

Condo buyers get hotel suites instead

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It's buyer beware when buying at Catalfumo Construction & Development's luxury 2700 N. Ocean condo on Singer Island.

The soon-to-be-built project is a condominium and hotel. But you wouldn't know that from talking to its sales execs or rifling through brochures, two buyers say.

Brad Eavenson said he found out after plunking down \$50,000 to reserve what he thought was a condo in the project. Only after **Eavenson** received his legal documents did the Palm Beach Gardens lawyer find out he was buying an \$850,000 hotel suite. In fact, about 100 of the property's 242 units are hotel suites. The hotel units are in one of two 27-story towers on the site of the former Days Inn hotel.

Eavenson said his unit in Tower 2 is classified as "restricted," forbidding him from applying for a homestead exemption to make the property a primary residence. (Homestead exemptions can save owners thousands of dollars in property taxes.)

Eavenson also found out his unit must be furnished, have maid service and be connected to a main telephone switchboard — just like a hotel room. The unit can be rented out several times a year, for up to a month at a time.

The lawyer in **Eavenson** was upset. "It was never once represented to my real estate agent that this unit is zoned resort hotel," he said.

However, Joey Eichner, a Catalfumo project director, said no one's hiding anything. "People are made fully aware of it in the condo documents," Eichner said. "You're not allowed to homestead it and have it as a permanent residence."

Oh, the information's there all right, buried in Exhibit F of a 61-page condo document, **Eavenson** said. "The developer will say it was in the documents. But if buyers don't have a lawyer or they aren't diligent to read this, they wouldn't know. It's one of the disclosures that should be blaring."

Eavenson's real estate agent, Kevin Dickenson of WCI, didn't know about the restriction either — and he steered his investor group into a \$1.2 million condo unit in the same tower as the hotel units. (Because the units' owners all share the same amenities, one wonders whether well-heeled residents will like having spring breakers lounging by the pool.)

Dickenson and **Eavenson** are unsure whether they'll go through with their deals, which have yet to become unrefundable.

Meanwhile, just up the street, Dickenson's employer is building The Resort at Singer Island, another condo hotel. Unlike 2700 N. Ocean, which doesn't mention the hotel part of the project in its sales brochures, "WCI has a package just dedicated to Q&As about condo hotels," Dickenson said.

He added that no one's talking yet about how 2700 N. Ocean's hotel units will be operated and whether they'll be rented out daily, weekly or monthly.

Despite the uncertainties, Riviera Beach Mayor Michael Brown said he's happy to have 2700 N. Ocean in the city. "We need additional hotel rooms on the island," Brown said.

Catalfumo's Eichner said the company soon will hire a licensed hotel operator to manage the units and handle the details.

But Eichner wanted to make one thing clear: 2700 N. Ocean "is not a condo hotel. It's a condominium resort." When asked how they're different, he replied, "That's a good question. I don't have the definition."