

## NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT

SOHO

## Shoes in the Bakery Window and Other Mysteries

By JAMES ANGELOS

THE Vesuvio Bakery on Prince Street in SoHo was much more adored, even among those who never patronized the venerable establishment. The bakery, with its often-photographed lime green storefront and its rare coal ovens, began producing Italian bread and biscuits in 1920. It was a remnant of a time when many more immigrants from Italy, and far fewer designer shoe shoppers, walked the neighborhood's cobblestone streets.

But of late, a great deal of mystery has surrounded the fate of the bakery. Over the summer, the bakery closed and a sign appeared in the front window saying that the business would halt for "the next couple of weeks" for renovations.

A few weeks passed. Vesuvio did not reopen. Another sign appeared on the window, one explaining that renovations to the rare coal ovens would take time.

Disappointed visitors wrote messages on the sign.

"We came all the way from the Bronx," someone scrawled. "We love it!" Pilgrims from Minnesota, Denmark, Israel and Sicily wrote similar messages.

Months passed. People were perplexed when high-heeled pumps suddenly appeared in the front window. Would Vesuvio Bakery become a boutique shoe store? (Andrea Vespucci, a part owner of the business who managed the bakery, said he had temporarily let a friend display shoes in the window, in part to raise money to fight breast cancer.)

Finally, near the end of last month, a "for rent" sign appeared in the window, just earlier last week, a real estate broker could be seen examining the space

At the site of the revered Vesuvio Bakery, a series of twists and turns capped by word that the business had closed for good



ANGELA REARD, THE NEW YORK TIMES

for clients who, he said, were interested in opening an epicurean deli.

One issue underlying these seemingly mysterious twists and turns is a dispute involving the bakery's owners and the landlord of the six-story building whose ground floor the business occupied.

"My first choice would be to have continued on and have a historic bakery in a historic building," said William Korn, a part owner of the building who lives in

Colorado. "That's not how it worked out."

On Wednesday, under a court-ordered eviction, the bakery's lock was changed, the landlord's lawyer said.

For much of the bakery's life, the business was run by Anthony Dapollito, a beloved neighborhood figure who died in 2003. Mr. Dapollito was born the year his parents opened the bakery, and as a boy, he delivered the bread on a horse-drawn wagon. Later, Mr. Dapollito be-

came a widely known community advocate, and the bakery served as a meeting spot.

"People would go in there, buy a loaf of bread and complain," said Frank Genovese, the proprietor of Milady's Bar, another longtime establishment, which is next door to the bakery.

Mr. Dapollito sold the bakery shortly before he died, but the business survived, at least in name. The new owners converted the interior into a cafe and of-

fered items like tiramisu lattes.

Some local business people still see great potential for the storefront. A few stores away, at Marisa Perry Jewelers, Ms. Perry sat in her leather swivel chair, amid display cases full of glittering diamond rings, and speculated on its future. With such a renowned storefront, she predicted that a business there could still be a "cash cow."

"It has that authenticity to it that's just magical," she said.

## LOWER EAST SIDE

## Seeking Seats at a Table Where Space Can Seem Elusive

By GREGORY BEYER

CHEESE sandwiches, homemade chocolate truffles, a haircut, a trim. These are some of the things you can get at the Essex Street Market.

But it is the matter of how vendors get space in the market that has recently raised questions at this vibrant indoor bazaar at Essex and Delancey Streets on the Lower East Side. There the city's Economic Development Corporation leases space at an average rate of \$34 a square foot, an attractive price to vendors.

Merchants can apply online. The city considers the applicant's business plan and how the business would affect the market's mix of products. Qualified applicants who cannot be immediately accommodated are placed on a waiting list.

But there is another way to gain entry to the market, one not mentioned on its Web site. This involves buying out the lease of a vendor who already has space in the market, just like subletting an apartment.

A spokeswoman for the corporation, which has operated the market since the early 1990s, said this route was acceptable, adding that her agency reviewed a transfer request with the same criteria used to evaluate new applications.

But the corporation is currently re-



FRANK GONZALEZ, THE NEW YORK TIMES

viewing this policy, responding to a request from Community Board 3. Last month, the board urged the city to clarify the application process out of concern that the system did not give equal opportunity to all potential vendors, a particular issue for those who would

otherwise struggle to pay the neighborhood's high rents.

