

Mayor's Column
March 23, 2015

I just returned from celebrating my mother's 89th birthday near her home in the Albany area. Now that she is a widow, I look at my former hometown through the lens of a single senior citizen.

While my mother's town is populated with wonderful neighbors and friends, its access to services, culture and amenities pales in comparison to Bronxville.

I often write how great it is to be a young person in Bronxville ~ with freedom to walkabout and replicate a childhood much like ours of the past. However, it is also the perfect place to be a Senior Citizen.

Houses of worship, a movie theatre, a post office, a supermarket, a college and stores with incredibly accommodating merchants are just a stone's throw away from any Bronxville residence.

A walkable robust business district is vital to maintaining a robust senior population. So when a person of any age makes a purchase in our Village, the sales tax dollars not only go to support the school and Village government but also to aid in maintaining age diversity in our Village. An inter-generational community adds to the richness and uniqueness of Bronxville and is well worth preserving. I cannot imagine Pondfield Road without toddlers, teens and seniors sharing the same sidewalks.

Seniors without cars can walk to a doctor of every specialty as well as a fine hospital. Our library offers movies, book clubs, computer lessons and thanks to the Friends of the Library, cultural performances and readings.

The Bronxville Adult School offers a varied array of classes, trips and recreational activities at very reasonable cost.

We offer a taxi service, conveyance by Metro North if Broadway calls and options for dining at every hour and price point. Bronxville's ability to fulfill the needs of body and soul are unparalleled.

Our wonderful police department will also keep spare keys for our seniors in case of an emergency and even routinely do a house check if so requested.

In addition to all of the above amenities, Bronxville is home to two vibrant organizations solely dedicated to our senior population.

In existence for 40 years, the Senior Citizens' Council of Bronxville offers a wide variety of programming and assistance. Thanks to the generosity of the Reformed Church, it has a home in their building.

In addition to sponsoring enrichment outlets, our Senior organization is to be lauded for their tradition of philanthropic work - be it collecting cereal for a Head Start Program in Mount Vernon, buying mittens for the needy or delivering presents to hospital patients.

A recent addition to the Village's senior services is Gramatan Village which fills an important niche in our community. Founded by your fellow Village residents several years ago, Gramatan Village follows the very successful model of a program first begun in Beacon Hill, Boston. Gramatan Village's mission is to provide local seniors with assistance and services enabling them to age safely and confidently in their own homes, thereby allowing them to age in place and stay in our community.

Simply put, we need our long standing residents to remain in the Village. They add a level of continuity, diversity, historical perspective

and chair or populate so many of our Village government boards, charitable institutions and volunteer programs.

Many, many people move to the Village primarily so their children can take advantage of a premier public education. However, the ever increasing model of arriving in the Village in one's 30's with school age children and departing in one's 50's soon after the last graduate is also economically unsustainable for the long term health of the Village.

As illustration, a home without school age children carrying an annual tax bill of \$50,000 contributes all of that money to the upkeep of the school and Village. If that person then sells to someone with just two children, (at an educational cost of roughly \$30,000 per child), the house now has a \$10,000 "negative" impact on the tax coffers. An added burden of the premature departure of the empty nester is the increase in the overall size of our school, which impacts individual class sizes.

Logically, the primary goal is to keep taxes from hitting the tipping point for our residents of longest standing, but there are also other variables that contribute to the viability of the Village as a long term home – be it safe streets, inclusive cultural and sporting events or ample parking for religious or senior services.

It is quite simply in everyone's best interest, whether age 10, 40 or 80, to keep all of us thriving and well served by the Village and School.