington, D.C. 20549, at prescribed rates. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the operation of the public reference facilities. Our SEC filings are also available to the public from commercial document retrieval services and at the web site maintained by the SEC at <http://www.sec.gov>. You may inspect information that we file with The New York Stock Exchange at the offices of The New York Stock Exchange at 20 Broad Street, New York, New York 10005.

We have filed with the SEC a Registration Statement on Form S-3 under the Securities Act of 1933. This prospectus does not contain all of the information set forth in the registration statement.

INCORPORATION OF INFORMATION WE FILE WITH THE SEC

The SEC allows us to "incorporate by reference" the information we file with them, which means:

Incorporated documents are considered part of this prospectus;

We can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents; and

Information that we file with the SEC will automatically update and supersede this prospectus.

Edgar Filing: REALTY INCOME CORP - Form 424B5

We incorporate by reference the documents listed below which were filed with the SEC under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the "Exchange Act"):

Our Annual Report on Form 10-K, as amended by the 10-K/A filed on December 19, 2002, for the year ended December 31, 2001;

Our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2002, June 30, 2002 and September 30, 2002;

Our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed July 24, 2002, August 9, 2002 and October 30, 2002;

Our Definitive Proxy Statement on Schedule 14A dated March 28, 2002;

The description of our 8¹/₄% Monthly Income Senior Notes contained in our Registration Statement on Form 8-A (File No. 001-13374), including any subsequently filed amendments and reports filed for the purpose of updating the description.

The description of our Class A Junior Participating Preferred Stock Purchase Rights contained in our Registration Statement on Form 8-A (File No. 001-13374) filed on June 26, 1998;

The description of our 9³/₈% Class B Cumulative Redeemable Preferred Stock contained in our Registration Statement on Form 8-A (File No. 001-13374), including any subsequently filed amendments and reports filed for the purpose of updating the description; and

The description of our 9¹/₂% Class C Cumulative Redeemable Preferred Stock contained in our Registration Statement on Form 8-A (File No. 001-13374), including any subsequently filed amendments and reports filed for the purpose of updating the description.

If any statement in this prospectus is inconsistent with a statement in one of the incorporated documents referred to above, then the statement in the incorporated document will be deemed to have been superseded by the statement in this prospectus.

45

We also incorporate by reference each of the following documents that we will file with the SEC after the date of this prospectus but before the end of the offering:

Reports filed under Sections 13(a) and (c) of the Exchange Act;

Definitive proxy or information statements filed under Section 14 of the Exchange Act in connection with any subsequent stockholders' meeting; and

Any reports filed under Section 15(d) of the Exchange Act.

You may request a copy of any filings referred to above (excluding exhibits), at no cost, by writing or telephoning us at the following address:

Realty Income Corporation
Attention: Investor Relations
220 West Crest

\$150,000,000

5.50% Senior Notes due 2015

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT
November 19, 2003

Joint Book-Running Managers

Banc of America Securities LLC

Citigroup

Credit Suisse First Boston
A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc.

Merrill Lynch & Co.

Wachovia Securities

BNY Capital Markets, Inc.

Banc One Capital Markets, Inc.

Wells Fargo Institutional Sales and Trading

QuickLinks

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT SUMMARY

The Offering

RISK FACTORS

SELECTED FINANCIAL INFORMATION

RATIOS OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

CAPITALIZATION

DESCRIPTION OF NOTES

SUPPLEMENTAL UNITED STATES FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSIDERATIONS

UNDERWRITING

LEGAL MATTERS

EXPERTS

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

PROSPECTUS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

THE COMPANY

USE OF PROCEEDS

RATIOS OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED STOCK

RESTRICTIONS ON OWNERSHIP AND TRANSFERS OF STOCK

UNITED STATES FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO OUR REIT ELECTION

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

STOCKHOLDER RIGHTS PLAN

EXPERTS

LEGAL MATTERS

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

INCORPORATION OF INFORMATION WE FILE WITH THE SEC