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Food Enhances the Scene in Battery Park City

Food Options in Neighborhood Are Getting a Boost

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By KAYA LATERMAN

Updated April 24, 2014 10:24 p.m. ET



North End Alley, also called 'Goldman Alley,' has become an eating destination. Mark Abramson for The Wall Street Journal

Battery Park City, the man-made extension of Manhattan's Lower West Side, has seen its share of boom and bust periods in its relatively short history.

The multipurpose complex, standing partly on land excavated during the construction of the first World Trade Center across the street, currently is bustling as a residential community for affluent families with young children. Yet dining options, one important front for residential areas, have remained surprisingly limited.

"We have great apartments, schools, parks and river views but the area is a restaurant wasteland," Tom Saunders, a Battery Park City resident since 2009, said of the neighborhood.

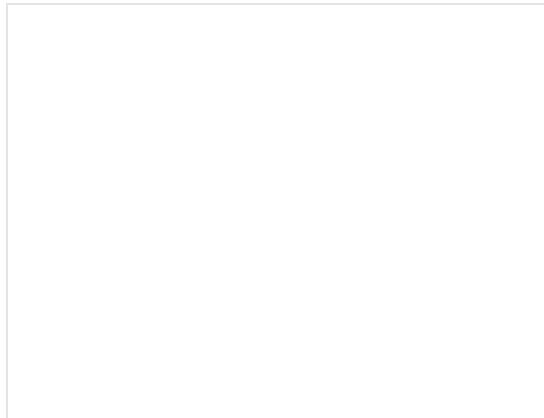
If You're Browsing for a Home in Battery Park City ...

<p>\$599,000</p> <p>300 Albany St., No. 25</p> <p>1,100 sq. ft. of living space</p> <p>View Graphics</p>	<p>\$1.95 million</p> <p>75 Little West St., No. 10</p> <p>2,100 sq. ft. of living space</p>	<p>\$5.95 million</p> <p>4 River Terrace, No. 50A</p> <p>10,000 sq. ft. of living space</p>
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Mr. Saunders said the lack of variety was "shocking" when compared with other Manhattan neighborhoods. He often finds himself walking to TriBeCa with his wife and two children to find places to eat out.

Perhaps the need to cross West Street in search of food could be easing as more options open in Brookfield Place, the new name of the former World Financial Center.

Opening in mid-May is Hudson Eats, a 30,000-square-foot gourmet food hall on the second floor of Brookfield Place. The food hall will have 14 casual eateries—including sandwich maker Num Pang, Mighty Quinn's Barbeque and Umami Burger—and hopes to lure not just the office lunch crowd, but area residents after sundown.



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Adam Schneider, left, and Vanessa Palazio are co-owners of Little Muenster, coming to the Hudson Eats food hall. Mark Abramson for The Wall Street Journal

"We expect to do a lot of delivery business to the surrounding residential buildings; it's a very attractive market to tap into," said Vanessa Palazio, one of the owners of Little Muenster, a fancy grilled-cheese shop that also is opening as part of Hudson Eats. A children's menu will be offered at the new Little Muenster, something not available at the shop's other two locations.

Hudson Eats will be open until 9 p.m. daily and there will be seating inside and outside overlooking North Cove Marina. "Ultimately, we wanted to create a waterfront neighborhood," said Ed Hogan, national director of retail leasing at Brookfield Properties.

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Brookfield plans to further expand food establishments with Le District, a 25,000-square-foot French marketplace on the first floor that will be partially open around the holiday season.

There will also be five new sit-down restaurants that are slated to open by March 2015.



Mark Murphy behind the bar at El Vez, opening on Friday. It will offer Mexican fare in Battery Park City. Mark Abramson for The Wall Street Journal

Also new to the neighborhood is Stephen Starr, who is opening El Vez, a contemporary Mexican-American restaurant, on Friday. It will be the fourth establishment that the Philadelphia-based restaurateur has opened in the city.

"I first had the chance to come to Battery Park City three years ago and I passed," Mr. Starr said. "Honestly, I was afraid to come down here."

What convinced Mr. Starr to sign a lease were lower rents compared with other parts of Manhattan. In addition, he said he was attracted by the momentum generated from Brookfield Place's \$250 million overhaul and the success of Union Square Hospitality Group's three restaurants—Shake Shack, Blue Smoke and North End Grill—that have



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opened in and around North End Alley in recent years.



The canopied alley is also known as "Goldman Alley," since the creation of it was overseen by [Goldman Sachs Group Inc.](#), (GS -0.73%) which moved its headquarters into an adjacent building in 2009 and took charge of cultivating the surrounding retailing and dining.

"Helping to build a more vibrant community and support the continued revitalization of Battery Park City is in all of our interests," Timur Galen, global co-head of corporate services and real estate at [Goldman Sachs](#), said via email.

Richard Coraine, senior managing partner of new business and consulting at Union Square Hospitality Group, said that in addition to the area workers and residents, the number of bikers using the path along the Hudson River was a sign that food businesses could thrive in the area.

"It's exciting when you see an underserved community and you're asked to cultivate a dining scene," Mr. Coraine said. "It gets me up in the morning."

Also opening this summer is Pier A, a historic pier built on the very southern tip of Battery Park City in 1886 that went through a long renovation process. Developed by Dermot Co., Pier A will have a casual bar area, as well as an oyster bar, a formal restaurant and an event space.

Peter Poulakakos, a longtime lower Manhattan restaurateur who is a partner in Pier A, Le District and other neighborhood establishments, said the boom in eating places indicates the area is over a hump.

"It's a vicious cycle in our world where you need three or four places to start a restaurant community," he said. "This should stop the previous pattern of various restaurants trading spaces and people saying there's nothing to eat down here."

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