

**FOOD, LIFESTYLE, NEWS**

## SUITORS LINE UP FOR THE FORMER WHITE ROSE SITE

BY THOMAS GRILLO | October 29, 2017



*Yakov Tseitlin, owner of the White Rose Coffeehouse space, stands in front of the shuttered cafe. (Spenser Hasak)*

LYNN — It didn't take long for the landlord of the shuttered White Rose Coffeehouse to find a new tenant.

Less than two weeks after the shop closed following anti-police comments posted by the cafe owner's daughter on Facebook, the 1,500-square foot space in Central Square is about to be reborn.

"We have been overwhelmed by the requests for the space," said Yakov Tseitlin, the building owner who operates Free Wind Travel next door. "I've talked with seven companies who want to be there and we never placed a single ad."

Tseitlin won't provide the names of the businesses since they are in negotiations. But he said the potential tenants include a Vietnamese restaurant, a pub, a restaurant featuring American fare, a coffee shop, a catering house, and a healthy food shop. He expects to have the space filled by Christmas in the \$15-\$18 per square foot range.

"One applicant from the Congo in Africa would like to keep it a coffee shop with food," he said. "He told me there are lots of people on the North Shore from Nigeria and the Congo, but they lack a place to call their own."

Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy said she's not surprised entrepreneurs have lined up to grab the space.

"Timing is everything and the recent developments in the downtown have made it a very attractive place to locate," she said. "I'm thrilled that we won't have a vacant storefront for very long."

The emergence of the downtown commenced in 2003 when zoning changes set the stage for residential development. Beginning with the former Boston Machine building and the transformation of properties on Essex and Munroe streets into residences, more people are living in the district.

In addition, a Cultural District has been established, the Lynn Auditorium has been improved and expanded, new luxury apartments at the Flatiron building are 100 percent occupied, there are upscale restaurants, and antique lights were installed. Last summer, Beyond Walls drew thousands to the downtown to see giant murals painted on the city's older buildings, and dynamic LED lighting is being installed under the elevated MBTA tracks.

"It's not just one thing," said James Marsh, the city's Community Development director. "It's a lot of small and big pieces together that have made people take note of the downtown."

James Cowdell, executive director of the Lynn Economic Development and Industrial Corp., the city's development bank, said \$14 million has been invested in that section of the city since January, 49 market rate units opened across the street and there's a new restaurant coming.

"There are all kind of investments going on all around that building and putting people living in the downtown with disposable income has a strong impact on future economic impact," he said. "In the last five years, the downtown has really taken off. It's simple supply and demand and right now there's strong demand."

Tseitlin expects the coffee shop space to launch with a new owner by Christmas. Despite the good news, he regrets cafe owner Kato Mele's decision to close White Rose.

“Kato is a victim of her daughter’s stupid mistake,” he said. “There was lots of support for her to stay open, but she decided to close.”

It wasn’t supposed to be this way. Mele signed a two-year lease last year. The 50-year-old former school bus company manager used the proceeds from the sale of her Lynn home and retirement savings to launch the business. The first year of any restaurant is known to be tough, and it didn’t help that the shop was damaged by recent floods.

But the beginning of the end started when her 23-year-old daughter, the store manager, vowed on Facebook never to allow a “Coffee with a Cop” event to take place at her family’s establishment. The meet and greets are a chance for the public and police to get together in a comfortable environment.

Despite Mele’s apology to the Lynn Police Department, the usual morning crowd disappeared.

“The whole episode was unfortunate,” Tseitlin said. “It’s sad, Kato is a wonderful person.”



Thomas Grillo

Thomas Grillo is an award-winning business reporter who has worked at Boston's major newspapers covering real estate trends such as the emergence of Assembly Square in Somerville and chronicling the growth of Boston's Seaport District. In Lynn, Thomas covers City Hall and commercial real estate development including the transformation of Lynn's waterfront into a mixed-use neighborhood. Follow him on Twitter [@BosBizThomas](#).

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