

Sloatsburg Farmstand Just Part Of Entrepreneur's Vision For Area

Carol Reif 09/01/2016



Michael Bruno, of Tuxedo Hudson Co., stands at the future site of Blue Barn, a farmstand that opened in Sloatsburg last month. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*

RAMAPO, N.Y. – The fresh tomatoes, apples and raspberries at Blue Barn, a brand-new farmstand in Sloatsburg, are just a taste of what’s to come for the community and its neighbor, Tuxedo, says multifaceted entrepreneur Michael Bruno.

Bruno, a 52-year-old self-professed real estate “junkie” who once ran an online antiques site, is gathering up a basketful of properties and historic buildings along the Route 17 corridor with the intention of turning them into destination spots for foodies, antique lovers and outdoor enthusiasts, especially bicyclists.

Word-of-mouth about Blue Barn, which opened last month at 78 Orange Turnpike, is growing fast. Bruno, who says its melons are “crazy good,” estimates that it is drawing 500 customers every weekend.

A local baker is making pies, quiches and cookies. Prepared goodies like lobster and chicken salads are also for sale.

THC plans to bring in a food truck in a few weeks.

Blue Barn, and its pretty courtyard filled with roses, lavender, and hydrangeas, sits behind a row of Victorian houses that Bruno, head of the Tuxedo Hudson Co., is converting into a bed-and-breakfast complex.

But that is just the opening salvo in a vision that Bruno hopes will transform Sloatsburg and Tuxedo while retaining their original characters.

“We want people to get the beginning of an idea of what the whole project is going to look like,” he said.

“We’re saying, this is our style, this is what we do. Everything will be done with the same sort of finesse.”

The stand, open on the weekends, gets its produce from the Chester Agricultural Center, an organic farm cooperative.

Although Bruno has homes in Manhattan and the Hamptons, he has set down roots in the area by buying a grand home in the gated community of Tuxedo Park and by getting involved with community groups.

A Westchester native, he fell in love with rough-around-the-edges Tuxedo four years ago.

“It really is a special place,” Bruno said, referring to its natural beauty, history and accessibility to highways, and the 47,527-acre Harriman State Park.

Next on the agenda for Sloatsburg is a boutique hotel with a pool, restaurant and shops that will face the railroad station’s parking lot. Because the property backs up to Mill Street, hotel guests will be able to use a cut-through to the park -- where they can bike, hike and paddle around sylvan lakes -- without having to deal with Route 17’s traffic.

Farther up the road, toward Tuxedo on the old Stewart Farm, will be an antiques and fine arts center.

Dealers will be housed in a 200-year-old stone barn and a farmhouse.

Bruno said he plans to remove trees and landscape the hillside so everyone can see the “gorgeous farm that’s been hidden for decades.”

“It’s really going to be what the Hudson Valley is supposed to look like,” he said.

THC’s vision also includes a market where Hudson Valley cheeses, meats and eggs will be sold, a wine shop, athletic gear rental store, pool hall, coffeehouse and restaurant.

The businesses won’t lack for potential customers. Thousands already come to the area to shop at Woodbury Common. A housing development is planned. And the Jehovah’s Witnesses are about to open a world headquarters in nearby Sterling Forest that is expected to draw thousands of visitors.

To critics who fear THC may be biting off more than it can chew, Bruno says: “I know there’s a ton to do, but we’re just going to take it one step at a time.”



Customers peruse the produce at Blue Barn, a new farmstand in Slootsburg that is offering a glimpse of real estate mogul Michael Bruno's vision for the area. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*



Michael Bruno (in baseball cap at left) talks with customers in the courtyard of Blue Barn, a new farmstand in Slootsburg. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*



Customers pick a peck of peppers at Blue Barn, a new farmstand in Slootsburg. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*



Eggplant, corn and other veggies, grown by local organic farmers, are for sale at Blue Barn in Sloatsburg. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*



The hydrangea bushes bloom at Blue Barn in Sloatsburg. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*



Heirloom tomatoes at Blue Barn in Sloatsburg. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*



Michael Bruno and friends relax in the courtyard at Blue Barn in Sloatsburg. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*



Berries are ripe for picking at Blue Barn in Sloatsburg. Photo Credit: *Tuxedo Hudson Co.*



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