"It's really necessary for everyone to be treated the same," said Sam Stetzer, the board's district manager. "Where is the transparency? And where does the wait list play into this?"

Lyn Pentecost, the executive director of the Lower Eastside Girls Club, asked herself those very questions when she applied for a booth in 2007.

Ms. Pentecost said she couldn't understand why her name remained on the waiting list even as several booths

"It's really necessary for everyone to be treated the same," said Susan Stetzer of Community Board 3.

became available. Eventually she said, a vendor suggested she might be able to expedite the process by offering money to a vendor. Choosing not to go that route, she stayed on the list for nearly a year. Her organization's shop, which sells baked goods and crafts, opened last April.

Since complaining to the city and the community board, Ms. Pentecost said, she received threatening notes from vendors who, as she put it, "feel we have 'stolen' their right to transfer their leases (or cash)."

Of those vendors, Ms. Pentecost said, "My feeling is that they have no right to sell city equity, particularly as it is heavily subsidized to start with."

Other vendors shrugged off the complaint, among them Jeffrey Rubalter, a butcher who owns Jeffrey's Meat Market, which his grandfather opened on the same spot in 1938.

"People on the waiting list are waiting for an open spot," Mr. Rubalter said. "But if someone decides, 'Hey, I want this guy's business,' that's a transaction between them."

## URBAN STUDIES

Grand Concourse

## The Other Tinseltown

By PAUL BERGER

THEY come in boldly colored DVD boxes bearing titles like "Hidden Tears" and "Crime of Love." They are the products of Nollywood, as the Nigerian film industry is affectionately known. And huge numbers of these films can be found in a tiny nondescript storefront on 165th Street near the Grand Concourse in the West Bronx.

There are holes in the ceiling, the linoleum floor sags, and handwritten signs plaster the walls. Yet, this ramshackle space of less than 200 square feet is home to a seven-year-old wholesale and retail business called African Movies Mall, which claims to be the city's oldest and largest distributor of Nigerian movies.

Hollywood may take the spotlight at Sunday night's Academy Awards presentation, but a little-known film industry is gaining in popularity. During the past 15 years, Nollywood

has become the third-largest movie industry, behind Hollywood and Bollywood.

Rabiu Mohammed, the owner of African Movies Mall, says his inventory runs to 300,000 African DVDs, most of them stored in a sprawling space above his store and at four other places around the city.

And while the city's Nigerian population numbers only about 16,000, according to the latest census figures, Nollywood films have an enormous following in New York's African and Caribbean communities.

Among Mr. Mohammed's customers the other day was the owner of an African products store in Rockland County who had driven about 40 minutes to buy about 50 DVDs with just two titles, "Scorned" and "Life and Living It." Mr. Mohammed, who was sold out of the movies, encouraged her to return later in the week.

Another regular, Fauziya Tijani, the owner of One Stop African Caribbean Market in West Brighton, Staten



FRANK GONZALEZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In search of "Hidden Tears" and other products of Nollywood

Island, buys 300 to 500 movies a week from Mr. Mohammed.

"You get hooked on a really good story and you want to watch more," said Ms. Tijani, who was born in Togo, in West Africa. "It's like a soap opera."

Shot using digital video rather than film, Nollywood's products look like home movies. But starring in such a movie can catapult a Nigerian actor into instant celebrity.

"People invite the actors to New York for a vacation, and they come to my store for signatures," Mr. Mohammed said proudly.

"Sometimes I have close to 200 people trying to get in here."

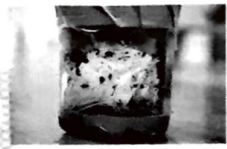
At the end of March, his retail business, squeezed for space, will move into a former tire shop two doors down on 165th Street. The current shop will be devoted solely to his booming wholesale business.

"Nollywood movies don't have a budget for technology," Mr. Mohammed said. "But they do have stories to tell."



THE VOICE

# The Man Who Lets the Bed Bugs Bite



**L**OUIS SORKIN has been an entomologist at the American Museum of Natural History since 1978, and he is an expert in that most reviled blood-sucking creature, the bed bug. As bed-bug complaints in the city have skyrocketed in recent years — calls to 311 rose 34 percent, to 5,213, in the past fiscal year — New Yorkers have flocked to him for advice.

