

EXECUTIVE LIFESTYLES [Luxury Yachts]

GOING VERTICAL

by Stacie Kress Booker

Aqua Marine Partners is changing the marina business in Florida. The Aventura company is buying marinas and redeveloping them into vertical yacht clubs, using a lift system to handle more and larger yachts than a traditional marina.

The company's prototype marina in Aventura's Thunder Alley will also have all the bells and whistles of a resort destination: Full concierge service, yacht provisioning and fuel at cost, a European spa, elegant lobby and lounge area, business center, coffee bar and gourmet cafe. It will also have 211 vertical boat slips and will feature a new, patented computerized lift system for dry-dock yacht storage.



MULTIMEDIA: To watch a video demonstration of vertical boat lift technology, go to FloridaTrend.com/Links.

“We are transforming marinas from parking lots for boats to a destination for boat owners,” says Andrew Sturner, founder and CEO of Aqua Marine Partners. “As boat slips continue to disappear to residential developers, boat owners are left with increasingly limited options for storing their vessels.”

His new system will enable the facility to handle anything from an 18-foot flats boat to an 80-foot, 100,000-pound yacht stored in a Mediterranean-style building. Passport Marine, a top-selling Formula boat dealership, will provide service and sell parts and accessories and boats on the premises.



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Sturner, a lifelong boater, expects to break ground by the end of the year and have the facility fully operational by 2008.

Presales began at the Miami International Boat Show in February, with prices starting at \$130,000 for a slip and exclusive club membership with reciprocal rights at other vertical yacht clubs. One-third of the slips are already sold. The company is planning vertical yacht clubs at Fort Lauderdale's Marina Mile and in Panama City.

“This is all about the customer service experience,” says Sturner, “and enjoying the yacht club lifestyle.”

