

Lund Co. builds momentum with expanded portfolio

by Richard D. Brown

Cushman & Wakefield/The Lund Co., an Omaha-based commercial real estate firm that markets and manages more than 8 million square feet of retail, office, industrial, agricultural, and multi-family property valued at over \$1 billion is having a banner year, in part, by completing the sale of a \$33.35 million multi-family portfolio in Northwest Omaha.

"In each of the past four years we've had more than a 15 percent annual growth over the previous year and our largest challenge right now is finding qualified employees for the newly created positions," President Jason Fisher said.

Lund Co. has more than 300 employees, about two-thirds of which are on-site at the firm's properties. The firm is located in 17,000 square feet on two floors of one of its buildings at 450 Regency Parkway. Fisher said an additional 3,000 square feet will soon be needed by the business.

The recent Northwest Omaha project included the sale of 438 multi-family homes comprised of The Club at Highland Park Apartments with 312 garden-style apartments and Terrace Garden Townhomes with 126 units. The buyer was New York-based Briar Capital Management.

Senior Vice President of Property Management Tanya Shapiro said that the portfolio transaction — partly due to its size — allows new investors to enter the Omaha market.

"The fact that they chose Lund to manage their properties speaks to our reputation for reliable, first-class management services for out-of-town investors," she said. "The technology we utilize, our reporting abilities, as well as our local touch to recruit and retain the best onsite talent provides the best of both worlds for larger out of town investors."



President Jason Fisher ... A recent sales of a multi-family portfolio has boosted the real estate firm.

Shapiro said the investor is expected to close on another 810-unit portfolio within the next month.

Shapiro, a 15-year veteran of real estate and property management, said Lund is one of the few true third party property management firms in the market.

Fisher and Shapiro emphasize that Lund doesn't own any multi-family properties and that the partners of Lund own less than 300 units in the firm's 9,000-plus unit portfolio.

"This has made us an attractive option for investors, as they are not competing against their management company for deals," she added.

Fisher and Shapiro also emphasize employee performance and longevity with being instrumental in Lund's success. For leasing specialists, the national average for turnover is 55 percent compared to 14 percent at Lund. In turnover rates for maintenance work-

ers the national average is 43 percent compared to Lund's 17 percent.

Fisher said other job categories such as service technicians, property managers, engineers, facility managers and accountants benefit from the longevity reputation Lund enjoys.

On the commercial side, requirements for HVAC professionals are strict and there is only a limited pool to draw from.

"There's a high level of sophistication for our engineers in overseeing chillers and boiler systems," he said. "It's remarkable what they do to balance the temperatures in facilities where a large part of their success is based on science and a smaller part is an art."

Lund's project management division oversees contractors in mixed-use developments, tenant build-outs and a range of other situations to reduce the need for post-occupancy issues.

"So much of our business is post-occupancy where we learn what mistakes are made in pre-occupancy," Fisher said. "For example, we suggest that air-conditioning be zoned and we ask them how many zones they want control over and then a cost decision is made."

Fisher, a graduate of the UNO real estate program who came to Lund in 2010, said his firm has 107 properties on the commercial side involving office, retail, medical and industrial pursuits in more than 60 communities.

A significant amount of time is be-

ing spent on two major office buildings Lund manages.

The downtown Landmark Building, a 26-year-old structure, which is only about 50 percent occupied, could receive just under \$20 million in improvements in a reinvestment plan. Enhancements would include updating the exterior and commons areas and a lighting retrofit, among others.

Fisher said Omaha is at a crucial time where more resources could be targeted toward attracting and retaining businesses downtown. Two successes in the Landmark Building are the retention of Stinson Leonard Street law firm and the relocation of expanding advertising agency Bailey Lauerman, two floors up.

In midtown, another Lund-managed property is the Omaha Tower. That structure is 94 percent leased and the largest tenant Travel & Transport has taken over some additional space.

Lund was founded in 1981 by John Lund, now CEO.

An alliance with Cushman & Wakefield, inked in 2012, gives the Lund Co. extended national reach, including resources and platform.

With so much happening on so many fronts, Fisher is taking extra steps to let the tenants of Lund-managed buildings know that they are important to his firm's continued growth.

He recently purchased a 30-foot trailer with a grill on the back that has been dubbed "The Mobile Break Room" and "Tenant Relations Trailer." Equipped with two TVs, the equipment has been used at 12 events — including the NCAA Men's College World Series — and will be used monthly for a reception at another Lund building.

"I never want to stop brainstorming ways for us to connect with the people in our buildings," Fisher said.

In addition, Cushman & Wakefield/The Lund Co. has in recent years redoubled its commitment to encouraging employee involvement in community service. On average, the firm has one-third of employees doing service projects daily.

Cushman & Wakefield/ The Lund Co.

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Services: brokerage solutions, property management of commercial and multi-family units, real estate strategies, consulting, investment acquisition, build-to-suite/sale-lease-back

Founded 1981 by John Lund

Employees: 300

One-year goal: Maintain 15 percent growth year-to-year while finding qualified employees for newly-created positions.

Industry outlook: Consolidation is continuing in the industry and meeting the needs of clients is more difficult for the smaller firms that don't have affiliation with global and national providers of specialized resources aimed at the medical community, among others.

Website: www.lundco.com

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