A mill-haired man who studied entomology at the University of Connecticut, Mr. Sorkin, 55, works in an office cluttered with vials and jars, a picture of Spiderman, old typewriters and shelves lined with bug-related literature ("The Arks of Ohio," "Spectral Wasps of the World"). Tarantulas live in tanks by the office door.

As hundreds of bed bugs crawled inside a jar on the table in front of him, Mr. Sorkin spoke about the insects and about City Council hearings, scheduled for Tuesday, that will focus on bills designed to address the problem.

SARKI KNAFO

On a normal day we might receive a package of preserved spiders and insects from Honduras or Nicaragua or Australia. Scorpions are taken out; someone else works on them. Spiders are given to me.

I identify them to the family level or further and label them: wolf spiders, fishing spiders, widow spiders, goblin spiders. Once they're labeled, they go into the collection. The spider collection takes up four rooms.

There are only a few drawers of bed bugs, but we have species you would normally only see on a bird or bat somewhere.

Around 1989, someone brought in our first bed bug. Most entomologists had never seen a live infestation before. Now infestations may be approaching the levels of 50 years ago, before DDT

was used. Some of the chemicals used now appear to have similarities to DDT, but bed bugs have developed ways of bypassing the toxicity. Some bugs were recently collected here in New York, and a journal article reported that they were 300 times more resistant than other bed bugs to one of the common insecticides.

That's why pest control companies do all sorts of things besides using chemicals: heating, freezing, steaming, vacuuming. The hardest part of controlling bed bugs is finding them. Most of the literature out there talks about a quarter-inch-long reddish-brown insect, but a bed bug is a ruminator long when it's born, about the thickness of a credit card.

I now have two bed bug colonies. They both come from a population that was collected in 1971 in Fort Dix, N.J. The collector, an Army entomologist, was supplying them to researchers. The colonies live in jars. I feed them about once a month. I invert the jars on my arm and the bugs feed through the screening. It doesn't hurt. The swelling goes down in an hour or two.

A lot of people get very itchy, and if you keep scratching, you can get a secondary infection. But at this point in time there's no research showing that bed bugs are natural vectors of human disease.

There are about 90 species of bed bug, but a few species feed only on certain bats, and at least one feeds only on swallows. Sometimes they live in

'If you collected a cicada as a nymph coming out of the ground and you watched it split open and an adult crawled out, that was very interesting.'

— Louis Sorkin

people's homes because of the host species there. Sometimes they feed on people.

The chief problem with bed bugs is this one particular species: *Cimex lectularius*. It seems to prefer people, but it also does well on mice, dogs, guinea pigs, birds and cats. Sometimes pest-control companies send me insects to identify. Sometimes people will call up and say, "Oh, I found this in my bathroom. I want to know what it is."

Of course, most people now say, "I think it's a bed bug. I'm really worried." And, of course, it isn't always a bed bug. One species of spider bee-

tle is commonly thought of as a bed bug. The spider beetle has a big, globular body, so it looks like it's filled with blood, but it's not a blood-feeding insect at all.

A pest-control company once brought in slippers from an infested apartment. You could see all the eggs that had been plastered onto the soles and all the bugs that were hiding.

I live in Rye Brook, in Westchester County, next to the house where I grew up. I used to collect stuff in the backyard, in the bushes and out in the pond nearby. We'd get frogs, snakes, turtles. We'd watch them and keep them as pets. I had mammals, too — rodents, rats, guinea pigs.

I collected butterflies, beetles, wasps, bees, ants, things that were easily seen. Then, as I grew older, I'd see if I could find smaller stuff. I'd look for leaf litter and under rocks and logs, or in logs. Or bark — I'd take it apart and see what was going on. I liked watching things metamorphose. If you collected a cicada as a nymph coming out of the ground and you watched it split open and an adult crawled out, that was very interesting.

I still collect cicadas. I sometimes bring them here and feed them to the spiders. Or I eat them. I put them in a little butter or oil and garlic and quickly sauté them. I'm very interested in entomology — the use of insects as food.

I don't find insects creepy, even bed bugs. I actually find them quite interesting. I've never had an infestation myself. Just the jars.

BELOMONT

## Why the Smoke Doesn't Get in Their Eyes

By SOPHIA HOLLANDER

**T**HE men sat hunched along counters at La Casa Grande Tobacco Company in the Arthur Avenue Retail Market in the Belmont section of the Bronx, working furiously. Deftly rolling, pressing and slicing tobacco leaves with a slab of sharp metal known as a chaveta, they sculptured perfectly cylindrical cigars — an art that requires years to master.

