

OFF TO THE RACES

BY MARY DUAN

Golfers have their clubhouses and sailors their yacht clubs for relaxation after a day on the links or an outing at sea. Auto aficionados can't make the same claims. Other than race days or events they attend, there's not much opportunity for gathering with their fellow auto enthusiasts to coo over their cars, share tales of the road and just socialize. After all, how much room can there possibly be in a garage?

Yet for every problem with a Silicon Valley connection, even if it's cars, there is a solution. For motorheads of all types, that solution is about to go live in North San Jose. Commercial real estate developer Ralph Borelli of Borelli Investments and mechanical contractor John Davis, founder of San Jose's Air Systems Inc., are due to open Club Auto Sport on May 29. The auto club is unique in that it melds the commercial condominium concept with auto storage and a social club atmosphere.

The 120,000-square-foot facility sits on a seven-acre site on Charcot Avenue and could store up to 400 cars, although Borelli thinks that number will be closer to 200. He says more than 30 percent of the units at Club Auto Sport have been sold.

The minimum price for the smallest, 800-square-foot unit, where four cars could be stored, is \$250,000 and includes a pro rata share of the club and its concierge services. Those services include access to all of the internal drive aisles, and reserve parking in the yard



PHOTOS BY VICKI THOMPSON

Ralph Borelli, right, and John Davis stand at the entrance to the future Club Auto Sport car condo that will offer a safe storage for high-end cars in San Jose. The complex will hold as many as 400 cars and provide a social club membership with concierge service for auto enthusiasts.

for vehicles such as motorhomes and trailers.

The concierge service is a story in itself.

Borelli and Davis have recruited Diana Mazza, a veteran event coordinator who has worked the business side of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and several professional racing teams, to be Club Auto Sport's concierge. She will arrange the club's monthly social events, coordinate special events around races or shows, and arrange

meetings, guest speakers and the charity events the club will host.

Mazza and her staff also will arrange for personal care of members' autos—detailing, home delivery and the stocking with food and beverages of motorhomes and trailers before events.

Club Auto Sport will also be available to companies that rent smaller units. Renters of the smaller units will pay \$500 per month, which includes an hour's worth of time from Borelli's personal mechanic and a social club

membership.

Davis, Borelli's partner in the development and a self-described "Porsche guy" despite his ownerships of American racecars, had been looking for space to store his cars for three years when he and Borelli hit on the idea to combine a club atmosphere with features needed to store and maintain autos.

"I think the perspective on this is that the only places you seem to be able to house your cars are the 'store it all' places, which are relatively expensive and you don't know who your neighbors are," Davis says. "If you have people of a like mind next to you, who have a respect for what you have, there's an amazing ability to network. You're not spread out in isolation."

Davis, who sold, bought and then resold his HVAC business, plans on running his \$3 million Air Systems Foundation from his condo at Club Auto Sport. He notes the club generally will have a serious focus on helping nonprofit groups, providing free event space and other amenities for

the Canary Foundation, which is dedicated to the early detection of cancer, and the Parkinson's Institute in Sunnyvale.

"The beauty of this is the camaraderie of being in the community in a number of ways," Davis says.

Larry Blair, co-founder of Ethernet switching company Kalpana, which was acquired by Cisco Systems Inc. in 1994, purchased a 1,500-square-foot condo where he will house his collection of "extremely rare" European exotic autos. Now retired from the technology industry, Blair, who owned a successful Indy car racing team in 2001 and 2002, also plans to run his fine art photography business from his condo at Club Auto Sport.

The club "is a nice blend of capabilities that independently I wouldn't be able to justify. It's the benefit of having the car storage and being able to present your cars in a positive manner, in your private garage or in the club showroom," Blair says. "An independent car warehouse is static. You go there and you leave. This combines a car atmosphere with the social aspects of ownership."

One observer said the concept of auto condos has gained momentum in recent years, with some collectors buying racetracks that have gone out of business and turning them into private clubs. The Club Auto Sport concept takes that even further by lowering the barriers to entry.

"I think it's a great idea and the reason it makes sense is that cars are like rabbits. You might have an event car, a track car, a coastal drive car, and if you have that tendency to want to collect and enjoy your cars, you might not have a safe place to put them," says Everett Anton "Tony" Singer, a Porsche enthusiast and founder of the vintage-auto memorabilia show Automobilia Monterey, which takes place in the days before the annual famed car show Concours d' Elegance on the Monterey Peninsula.

"For collectors, the concept of this kind of development is magical because it brings together the social side of car ownership with the practical side of needing space for your collection," Singer says.



Buick Eight owned by John Davis will own a condo at Club Auto Sport in San Jose.