

Boca Raton News

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local real estate deals.

One of Spagnuolo's more telling predictions involves Wilma's lingering impact upon South Florida's home construction industry.

"Believe it or not, Wilma will most likely be a boon for the industry," Spagnuolo said. "Because of the damage that was sustained, many houses had to be torn down and new construction planned. That translates to a lot of dollars."

At the beginning of every hurricane season, Spagnuolo helps protect his clients' financial stability in case of disaster by urging them to take out a substantial equity line on their homes and put the money in the bank.

"As a result of doing this, my clients who were adversely affected by the hurricane did not have to wait for funds or deal too long with insurance adjusters," Spagnuolo said. "It's a good example of why foresight is so important in my field."

Boca mortgage banker predicts 'blockbuster' 2006 for South County

By Conny Sooms
STAFF WRITER

Hurricane Wilma's destructive path through South Florida two months ago had a noticeable impact on Palm Beach County's real estate market, affecting both home sales and closings.

Keeping a close eye on where the market is heading is Boca Raton mortgage banker Louis Spagnuolo, who strongly believes that the county's storm-related real estate woes are soon coming to an end.

"We're going to have a blockbuster 2006 in terms of Palm Beach real estate," Spagnuolo said. "Many different elements are in play that will make this a reality."

Also trained as a broker, Spagnuolo is a senior mortgage banker for Boca-based Home 123, which specializes in offering high-end residential, multi-family and commercial loan programs across the United States.

Spagnuolo said part of his role as a mortgage banker is following real estate trends throughout South Florida. His recent analysis of post-storm real estate conditions in Palm Beach points to a positive outcome.

"Even though Wilma gave us quite a beating, we are pretty resilient and will bounce back in a big way," Spagnuolo said.

One of the factors aiding in this change, according to Spagnuolo, is that a record number of people – particularly those from the Northeast –

is expected to migrate to Palm Beach and other areas of Florida next year.

While the median cost of a Palm Beach home is still hovering

around the \$400,000 mark, Spagnuolo points out that it will not be much deterrence to newcomers.

"When you start to make comparisons, you'll see that this area and the rest of Florida are far more cost-effective to live in than anywhere else in America," Spagnuolo said. "We also have the sunny climate and beaches that really draw the masses and create high demand."

Spagnuolo also remarked that South Florida interest rates will remain stable or lower slightly in the near future. He added that the high price of gold will prove to be worthwhile for investors planning to shift profits over to



Spagnuolo