In a glass case next to their workstation, another cigar curiosity beckoned customers: the battery-operated version.

"Electric cigars!" a customer exclaimed the other day, a real cigar stub still smoldering in his hand. He burst out laughing and walked away, shaking his head.

But e-cigars — along with e-cigarettes — are no joke.

Paul DiSilvio, the 34-year-old founder of La Casa Grande Tobacco Company, began stocking them in December after stumbling across a description on the Internet. He was intrigued by the pitch: odorless, tobaccoless products that companies claimed offered the experience of smoking — without all the hazards.

He let himself imagine the possibilities: No spouses irritated by the smell, no children pestering parents about



REAGAN GALLAGHER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Taking a drag on an electronic cigar while making the real thing.

health concerns, no restaurant managers insisting that smokers step outside in the dead of winter. And with ever steeper cigarette taxes, a rechargeable battery could even be cost-effective.

Mr. DiSilvio hadn't sold cigarettes in years. Not only did he consider their ingredients more harmful than cigars', but "cigarettes you can buy anywhere, any counter bodega," he said. "There's

nothing innovative about it." Electronic cigarettes were something else entirely. He thought they might even help smokers quit.

Mr. DiSilvio ordered his first shipment, and they sold out. "We're the ones who brought them to the forefront, baby," Mr. DiSilvio said with a grin. With starter kits that sell from \$99 to \$149, he added: "We can't

keep them on the shelves. It's the next big thing."

With most models, a stainless-steel case is designed to resemble a cigarette or cigar. Inside are cartridges filled with water and varying levels of nicotine — a highly addictive substance that can affect heart rate and blood pressure. A rechargeable battery powers puffs of water vapor out one end, which glows red with each drag. Refills cost \$19 for five cartridges, about the equivalent of 200 cigarettes.

Recent customers include Rosa Martino, a 50-year-old secretary from Morris Park in the Bronx who said she smoked her first cigarette 35 years ago. "Everybody was smoking, so we all started," said Ms. Martino, who estimated she had been smoking as much as a pack and a half a day. "My kids are always bugging me, and cigarettes have gotten expensive. I'm hoping this will help me stop."

So far, she said, the experience has been promising. "They taste like a cigarette," she said. "The only thing was, it's hard to find the filters."

Yevgeny Fromer, an e-cigarette wholesaler, hopes that such problems are short-lived. He supplies more than a dozen stores in New York through Safety Shield, a company he founded in 2006.

The company offers nine models of electronic cigars and cigarettes imported from China and Turkey.

"It's an amazing item," said Mr. Fromer, who estimates that he has sold 20,000 kits since introducing the item last year. He has smoked them in restaurants and bars, he said. "Everybody asked me: 'Where did you buy it? Where did you get it?' And I gave them my business card. It's a pretty good advertisement."

A spokeswoman for the city's health department said that if the product had no tobacco, it could be used anywhere. But she added that there was not enough information to support its use as an aid to quit smoking.

Electronic cigars and cigarettes are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration. An agency spokeswoman said that similar devices have been classified as unapproved new drugs, which makes them illegal.

In September, the World Health Organization said in a statement that there was too little evidence to endorse any safety claims or the product's effectiveness in weaning smokers off tobacco.

But Mr. DiSilvio has no doubts. "I think, honestly, it could change the world," he said. "A tobacco-free world could be a better world."

He paused. "Maybe not a cigar-free world," he said. "A cigarette-free world."

RIVERDALE



NATEL REIDMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Fears of Blight In a Land of Plenty

By KATHERINE BINDLEY

**T**ALK of empty storefronts, vacant lots and unfinished residential developments is commonplace in New York these days. But in the affluent Bronx neighborhood of Riverdale, such chatter strikes many residents as a new and troubling development.

"It looks horrible," said Kathy Goldstein, a 40-year-old mother of two, who one recent Monday afternoon was surveying the scene from the window of a bakery on Riverdale Avenue. Gesturing north, she pointed toward the most glaring evidence of the community's commercial woes: a two-block stretch between 236th and 238th Streets

that is home to eight empty storefronts. Store closings along Riverdale Avenue have become so prevalent that The Daily News declared this strip a "ghost town," adding, "You almost might expect a tumbleweed to roll by." The Riverdale Press, a local newspaper, cited this stretch in reporting on an "epidemic" of shuttered shops.

