

# Investors Realty marks 35 years with change in leadership, new technology

by Michelle Leach

There is a "title" change occurring at Investors Realty, as this month R.J. Neary assumes the role of president — a position for which Steve Farrell had served since 1992. This change in wording, more than mission, coincides with a milestone for the full-service commercial, retail and office real estate firm: It turns 35.

"We've never put too much emphasis on titles around here — we just always worked together to get things done," Farrell said, noting that when he and Jerry Heinrichs started the company in 1975 the decision as to "who" would preside as president came down to a coin toss. "We do recognize that titles come with a certain level of re-

**Continued on page 20.**



**From left, Vice President Tim Kerrigan, Steve Farrell, outgoing president and co-founder, and R.J. Neary, president, at a property, Pacific Springs Vista ... Retooling technology to help clients a key to next 35 years for commercial real estate firm.**

# Investors Realty marks 35 years with change in leadership, new technology

Continued from page 1.

sponsibility, and over the past five years R.J. and Tim — as we've expanded our company and added brokers and property management services — have ... taken on greater roles and responsibilities."

According to Investors information, Neary joined the Omaha-based firm specializing in real estate sales and property management in 1987. The UNL graduate and former small business owner was promoted to a managing partner in 1992.

Kerrigan joined the firm a few years later, bringing along experience with a local wholesale distributor and a business administration degree from UNO.

He was promoted to partner in 2006.

The trio stresses that Farrell will continue to play an active role in the business.

"I will continue to be involved in the operation of the company," he said. More specifically, Investors information noted that the nearly 40-year licensed real estate agent "will continue to provide brokerage services to his clients and advice to the firm, its agents and brokers."

As these leaders look to the next 35 years, they're refining the elements that contribute to a culture different than the "next commercial real estate firm."

"Our real key is not so much the transactions; it's the relationships," Neary said.

He cited relationships with organizations like developer KDI, Kiewit and Creighton — entities contributing to a diverse portfolio.

"About a third of the portfolio is retail, a third is office and a third is industrial today," Kerrigan said, of the property management side — an area Investors continues to target for strategic growth.

The composition of this portfolio may get a bit of a shake soon, as Neary said there is greater emphasis on larger, Class A-type projects.

Other clients or properties represented, on the management or brokerage side, include Goodwill Industries, the shops at Oak View Mall and Mutual of Omaha.

The trio is fond of talking about how technology has further leveled the playing field for firms of various sizes in the market.

Neary said they've harnessed technology in ways that make sense, and provide value and benefit to the client.

"We are trying to spend money where it enhances our customer service, and due to our size we're able to customize a little more," he said.

They're currently implementing new customer relationship management software, and have also upgraded accounting services.

Kerrigan also noted that the company seized opportunities afforded by the downturn to refine existing business processes by creating a new position — chief administrative officer.

Farrell also indicated that time has been on the firm's side, as in its 35 years Investors has experienced — and learned — from previous down cycles.

With regard to marketing, Neary said the company is also exploring how to best utilize social networking in a corporate setting.

"We haven't come to any strong conclusions yet," he said.

Kerrigan said the thread that binds is social networking is based in building relation-

ships, just as Investors has built its business on relationships, sans high-tech solutions in previous decades.

"Clients can get overwhelmed by the abundance of information," he said. "Information is great but the key is to combine real-time information with the appropriate analysis."

"I call it 'old-time' judgment, but Steve and R.J. call it 'experience.'"

According to Investors information, it leverages commercial real estate listing services LoopNet and Xceligent.

The proof that Investors' approach is working, Farrell indicated as he reflected on the past 35 years, is in the longevity of client relationships, which evolve from working with a client to later the client's son or daughter or even a grandchild.

"We have a lot of private investors that own multiple properties," Farrell said. "Some of those, frankly, are sizeable portfolios but

## Investors Realty

Phone: 330-8000

Address: 11301 Davenport St., Omaha 68154

Founded: 1975 by Steve Farrell and Jerry Heinrichs

Services: solutions related to helping clients buy, sell, lease, manage and invest in commercial real estate, including brokerage, investment and counseling and property management

Goals: Roll out new CRM program.

Refocus portfolio slightly to larger office properties.

Website: [www.investorsomaha.com](http://www.investorsomaha.com)

we're doing the small deals that are necessary to service their entire portfolio.

"We work for many big names but sometimes the little deals are just as satisfying," Neary added.

Be it big or not-so-big deals, in all, they contributed to a record-breaking year — not far removed from the 35th anniversary — in 2007, when sales and lease transaction value hovered in the \$200 million range, according to Investors.

"We weren't able to sustain those numbers — that was the peak of the market," Neary said. The following two years have been tough for all in commercial real estate, but Neary said the company was still able to remain profitable and did not have to let anyone on its 40-member team go.

The aforementioned employee and transaction values are in stark contrast to the "early" days; according to Investors info, the company started off with two brokers. Now, of its staff, 17 are brokers and six are property managers. While it may have started with apartment conversions valued at \$30,000 it now sells properties valued at tens of millions of dollars.