

Historic brewery for sale

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Journal Staff Writer

The George J. Maloof Realty Co. has put on sale one of Albuquerque's historic gems, the Southwestern Brewery and Ice Co. building in east Downtown.

The five-story brick building at 601 Commercial NE, built in 1899, has a storied past and was once home to one of the city's biggest businesses. The slogan "Home of Glorieta Beer," painted on its west side, is a surviving image from its history.

The asking price of \$2,250,000 includes the 9,000-square-foot former brewery and nearby 58,000-square-foot warehouse at 523 Commercial NE that was formerly the Maloof Cos.' Coors distribution warehouse, plus 3.8 acres of land in the area between Broadway and the railroads tracks, north of Marquette.

Once prominent in the Albuquerque business community, the Maloofs have shifted its business focus to Sacramento, Calif., and Las Vegas, Nev. It still has significant business interests in New Mexico, including the state's largest beer distributor, although the Southwestern Brewery site is now considered "excess property," said Tim Townes of Metro Commercial Realty.

Townes is marketing the property with Bud Reynolds of Reynolds Financial Management Services, who worked 20 years in the Maloof's distribution warehouse.

The site appears destined for redevelopment for a mix of uses somewhere in the future after the economy turns around, he said. Some adjacent owners have expressed interest in combining their properties with the brewery site for a master-planned redevelopment, he said.

"The city of Albuquerque might consider it as a site for an arena," he said.

The 58,000-square-foot warehouse, which was expanded over the years, was originally occupied by the Maloofs in 1940. The distributorship was relocated to a warehouse near Comanche and Interstate 25 in 2003 after a division of the Maloof Cos. acquired New Mexico Beverage Co.

According to the Journal archives, Southwestern Brewery was formed

in 1888 by Don J. and Harry Rankin, new arrivals from Lawrence., Kan., and other investors. The next year, they were joined by Jacob and Henry Loeb, who were brewmasters from Germany.

The five-story brewery or barrel house was one of several buildings, including a stable, built on the site in 1899. Its mainstay beer was named Glorieta, which sold for a nickel in a tall mug at local saloons with names like the White Elephant, Free & Easy and Bucket of Blood.

Southwestern Brewery also made ice, which was standard procedure for breweries in those days to keep the beer cold. The brewing stopped in 1917, when New Mexico became one of the first states to enact prohibition.

The company became Western Ice and Bottling Co., in the process switching to making distilled water. When prohibition ended in December 1933, the company didn't restart brewing.

Miami Beach, Fla.-based Southeastern Public Service Co. bought the operation in 1948 and continued making ice and providing cold storage of goods for decades. In the summer of 1981, the company employed 19 people and was selling 20-23 tons of ice a day.

The operation continued under different ownership before finally closing in 1997, when the Maloof family bought the property. Joe Maloof, president of Maloof Cos., later told the Journal, "My mom (Colleen J. Maloof) thought it was one of the prettiest buildings she had ever seen."

In February 1998, a one-story warehouse next to the former brewery burned, threatening nearby buildings and tying up traffic because of high winds. The former brewery itself was just slightly damaged.

In the aftermath of the fire, there was some alarm raised over the potential fate of the five-story building, including the possibility of an owner tearing it down. Although listed on several registries of historic places, the building was said at the time to have no special protection from being demolished.