In December, community leaders organized a Greater Riverdale Chamber of Commerce. And last month, local residents from an online chat group for Riverdale families banded together to advocate for new stores.

Gotham Auto School once occupied one of four empty storefronts on this strip held by the same landlord, Edward Goldstein, 75, who runs the school with

his wife, said that last summer he relocated more than a mile away, to Moshulu Avenue, because his landlord would offer only a month-to-month lease. "We couldn't accept that," said Mr. Goldstein (no relation to Kathy Goldstein). "So we had to leave."

Jayson Blau, a lawyer who represents

the principal owner of the four properties, would not disclose the names of the owners, and said plans for the storefronts have yet to be determined.

"All real estate is down," Mr. Blau said. "They're holding onto everything and waiting to see what happens."

The other four storefronts are vacant.

for a variety of reasons, not all of them economic, but the total effect is one of a blighted commercial strip.

Among the few newcomers on the stretch is a Sotheby's International Realty office, which opened last month. Vasco Da Silva, a vice president of the local office, said that Riverdale remained a prosperous area, though he acknowledged that the sight of empty storefronts can be alarming. "It's a scary world," he said. "It's a ghost town?"

Charles Moerdler, chairman of Community Board 8's land-use committee, said that the many unfinished residential and commercial developments coupled with the vacant storefronts created an ugly image that the community has to confront.

But as for talk of ghost towns and tumbleweeds, Mr. Moerdler said: "This is not a situation where you have crossed the line by any stretch of the imagination. It's a situation where you're preventing the line from even coming on the horizon."





When it comes to expert end-of-life care no one is as close as we are.

Patients and their families don't need to travel far for the world-renowned compassion and care of Calvary Hospital. The fact is, Calvary's expert nurses, doctors and social workers are available in our modern 200-bed facility on Eastchester Road in the Bronx and at our Brooklyn satellite at Lutheran Medical Center. Calvary also offers the convenience of providing this expert comfort and care right in your own home or select nursing home through our Home Care and Hospice Program called Calvary@Home. In fact, Calvary Hospital

and Calvary@Home are proud to have been honored with the Gold Seal of Approval™ from The Joint Commission – the world's leading healthcare accrediting agency. In addition, Press Ganey Associates – the premier provider of healthcare performance measurement and improvement services – has ranked Calvary among the top 1% of hospitals in the country, year after year. Calvary Hospital: For over a century, it's the place Where Life Continues. Call the Calvary Community Outreach Department today at 718-518-2300.

**CALVARY HOSPITAL**  
Where Life Continues

1780 Eastchester Road • Bronx, NY 10461 • (718) 518-2300 • [www.calvaryhospital.org](http://www.calvaryhospital.org)  
Calvary Hospital Inpatient Service • Outpatient Services • Calvary@Home (Home Care/Hospice)  
Center for Cancer and Palliative Medical Care • Satellite Services at Lutheran Medical Center, Brooklyn, NY 11220  
Calvary@Home programs are Medicare-certified and continue with most major insurances.

OUR BIGGEST EVENT OF THE YEAR

# Classic Galleries

HELD OVER!

*President's SALE*

Over 40,000 sq. ft. of Fine Furniture

CENTURY HERNDON KINDEL BAKER HARRISMAN HICKORY CHAIR KARPIS RALPH LAUREN JULIAN MCGUIRE LEXINGTON SHERBELL TAYLOR KING MATLAND SMITH THEODORE & ALEXANDER

SAVE UP TO **75% OFF** Selected Floor Models

50-70% OFF All Floor Model Leather Upholstery

243 MAIN STREET HUNTINGTON, NY 631.427.1045

Hours: Mon, Tues, Wed 10:30 - 6PM, Thurs & Fri 10:30-6PM, Sat 10:30 - 5:30PM, Sun 12 - 5PM

All discounts are off original list price or floor model. Your sale includes complimentary in-home design service. A minimum purchase per month. All New York City residents are eligible for this sale. Some exclusions for furniture purchases. See store for complete details.

SAVE UP TO **70% OFF** Select SHERMAN HANDCRAFTED MATTRESS Floor Models

40-65% OFF ORIENTAL RUGS

Complimentary In-Home Design Service featuring the interior design service you expect...only from Classic Galleries

Classic Galleries

Small through over 100 rooms fully decorated with our entire collection of fine furniture.

