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## Marina to make way for high-end condos

By MEGAN SCOTT

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CLEARWATER - Since 1963, the blue High and Dry Marina on Island Estates has been home to more than 300 boats.

As other marinas in the area closed, the enormous warehouse became one of the few places in Pinellas County where boaters could store their boats out of the water.

"They get it down, put it in the water for you. They've been a real good service," said customer Pauline Hess.

But starting Oct. 6, High and Dry customers will have to find another storage place. After more than a year of negotiations, a developer has purchased the 1.8-acre parcel for \$5.2-million to make way for a 55-unit, high-end condominium complex.

Sal Haider and his partner Larry Cooper plan to demolish the blue landmark within the next two months to build the Residences at Windward Passage,



[Times photo: Douglas Clifford]

Gregg Raptelis of Holiday removes a boat Wednesday from the High and Dry Marina storage area on Island Estates. The marina has been sold for \$5.2-million to make room for condominium units. The the blue landmark may be demolished within the next two months to build the Residences at Windward Passage (below).



[Artist rendering]

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three-bedroom, 3 1/2-bath condo units Island Estates, a small shopping and residential community that's "off the beaten path," is perfect for the project, developers said.

"We have had a lot of response from people who don't want to be in traffic congestion," Cooper said. "They want a more private secluded destination. They want to live on the water, be close to the beach without the hassle (of) taking care of a single-family residence."

The units range from 2,500 to 3,230 square feet - 25 percent larger than the average high-end condo, Cooper said. Each has a waterfront view with a balcony, an island kitchen, 10-foot ceilings and tile floors in the foyer, bathroom and kitchen. There will also be 20 boat slips for the residents, although they'll have to buy them for \$50,000 to \$100,000 each.

Cooper and Haider acknowledge that their condos are pricey.

But they say an increasing number of people want and can afford high-end living. Younger people are getting better jobs. Baby boomers are inheriting wealth. And some are purchasing the condos for investment.

"There is probably the largest transfer of wealth from one generation to the next," Haider said. "Baby boomers are inheriting money from their parents. We are looking for a nice, high-end product. We want to be close to places we want to go."

The developers emphasized that they are not targeting the tourist or winter resident. And they don't want too many investors. They are seeking permanent residents.

Island Estates residents say the neighborhood has so far managed to maintain a small-town feel.

Almost everyone does their shopping at the Publix, which has been there for more than 20 years.

"It's a neighborhood," said Mary Zaleski, 84, who owns a liquor store and lounge with her three daughters. "It's pretty safe. We have a lot of nice friends and a lot of nice customers."

The only change is that the population is getting younger, said her daughter, Shirley Heckert.

"It used to be all older people," she said. "Now there's a lot more children, which is nice."

But more change is coming - especially for the marina's 300 boat owners. Although High and Dry is trying to help customers find alternatives, it won't be easy. There is only one other dry marina in Clearwater.

Most of the customers live in Clearwater, Dunedin and Largo. They dislike trailers and want to be close to their boats.

"It's a real inconvenience to a lot of people," said Gregg Raptelis, a dock master for High and Dry. "I've called various marinas, and they are full. A lot of people may end up selling their boats."

Bryce Armston, marina manager and part owner, said he was sad to see the property change hands.

But the original owners are dead, and the family members who took it over don't have the same passion for running the marina, Armston said.

As the value of the land skyrocketed, they felt it was best to sell, he said.

Armston has opened a boat sales shop on Seminole Boulevard. Other employees are looking for jobs elsewhere.

The condo developers are already renovating part of the marina for a marketing and sales office. The condos are expected to go on sale Sept. 15. Construction is scheduled to begin in January 2005 and take about 14 months.

"We think it's very good," said Sheila Cole, executive director of the Clearwater Beach Chamber of Commerce. "We would much rather see nice residential (units) there than the High and Dry marina. It's great for the city's tax base. I think it makes the street look more residential."

[Last modified August 26, 2004, 00:27:25]

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