



Wednesday, May 20, 2009

Littlefield of Dreams

The next nightlife destination in Go-Go-Gowanus

By Jake Englander

Just west of Fourth Avenue's long-shuttered Brooklyn Tile Supply Corp., along the shores of the Gowanus Canal sits a neighborhood that seems to be waking from its grimy, industrial slumber. Flanked from the east by an expanding Park Slope and from the west by the Smith Street renaissance, signs of change have lately arrived to Gowanus in the form of summertime kayakers who are committed to the revitalization of its murky inland waterway. Discussion of transforming the rusty waterfront into something like San Antonio's famed River Walk remains mostly talk for now, but new bars, restaurants and music venues are already attracting attention to Gowanus. In the process, this Third Avenue-anchored stretch of Brooklyn, formerly known best by truck drivers and drug dealers, is beginning to lose its designation as a bleak blip on the map. ...

A thriving community of artists first colonized Gowanus, converting fallow warehouses into spacious studios decades after Brooklyn's maritime industry began to fade. But proximity to the hip, moneyed clientele of the surrounding areas (not to mention the promise of cheap rent) has lured a variety of new businesses to the area. "You

get a good bang for your buck out here," claims Erik Serras of Ideal Properties Group, who handles transactions for new commercial ventures on and around Third Avenue. ...

The area's shifting gastronomy is further evidence of the changing tide that Littlefield is riding into town. In the mid-'90s, before Erik Serras was closing real estate deals in the neighborhood, he lived on the corner of Union Street and Third Avenue where he had but one local eating option, the family owned Two Toms Restaurant. That enduring culinary staple provides a stark contrast to newcomer Bar Tano, an Italian bistro where Erik regularly lunches on \$9 plates of spaghetti con polpette. The eatery arrived last year complete with an extensive whiskey collection, and sits right across from his office in the shadow of the elevated F train. And with brand new specialty beer house Draft Barn and a planned Whole Foods just a few blocks away, Bar Tano proprietor Peter Scalfano couldn't be happier.

(Excerpt)

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New York Press

Published: May 20, 2009

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