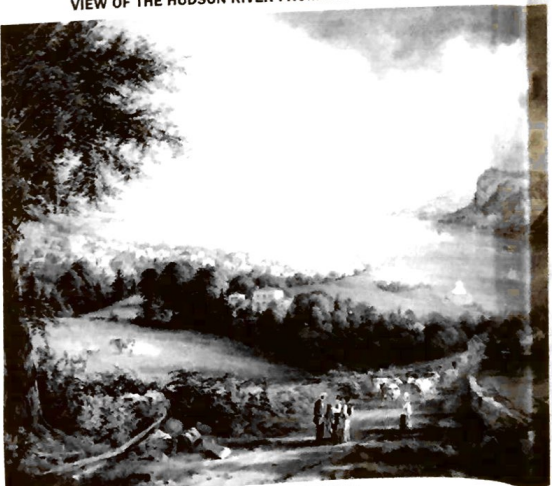
The New York Times  
**STORE**  
[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

# HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL LANDSCAPES

## Acclaimed Paintings From the 1800s Available as Fine-Art Prints

The Hudson River School was one of the most important artistic movements in American history, producing many of the finest landscapes this nation has ever seen. For 130 years, these magnificent paintings in the New York Historical Society collection were reproduced only in books or as posters, but now they are available as full-size fine-art prints, in a special museum-authorized limited edition. This historic first printing, published by Oppenheimer Editions, is limited to 200 of each stunning image. Prices start at \$1,500, with museum-quality framing available in gold. To view the entire collection, visit [nytimes.com/hudson](http://nytimes.com/hudson).

### VIEW OF THE HUDSON RIVER FROM SING SING, N.Y. (1850)



By Robert Havell Jr., 30 1/2" x 43" print \$2,500 (framed \$4,495). NSAP1966

### THE COURSE OF EMPIRE: DESTRUCTION (1836)



By Thomas Cole, 26 1/2" x 43" print \$2,500 (framed \$4,495). NSAP1961

### VIEW OF THE YOSEMITE VALLEY (1865)



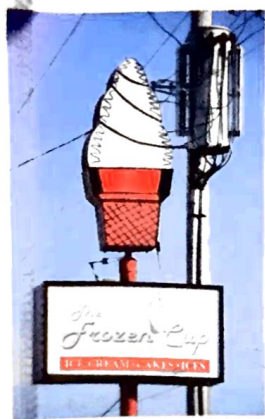
By Thomas Hill, 32" x 43" print \$2,500 (framed \$4,495). NSAP1963

The New York Times  
**nytimes.com**

ORDER NOW:  
[nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com) or call  
(800) 671-4332.



# The Great Divide



An icon of old Bellerose, above, overlooking at Fuzzy's Bar, top right; a typical Bellerose street scene, right; and John Dolan, below right, at the local V.F.W. post.

'If they have so much feeling,' said one of the developers planning to build a hotel on the site, 'let them buy it. Let them run the Frozen Cup if they want to.'



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES HARRIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

From Page 1

users. Several years ago, the nearby movie theater closed, and the building now houses a martial arts supply business.

There have been other changes, even more unsettling to some residents in this neighborhood, living a mostly white enclave of families of Irish, Italian and German stock.

In 1988, an old motorcycle shop on Braddock Avenue became a Sikh temple. Around the same time, grocers' stores on Hillside Avenue began to sell mainly rice in 40-pound burlap sacks and a syrupy sweet pastry called gulab jamun. One new store sold statues of Hindu deities, and some long-time residents were baffled by the sight of a large elephant-headed figure with 10 arms in the front window.

The influx of immigrants from South Asia, lured by the same good schools and suburban-style living that attracted their predecessors, had begun in earnest by 1990. By one estimate, Asians, mostly from the Indian subcontinent, today make up nearly a third of the neighborhood's population of about 20,000.

The transformation has come as a shock to many of the neighborhood's earlier settlers, some of whom say they wonder whether magazines tucked into seatbacks on flights between Mumbai and Kennedy Airport advertise homes in Bellerose.

And many residents are not surprised that the developers, who plan to tear down the Frozen Cup are Indian immigrants. Some of the same developers recently opened a Quality Inn down the road in Floral Park, an establishment, Mr. Augugliaro said, that "stands out like the Taj Mahal."

