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Boston Killing Boston - too much traffic, high rents, finding and keeping help, and the parking! - by Dennis Serpone

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Caption

There's a new movie in production in Boston featuring Boston's most iconic comedian, Steve Sweeney, titled 'SWEENEY KILLING SWEENEY'. Someone should make a documentary, 'BOSTON KILLING BOSTON'.

As you drive down the feeder roads into Boston, you can't miss the forest of construction cranes. Whether it's for office bldgs., apartment monoliths, or condo complexes, it seems that every square inch of vacant space, or the reuse of derelict bldgs. are being developed.

Who is putting their 'stamp of approval' on all these projects...the governor, mayor Marty Walsh, and their underlings?

If you're coming or going through Boston, almost every day you'll be in 'rush hour' traffic from 7 AM to 8 PM (I'm exaggerating a bit). The highways, both in and out of the city, are bumper-to-bumper most of the day. Then when you approach your destination you have to deal with the trauma of finding a place to park. You drive around and around hoping to find a meter...no luck. You then accept the fact that you're going to have to spend \$22 to leave your car in a surface lot or \$33 or more in a hotel or office bldg. garage. It seems that the really happy people walking the streets are the often surly, indifferent, and many times rude meter maids.

After you've enjoyed dinner and a couple of drinks, or you've gone to a sports bar or trendy Boston nightclub, you have to deal with the trauma of going through the phalanx of patrol cars guarding the byways that brought you in, looking for drivers who are over the legal alcoholic limit...almost everyone is who goes to a watering hole has a couple of drinks in the course of a night. and are 'over'. The threshold for being legally drunk is very low.

Driving from Boston to your home in Winchester or Wilmington could cost you your license for 6 months and \$5,000- \$10,000 in court and legal fees.

However, on a positive note, everything you can find in Boston can be found in the suburbs...without all the angst.

Surrounding Boston are towns with similarly notable restaurants, great sports bars and nightclubs that are easier to get to, provide easier parking, and generally cheaper prices. Not constrained by astronomical high rents, restaurant owners can provide comparable food, more palatable prices, and ease of access.

To some, maybe eating at Legal Seafoods, Del Frisco's, or Tony C's...within site of the Boston harbor is worth the frustration and premiums. That same food is just as tasty in Burlington, Lynnfield, or Dedham. If you need to be near the water, you have great restaurants along the coast...Hingham, Marshfield, and Scituate have a couple of my favorites.

If you live in Boston, don't have a car, love riding the MBTA, Uber-ing, or walking to your favorite restaurant or pub, Boston might work. On the other hand, you live anywhere other than Boston, I'm sure you can find a restaurant, sports bar, or nightclub that serves the same, or better, dining or entertainment experience at a cheaper price with less parking anxiety.

Recently I happened upon a business show on NECableNews. The host was interviewing several Boston business owners who were expounding the same concerns...too much traffic, high rents, and frustration with parking. They did recognize that Uber and Lyft are welcome additions to the city and the suburbs.

If you then put all the negatives and positives in a box, mix them up, and see what falls out, you'll find that people like to complain but are resilient. We'll still go into Boston and endure the 'pain' and we'll frequent new and old food and beverage purveyors in the suburbs. The fact is that people are eating out more than ever before. Wine consumption is off-the-charts. Millennials spend money as fast as they get it. Baby boomers are retiring and enjoying the fruits of their labors.

Restaurant, and other business owners, however, are still struggling. Finding and keeping 'help' is a major problem, sustaining always increasing occupancy costs keeps operators awake at night, and fighting the competition has never been more daunting. Yet, if you drive through the redeveloping areas of Boston, one way or another, all that vacant retail space eventually occupied.

Hopefully some young filmmaker will team up with an investigative journalist and produce 'BOSTON KILLING BOSTON'.

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