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Developer hopes new condo points to resurgent luxury market



**SOFLA
LUXE**

Jeff
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On a near-vacant lot in Aventura sits the foundation of what developer Martin Z. Margulies hopes will be the phoenix of the area's luxury condominium market.

Or at least his 24-floor, 70-unit, \$100 million share of it.

Margulies is launching sales and marketing for Bellini Williams Island –

the first new condo in the area since the real estate bust of 2008.

Margulies purchased the 1.59-acre property, plans and permits from Minto Group for \$10 million cash, said Shannon Selby, COO of the project. The prospective project, with designs by Stu Cohen with Cohen Friedman & Encinosa in Miami Lakes, had the foundation poured more than 18 months ago, she said. Then, with the market's demise, Margulies decided to shelve the project and wait.

"We decided to wait it out," she said. "Then, in January, we said the timing is getting close."

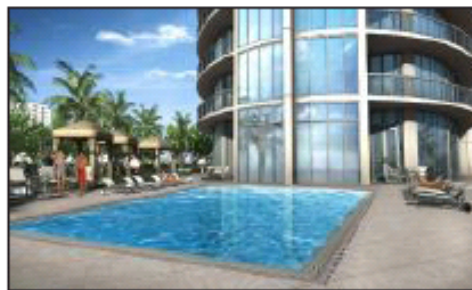
The construction loan should close by year-end, Selby said. The building should be completed by 2013.

In three decades of high-end condominium construction, Margulies has built Grove Isle, Grand Bay Towers Key Biscayne and The Kenilworth House, a luxury development in Bal Harbour. The new project comes on the heels of the Bellini Bal Harbour, Margulies' 81-unit beachfront condo.

That the two properties share the same



Margulies' new project, Bellini Williams Island, would be the first new condominium in the area since the real estate bust of 2008.



first name – one "unrelated to the drink or the cribs," Selby said – is no coincidence. The beachfront property had been purchased for \$27 million before the boom. Units at the Italian-themed residence sold for close

to \$800 a square foot, Selby said. Williams Island will boast a "smaller Bellini"-styled design, themes and luxury amenities.

Perched off Williams Island Boulevard, Bellini will offer four units per floor – each corner units with private elevator access, views of the Intracoastal Waterway and, farther in the distance, the Atlantic. Penthouses will feature 5,000 square feet of living space and 12-foot ceilings. One Sotheby's International Realty is the exclusive broker. Prices are expected to

approach \$400 a square foot.

With three-bedroom models, Bellini will be different from other condos, Margulies said. It will be for people planning to spend more time living and shopping in Aventura.

"This isn't for speculative buyers," he said. "This has become a user's market."

Margulies still is banking on international buyers to bring their cash. In a move to lure Brazilian buyers, Margulies recently inked a deal to outfit the showroom with product from Brazilian high-end furniture maker Artefacto, which has showrooms in Aventura and Coral Gables. Product was to arrive this week.

Some wonder whether the market can absorb new inventory. Ample resales of rela-

tively new product already exist in Aventura, Williams Island and Sunny Isles Beach. Maybe Margulies' studies prove Bellini will serve an unfilled niche, said Stu Berger, a broker associate with Coldwell Banker in Aventura. Also, with so much product on the market, local agents will be more likely to sell existing condos than those pitched from models and floor plans.

"New construction isn't that easy to sell when you're selling from plans," said Berger, who recently closed on a Turnberry Ocean Colony condo resale in Sunny Isles Beach for \$2.75 million. "Will Realtors bring people to see something that may close in two or three years? A lot of other buildings are out there."

Margulies isn't alone in jumpstarting development. Developer Jorge Perez and Related ISG reportedly have several Miami-Dade and Broward county condominiums in the works.

Timing could be right for a new project – if marketed and sold right, said Mark Pordes, president of Pordes Residential Sales and Marketing, a brokerage firm specializing in luxury condominiums and condo-hotel properties.

"There's no question there's a need for new units, and there's no question Aventura can absorb new luxury units," he said. But, "unless someone is compelled to be within the Williams Island complex and can wait 18 months, it could be challenging for the project. There are ways to deal with that, as well. They'll need to identify the right sales angle for the market."

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