

Mayor's Column
January 17, 2017

I want to thank all of you for responding to my request for input as to how to sustain and energize our business district.

I was so gratified by the number of respondents as well as the quality of the suggestions. It just further demonstrates the commitment community members have to the existence of a small village business culture.

The following are just a representative sampling of the ideas put forth. In their entirety, they will be shared with all the constituent groups including Village staff, elected officials, shop owners, landlords and the Chamber of Commerce and given a serious vetting and evaluation.

Streetscape Comments

- Cleaner sidewalks, less garbage on the street, cleaner waste receptacles, more plantings, less merchandise impeding pedestrian passage and tighter control on the cleanliness of outdoor dining spaces.
 - Many of these responsibilities are jointly shared by shopkeepers, landlords and the Village. The Village commits to increasing our vigilance in the business district in our maintenance obligations as well as requiring the merchants to do same, most notably the care and washing of their abutting sidewalks.
- In the same vein, many thought store windows were cluttered with advertisements, paper signs, negatively impacting their attractiveness. They encouraged the Village to be more vigilant in enforcing code regulations relating to window displays.

Types of Businesses Needed for a Retail Mix

- A well-stocked hardware store with locksmith.
- More goods catering to men and boys – including shoes, lacrosse and football gear, birthday present options
- Activities especially for young people, capitalizing on their increased numbers in the Village, including ballet space, arts and crafts, youth exercise, pottery studio.

- Note: When a second grade class did a “shopping in our Village survey” a vast majority of the children voiced dislike for the car rides needed to buy their clothes and shoes.
- Allow national chains to come to the village if they have a needed product and fit in with Village character.

Public Relations

- Start a regular feature in our online paper that highlights one store owner and their goods and services to educate the reader as to what is available in the Village and make a personal connection with our shopkeepers.
- In the same theme, centered on the holidays, have a local shopper suggest gifts for mom, dad, and toddlers. In a fashion, a virtual stroll through the business district for residents who may be commuters and not often in the Village shops and unaware of all our offerings.
- Have a local Bronxville Restaurant Week.
- Adopt the “10% Program” initiated by many New England small towns to encourage residents to move even 10% of their purchases “back home” from the Internet.
- Follow the lead of other small businesses, in Beacon Hill as an example, and display prominent decals that say proudly, “Locally owned”.
- Meet with the nearby communities for a summit on best practices and innovative ideas that have proved successful in other small business districts.
- Make better connections with school and church organizations to partner on purchasing/promotion of local stores and events.

Parking/Traffic

- Increase the inventory some way, somehow of available spaces for patrons
- Create incentives to encourage business employees to remotely park away from the needed on street customer spaces.
- Change our parking culture. Residents who moved here from the City and thought locating a spot four blocks from a museum was a good find vs. now for some not finding a spot on Pondfield Road equates to there’s no parking to shop.
- Make Park Place a pedestrian esplanade to encourage festivities, street activities.

- Make Pondfield Road one way to end the double yellow line crossing for parking spaces and improve traffic flow.

Rents/Landlords

- Find some way to incentivize new businesses to come to Bronzville
- Conversely, also find a way to financially penalize landlords for multi-year empty storefronts.
- Lower rents
 - Caveat landlords and then shopkeepers absorb a significant amount of school taxes incorporated into their rental costs and do not have the legal option to use our school system.

Outreach

- Continue to educate the public on the direct nexus between local shopping/increased sales tax revenue and resulting lower local property taxes.
- Conduct a community wide “Survey Monkey” to learn what shoppers truly want in the local business district.

Just since Christmas, “North”, a beautiful upscale women’s clothing store closed as well as Candyland on Park Place, and we lost one of our most venerable retailers Joan Manning, a fifty year shop owner, who passed away over the holidays.

We are at a watershed in the local economic climate. Please help us start new traditions, add vibrancy and re-energize our historic business district. It is to all our benefit.