

The Palm Beach Post

FRIDAY, JULY 29, 2011

LOCAL BUSINESS IS OUR BUSINESS *Retail*

PERUSING COUNTY PLAZAS

Focus of Bus Tours: Shop site-seeing

Costume-clad retail folk get to mingle while mulling available sites.

By EMILY ROACH
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

It was a whirlwind trip through shopping centers and a social occasion all rolled into three busloads of landlord representatives, potential tenants and retail-friendly business people.

Thursday, was the inaugural Retail Bus Tour for Palm Beach County. The buses rolled out of Boca Raton around 8:30 a.m., headed up to Jupiter and then back south by 5:30 p.m.

About 160 people — most from South Florida — got a look at 30 percent of the commercial



Broidis

retail centers in the county offering 100,000 square feet or more of space.

But more than that, many met the voices on the phone they had done deals with and maybe their next partner in a deal.

Gary Broidis and partner Larry Brooks began offering the tours in Broward and Miami-Dade County late last year. They devised the bus tours because they saw a need to bring people in the retail industry together and give them a look at the properties in the market.

"Outside of industry events put on, there are very few opportunities to network with people in the industry, and more than networking, see the market," Broidis said.

As Marc Boucher, president of SEC Commercial Realty Group, pointed out, Palm Beach County is a large county. Many leasing agents haven't seen what all is out there.

"It actually gives you an idea of what's available in the marketplace today — a snapshot," he said.

So, are people signing deals? Yes. But the market is still soft, he said.

"You have people looking again," Boucher said.

Clearly some major retailers, such as hhgregg, entered the county recently. And yogurt shops are hot again — every shopping center needs one.

Retailers and their leasing agents are optimistic people. And on this tour, they had people ready to move into the market.

Matthew Livingston, real estate manager for Tijuana Flats Burrito Co., is looking for seven to 10 locations in South Florida to open in the next 12 months.

"It's a good opportunity to network," he said of the tour. "It opens up doors to new sites, new leads."

Marc Nudel is ready to open a Dr. G's Wellness medical weight loss center in Wellington by the year's end



Colorful approach: Participants lightened the mood with costumes. Andrew Guzik of Thur Associates took part in the fun with his rainbow-colored hat. About 160 people on the tour got a look at 30 percent of the commercial centers in Palm Beach County offering 100,000 square feet or more of retail space.

and several other locations in the near future.

"This is my territory," he said. "It's a good way to learn the demographics, compare prices and build relationships."

In between information on square footage, demographics and anchor retailers from a moderator was goofy hats, karaoke and bad jokes.

"Everyone in retail is great," Livingston said.

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Staff photos by GWENDOLYNNE BERRY

Costumes, anyone?: Beth Azor, of Azor Advisory Services, hands out costumes to others on her bus after lunch at The Village Shoppes in North Palm Beach on Thursday. The Retail Bus Tour took 160 retail industry people to commercial centers from Boca Raton to Jupiter to look at retail space.

Retail bus tour

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