

## Tuxedo officials eagerly await developer's new projects

By Daniel Axelrod

Times Herald-Record

Posted Oct 8, 2018 at 7:04 PM



TUXEDO – Real estate developer Michael Bruno is shifting his attention toward fixing two Tuxedo anchor buildings, after creating a large, wedding-worthy inn a mile away in Sloatsburg.

The mogul, known for pioneering an online antiques auction website and other e-commerce and real estate investments, can't start the Tuxedo portion of his Route 17 project soon enough for town leaders.

Bruno said he plans to imminently repair and restore the former IGA Market's façade so it's similar to its 1890s look, while subdividing the building for up to four tenants.

Before winter, he expects to replace the 18,000-square-foot building's brick exterior with a stucco facade with awnings and big, old-fashioned storefront windows.

He's hoping to attract a small- to medium-size restaurant with a liquor license, which could occupy one or two of the building's spaces, and an organic market or little retail shops like an antique store for the ground floor.

The building's basement would be used for storage and its second floor could become office space.

But Bruno, who will soon start trying to lease the building, said he'll wait to redo the interior until he knows his tenants' needs.

Next door, Bruno is still weighing plans for the former Tuxedo Junction Inn restaurant.

It's one of 13 properties he purchased between 2012 and 2016 on both sides of a one-mile stretch of Route 17 in Tuxedo and Sloatsburg.

He could tear down the former restaurant, depending on the IGA building's parking needs, lease the Tuxedo Junction Inn to a new restaurant, or sell the building.

Once he has half of the IGA building rented, he'll decide the Tuxedo Junction Inn's fate.

"The Duck Cedar Plaza sat empty for years, and someone fixed it and rented, so there are people in the area who want to operate businesses," Bruno said.

"None of this happens overnight, but we're seeing momentum ..."

Bruno's original ideas for Tuxedo were more ambitious.

He had planned to create an organic grocery store, a top-flight restaurant and bar with rooftop dining, landscaping, and retail at the IGA site.

But he said he down-scaled in the summer of 2017 because of a parking shortage, Tuxedo's demands for more than 20 variances, and a Metropolitan Transportation Authority decision.

The MTA closed a bridge that would have allowed hikers and bikers to access his Tuxedo properties from Harriman State Park.

Bruno has already spent nearly \$19 million to transform the Route 17 corridor, with most of it going to the nearly complete, amenity-filled Valley Rock Inn & Mountain Club.

It includes a 75-foot pool, a gym, an organic market, two restaurants, a modern-art gallery, a bike shop and outdoors club, conference and movie-screening space,; four short-term rental houses, and an idyllic courtyard with rose vine-draped stone slabs ringing a fountain pool surrounded by crushed white marble.

"He's doing such a great job down in Sloatsburg," said Tuxedo Supervisor Michael Rost.

"Those properties are beautiful ... but we need to finish transforming the corridor and get something going in Tuxedo."