While New York is often praised as a gorgeous mosaic, ethnic tensions are hardly unknown in the city, especially in neighborhoods that undergo rapid demographic shifts. Sometimes tensions are expressed overtly, other times, they lurk under the surface, revealing themselves in conversations that can be heard in local bars and living rooms.

That is the case in Bellerose. Opponents of the planned Days Inn insist that their primary concern is not the race of the hotel entrepreneurs but the community's quality of life. Still, many of what are seen as unwelcome changes have arrived with the South Asian immigrants, a fact that invariably comes up in discussions about the fate of the Frozen Cup.

## The Past vs. the Future

The Frozen Cup sits between a used-car lot and Raj Auto Center repair shop. Across the turnpike is Vishnu County. A plastic vanilla cone, perched atop a pole by the roadside, still advertises the ice cream stand, though the Frozen Cup may be demolished any day now. Recently, its insides were mostly gutted but for items like an old cooler and a poster that read "It Tastes Better in a Cone."

When some Bellerose residents learned of the Frozen Cup's likely demise, they protested loudly. They insisted it was a landmark, some noting with considerable pride that the Frozen Cup appeared in an episode of "Sex and the City" when Carrie stopped there for a hamburger.

The closing of the Frozen Cup was bad enough. But the plan to build a 44-room hotel, for which construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in the spring, salts local wounds. Some residents worry about the possibility that the hotel will be used by prostitutes, often a local concern when new hotels arrive in Queens. And if the hotel falls victim to

## ONLINE: THE NEIGHBORHOOD MIX

A slide show on the old guard and the new wave of Bellerose, Queens: [nypost.com/08city](http://nypost.com/08city)

the ailing economy, many residents fear that welfare recipients would move in.

On Dec. 15, one of the hotel developers, Mitesh Patel, told several dozen residents at a community board meeting at the Bellerose Assembly of God Church that he and his partners aimed to create a reputable hotel, not a "hot sheets" establishment. And he told them that he and his family lived in the community.

But some in the crowd were skeptical. "They're renting their rooms to people from their country," one man said, according to an article in The Jamaica Times, a local newspaper that covered the event. "You're changing our whole way of life, our whole neighborhood," the man reportedly said to Mr. Patel.

Shortly after the meeting, one of Mitesh Patel's business partners, Harshad Patel (no relation), talked about local antagonism toward the hotel and its developers.

"It's a kind of jealousy," Harshad Patel said from an office at a Days Inn on Queens Boulevard, one of several hotels of which he is a part owner. A few good-luck \$20 bills were tucked to the wall, next to a small image of a Hindu goddess.

"They feel we are coming from out of country," he added, "and we move forward, and they don't." Harshad Patel, who lives with his family in Floral Park, immigrated to the United States in 1981. Before entering the hotel business, he worked as a restaurateur, a metal lathe operator, a water plant operator and a sewage treatment worker. He also ran an electroplating business.

He said he was perplexed by the veneration of the Frozen Cup.

"If they have so much feeling," he said of the establishment's devotees, "let them buy it. Let them run the Frozen Cup if they want to."

But the business would not survive, he insisted. "Nowadays," Mr. Patel said, "there are so many

flavors on the market and so many places to go."

To drive home his point, he made a public offer. If someone wanted to run the Frozen Cup for the next 10 years, he promised to sell the place at a \$100,000 loss.

"Let me see," he said with a grin. "Who is coming forward?"

## Turbans, Mansions

As officers of the Queens Colony Civic Association and members of other community groups, Angela and Michael Augugliaro have been among the most vocal opponents of the plan to replace the Frozen Cup with a hotel.

But as they sat in their living room, they expressed unhappiness with what they see as other undesirable changes in the neighborhood: street vendors selling halal gyros; traffic congestion near the Indian and Pakistani grocery stores on Hillside Avenue; newly created mini-mansions, many of them occupied by extended South Asian families.

"They're turning the neighborhood into a third-world country," Mr. Augugliaro said. "We don't want it over here to look like Richmond Hill or Jackson Heights," he added, speaking of Queens neighborhoods with sizable South Asian populations.

As he spoke, Ms. Augugliaro shook her head in disapproval at some of his remarks, and he seemed to pick up on her unspoken criticism.

"I'm not a racist," Mr. Augugliaro quickly added. In fact, he said, he was tired of the subject of race coming up so often. "What does race have to do with it?" he asked.

