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W.M. Barr selects Koger Center for higher profile location for corporate personnel

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W.M. Barr and Co., Inc., a private company that has operated in Memphis since 1946, is moving its corporate offices from Presidents Island near Downtown to the **Koger Center** in Cordova.

The home improvement and automotive refinishing products manufacturer signed a five-year, 13,621-square-foot office lease in the Koger Center's Oak Ridge Building.

"The key to building our business is the sales and marketing side of it and we feel that we can attract the right people in this new location," CEO Rich Loomis says. "Presidents Island is ideal for us from a manufacturing and distribution side, but when it comes to attracting folks from out-of-town, the Koger Center area does present a more appropriate forum for us."

Barr, which also manufactures products for industrial use, has three manufacturing plants on Presidents Island and one distribution facility.

"It's a strategic strength for us nationwide," Loomis says.

Currently, Barr has offices spread across its Presidents Island facilities.

"Over the years, we've built on and added offices here, there and everywhere in the plant," Loomis says.

In the past few years, Barr has been acquiring companies and consolidating them on Presidents Island.

The company, which also produces Klean-Strip, Citristrip, Armor All Home Care, Kwik and Bulldog brands, has been moving more into household products that consumers can buy at **Wal-Mart** and other retail locations.

It acquired DampRid, Inc., in 2003. That company's main product, DampRid, is a moisture absorber which prevents mold and mildew. The product has 95% of its market.

This year, Barr consolidated DampRid's executive offices, moving manufacturing and distribution to Memphis from Orlando, Fla.

In early 2007, Barr bought Miami-based **Solutionex Products, Inc.**, consolidating that company's operations in Memphis.

About 40 sales, marketing, administration, customer service and finance employees are moving to Koger Center.

"Pretty much anything that is facing out to the customer," Loomis says.

IT facilities, manufacturing management and some accounting functions will remain at Presidents Island.

Michael Morgan, a marketing specialist with **CB Richard Ellis Memphis**, represented Barr, while Michael Donahoe, an affiliate broker of **Investec Realty Services LLC**, represented the landlord, DRA CRT Germantown Center LP.

Koger Center is on the edge of the East Memphis submarket. The Barr lease adds to the area's Class B absorption, which was a positive 27,725 square feet, according to CB Richard Ellis' Memphis Office **MarketView** third quarter report.

"It's good for the absorption numbers because Barr is moving out of an owner-occupied building," Morgan says. "They aren't vacating their premises on Presidents Island by any means, but they're consolidating and getting a more professional environment for their office people."

It's a stark contrast to Presidents Island, which is focused on heavy manufacturing and distribution.

"You also have more of your white-collar workers that live in the Cordova, Collierville and Germantown areas, so it really cuts down on commute times," Morgan says.

In East Memphis, Class B space has a 13.4% vacancy rate, while Class A has a market-low 2.9% vacancy rate, according to the MarketView report.

W.M. Barr and Co., Inc.

Home improvement products

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