

Jupiter Pointe marina complex 'a resort for boaters'

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TEQUESTA — The Seagate Marina, once a bucolic launching point for small boats, might soon be the site of a \$25 million waterfront retreat with a 130-room hotel, expanded barns to store luxury boats and tiki bars and grills.

The location is the marina's best asset, said North County commercial Realtor Rebel Cook. The nearest indoor large boat storage locations are in Riviera Beach and Stuart. And Jupiter Pointe is a convenient location for boat owners who live on Jupiter Island, she said. "The economy is still down. (Miller) must have strong financial backing if he is going to make it through this recession," Cook said.

"We'll be a resort for boaters," said owner Rob Miller as construction continued at the site across from Blowing Rocks Preserve. "We're changing with the times."

As marina space shrinks and boats get bigger, finding boat storage becomes more difficult. That's the niche that Jupiter Pointe hopes to fill, said Anna Bennett, Jupiter Pointe club and marina manager.

"When a person spends big money for a luxury boat, they want to keep it inside to protect their investment," Bennett said.

Miller, 62, bought the 10-acre Seagate site of the former Maxon Marina in 1996 for \$3.5 million, according to Martin County records.

A Palm Beach resident, he is a real estate developer who also owns Farnsworth Stables in Ocala, where he breeds and trains thoroughbred horses.

The Martin County Commission has approved plans for the boat barns, boat launching ramps and tiki huts. Construction has started, with completion expected early next year.

Miller recently bought three additional acres on the north side adjacent to the marina. The new property is scheduled to be the site of the 130-room hotel.

The 3 acres must be rezoned and the hotel plans approved by the county commission before construction can start. Miller hopes to open the hotel in early 2011.

When Miller first made renovation plans for the 13-acre marina, he considered "rackominiums" for boat storage. Rackominiums are dry dock space inside the boat barn that owners buy like a condominium.

Instead, he opted for a more public marina.

"I was with my family at Sailfish Marina one day," Miller said, referring to the public marina/restaurant across from Peanut Island. "I liked the public feel to the place."