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What a great time to buy a restaurant! - by Dennis Serpone

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National Restaurant Exchange

Just like the stock market...buy when others are selling, seek out and take advantage of opportunities. The number of restaurant transactions is up by more than 75% going into the 2nd quarter of 2022 over the same comparable time last year. The apparent end of the pandemic and the confluence of economic and market conditions spell 'opportunity' for the seasoned buyer. No matter if they're looking at vacant space, or an operating restaurant that has become available in a good location or conversely a losing business that the inexperienced operator bought in a less-than-desirable location, there is a buyer out there ready to make a deal.

The playground of the affluent 'socialistas' in general and the young millennials as a subset, was Newbury St. Old money, new money, the people watchers, and the wannabes could all be found wandering in and out of stores and restaurants, walking tirelessly up and down Newbury St. or sitting by a window when it was too cool to be perched at a sidewalk table. There was a time when there was little of no business turnover in those coveted locations.

Then the Seaport District materialized. Like Poseidon rising from the ocean's depths, slowed briefly by Covid and then growing amazingly fast, apartment/office bldgs. began springing up on every square inch of land. At street level, high-cost retail space has spawned a multitude of high-end restaurants and bars, augmented by numerous fast food emporiums. The migration from Newbury St. of its patrons to the Seaport area is blatantly apparent.

But, most notably by those of us in the restaurant consulting arena is the deleterious effect that the huge food halls are making on the local independent food purveyors. Boston Public Market and Eataly are only the most established sucking customers from locals who can't sustain the loss of foot traffic. That said, now is a great time for the seasoned, successful inner-city operator to position his operation in the suburbs.

Dennis Serpone is the founder of The National Restaurant Exchange, Wakefield, Mass.

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