

Swisher sees opportunity in Lenawee County

Commercial real estate firm opens Tecumseh office

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Swisher Commercial is expanding into Lenawee County, where the Ann Arbor-based commercial real estate firm is opening a branch office in Tecumseh this month.

Paul Bidwell, a real estate broker and appraiser, will work the territory in the county located southwest of Ann Arbor. Communities that he'll cover include Clinton, Tecumseh and Adrian, the Lenawee County seat.

Bidwell also is president of Affinity Valuation Group LLC, a real estate appraisal firm. He'll remain in that role while taking on commercial brokerage clients, and the operations will share office space on South Evans Street.

"Lenawee is becoming more influential in the Ann Arbor market every day," said Bidwell, noting that Tecumseh's proximity to Washtenaw County and the number of residents who work there.

The idea took shape over the last month as Bidwell, a Tecumseh resident for 11 years, approached Swisher CEO Dave Hamilton about doing brokerage for the firm.

The pair had worked together on projects over the past several years, Hamilton said, including the Water Street development in Ypsilanti.

"This is a chance for us to branch out with a guy who has a lot of experience, who we know



ROBERT RAMEY

Paul Bidwell will cover the Lenawee territory for Swisher.

and who lives in the area, so it will be a win-win for both of us," Hamilton said.

It's the first foray into a new market for Swisher since it was founded in 1968. The company

has 12 commercial agents and recorded 190 listings at the end of 2004, the most among county brokerages.

Hamilton said the move into Lenawee comes as the county con-

tinues to evolve as a bedroom community for Ann Arbor. The population is about 100,000, compared to 338,000 in Washtenaw County and 172,000 in Livingston County.

"The commercial market is certainly not as large as (Ann Arbor)," Bidwell said.

However, he said, he sees expanding development – particularly in Adrian and Tecumseh – to service new residents moving to the county.

"There's ample land for future developments, and communities are interested in providing opportunities for developers," Bidwell said.

Many commercial deals in the county have been brokered by residential agents, Bidwell said.

"There's no large commercial office (there)," said Hamilton. "We think the market is wide open to better serve the Lenawee County area."

Bidwell said that the Swisher office will be able to offer landlords marketing beyond traditional multiple listings on the residential side. That includes listings posted on Swisher's CPIX database, a multiple listing service for commercial brokers across the state.

"My background, experience and the opportunities for exposure that Swisher is going to be able to provide will bring the office's advantages down here to Tecumseh," Bidwell said.

■ *Paula Gardner covers real estate and development for Business Review.*