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How Many Restaurants in Bronxville Are Too Many?

By Carol P. Bartold



In a one-square-mile village with approximately twenty-three restaurants within its business district--a combination of sit-down establishments from elegant to casual and deli take-out facilities--how many restaurants might be too many?

Jon Gordon of Admiral Real Estate Services Corporation feels that restaurants can play a pivotal role in revitalizing Bronxville's central business district, plagued recently by several vacant storefronts. Based on his leasing experience in other nearby communities, Gordon feels certain that more restaurants in the village would draw people into Bronxville and spark interest and sales at local stores.

Gordon pointed out that many empty storefronts in the village housed soft-goods retailers, a segment of the economy that has been especially hard-hit by the popularity and growth of Internet sales.

"We need to go to the uses that occupy bricks-and-mortar retail that are growing," Gordon said. He specified entertainment, personal services, and food as those uses.

"Restaurants often form a synergy," Mayor Mary Marvin said. "Often when one good restaurant is crowded, diners don't leave town. They walk a few doors down and can find a table. That synergy can benefit both restaurants."

One of the biggest trends in community vibrancy, Marvin mentioned, is outdoor dining. She stated, however, that a balance between outdoor dining and safe sidewalk passage must be kept in mind.

She pointed out that too heavy a concentration of outdoor dining facilities could interfere with customers' access to other stores.

While more restaurants might draw diners and shoppers from other communities to Bronxville, Village Administrator Harry Porr stated that parking poses one of the biggest obstacles in opening more eating establishments.

"Look at our village," Porr said. "We're so tight for downtown parking, especially at the nexus of Pondfield Road, Park Place, and Kraft Avenue. Parking is a premium."

Marvin agreed that parking for additional restaurants would pose a challenge at lunchtime. She pointed out, though, that many spaces open up in the commuter lot after 6:00 pm, which should encourage diners from other communities to patronize Bronxville restaurants. "We don't charge for parking after 6:00 pm, and that should be a good incentive to eat in the village," she said.

Porr emphasized that village officials are happy to work with a prospective restaurateur whose market study shows that a proposal is viable. "The process works," Porr said. "If people come in with good applications and have good consultants, they can work through the planning and zoning process relatively efficiently."

Although the Village of Bronxville Community Plan of 2009 calls for limitations on street-level banks and real estate offices, it contains no provision for a maximum number of restaurants. However, in an effort to preserve the character of the central business district streetscape, the plan does prohibit fast-food outlets.

Marvin related that people have told her that more restaurants in Bronxville means they can come to the village on the spur of the moment and know they'll enjoy a good meal.

"We have wonderful restaurants in town," Porr noted, saying the market might have the capacity to bear more.