

## Miami River Commission approves yacht building and restaurant

TRD MIAMI / By [Erik Bojnansky](#)  
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*Rendering of planned marine facility and restaurant*

The Miami River Commission on Monday backed a proposal to build a six-story marine facility and an adjacent 90-seat restaurant on properties once owned by a Cuban exile accused of plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro.

But Carlos Salas, president of the Spring Garden Civic Association, said he intends to appeal the decision for the proposed project at 301 and 311 Northwest South River Drive. The appeal would come before the Miami Planning Zoning and Appeals Board for a public hearing.

Puntallana LLC, managed by Arturo Ortega, bought the two warehouse properties totaling 15,524 square feet from Enrique Bassas in October 2016. In September 2016, The Real Deal reported that the property was under contract for [\\$7.55 million](#).

Bassas bought the properties for \$450,000 in January 1998. Later that year, he was implicated in a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro while the Cuban dictator was visiting the Dominican Republic, according to the Miami Herald.

Steven Wernick, Puntallana LLC's attorney, said the developer intends to replace a one-story warehouse at 301 Northwest South River Drive with a six-story custom-made commercial building for Turkey-headquartered NuMarine. The company plans to move from its corporate

sales office in Doral once the building is complete, Wernick said. The ground floor will be a yacht sales center, while the upper floors will have sales and office space. The development may also have a mechanics shop, he added, as well as four dock slips for yachts.

The two-story warehouse at 311 Northwest South River Drive will be converted into a restaurant that will include a “family-friendly rooftop observation deck.” Boats will not be allowed to dock at the restaurant, Ortega told the commission. A restaurant tenant has not been determined, Ortega said.

There won’t be on-site parking. Instead, Ortega plans to use two properties 1,000 feet away as off-site valet parking. The Ortega family bought the two lots at 720 Northwest Second Street and 742 Northwest Fourth Street from Augusto Franchino for \$1.3 million in June 2016.

Ortega offered to create a public “riverfront courtyard” by the restaurant, enhance an existing walkway near the property, and “explore a functional alternative walkway adjacent to the river, with public access between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.”

Salas, however, said the developer should design a project with a public riverwalk and onsite parking. Salas and his neighbors are also worried about the proliferation of noisy restaurants like Kiki on the River and Seaspice along the [Miami River](#). And they questioned why a boat repair place and showroom needs a six-story facility. For those reasons, Salas said the neighborhood group opposes the project.

“Our organization is pro-building and pro-development. We want the area to grow and improve,” Salas told the commission. “But we want riverwalks and we want [onsite] parking.”