

How Market Knowledge Can Shape Decisions in Developing or Expanding Boat & RV Storage Facilities

By Zachary Urow and Sean Ruhlman

The Need for Market Knowledge

Recreational vehicle and boat storage is rapidly growing. Nearly 1,800 specialized boat and RV storage facilities operate in the U.S., which is more than twice the total number of facilities from just a few years ago. Ownership of recreational vehicles remains at record levels. RV Industry Association data shows over 11 million households now own RVs, which is a 62% increase since 2001¹. On the surface, these trends seem to offer a wide-open opportunity for developers. However, true *market knowledge* involves more than recognizing national demand. Local data, user behavior, competitive dynamics, and timing shape the most successful boat and RV storage developments and expansion investments.

Market Knowledge in Practical Terms

In the boat and RV storage sector, national demand indicators — such as RV shipments or ownership rates — provide only a surface-level view. True feasibility requires hyperlocal insight that directly informs design, pricing, phasing, and long-term viability². What separates sound development strategy from speculative risk comes down to understanding the following:

- **Site Dynamics: Access, Visibility, and Operational Flow:** A good location on paper can still fall short in practice. Factors like traffic flow, turning radii for large vehicles, visibility from main roads, and the surrounding infrastructure are all critical. A site that lacks easy ingress/egress or presents challenges for maneuvering large vehicles can slow lease-up and limit operational efficiency, even in areas with strong overall demand.
- **Competitive Landscape and Storage Product Type:** It's not enough to count the number of traditional facilities — developers must account for less visible alternatives such as informal lots, under-the-radar storage yards, or private land arrangements. These options are especially common in lower-density or price-sensitive markets and can quietly absorb demand, distorting supply assumptions. Additionally, the type of product offered carries long-term implications. Open-air parking appeals to cost-conscious users and is relatively easy to bring online, but its low barriers to entry leave it more exposed to new competition — often leading to rate pressure and higher turnover. In contrast, covered and enclosed storage creates a more premium experience that attracts long-term users, particularly RV owners. When aligned with a market that values those features, these facilities benefit from higher barriers to entry, stronger retention, and more durable pricing power.

¹ <https://www.yardibreeze.com/blog/2025/02/rv-boat-storage-breaking-records/#:~:text=fueled%20peak>

² <https://marketlogicsoftware.com/blog/how-market-sources-drive-market-knowledge/>

- **Demographics, Preferences, and Use Cases:** Storage preferences vary widely depending on the local customer base. Casual RV users may prioritize affordability over amenities, while more affluent RV owners often expect higher-end features like enclosed storage, shade, security, and convenience. Understanding the usage patterns and expectations of your target customer is essential in determining the right mix of unit types and pricing strategy.
- **Real-Time Data and Operating Benchmarks:** Up-to-date local data on rental rates, occupancy, expense ratios, and operating performance is critical to making well-informed development decisions. This intelligence guides planning around unit mix, phased construction, lease-up timelines, and long-term strategy — and helps developers stay ahead of shifting market conditions or incoming supply.

What Shapes Successful Boat & RV Storage Projects?



Source: Urow Real Estate

Each of these factors help developers decide if a project will succeed and how they will build and operate it. Let's dive deeper.

Five Miles Can Change Everything

Two sites within the same metro area can produce very different outcomes depending on their location. Road access, visibility, zoning leniency, and adjacent land use all affect the viability of a location³. For instance, a boat and RV storage facility positioned along a road near a lake or state park will typically outperform one hidden behind commercial lots with limited signage.

³ <https://toystoragenation.com/2023/01/16/trends-in-rv-and-boat-storage/#:~:text=Greg%3A%20It%E2%80%99s%20important%20to%20keep,mind%20per%20capita%20income%20as>

Zoning differences between municipalities also may result in different permitting timelines. Developers have reported multi-year delays in cities with restrictive land-use policies, while adjacent counties approved comparable projects within weeks^{4,5,6}. Hence, developers should combine data with visiting the site in person. Seeing the traffic, access points, and nearby recreation areas firsthand help reveal whether the location will really work.

Designing to Serve the Right Customer

Design choices should align with the preferences of local customers rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all model. In markets dominated by high-usage boat and RV users — especially those with median incomes exceeding \$100,000 — customers may store luxury Class A motorhomes, wake boats, or fishing vessels valued at six figures. These tenants typically expect covered or enclosed storage, charging stations, dump stations, and premium amenities. Additionally, they prioritize 24/7 access and robust security measures.

