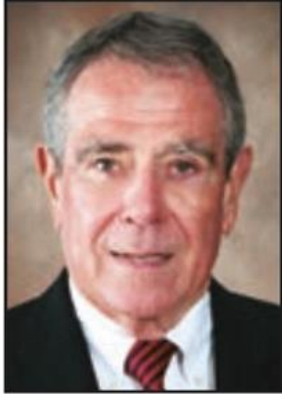


## Spotlight on Southwestern Illinois: Commercial Real Estate

### BARBERMURPHY's signs going further into rural areas

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

BARBERMURPHY's signs dominate the commercial real estate landscape in the Metro East, but increasingly the company's reach is going deeper into Illinois.



**Barber**

when they get out in the more rural areas of Southern Illinois and see our signs a hundred miles from here. We're doing business in 25 counties," Wayne Barber said.

Barber, the founding principal of the firm along with partner Paul Murphy, said the company's territory goes to the tip of Illinois to the south, to Morgan County to the north, and as far east as Fairfield in Wayne County.

Historically, the firm has represented many industrial properties, and a lot of those have become vacant throughout the years.

"In a lot of these little towns, it's part of how I got started," Barber said. "Whenever there was a plant closing in a town, we'd chase that opportunity for a sale. In more recent years, our activity has been broadened to land locations, interstate locations, retail locations — the full gamut, just as we do in Metro East."

Being spread out necessitates having brokers familiar with the territory.

"Our people have become more experienced in those outer areas as they've done more business out there. And, some

have prior experience in those areas," Barber said. One example is firm broker Mike Pierceall.

"We used to turn down a lot of opportunities in Carbondale and Marion. We didn't know the market that well and it was too far to service. Mike was with community development in the city of Carbondale. He has a good understanding of that area. Now we've got somebody to service that area with good market knowledge. Mike just closed on 64 acres in Marion for a retail development."

Mount Vernon is another prime location. It's a growing market in Jefferson County, once very agricultural but now it's booming.

"We've done business in the city of Mount Vernon for a long time," Barber said. "We've got a number of interstate locations there, just as we do in Salem (in Marion County)."

There are other hotspots outside the urban market. The Illinois Route 13 corridor in Marion near Carbondale is one. Benton, Ill., is another.

"We just recently closed on a 400,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Benton," he said. That location is a former boat manufacturing plant, purchased by Mincon, an engineering company based in Shannon, Ireland. In Benton the company will make mining drills.

Barber points to another big property available in Fairfield and notes that a lot of these facilities have a readily available workforce if the manufacturer so chooses.

"That's a key for a lot of companies in the transportation and manufacturing industries. Availability of the workforce is a dominant factor here. It used to be incentives, location and so forth, but available manpower has crept up near the top — more so outside the metropolitan area."

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