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FORT LAUDERDALE'S CITY MAGAZINE

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FORT LAUDERDALE'S IMAGE MAKERS



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PIER 66

THE STORY BEHIND THIS ICONIC BUILDING — AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ‘66’

The Pier 66 tower has long been an iconic and integral part of Fort Lauderdale’s waterfront skyline.

For more than 55 years, this masterpiece of mid-century modern design, along with its marina and other amenities, has welcomed visitors from around the world to Florida’s yachting capital.

The tower is an architecturally significant building that principal designer, Richard F. Humble, infused with details that paid homage to his employer — and the tower’s original owner — Phillips Petroleum. The number 66 features prominently throughout, including the 66 spires on the building’s crown, the 66 windows in each of the tower’s walls, the 66-second glass elevator ride to the top, and the 66 minutes it takes the circular floor of the Pier Top to make a full rotation as guests are treated to panoramic views of the city and beyond.

After Phillips relinquished the property during a bankruptcy liquidation in 1985, Pier 66 was bought and sold by a number of investors, including a New York private equity firm in 2004. Renovations and improvements were made along the way, but overall, not much changed in the Pier 66 complex over the decades. In 2016, the property was finally sold to owners with a passion for the landmark — Orlando-based Tavistock Development Company. Life was once again breathed into Pier 66.

In 2019, much to the delight of the city, business professionals and boat owners, Tavistock embarked on an ambitious, two-year plan to fully renovate and expand this iconic part of Fort Lauderdale’s history. Plans for the mixed-use development include expansion to the south side of 17th Street, nearly 400 rooms and suites, 100-plus residential units, new pedestrian-friendly commercial spaces and a dramatically expanded marina designed to attract superyachts from around the world.

Tavistock, led by British businessman, investor and boat owner Joe Lewis, has pledged to pursue the expansion with a deep respect of the property’s history while employing forward-thinking strategies aligned with Fort Lauderdale’s and South Florida’s continued growth. Lewis is personally invested in the redevelopment project and is viewed as a trusted steward who will shepherd Pier 66 to success in the coming decades.

There is no doubt that expanding the facilities to encompass both sides of the 17th Street Causeway and enlarging marina capabilities to attract bigger yachts is a solid step toward cementing Fort Lauderdale’s reputation as a world-class boating destination. Beyond reputational considerations, the influx of yachts from around the world will bring financial benefits to the city and beyond.

From additional marine industry jobs to more money flowing into the local economy to greater demand at regional airports, the positive economic impact of this long-overdue development cannot be overstated. Considering Broward’s already impressive economic numbers — 121,000 marine industry jobs and \$9.7 billion economic impact, adding to these statistics will only strengthen the region.


With new Pier 66 leadership in place and a completion date rapidly approaching, we are excited to see the additional positive economic impact the finished project will have on Broward’s overall economy. 



PHOTO BY JASON LEIDY