

Broker Spotlight:

Art Barry, Coldwell Banker Commercial Eberhardt & Barry



By Jaime Lackey

Arthur Barry III prides himself on his knowledge of properties that he lists. "I like to know everything about a property I'm selling," he says.

Barry specializes in industrial properties in the Southeast. "We sell very complex properties, and there is a small market for these types of properties," he notes. He and his team put together thorough and detailed marketing packages for each property.

Most of the properties he sells are vacant, former manufacturing facilities. "As manufacturing activities have moved offshore, we are left with very large, technically challenged buildings in various states of repair. Some of these buildings are half the size of a major metropolitan mall," he says. "Our task is to find users for these buildings."

Recently, Barry arranged the sale of the former Keebler Bakery facility in Macon, Georgia. "This was a very specialized 454,500-square-foot facility," Barry notes. He identified California Cereal Company as a potential buyer and represented the owner, Kellogg Company, in the sale. California Cereal Company is now re-tooling the facility and plans to hire a number of people that previously worked for Kellogg.

"The facility was built at the end of World War II and has employed up to 900 people at any given time since then," Barry says. "California Cereal Company is saving many hundreds of jobs. That is important to me — this is my hometown."

Barry says the best scenario is to sell a property to a company that does the same thing as the previous owner; this generally results in the hiring of employees that worked for the previous company. However, with fewer manufacturing operations in the U.S., brokers must find creative uses for vacant properties.

Barry has been with Macon-based Eberhardt & Barry for 21 years. Barry's father (Arthur Barry Jr.) and Guy Eberhardt founded the firm in 1970. Barry joined the firm in 1986, after working for 2 years with Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance

Company in Jacksonville, Florida. He credits his experience at Northwestern Mutual for much of his sales success. "Not many people have the opportunity to learn sales at a Fortune 100 company," he says.

He also credits his father for his success. Barry says his father was a great mentor in that he shared knowledge and offered encouragement. Barry's father was part of a local startup commercial bank, which gave him an opportunity to learn the intricacies of loan underwriting. Barry says, "I had a best friend and mentor who was able to enlighten me on the real estate business and also shared his insight into the inner workings of the commercial banking business and how it affects the course of making deals in this industry."

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Barry adds that it was his father who suggested he constantly look for real estate opportunity in his hometown as well as in rapid growth areas outside of Macon. "This ultimately caused me to see the opportunity in large industrial real estate deals in the Southeast. Had I not had his encouragement to pursue more complex deals, like the manufacturing facility resales in our region of the country, I am sure I would have given up chasing these types of deals," Barry notes.

Barry's father also helped him understand how to treat clients: "Daddy always reminded me that it was important to have



Barry

a 'sense of urgency' with all business dealings in real estate. Meaning, if there is a client who expresses a need, then act on that need today, not tomorrow."

Through the years, Eberhardt & Barry has undergone changes. In the early 1970s, the firm had a residential arm. "The firm had dozens of agents but it was not profitable," Barry says. In 1999, a large residential consortium that wanted a commercial arm purchased the firm.

"But we realized that we needed to own our company," Barry says. In 2004, Barry partnered with fellow agents Hal Harper, Miki Folsom and Stephanie Folsom to purchase the company.

"We wanted to preserve the tradition of the firm and continue exclusively focusing on commercial and industrial real estate sales and leasing," Barry explains.

Since 1999, the firm has been affiliated with Coldwell Banker Commercial. "We are a franchisee of the largest commercial real estate consortium in the world," Barry says. "Through this association, we share information through 3,300 agents in the U.S. and thousands more worldwide. But we are still a boutique firm with the flexibility needed to better serve our clients."

As the industry changes from a relationship-based business to a technical information-based business, Barry says, it is important that commercial real estate firms have strong marketing capabilities and access to numerous databases and online sites for distributing property information.

"All of the information about the prop-

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erties we have for sale are available across the Internet," Barry says. "We still have signs on the properties and we make calls to obvious buyers. We don't depend on the web; but it is a tremendous tool."

As you might expect of someone who went into the family business, family is important to Barry. He's very proud of his 20 years of marriage to Jan Hester Barry and of their three teen-aged sons, Patrick, Russ and Reid. "If the boys decide they want to be in this business, I'm glad to be able to give them the opportunity," Barry says.

His hometown, Macon, is also important

to Barry. He expects 2008 to be a tough year for the real estate industry, and he is watching to see what will happen in Georgia. He notes, "I expect the subprime market is going to be the undoing of the residential and commercial markets during the next 36 months. With foreclosure rates increasing and an unusually large number of properties on the market, values will decrease. Credit will be more difficult to obtain, so there will be fewer buyers."

However, he says, "Investors have been on the sidelines, investing in stocks. The pendulum is swinging back and there will be tremendous buying opportunities for the

next 24 to 36 months."

According to a Georgia Institute of Technology report commissioned by the Georgia Ports Authority, Macon ranks second to Savannah in a list of Georgia cities best suited for trucking, warehousing and distribution activities. "Macon is outside the Atlanta congestion. We have two interstate and four state highways here. We are well-located to handle the distribution of imports that come into the U.S. through Savannah," Barry says. This bodes well for an area that has numerous industrial properties and few prospects for growth in the manufacturing industry. ■