

The V&A Waterfront, Cape Town, has all the ingredients for a successful marina village.



Marina villages revive waterfronts

Throughout history, people have been drawn to waterfronts. The world's great cities sprang up along rivers and harbours as boats were the primary vehicles for transportation and trade.

For decades, waterfronts in many places have been neglected. In some cities where people have migrated out to the suburbs, city centre waterfronts have become under-utilised zones of decrepit warehouses and factories. The trend to revitalise such waterfronts, often spearheaded by property developers, has led to the emergence of the marina village.

To be successful, however, a marina village must be carefully planned and have the proper mix of boating facilities, housing and amenities to attract boaters, residents and visitors. Coming up with the right formula requires diligent market research and comprehensive planning.

What is a marina village?

Simply put, a marina village is the integration of a marina with residential and commercial development to create a single, inclusive facility. A successful marina village is like a town within a town, comprising most of the amenities necessary for a self-contained community. Examples can be found around the world – on the French Riviera, the UK south coast, in Cape Town's Victoria & Alfred Waterfront and Australia's Sanctuary Cove Resort and Marina Hindmarsh Island. Thailand has Royal Phuket Marina Village and New Zealand, Gulf Harbour. The first attempt to create a planned marina village in the USA was Harbor Town, part of the Sea Pines Resort on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. It's billed as a 'colourful marina village with great shopping, dining, activities and water sports among the beauty of a spectacular yacht basin.'

Another marina village, Atlantis on Paradise Island in the Bahamas, took the marina area 'from stale to stellar' according to Sam Phlegar, senior vice president and director of ATM's marine division, thanks to development of a marina village where people can enjoy its allure. The marina village formula is to create a

by Peter Fabris



fun, vibrant area within the backdrop of an attractive waterfront – where shops, dining opportunities, parks, promenades, plazas, apartments and condos overlook pleasure boats and marine activity.

Key attributes

The elements required for a successful marina village are:

- A sense of place with a distinctive personality
 - Something for people of all ages
 - Amenities for both boaters and non-boaters
- Unsuccessful marina villages occur when a plan:
- Is poorly master-planned/phased/integrated
 - Fails to incorporate all components properly
 - Creates an undesirable atmosphere (poor aesthetics)
 - Fails to create a 'destination' with attractions for people with varying interests

For instance, a destination that is too remote, without easy pedestrian access, will likely fail. If boaters are kept out by lack of transient slips, the odds of failure are also high.

Marina villages should be built in areas that will attract visitors and connect to the surrounding population. This is essential for the development to succeed. "The marina planner, architect, developer and all parties involved should work together to design a marina village that brings a solid return on investment to the marina, retail area and the connected community," Phlegar says.

What is suitable?

Site prerequisites for a marina village project include sufficient building land to support the plan. Frequently, rezoning may be required, particularly to allow for residential development. Sometimes blighted or

brownfield parcels may require environmental clean-up and/or acquisition by eminent domain. Because a marina village has a large impact on the community, local government and public support is essential.

Analysing the market

Understanding your market begins with a demographic analysis of the boating and non-boating communities. Characteristics of potential visitors such as age, income level and types of boaters, all have an impact on the village's conceptual plan. For example, retirees may want more high-end restaurants and retail outlets, while in an area expected to attract many parents with children, a water park and playground areas may be key components.

Another important element of planning is developing projections for the marina itself – numbers of boats and their size ranges. It is also critical to plan for the types of boaters expected (e.g. transient boaters, megayacht owners, boaters who live in or near the development, fishing or other charters, etc). Seasonal variations in boat and visitor traffic are also important considerations. All of these factors influence the project's design.

Conceptual plan

Armed with market analysis data, consultants and the developer typically collaborate to create a series of designs that are presented at public workshops. It's important at this stage to give the public a good idea of what the developer has in mind, find out what concerns the community may have and address those concerns. The conceptual plan includes details about the programming of the development, including the amount of square feet projected for residential buildings, retail, food and beverage outlets.

The marina business plan

Obviously, the key element of a marina village is the marina, and it is critical to ensure that the marina's facilities will be appropriately designed to support a thriving business.

The marina business plan examines the boating demographics in the market analysis, the marina's current slip rates, other revenues and costs, and projects these factors based on expected boat traffic after the development is completed. This plan will provide details on

Atlantis – a luxurious mixed-use development.





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‘There are always
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key marina attributes including the number and size of new slips required, new slip rates, whether rates will need to be adjusted for seasonal boating traffic fluctuations and the projected market for drystack, if this is to be included.

Drystack option

Although traditionally we may think only in terms of wet marinas, drystack can be valuable assets to a marina village, allowing the marina to increase its ability to accommodate more boats per square foot of dockside and slip space. Since a marina village needs to attract a steady stream of boaters, the more boats the marina can support, the better.

Though some perceive drystack as large, monolithic structures that may not be aesthetically pleasing, innovative designs can actually make them assets to marina village ambience. For instance, a drystack structure can include retail and restaurant space such as one finds lining newer city centre garages.



*Sam Phlegar:
‘Atlantis took marinas
from stale to stellar’.*



In fact, at some marinas, drystack can be sightseeing attractions. For example, a restaurant featuring a picture window with a view of a crane lifting boats in and out of a drystack can add to patrons’ appreciation of the waterfront atmosphere.

“One of the biggest concerns with drystack is their mass,” says Robert Semmes, vice president with ATM’s International Marina Consulting practice. “But there are ways you can break up a drystack facility into separate structures to make it less massive.” There are also new techniques in drystack design that improve efficiency, minimise spatial requirements and allow for larger boats to be put on racks.

Harbor Town in South Carolina was the first marina village in the USA.

All the elements

All in all, a marina village development requires a lot of upfront preparation to create the necessary design and mix of elements. It is well worth the effort, however, with numerous instances of marina villages providing the catalyst for regeneration of waterfronts and the creation of vibrant village centres for new resorts and existing year-round communities. *Applied Technology & Management (ATM) is a coastal, marine and water resources engineering firm with headquarters in Charleston, SC, USA. www.appliedtm.com*

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