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Marina gets new owners, facelift is on the way



Changes are coming for the Jacksonville Marina over the next six months.

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by Mike Sharkey

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There are new owners of Jacksonville Marina and by midsummer the marina adjacent to the ferry in Mayport will have a new look and feel.

North Carolina-based Morningstar Properties, LLC recently purchased the marina in partnership with Harrison Street Real Estate Capital, which is based in Chicago. The marina is the first for Morningstar in Florida and according to Matt Shapiro, assistant vice president, the Mayport marina's proximity to other marinas the company owns north of Jacksonville made it a logical first venture in Florida.

"It's a natural progression and comfortable distance (from the company's home office in Matthews, N.C.). The location is phenomenal and this is a great opportunity to redevelop and reinvent the property," said Shapiro.

Renovations will start soon and, if all goes well, they will be done by midsummer. The marina consists of two dry rack storage buildings with the capacity to berth 210 boats, 10 open slips used for fueling, a boat showroom, store, service building and fueling system. The renovations will include dredging, replacing the bulkhead, new docks and an overall upgrade Morningstar officials says will "redevelop the marina into a first-class boating and fishing facility."

Overall, Morningstar owns and operates over 3,300 dry and wet berths in five states across the Southeast and the company is looking to continue to acquire properties in Florida and as far north as Maryland.

"We are thrilled to announce Jacksonville Marina as the newest addition to the Morningstar Marinas family," said company president Dave Benson, in a statement. "This is a great opportunity for us to extend our brand into Florida and to partner with Harrison Street on another marina transaction."

Guy Morrison has worked at the marina in some capacity for the past seven years. He said the sale from previous owner Robert Stovall to Morningstar will be good for the casual boater as well as fishermen who use the marina.

"It's very good for the main reason they have eight marinas already and when they buy a facility they make upgrades and improvements," said Morrison, adding the marina's current customers know about

the sale. "They are ecstatic."

Shapiro said the deal has been in the works for about six months. He also said the current economic situation wasn't much of an issue.

"Our belief is that boaters will be boaters for life," said Shapiro. "Even in a challenging economy, you still have to have some fun."

Shapiro said the marina is about half full right now, but the improvements should bring in new customers.

"We believe with the improvements and renovations boaters will utilize and capitalize on the location," said Shapiro.

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