

Marina

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Essential reading for marina and waterfront developers, planners and operators



Stock Island Marina is perfectly positioned to become a 'Key West' destination.

north land pier is the ship's store with a captain's lounge above and an outdoor bar and grill alongside the new floats. The second land pier anchors an older live-aboard moorage with 80 slips.

The facility offers a wide range of amenities, including in-slip pump out for all slips and 480A, 3-phase electrical service for power-hungry superyachts. High-speed fuelling is available at the 430-foot fuel dock, the largest in South Florida.

A different approach to development

Strunk began acquiring the site in 2006 through the purchase of 60 separate properties. These included a 25-slip marina condominium which has since been dissolved to make room for future development, including a planned 80-room boutique hotel. The development has 12 acres of upland and 26 acres of bay bottom.

Before he decided to develop Stock Island Marina Village, Strunk was a frequent visitor to Key West with a passion for deep-sea fishing. He admits that he started out as Developer 'A'. "I originally planned to clear the site and build an upscale steel and glass hotel and marina," he recalls. The 2008 financial crisis and the recession that followed caused him to reconsider. "The original plan doesn't work today. I hired marina manager Ray Soboski to help me develop a new strategy. We decided to let the property tell us what it should be. Ray and I listened and we learned."

"When I first toured the property it was in poor shape," Strunk admits. The 1950s era wooden docks were past their service life. Scattered around the

Great attention has been paid to community needs. L to r: the stylish captain's lounge; one of two dog walking parks for visitors and liveaboards; guinea hens are kept on site to control the insect population.

Stock Island Village puts Key West heritage on show

Marina Developer 'A' begins with a clean sheet of paper and sees the project as an opportunity to clear away the old and create something new. He gives it a brand name and a logo, but does little else to take advantage of the essential nature of the location. Developer 'B' recognises the potential of what is there. He patiently encourages a process that channels the ethos and energy of the community into the project. Robert Wilkes speaks to Matthew Strunk

Matthew Strunk is the quintessential Developer 'B'. Stock Island Marina Village in Florida embraces Key West's mellow lifestyle and colourful history. Rather than a marina tailored to a narrow market segment, Strunk is creating a Key West experience that appeals across a wide spectrum. "It's eclectic," he says. "It's a big gumbo that appeals to all kinds of people."

Strunk and his team have just completed phase one of a two-phase development in Safe Harbor on Stock Island. The island is the penultimate link in the Florida Keys before Key West.

A new floating concrete dock marina built by Bellingham Marine occupies the east half of the basin. The newly opened moorage features Unifloat docks in a 128-slip configuration with berths ranging from 12m to 21m (40ft to 70ft). Two new side-tie berths welcome superyachts up to 80m (250ft).

Safe Harbor is accessed from the Atlantic through a dredged entrance channel 7.6m to 10.6m (25ft to 35ft) deep. The marina basin is divided by two massive land piers cut from solid indigenous limestone and separated by 90m (300ft) of water. At the end of the





site were junkyards and unkempt empty lots. A seasoned developer with an eye for the possible, Strunk looked past the clutter and recognised the potential of the eclectic assortment of activities at the site: commercial fishing, artisans, craftsmen, charter fishing boats and a tight community of live-aboards. One can drink with the locals at the Hogfish Bar or watch furniture craftsmen in Ye Ole Hippie Workshop.

He decided that the site had a charm and vitality that could be developed into a compelling visitor experience. "We want to build a working waterfront and interactive museum that turns our real working waterfront into a kind of theatre. We'll celebrate the history and educate people about the amazing natural resources we have here. For example, we have the only living coral reef in the continental US just outside the harbour."

Visitors and tenants will find a meticulously maintained marina that anticipates their needs. Noticing that many live-aboards owned dogs, they created two well-maintained dog parks for the tenants, one for small dogs and another for large dogs. The property is extensively landscaped with 70% indigenous plants and tropical fruit trees. An organic community garden is provided for live-aboards who want to grow fresh fruit and vegetables.

In the 1970s Safe Harbor was home port to more than 300 shrimp boats. While commercial fishing has diminished over the years, three permanent and 20 seasonal shrimp boats still operate from the harbour. To revitalise the commercial fishing heritage of the harbour, Strunk plans to build a 'fish house' to receive and distribute locally-caught seafood including a small retail trade. He also

plans a museum and interpretive centre. "We want our marina village to be an attractive and interesting place for all kinds of people who come to Key West," he confirms.

Key West is the heart and soul of the Florida Keys, and the marina is only six miles from Duval Street. Key West is where Hemingway wrote *A Farewell to Arms*, Audubon created some of his spectacular bird paintings and Jimmy Buffet lit up the charts with 'Margaritaville'. Key West is a national treasure that attracts millions of tourists every year. President Truman had his winter White House here, and cruise ships make port calls nearly every day. The town is a magnet for adventurers and eccentric characters.

Strunk understands that soulful places like Key West can't be built, they coalesce organically over time. He studied Sausalito and Cannery Row in California. Cannery Row has a commercial fishing tradition similar to Stock Island and now draws visitors from all over the world.

"I read everything I could about Key West," says Strunk. "I read the local newspaper every day for three years. Ray Soboski helped me see the site as a living seaport, not just a marina. We approached the fishermen and live-aboards for ideas. A shrimp boat owner invited us home for dinner and we learned about the history of Safe Harbor. There were once so many shrimp boats you could walk across the harbour on them. We learned our marina used to be the

Side ties are in place to accommodate superyachts.

Although commercial fishing has seriously declined since the 1970s, shrimp boats still moor up in the harbour.

embarkation point for the ferry to Cuba. Perhaps it will again."

The spacious, deep harbour and serene setting presented an opportunity to accommodate visiting superyachts. "Steve Ryder at Bellingham Marine helped us plan our marina to incorporate the requirements of very large yachts," says Strunk. Ryder adds, "The two 80m side tie berths, deep entrance channel and peaceful setting away from the glitz and glamour of downtown Key West will be heaven for many superyacht owners and captains."

Environmental stewardship

Ecology has high priority at Stock Island Marina Village. The marina captures and treats all storm runoff from the property. Rainwater is collected and used to water the garden. Solar panels provide bathroom heating and air conditioning and create 18 kilowatts of supplementary electricity per year. LED lighting is directed to prevent light pollution in the ocean at night. The community garden is organic and insecticides are banned.

Jeff Stotts is the marina's 'Green Manager'. A classically-trained horticulturalist, he is planting key lime, cashew and avocado trees, and plans to have 20 varieties of mango. Other trees provide edible seeds for migrating bird populations. Guinea fowl live in a specially-constructed fowl house and control the insect population. Two rambunctious peacocks patrol the property. Stotts is erecting an osprey nest complete with video monitoring. "Our environmental work has intrigued visitors and won us a lot of respect," he says.

Robert Wilkes writes about the marina industry from his home in Bellevue, Washington, USA.

