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Allen Plaza developer seeks to acquire West Peachtree hotel

Atlanta's Barry Real Estate has under contract a Best Western Inn—just one block south of \$500 million mixed-use development—and says it's a 'good investment'

By Aisha I. Jefferson, Staff Reporter

ATLANTA REAL ESTATE developer Barry Real Estate Cos. is in the process of acquiring the Best Western Inn at 330 West Peachtree St., a sign that Barry's five-block, \$500 million Allen Plaza project could be expanding.

Chris Schoen, Barry's chief executive officer, said the Best Western deal was going through due diligence but would not discuss what the company's plans were for the four-floor, 112-room hotel.

He said the Best Western is "a very good operating hotel, and we think it's a good investment."

"We are working on it," was all Hal Barry,

chairman of Barry Real Estate, would say about the deal.

Neither executive would disclose how long the company has had the hotel under contract nor how much they offered for the property. The owner of the Best Western on West Peachtree, Paul Heller of Aggressive Hotel Concepts, would not comment on the sale.

Located at the corner of West Peachtree and Simpson streets, the Best Western Inn is a block south of 30 Allen Plaza, a 15-story building that is home to Southern Co.'s headquarters and a

signature property of Allen Plaza.

The current five-block development is set to include 55 Allen Plaza, which is under construction, and 50 Allen Plaza, which has not broken ground.

The building at 55 Allen Plaza will serve as the Southern headquarters for Ernst & Young when the firm moves out of Bank of America Plaza in spring 2007.

Barry is in talks with White Plains, N.Y.-based Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. about putting a W hotel on the same block as 55 Allen Plaza. Barry currently is putting in a foundation system that could support a hotel.

There currently is a W Atlanta at Perimeter Center, and a W hotel is slated to open in Midtown next year.

Two of the five blocks in the project are part of a joint venture between Barry and Post Properties Inc. to co-develop 3.5 acres beginning late this year. The project will include apartments, condominiums and a hotel with ground-level retail.

Schoen suggested the project was expanding to nine blocks in a July article in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, calling Allen Plaza “the largest single redevelopment in an American downtown that we’re aware of.”

The hotel being bought by Barry has been a Best Western member hotel for 10 years, said Best Western International Inc. spokeswoman Denise Seomin.

The property’s current membership agreement, which comes up for renewal on an annual basis, ends Nov. 30, Seomin said.

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