

Mixed Use

By Patrick Hedlund

Bowery for sale

A massive, eight-building portfolio on the Bowery located across the street from the New Museum has come onto the market.

The mixed-use property, which sits on six lots at the northwest corner of Prince St. and Bowery, currently contains 11,000 existing square feet — with nearly 67,000 square feet of buildable space.

The Bari family has owned the property since the 1940s, using it for restaurant-equipment supply operations, and stand to cash in on the neighborhood's emergence as a destination for art galleries and luxury development.

The recently implemented nearby rezoning of more than 100 blocks of the Lower East Side and East Village will surely increase interest in high-rise development along the formerly gritty stretch.

“With everything else in Downtown Manhattan moving to lower zoning, this one is still a 6 F.A.R. [floor area ratio],” said Nancy Guo, of Massey Knakal Realty Services, which is marketing the property. The corner plot currently holds a mix of one-to-three-story properties sitting in the Special Little Italy District, which limits new buildings' height to eight stories.

Guo added developers have shown great interest in the location since it was put on the market on Nov. 12.

Soho's Miami vibe

A new high-rise hotel in Soho will have more than double the number of seats for diners than actual hotel rooms, and operating hours for the most controversial of the three on-site restaurants have yet to be settled.

Soho residents met with developers of the 17-story hotel at Grand St. and Sixth Ave. — the location of the former Moondance Diner — again last month to discuss details of the space's trio of dining-and-drinking venues.

Developer Brack Capital plans to operate three restaurants with a total seating capacity of 340 inside the 114-room hotel: one in the enclosed cellar area near the ground floor; the second on a multilevel open-air plaza area just above street level; and the third on an enclosed rooftop space complete with cafe and dipping pool.

“It’s a major operation,” said Darlene Lutz, a member of the Soho Alliance, which has met repeatedly with the developer. “It’s a very Miami Beach-style hotel that’s being built in Soho.”

Alliance members succeeded in negotiating operating hours for the cellar and rooftop venues: The developer agreed to close both restaurants at midnight Sunday through Wednesday and at 1 a.m. Thursday through Saturday. (The rooftop area will open at 9 a.m.)

But the open-air plaza area has proved a thorny issue for the Alliance, which is trying to limit outdoor noise and had hoped to get the developer to agree to closing times in the area of 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Lutz did note that Brack has been amenable to 90 percent of her organization’s requests.

“Residents know how much noise [outdoor areas] can generate, even if they aren’t playing music,” she said.

R.I.Pizza

East Village pizza shop Five Rose’s closed quietly over the weekend after serving up pies on First Ave. for close to three decades.

The hole-in-the-wall eatery between E. 10th and 11th Sts. fell victim to rising rents by the building’s owners, who are also Five Rose’s original founders, according to the blog Jeremiah’s Vanishing New York.

The current owner, Christina, who has worked at the restaurant 27 years, hopes to reopen in a new space, possibly at Fourth St. and Avenue A, by the spring.

East Village activist Chris Flash commented to J.V.N.Y. that Five Rose’s landlords, “who own the building and have family members living upstairs,...are raising the rent to something like \$9,000 per month. (That means selling 120 slices per day, assuming that the slices cost nothing to make!)”

Republic revolution

Delivery workers led a revolt against the Republic recently by protesting outside the popular Union Square noodle restaurant to highlight their claims they were cheated of wages and suffered retaliation after filing a labor violation lawsuit.

Protesters waved homemade signs in multiple languages on Nov. 19 decrying the alleged mistreatment of eight Republic employees, who they claimed have been the victims of harassment by management since speaking up about the low pay.

Joined by other restaurant workers and organizers involved in the Justice Will Be Served! Campaign — composed of the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association, National Mobilization Against Sweatshops and the 318 Restaurant Workers Union — they focused their fury on Republic co-owner Jonathan Morr, whose name and likeness appeared on many of the multicolored protest posters.

The crowd of more than 75 people chanted, “Two dollars? No way. What do we want? Fair pay,” in Chinese, Spanish and English. The workers had been earning \$2.43 per hour.

Republic managing partner Michael Callahan said the restaurant is paying workers fair wages now but acknowledged that it hadn't been “a few years ago.” Callahan added that Republic offered the eight plaintiffs a settlement, “but they want much more than that. ... They're trying to extort more money from the company than they deserve,” he charged.

The Republic employees felt empowered by a \$4.6 million win last month in Manhattan Federal Court by 36 delivery workers at the nearby Saigon Grill, a lawsuit that was also launched by members of J.W.B.S. A C.S.W.A. organizer estimated at least a dozen similar cases against restaurants are underway in the city.

Organizer Mika Nagasaki referred to alleged harassment workers received for filing the lawsuit, including claims their hours were slashed by 20 or more, they were fed rotten food and called names. “It's really about the indignity the workers are put through just for speaking out,” she said.

The workers claim in their suit that they labored as many as six days and more than 65 hours a week “for wages that fell below the legal minimum wage and without receiving overtime premiums as required by law.”

last item by Heather Murray

mixeduse@communitymediallc.com