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# QUEST

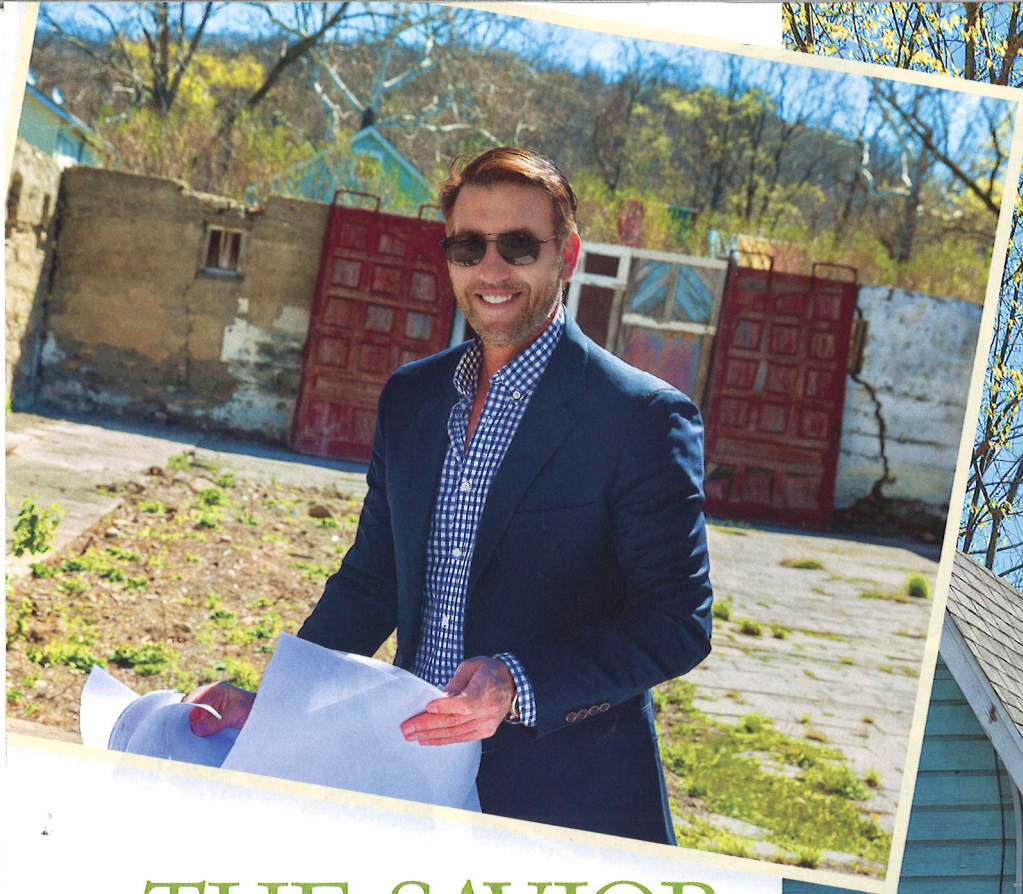
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# THE SAVIOR OF TUXEDO PARK

**MICHAEL BRUNO** has a vision. When he looks at the Village of Tuxedo Park, he sees historic structures, restored to their former glory; a bustling community center of restaurants, farmers' markets, and antique stores; and a revitalized area known as "the Gateway to the Hudson Valley." *Quest* spoke with Bruno, founder of the online luxury marketplace 1stdibs, about his grand plans for investing millions into the town's renaissance.

**Quest:** What made you fall in love with Tuxedo Park?

**Michael Bruno:** I love historic architecture and in Tuxedo Park, it is like living in a 2,000-acre private park of house museums built around lakes. There are so many spectacular houses built by the great architects of the Gilded Age, all still in use as residences—versus a place like Newport, where most of the great homes have been turned into museums and tourist sites. In addition, Tuxedo Park is nestled in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains between two state parks equally over 70,000 acres; all of this

*This spread: The French Resistance Café and Coffee Shop, one of the many properties being restored; Michael Bruno (inset).*









**This page: The Tuxedo Hudson Company Market— which will have a wood-burning grill where you can select your piece of fish or meat and have it cooked to your liking— will be housed in a historic 1890 building. Opposite page, clockwise from top: The as-yet-unnamed Inn; Michael Bruno looks forward to revitalizing the area as the gateway to the Hudson Valley; the Tuxedo Hudson Company Farm.**

is 30 minutes travel time to the George Washington Bridge... What's not to love?

**Q: Do you see any advantages in the fact that the place had been neglected by chains and major businesses?**

**MB:** That's the thing I love most! It's not over-gentrified like all of the other fashionable places. While there is room for improvements and restoration, it will always have a rural feeling. Most buildings are over 100 years old, and we have purchased 20 of them, all zoned for commercial use along the Route 17 corridor between Tuxedo and Sloatsburg, New York.

**Q: Tell us about your vision for the area.**

**MB:** Since we are located at the gateway to the Hudson Valley, we need to live up to the bounty of amazing food that comes from the valley. The centerpiece of our project will be the Tuxedo Hudson Company Market, which will feature all of the best of what's available from the Hudson Valley, from produce to meat and cheese. The market will be housed in a historic Walker and Gillette building from 1890. In addition to the market, we will be opening several restaurants featuring chefs that will focus on a "Hudson Valley First" farm-to-table menu. In addition, we will promote hiking and biking on the many miles of trails and beautiful roads through the parkland to which we are so fortunate to be directly connected. We are opening a small boutique hotel in Sloatsburg made up of a block of Victorian houses, which will have a coffee house, a restaurant, and a pool. Our focus and target market for this venue will be cyclists, hikers, and young people who are in search of chic, budget-friendly accommoda-

tions. There is a train station nearby and cut-through access into Harriman Park that people can use without having to travel on the congested Route 17.

**Q: What reactions have there been from the local community?**

**MB:** Either everyone is excited about what we are doing (or they only tell me the good things). I think the main reason people are behind our project is because we are putting effort and emphasis on restoring these beautiful old buildings rather than tearing them down and putting up generic new buildings.

**Q: Does your knowledge of antiques come in handy?**

**MB:** My love of antiques very much comes in handy as we plan to establish Tuxedo as an antiques and design destination on the 12-acre Stewart Farm. When we first open, there will be room for about 25 dealers, with room for another 25 a little further out, when we are ready for more to join. Antiques fit quite well with the old-school atmosphere we are creating: they are part and parcel with my life and vision for the area.

**Q: What is your favorite background history of a local house?**

**MB:** There are many good stories to tell, but my favorite is the Loomis Lab: In the 1930s, Alfred E. Loomis gathered some of the great scientists of the time to work together to win WWII. Many important discoveries were made there including radar; the White House had a direct line to the lab; and Roosevelt's aunt owned what is now my home in Tuxedo Park. The lab was so important that after about a decade it was moved to M.I.T. and became known as the RAD Lab. ♦



