

Retail Bus Tour Rolls Again in Palm Beach County; Now Headed North

by Emily Roach, July 28, 2012

The Retail Bus Tour founded in Palm Beach County is adding routes in Atlanta, Tampa, Orlando and up the East Coast



Gary Broidis, left, leads Retail Bus Tour participants (Scott Tunis, right) in polls, jokes and trivia contests in between stops at shopping centers.

Commercial real estate brokers Gary Broidis and Larry Brooks launched the bus tours two years ago. Though the Boca Raton-based business started the tours in Broward County that October, it brought the tours to Palm Beach County last July. The second Palm Beach County tour ran this week, with about 150 registering for the tour.

Broidis said the idea has taken off.

In addition to the new cities in Florida and Atlanta, Broidis said tours are in the planning stages in Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Washington and Hartford, Conn.

The bus tour brings together people who buy shopping centers, people who manage shopping centers, people who look for the tenants for shopping centers and people who represent companies that want to set up shop in those centers. It brings in money with sponsorship of buses and meal stops, and the leasing companies pay to have the tour stop by their properties

Regaling the bus with stories and bad jokes in a fuzzy black top hat, Broidis clearly means it when he says he keeps doing the tours to bring together people on all sides of the commercial real estate business.

“It’s not just about the money,” Broidis said.

Well, maybe it is.

Russell Bornstein, senior vice president of retail brokerage services at CBRE in Boca Raton, said he has done several deals on the bus tours. He was on the committee that helped put together the tour agenda.

“It’s perfectly organized,” he said. “You get a tremendous amount of info in one day.” The bus tour is a great opportunity for someone new to the business to see the whole county condensed into one day, Bornstein said.

Kirstie Ward, a leasing agent at Cohen Commercial Realty in West Palm Beach has been in the business for a year. She got to see commercial properties in areas with which she is unfamiliar, but most importantly, she got to meet some people she had done business with on the phone.

“It’s all about who you know, especially in this business,” Ward said.

The tour took in 31 shopping centers between 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Thursday. The set-up is similar in each locale, and the new locations have regional directors to bring local knowledge to the formula.

To break up the stretches in between properties, participants talk about what’s selling and who’s leasing and offer advice. There’s also singing and funny hats.

Like Bornstein, several participants have decades of stories and tips to share.

“I enjoy sharing my retail knowledge,” said Katy Welsh, president of Hunter RE Brokerage in West Palm Beach, who served as moderator on one of the three buses.

As one person making arrangements, it would take a month to see the 30 properties on the tour, said Laura Lynch, RAM Realty Services’ vice president of retail leasing. She’s gone on all the tours in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties.

“It’s very difficult to see so many different properties in such a short amount of time and bring together so much market knowledge,” Lynch said. “And have fun too.”

Thursday’s trip started and ended at Glades Plaza/The Commons at Town Center in Boca Raton — breakfast at the new Corner Bakery and after-tour drinks at Nick’s Apizza. It went from Glades Road to Abacoa in Jupiter with lunch stops at the Shoppes at Cresthaven in suburban West Palm Beach (in the vacant former Perkins on Military Trail) and afternoon refreshments at Wellington’s World of Beer on State Road 441.



Beth Azor and Gary Broidis, Co Moderators on the recent Palm Beach County, Retail Bus Tour