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Real estate duo jumps from Paul Hastings to Carlton Fields

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PAUL HASTINGS partner **Charles Sharbaugh** has decamped for **Carlton Fields**, bringing an associate, **Jason Howard**, with whom he works closely in his real estate practice.

"I am very proud to have been a Paul Hastings partner and to be a Paul Hastings alumni. It's a wonderful firm," said Sharbaugh, who joined Carlton Fields on Nov. 1 as a shareholder. Howard joined as an associate.

Carlton Fields has also hired an associate for its corporate practice, **Philip Bresson**, from **Quarles & Brady** in Florida.

Paul Hastings' local managing partner, Phil Marzetti, wished Sharbaugh well. "Charlie and I have been great friends since 1975, when we worked together at Powell Goldstein," he said.

Sharbaugh started practicing law at Powell Goldstein in 1974 where he worked until Marzetti recruited him to Paul Hastings in 1994.

"I wish him a lot of success and hope he has a lot of fun," said Marzetti. "I will miss him."

Marzetti said the global firm still has three real estate lawyers in its Atlanta office and is actively looking for a fourth. "We continue to have a vibrant practice here in Atlanta," he said.

Sharbaugh said he started thinking about Carlton Fields after talking to Greg Null, who joined the Florida-based firm 3½ years ago to start a commercial real estate practice for its Atlanta office.

"I have been friends and worked with Greg Null for many years, and the fit for us was exactly right," said Sharbaugh, explaining that he and Howard will have more flexibility in pricing matters.

"We believe that working with a firm of the size and caliber of Carlton Fields will provide a better opportunity for us to service our real estate clients," Sharbaugh said. The roughly 300-lawyer firm has offices in Florida and Atlanta and just opened a New York office.

"Having the international presence of Paul Hastings is a wonderful thing—but it's not a wonderful thing for all the clients we represent," he said.

Null said he was delighted to add the Paul Hastings lawyers to the team. "Charlie is one of the icons of the commercial real estate finance practice in Atlanta. It's a terrific opportunity for us," he said.

The addition of Sharbaugh and Howard gives Carlton Field's Atlanta office eight real estate lawyers, Null said. "It's been a growing enterprise in this down market," he said. "We think we have as deep a bench as any firm in the country."

Carlton Fields takes a low-leverage approach, he said, with more shareholders than associates. Of the Atlanta real estate team, all are shareholders except Howard and one of counsel.

"We don't compete on rates necessarily, but on the overall cost of the transaction. When it's staffed with more experienced people, we can do it faster," he said.

Null said the group's focus has been helping clients with distressed debt and problem loan work, but "increasingly we are seeing more funding opportunities" as the economy slowly recovers.

Sharbaugh said he and Howard are representing private equity funds in workouts, distressed debt deals, and some new acquisitions in multifamily housing.

"One of the things I enjoy most is working with my friends and clients to make deals happen," he said.

The biggest deal he and Howard have done this year, Sharbaugh said, was representing Crocker Partners in the acquisition of the Prominence Building in Buckhead at the Piedmont Loop—a complex deal with multiple sellers, plus zoning and financing issues. "It was fun," he said.

Sharbaugh added that he was "very proud" of a deal he and Howard handled last year, representing the City of Atlanta in the sale of City Hall East to Jamestown Properties.



From left, Jason Howard, Charlie Sharbaugh and Philip Bresson have joined Carlton Fields' Atlanta office.

Other clients include Area Property Co., based in New York, and Quarter Circle Properties in Nebraska as well as local funds, Live Oak Investors and Bright Side Properties. He's handled industrial and some office deals for Koch Industries and its subsidiary, Georgia-Pacific.

Sharbaugh is also quite involved in the community. He is president of the Druid Hills Golf Club and serves on the boards of Zoo Atlanta, The Atlanta Opera, the Midtown Alliance and Kennesaw State University Foundation.

Asked if he'd considered retiring, Sharbaugh, 63, replied, "I've got a lot of energy, and I'm not ready to go to the first tee."

He added that he enjoys working with Howard and ultimately plans to hand off the practice to him.

Howard joined Paul Hastings almost three years ago, after receiving his law degree from the University of Georgia in 2009. "I started working with Charlie and I've been side by side with him my entire time in practice," he said.

During his undergraduate career at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Howard was a three-time Academic All-American in swimming. He is on the advisory board of the Pro Bono Partnership.