

New Sloatsburg development aims to attract tourists

Michelle Hainer, For The Journal News Published 2:24 p.m. ET Oct. 4, 2017



(Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)

Anyone who lives in Sloatsburg or Tuxedo — or drives that corridor of Route 17 regularly — has probably noticed the ongoing renovations to the rundown stretch of road adjacent to the train station parking lot.

An attractive white fence appeared first, as workers could be seen slowly restoring four historic homes to their former glory.

This past summer, the view from the commuter parking lot became a lot easier on the eyes, with freshly planted trees and flowers peeking out from beyond the asphalt.

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And then, in early September, an invite appeared in the mailboxes of Sloatsburg and Tuxedo residents, inviting them to the opening of The Valley Rock Inn, real estate developer Michael Bruno's long-awaited — and talked about — improvement project.



Work in progress at some of the houses at Valley Rock Inn in Slaatsburg Sept. 21, 2017. (Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)

The inn, which as of now consists of four fully furnished guesthouses that will be available for rent later this fall, is Bruno's way of enticing tourists — especially New York City dwellers who enjoy hiking and cycling in nearby Harriman State Park — to think of Sloatsburg as a weekend destination.

"People don't realize how lush and beautiful it is here," says Bruno, a Tuxedo Park resident, who got the idea to redevelop the property once he discovered that its location was easily accessible to Harriman State Park without having to navigate heavily trafficked Route 17.

"I thought cyclists and hikers might really like this, but there was no ground zero for the cycling world here. Once I realized there was an audience I could market to, it was worth going all in."



The Bike Shop at Valley Rock Inn in Slaatsburg Sept. 21, 2017. (Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)

"All in" for Bruno meant also creating the 7 Lakes Bike Barn, a full-service shop where customers can rent road and mountain bikes from brands like Cervélo and Santa Cruz, take an electric assist bike for a spin or purchase high-end apparel. (An eagerly anticipated coffee bar will open inside the bike barn before year's end as well.)

Further down the stone walkway lies the Blue Barn Farm Market, which houses locally grown produce sourced from nearby Blooming Hill Farm and Sun Sprout Farm, as well as small batch brands like Maple Hill Creamery, Van Leeuwen Artisan Ice Cream and Saratoga Peanut Butter Company. Baguettes from Balthazar and baked goods from Noble Pies in Warwick are also on offer, along with a selection of crackers, cheeses and olives.



Fresh produce and other items in Blue Barn Farm Market at Valley Rock Inn in Sloatsburg Sept. 21, 2017. (Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)



Owner/Developer Michael Bruno sits at a table with some of the items from the food from the Tuxedo Hudson Company truck, at Valley Rock Inn in Sloatsburg Sept. 21, 2017. (Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)

Staple items like eggs, butter and even frozen chicken and beef are available too. All of which is a much needed — and welcome — addition, given that the closest grocery store is an Acme in Mahwah, New Jersey.

"We've been waiting for this," says Cindy Sass-Garcia, a Sloatsburg resident for more than 20 years. "It's a little bit of Europe right here in Sloatsburg."

Continuing Bruno's commitment to local, seasonal fare — and serving as a precursor to the farm-to-table fine dining restaurant that is slated to open on property next summer — visitors will also find a food truck serving up a selection of fish, beef and braised chicken tacos along with autumn squash toast and roasted vegetable salad.



Michael Davis is one of the cooks in the Tuxedo Hudson Company food truck at Valley Rock Inn in Sloatsburg Sept. 21, 2017. (Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)

The prices aren't cheap: Two tacos will set you back \$8-9 and the toast is \$11 for a small portion, but the super fresh flavor is worth it. As is the atmosphere — a tranquil garden of sorts with pebble-lined walkways and plenty of inviting places to sit and eat.

But while all of this sounds — and looks — like nirvana nestled among the hustle and bustle of Route 17, it's only the beginning of Bruno's vision.

Next up is an art gallery and book store and by summer 2018, he hopes to have completed construction on The Lodge, a more traditional style hotel with a 25-yard training pool, gym and spa, and Rock House, the aforementioned fine dining restaurant and bar. All of which he hopes will encourage outdoorsy city folk to spend their dollars in Sloatsburg, and maybe even consider settling here once the 'burbs begin to beckon.

"I want this to be a place where young people can come and have a really good time," he says.

"My goal is to ignite new life in this corridor because it's actually really pretty. Hopefully there's a reason for young people from Brooklyn to come and buy a house here someday." Or, at the very least, a fish taco.



Water flows out a spout at Blue Barn Farm Market at Valley Rock Inn in Sloatsburg Sept. 21, 2017. (Photo: Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News)

If you go

What: Valley Rock Inn (opening November 2017). The inn offers three, four and five bedroom guesthouses available for rental

Info: 27 Mill St., Sloatsburg, valleyrockinn.com

What: 7 Lakes Bike Barn. The full service bike shop also offers rentals. It's open now.

Info: Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursday-Sunday. Bikes available for rent \$25 per hour or \$85 per day. Phone: 845-618-9112

What: The Blue Barn Farm Market (open now). Offers local and seasonal produce and small batch provisions

Info: Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday-Sunday, 845-618-9112

What: Shade Garden and Food Truck (open now) offers seasonal cuisine made to order

Info: Open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday-Sunday