

When Main Street is a Highway — Sloatsburg, Route 17 and the “benefits” of benefactors

Posted on 25 October 2017 by Editor

On Wednesday evening the county spotlight will shine on Sloatsburg and its Complete Streets project. The Rockland Municipal Planner Federation features Sloatsburg at a workshop that is part of its “A Year of Transportation” program aimed at Rockland’s transportation needs.



Sandra Jobson with the NYSDOT Region 8 Complete Streets Sloatsburg team presenting options during Public Meeting workshop at the Sloatsburg Fire Hall.

The panel discussion is set for Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals members across Rockland and features Sloatsburg Mayor Carl Wright, Trustee and Deputy Mayor Peter Akey, Sloatsburg Revitalization Chair Darrel L. Frasier, and New York Department of Transportation’s Sandra Jobson.



“When Main Street is a State Highway”

Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 **Location:** Rockland Community College
Time: 7:00 – 9:00 PM Technology Center, The Ellipse, 145 College Road
Suffern, NY 10901



In the past, the consequences of transportation projects on communities has often been ignored or introduced near the end of the project's development, reducing them to reactive considerations at best. Today, transportation professionals understand that involving the public early and meaningfully can result in a *Main Street* that is not only efficient and safe but enhances the vibrancy of the community, economically and socially.

The Route 17 Sloatsburg Complete Streets project is a recent example of how transportation professionals, municipal officials, and the public can work together to develop a balanced *Main Street* project that respects the local community while still meeting regional needs.

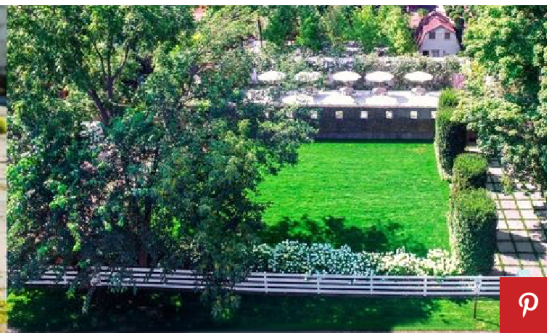
The NYSDOT's approach to Sloatsburg is positioned by the agency as a case study for public involvement in the development of Main Street projects, matching state road needs with local interests that attempts to enhance Main Street quality of life and enhance the vibrancy of the community.



Is Buying an Entire Town the Next Status Symbol For the Ultra-Wealthy?

You can be the mastermind of your own utopia—or the most hated person in the county.

by **BOB MORRIS** OCT 19, 2017



MICHAEL BRUNO, SLOATSBURG, NY: THE FOUNDER OF 1STDIBS.COM HAS LAUNCHED A SECOND CAREER AS SMALL-TOWN WHITE KNIGHT. RIGHT: PHASE ONE OF THE VALLEY ROCK INN COMPLEX.

JILL SWIRBUL (BRUNO); TUXEDO HUDSON COMPANY (SLOATSBURG).

“An unsightly stretch of Route 17”

A recent article in *Town and Country Magazine* put Sloatsburg front and center about the upside and pitfalls of wealthy benefactors investing large scale in local communities. By any account, Michael Bruno's recent investment in

Sloatsburg Route 17 real estate falls squarely into that category — rich benefactor buys up Main Street and attempt to turn it into a piece of paradise.

After one gets past a few pointed and petty “writerly” putdowns of place, writer Bob Morris arrives at the heart of the matter — can a tycoon change the stars of a small community? As Morris details in the article, there are a number of successes and a lot of failures. But the fact remains that all communities are driven by local economic interests, just as Sloatsburg was once shaped by the Sloat and Pierson families and their particular industrial interests.

Small town living and walkability have become assets as we come to realize that social media isn’t always so social ... from Bob Morris’ *Town and Country* article *Is Buying an Entire Town the Next Status Symbol For the Ultra-Wealthy?*

One thing many residents of Sloatsburg and those nearby in Tuxedo agree on is that Route 17 and Sloatsburg itself need change. Over time, the highway through the village and beyond, once noted as a scenic route, has become a sort of “unsightly stretch” of road that is the opposite of quaint and scenic. Route 17 currently promotes car culture over local life and that has slowly stifled Sloatsburg.

The Complete Streets project and parallel investment of Michael Bruno are certain to change Sloatsburg. The hope by many proponents of change is that both, taken together, will enhance and elevate the quality of community life and position Sloatsburg for the long run, creating both a vibrant local economy and affordable lifestyle.



“It’s going to be a village for all seasons,” said Bruno in the *Town and Country* article, quoting Sloatsburg’s now weathered street banner logo. “Bruno,” wrote Morris, “is the latest in a long line of wealthy benefactors who have wrapped their arms around a town they love in the hope of helping it not just survive but

thrive. Along with cash they bring political clout, a track record of getting things done, and, for better or worse, a vision of how things should work.”

But Bruno, like those “benefactors” before him, must partner with both the local population and municipality in order to earn trust and see his grand plan become successful. To date, Sloatsburg has been an agreeable village government, accommodating Bruno’s enthusiasm and vision when appropriate to local standards and community values.

It takes a village to gather together all the ingredients to make a grand plan work. But sometimes it only takes planting a few too many bushes to suddenly change the message from neighborly and welcoming to something else entirely.