

November 12, 2015

I want to make clear that our family opposes the proposed 2am closing time. We feel that a new restriction on the operating hours for licensed establishments will NOT improve the quality of life and safety in our neighborhood, or in Erie County in general. In the short run, it would hurt businesses. And, in the long run, it could have a detrimental affect on our efforts to attract and retain young talent.

Recently developer Rocco Termini said that the downtown condo market is soft because of the noise and "late night drama" at bars. We live here and know a lot of people downtown...and in the suburbs. His statement is just untrue. The biggest deterrent to people coming downtown for any reason is CRIME. Fear of violent crime, car break-ins, street dealers and homeless panhandlers. That's what people outside of our downtown bubble see. Not noisy nightclubs. In fact, the days of the busy Chippewa street scene are long gone anyway.

We moved here over 10 years ago for the activity, restaurants, bars and late-night conveniences. We own our building and run a small business. We have two young children. And we've been committed to living here and improving our community. Traffic, parking, noise, people; those are a given. But, in fact, it's not nearly as noisy, crowded or bothersome on most nights as the graybeards imagine. All heck doesn't let loose at 4am every night with nightclubs pounding out earsplitting music, throngs of drunks stumbling around (as the Buffalo News' Donn Esmonde stated), and cars careening out of control just before dawn. It's a phony argument that we are here to debunk.

As homeowners and residents, the three biggest problems that we face are: street crime, lack of quality schools, and services (streets, infrastructure, etc). Bar closing times and bars in general are not anywhere on the list.

Our neighbors across the street provide a perfect example of what's wrong with the arguments for the new restrictions. Three years ago a local developer purchased a dilapidated old liquor store. The building was completely rehabilitated and became a beautiful cocktail lounge called Savoy. For two years, the building owner operated the business, closing strictly by 2am. Then, new operators leased the facility. They gained a younger crowd and are now open until 4am nightly. Business appears to have doubled. Yet, strangely, we've experienced no ill-effects. We still sleep just as soundly at night. There have been no incidents of violence, vandalism or other "late night drama". The lesson here is that 2am vs 4am is not the issue. If there is a problem, it's the individual operator.

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