

Ameren Illinois chairman announces plans to retire in August

After a distinguished 20-year career in the energy sector and 45 years of business and civic leadership, Richard J. Mark, chairman and president, Ameren Illinois, announced his intention to retire on Aug. 1, 2022. Upon reaching a final decision, Ameren leaders will announce Mark's successor.

"Richard has been a difference-maker for our company, having served in leadership positions for both Ameren Missouri and Ameren Illinois," said Martin J. Lyons, Jr., president and chief executive officer, Ameren Corp. "He has always focused on doing what's best for our customers and I extend my gratitude for his many contributions to Ameren and our communities."

Mark was promoted to president of Ameren Illinois in 2012 after 10 years in executive leadership for Ameren Missouri. Since joining Ameren Illinois, he has helped shape constructive regulatory policy that has modernized the energy sector in the state. Under his direction, Ameren Illinois has undertaken a transformative overhaul of the Illinois electric grid and natural gas infrastructure, install-



Mark

ing advanced technologies, improving reliability, reducing outages, and creating thousands of jobs in communities throughout central and southern Illinois. Mark's focus on customer satisfaction earned Ameren Illinois a top-tier ranking among Midwest Large Utilities by JD Power.

"Leading Ameren Illinois has been the privilege of my lifetime," said Mark, a Collinsville native. "I have been fortunate to be surrounded by a dedicated team that shared my passion for our customers. I'm proud of what we have accomplished together and I'm confident that even better things are ahead for Ameren Illinois."

Among his accomplishments, Mark is credited with increasing Ameren Illinois' corporate philanthropy efforts and focusing on building stronger local communities. In 10 years, he directed more than \$22 million in donations to Downstate Illinois non-profits and service organizations and stepped up the company's volunteer efforts for charitable causes. As a champion of diversity, Mark opened doors for more minorities to grow into leadership positions in Ameren Illinois and increased the value of goods and services purchased from minority- and women-owned suppliers by 34% over ten years.

Prior to joining Ameren, Mark spent 11 years in hospital administration, including six years as president and chief executive officer of St. Mary's Hospital in East St. Louis and five years as chief operating

officer. He also led the East St. Louis District 189 Financial Oversight Panel.

Mark has received three honorary doctorate degrees for his civic and community work, along with hundreds of community service and leadership awards. Later this month, he will be honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Boy Scouts of America. He has been recognized by Black Enterprise and Savoy magazines as one of the top 100 most influential black businessmen in America. He received the Senator Richard H. Newhouse Award from the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation and a Leadership Award from the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance.

Mark serves on multiple boards of directors, including Tenet Healthcare Corp., Madison Mutual Insurance Company, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation, and Fontbonne University; and he is chairman of the Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois. He is a founding director of the Illinois Utilities Business Diversity Council and serves on the board of directors of the American Gas Association.

Investment deals comprise nearly half of firm's total volume

As the investment market continues to outperform all other real estate sectors in their market, BARBERMURPHY brokers are continually expanding their network to assist clients, often well before a property hits the market.

Due to the confidential nature of these transactions, many of them close without generating any press. But although these deals seldom make the headlines, they are a significant part of the work BARBERMURPHY does every day in Southern Illinois, St. Louis and beyond.

"Investment deals comprised 47 percent of our firm's total volume in 2021," said Steve Zuber, principal at BARBERMURPHY. "Industrial, office, multifamily and other income-generating properties continue to be in extremely high demand. With the stock market in flux and interest rates climbing, investors are looking at their portfolios and considering real estate as a more tangible investment, one that they can touch and feel."

Collin Fischer, also a principal at BARBERMURPHY, says he has seen more people than ever before getting into real estate investment. "We're here to serve as educators for those who are new to investment real estate as well as those searching for intel about the markets we work in on a regular basis," Fischer said. "It continues to be such a competitive market. There are so many people

looking for opportunities, coupled with the fact that many people don't want to sell because they're earning such a strong return now on what they own."

Two prominent investment real estate deals BARBERMURPHY brokers closed in 2021 are evidence of the firm's ability to connect buyers and sellers from all over the U.S. and get deals done. In October, the firm repped both parties – a local seller and a New York City-based buyer – to close a \$10 million deal in Madison, Ill. Within 60 days, the seller of 1.3 million-square-foot, family-owned industrial complex there netted several full-price offers. The transaction closed within 90 days at list price. And in August, BARBERMURPHY represented the seller and buyer of a 55,000-square-foot industrial warehouse in Dupou, a deal that closed at \$5 million.

The firm's ability to market internationally, as illustrated by the Madison deal, is evident, according to Zuber and Fischer, as none of the offers associated with this transaction came from local investors.

"We're sort of under the radar when it comes to investment deals," Zuber said, "but this part of our market has consistently outperformed any other over the past decade. And it's not just a regional phenomenon. On the east and west coasts, you're seeing investment deals getting done in the 3 percent to 4 percent cap rate range," he added, noting that the



Zuber

cap rate is a ratio between net operating income generated to the asset's current market value. "For the first time in more than 25 years, brokers are seeing industrial space bringing in a higher dollar than Class A office space. That's indicative of where the overall market is."

BARBERMURPHY brokers continue to see sellers receiving multiple offers above list price at record-low cap rates.

"If anyone has property they're

still using for their business, now is the time to consider a sales-leaseback," said Zuber. "People are often pleasantly surprised when they find out what it's potentially worth today."

As opposed to firms that focus intently on quantity and churn out listings, Fischer says BARBERMURPHY focuses on quality.

"We have assembled a team that is equipped to properly underwrite almost any asset to give proper guidance on what both parties in the transaction should expect, giving us a great success rate," he said. "We don't have a template in terms of how we do deals," Fischer said. "We're not working with 200 buyers at one time, and often our deals are sourced without ever hitting the market. Investment property deals are hard to find, so we're only interested in ones that are realistically priced and positioned to sell quickly. Discernment and quality control are essential. Our firm's reputation speaks for itself from the vast number of investment deals we've closed through the years. Sellers know that when we call, we have a legitimate buyer."

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