The couple later recalled a morning years ago when they saw an old man in an orange turban walking on the sidewalk with a curved sword slung from his waist like the one they remembered from the Ali Baba cartoons.

The man was a Sikh, and the object was a Kirpan, a sword carrying religious symbolism and worn by some adherents of the faith, though often a smaller version of the Kirpan is worn on a necklace under a shirt. The couple laughed as they recalled the scene.

"It was like a total shock," Ms. Augugliaro said.

## Tales Told at the Bar

Many of the South Asians who live in Bellerose have only good things to say about the neighborhood. On a snowy Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Francis Thomas, the Indian-born owner of India Kitchen, a restaurant on Braddock Avenue, stood at the counter and said relations between the races in Bellerose were good. "They're tolerant," Mr. Thomas said of the people of Bellerose.

Next door to the India Kitchen, however, at a pub called Fuzzy's Bar, where a grill called Wolf Duvig serves burgers and "hot dogs," patrons gripe about their immigrant neighbors as "leopardy" played on two small television sets.

"Everybody wants to bring their country here," said Bruce Holloway, one patron who lives in Bay-side, Queens. "They don't want to look like Americans, they don't want to dress like Americans, and they don't want to speak English."

But they do come for the benefits, volunteered his drinking buddy, who gave his name as Franco and said he was born in Belgium and used to go to the frozen cup. And of the South Asian grocery stores, he added, one of which opened a month earlier down the block and had the word "bazaar" in its name, "it's not the kind of store an American goes into."

Of the newcomers, a group he describes simply as "the Indians," he said, "They change everything that's been here." And he wondered aloud, "Where the hell do they get the money from?"

A few nights later, inside a nearby Veterans of Foreign Wars post that features a camouflaged armored personnel carrier in its front yard, some sentiments expressed by the patrons at the bar were much the same. But one younger member of the crowd didn't entirely agree.

John Dolan, 23, recently completed a four-year stint on active duty in the Navy, some of it in Iraq. His family used to go to the Frozen Cup, he recalled as he sipped beer from a plastic cup, and in fact, his mother stopped there for a vanilla cone when she was in labor with his older brother ("I see cream always calms you down," she explained).

When Mr. Dolan was a boy, one of his friends knew the number of the pay phone on the street near the Frozen Cup. They used to call the number, and to their surprise, girls sometimes answered. Some of his friends in those days had names like Nashad, a common South Asian name.

"We didn't really care who was who," Mr. Dolan said. "We were just trying to have a good time."

## 'New Kids on the Block'

Next door to the V.F.W. post stands Gurdwara Sant Sugar, a Sikh temple where Monday, Jan. 26, was an important day. That afternoon, men with long white beards and wearing white and purple turbans chanted in Punjabi before a congregation of several dozen worshippers. They were commemorating the birthday of Baba Deep Singh, a historic figure venerated by Sikhs as a martyr.

After the ceremony, a vegetarian meal was served on plastic foam plates, and members of the congregation sat cross-legged on the maroon carpet eating dhal and roti. Among the crowd was Swarnjit Singh, a 55-year-old real estate broker who is running for the City Council.

"We are the new kids on the block," Mr. Singh said after the meal, over the sound of workmen hammering on the other side of a drywall partition to expand the space in the temple.

Mr. Singh predicted that a 2010 census would show that nearly 40 percent of the population of District 23, which includes his neighborhood of Bellerose and several surrounding communities, was of South Asian ancestry. If he could unite voters of South Asian ancestry, or, as he referred to them, "roti-eating people," and get them to turn out at the polls, he predicted, he would defeat Councilman David Weprin in September's Democratic primary.

"Pizza-eating people have representation," Mr. Singh said. "Burger-eating people have representation. Bagel-eating people have representation. But roti has no representation."

Then the candidate headed off in his black Lexus to his campaign office on Union Turnpike, passing an Italian ice stand where he and his wife sometimes stop during evening strolls in the summer. Mr. Singh likes the watermelon ice there the best. He had never been to the Frozen Cup.

In the window of his office was a campaign poster showing him with a graying beard, ponytail, mustache and red turban, the image set against the stars of the American flag. The candidate smiled contentedly at his prospect for victory. "You comes out Obama," he said. "One of my people said to me, 'Here comes our Obama.'"



Sikh youths, above, and women eating after prayer at Gurdwara Sant Sugar, next door to the V.F.W. post.

