

New development would cut 1,100 parking spaces from Roger Dean Stadium

By [Bill DiPaolo](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

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JUPITER -- —

A vacant lot now used for paid outdoor parking for about 1,100 vehicles at Roger Dean Stadium could become 300 luxury apartments and retail/office space about the size of a Home Depot. “There is a demand for luxury rentals. There is a general move away from home ownership,” said Kurt Kehoe, vice president of Florida development for the NRP Group, the Cleveland-based developer proposing the apartments and about 17,000 square feet of retail/office space. The company hopes to break ground for the \$45 million project by the end of the year. Plans also call for about 80,000 square feet of office space.

“The demand for office space is very strong in Abacoa. People like the live/work/play atmosphere,” said Rebel Cook, a north county commercial Realtor. The 80,000 square feet of office would be on the remaining 4 acres fronting Stadium Drive.

Where will baseball fans park? “There is not enough parking for our games without that lot. People are used to the easy in-and-out access,” said Mike Bauer, general manager of the 7,000-seat Roger Dean Stadium. This year, the 28 games played by the Florida Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals at Roger Dean drew about 154,000 fans. “I understand developing that property is part of the overall Abacoa plan. But people for 13 years have been parking on that lot. We need to come up with a parking plan to keep the fans happy,” Bauer said.

Reducing parking could start owners of the Cardinals and Marlins to think about leaving Roger Dean, said Jupiter Councilman Todd Wodraska. Florida has lost five spring training teams to Arizona since 2000, most recently the Los Angeles Dodgers from Vero Beach in 2009. “We don’t want to give them a reason to even think about leaving. We could risk losing what is very important to local businesses,” Wodraska said.

The Marlins and Cardinals have signed a lease to play at Roger Dean until 2027. The lease states the two teams can leave if the New York Mets, who play in Port St. Lucie, or the Washington Nationals, who play in Brevard county, leave Florida’s east coast. Team officials say as the number of teams in an area decreases, travel expense increases.

Parking alternatives include two free garages near Roger Dean. Parking for games will be available in the development. Jupiter-based Rendina Cos., owners of the 14-acre property, have signed an agreement to pay Florida Atlantic University to allow 500 vehicles to park at FAU during games, said Rich Rendina, company chairman and CEO. “I’m confident there will be enough parking,” Rendina said.

The preliminary plan is under review by town officials. No date has been set for council consideration. The apartments and about 17,000 square feet of office/retail are planned for the 10 acres farthest from the stadium along Parkside Drive. By comparison, the Home Depot store on Indiantown Road is about 100,000 square feet. Some areas would allow residents to live and work in the same building, which is common in other parts of the non-gated Abacoa community.

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