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## INVESTMENT

From Page 15

rates will help the market in 2003.

"The investment property market will continue to be strong based on the low interest rate environment," he said.

He envisions an "inconsistent" office leasing market in 2003, but thinks "2004 should see a much stronger market."

Some other opinions on the prospect of a slumping office market turning around:

■ Joe Pasqualetti, president of Emerson International Inc: "Our projections are that the market is improving. We're seeing more interest in the last couple of months than all year long. I'm not saying it's strong interest, but it's been better than the rest of the year. The projections I've read are that it may be little slow in 2003, but there will be a vibrant recovery in 2004."

■ Tom Green, senior vice president, Colonial Properties Trust: "Generally speaking, 2002 may turn out to be one of the worst office absorption years since 1990 or so. But while it's hard to really predict anything, we're feeling generally hopeful that 2003 will be a turning year."

■ Marc Reicher, vice president of operations, ChampionsGate:

"We're seeing more activity on office. I think there's going to be more build-to-suits in the office market. I think the Orlando market, and the Florida marketplace in general, will continue to grow. Residential sales will also continue to drive retail and commercial investments as a whole."

In general, virtually all real estate observers think investor interest in Orlando will pick up.

"Investor interest in Central Florida will continue to hold its relative strength," said a report by the Grubb & Ellis Co., adding that reduced returns in the financial market and historically low interest rates will encourage investors to put more capital in real estate.

The company also predicted sale-leasebacks will become more predominant in Orlando's office market. A major reason: "Central Florida remains one of the most attractive markets in which to buy office buildings and is also one of the most cost-effective areas to do business."

"Our projections show that the overall investment market will be good in 2003," said Sheriar Khorsandian, vice president at Grubb & Ellis.

□ As for Carter, whose firm was

started by his father, he is not making too many predictions, but he does think the east side of Orlando near UCF — with its residential boom — may be a better place for investments than ever. The Lake Spear area in the southwest near Disney is another "very good area," he said.

Near Moss Park, the southern connector of the Beltway has helped open up the area for residential development that has created more retail demand. Carter recently sold a tract of land for a shopping center near Moss Park and Lake Mary Jane.

"The residents in there wanted and needed it so badly they sent me 'thank you' notes," Carter said.

He also thinks the region around Clermont and Lake County is worth a look.

"It's a beautiful region, well thought out, well-planned, with lots of amenities. It's a nice place to live and a short commute to Orlando. Easy in and easy out," he said.

In the rolling hills of Clermont, land prices are now quoted by the square foot rather than by the acre — a sure sign it has arrived as a popular place for investors, making it part of the paucity of good news in the commercial market. □