Class A vs. Standard Boat & RV Facilities

CLASS A BOAT & RV FACILITIES	STANDARD BOAT & RV FACILITIES
 SOLAR-INTEGRATED CANOPIES	 OPEN PARKING OR BASIC COVERED SPACES
 EXTRA-WIDE DRIVE AISLES & ANGLED PULL-THROUGH PARKING	 STANDARD DRIVE AISLES
 TRICKLE CHARGING AT EACH SPACE	 SELF-SERVICE GATE ACCESS (DIGITAL CODES)
 WASH STATION, DUMP STATION, TIRE AIR STATION, PROPANE	 BASIC SECURITY CAMERAS
 RESTROOMS, SHOWERS, ONSITE CONFERENCE ROOM	 NO PREMIUM AMENITIES
 MONITORED AND HIGH-SECURITY CAMERAS, GATES & FENCES	 LIMITED INFRASTRUCTURE
 HIGH WALLS	

Source: Urow Real Estate

⁴ <https://www.insideselfstorage.com/self-storage-development/city-restrictions-against-self-storage-development-create-new-barriers-to-entry>

⁵ <https://www.axios.com/local/charlotte/2024/11/21/udo-development-pappas-northwood-childress-klein-regulations>

⁶ <http://ctpost.com/news/article/bridgeport-joe-ganim-permitting-inefficiency-19983923.php>

In more casual or price-sensitive markets, a facility may primarily serve owners of older towables or smaller boats. These customers are less likely to pay premiums for amenities they do not use. Therefore, open parking, basic covered storage, and digital self-service platforms may better align with their needs.

Uncovering the Hidden Competition

Many feasibility studies overlook informal storage providers. These include farms, unpaved lots, marina side yards, and peer-to-peer rental platforms like Neighbor.com. Though databases such as *Yardi Matrix* or *Radius+* often exclude these alternatives, they still represent meaningful supply. Peer-to-peer options, for example, can cost 20%–30% less than traditional storage⁷.

To get an accurate picture of competition, developers should survey the market on foot and online. Observing where owners store boats and RVs today, including illegal or informal parking, can reveal service gaps or saturation. Talking to brokers or to HOA boards can help you uncover local trends and better understand consumer behaviors.

Timing Development and Planning the Exit

Market knowledge also shapes timing decisions. Choosing the right time when to delay, to phase, or to speed up construction can keep costs down and protect capital. In 2024, several Sun Belt markets experienced rent softening as new facilities came online⁸. Developers who had monitored supply pipelines adjusted their building timelines or shifted investments to under-supplied regions.

Class A Oakley Executive Boat & RV Storage in Oakley, CA



Source: Urow Real Estate

⁷ <https://www.move.org/neighbor-review/>

⁸ <https://www.yardimatrix.com/Publications/Download/File/6369-MatrixRVBoatStorageNationalReport-Fall2024>

In the same way, exit planning should also rely on *market knowledge*. In 2022, strong performance in boat and RV storage attracted new capital and pushed property prices near record highs⁹. Developers who sold during this period benefited from strong buyer demand, favorable financing conditions, and peak land values. By 2024, that demand cooled, and land prices dropped¹⁰. Those who planned their exits carefully secured higher profits. Today, long-term planning depends on closely monitoring local cap rates, NOI trends, and consumer behavior.

Final Thoughts

Boat and RV storage continues to grow, but building a successful project today requires more than responding to broad demand trends. Developers who understand local conditions can make stronger strategic decisions at every stage of the pipeline. *Market knowledge* shapes not just where to build, but how to design facilities, when to phase development, and how to plan profitable exits. As the industry evolves, sustainable success will favor those who combine real-time data with direct, local insight, adapting their strategies to fit each market's unique realities rather than following a one-size-fits-all model. In an increasingly competitive landscape, *market knowledge* will separate successful projects from those that fall short.

About Urow Real Estate

Urow Real Estate is a boutique investment sales firm exclusively focused on the sale of self-storage facilities across the United States. Recognized as experts in the boat and RV storage, we successfully brokered the sale of the largest Class A facility of its kind in the country in 2025, Oakley Executive Boat & RV Storage.

Located in Oakley, California, this 546-unit, 273,105 NRSF property set a new benchmark for large-vehicle storage in Northern California. Its standout features include:

- 20 solar-integrated canopies
- Extra-wide drive aisles and angled pull-through parking
- Top-tier amenities including trickle charging, dump stations, wash station, tire air station, propane, restrooms, showers, and an on-site conference room
- 35+ security cameras, gated keypad access, and a 14-foot perimeter fence
- On-site solar infrastructure generating over \$695,000 annually in additional income

To learn more about the Oakley Executive Boat & RV Storage sale, visit: *[add link to case study once published]*

For the latest articles and news, visit *The Urow Magazine* and register on our website to stay informed: <https://www.urowrealestate.com/articles/>

⁹ <https://www.yardimatrix.com/Publications/Download/File/2669-MatrixBulletin-RVBoatStorage-August2022>

¹⁰ <https://www.yardimatrix.com/media/downloads/file/5479-MatrixRVBoatStorageNationalReport-Spring2024?direct=true&sample=true>

For more information about Class A RV and boat storage opportunities, reach out to:



ZACHARY UROW
PRESIDENT & FOUNDER
ZACHARY@UROWREALESTATE.COM
201.572.4021



SEAN RUHLMAN
SENIOR ASSOCIATE
SEAN.RUHLMAN@UROWREALESTATE.COM
727.504.1237