

In the Suburbs / "Fairfield after dark"

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This past Sunday, we'd gone to a 4:30 movie and decided to grab a burger afterward at the Flip Side, which has quickly become one of our favor spots in Fairfield. And as I glanced down the street when we turned into the parking area, I noticed that Molto Pizza and Fin, the Japanese restaurant right next door, were overflowing with outdoor diners. And the Flip Side's patio was also open. Dining al fresco is alive and well in downtown Fairfield.



How great is that? It was a warm, pleasant Sunday night and people were out and about in downtown Fairfield. I've been suggesting that all we've needed here is great restaurants and retailers who are brave enough to stay open later and it's finally happening.

We've lived in this sleepy community for nearly 28 years and it finally took the innovation and drive of the Kleban developers to get folks to focus on the other end of the downtown area and bring things to life. Now it's a whole new world at the opposite end of Fairfield Center and the nightlife opportunities are growing.

This newly expanded Brick Walk area with more surface parking and a garage has evolved from the original medical building and shops, which have Ponte Vecchio and Tombo -- two wonderful restaurants; as well as Vino, the great restaurant in the second Brick Walk plaza. Vino has had outdoor dining for several years and an early dinner prix fixe. And all of those places are open on Sundays. Looks like Fairfield is fast becoming gourmet heaven east of the library.

But there are more eating establishments coming. From what I can tell, the popularity of this new Brick Walk section is spilling over to the other side of the street, where I believe a new restaurant is going in where Saraband had been, and another one is coming in to replace Bravo next to the [Community Theater](#). Just down the street where the old Fairfield Stationers had been before migrating to Brick Walk, construction on a popular Stamford Italian restaurant transplant is moving quickly.

It's really wonderful to see downtown Fairfield expanding, especially with so many eateries. And it's great to see that downtown is becoming a happening place throughout the weekend, especially on Sunday evenings.

My only disappointment was when we drove over to Borders after our early dinner and found it closed at 8 p.m. I can only hope that as the summer unfolds, Borders will stay open at least until 9

p.m. if not later. There's nothing more enjoyable after a great dinner than to browse at the local book center.

And I wasn't sure about plans for any of the other shops in the newly expanded Brick Walk area to stay open later. I know it's always tough to find staff on a Sunday evening, but if the Brick Walk begins to offer an incentive to dining patrons with coffee and goodies at the new bakery and more open stores for browsing after dinner, that could really catch on, especially in the warm weather.

I know that summer concerts at [Sherman Green](#) are popular on Thursdays during the summer and Centro, another wonderful place, is always jammed, but maybe there are some opportunities to create Sunday concerts where restaurants like [Archie Moore's](#), St. Tropez and 55 Degrees Wine Bar and Restaurant might offer other incentives or even a blanket discount on dinners. And great carry out places like The Nauti Dolphin, The Chef's Table and Captain's Pizza could also consider specials.

And from my perspective as the new public relations guy for the [Fairfield Museum and History Center](#), our doors are open until 4 on Saturdays and Sundays and we're walking distance to the Brick Walk. And that only makes our exhibitions more appealing, the way I look at it. Plus, we have a wonderful gift shop for browsing so we're a great weekend destination.

I really like what's happening to Fairfield on weekends in the early evening and after dark, and I'm hoping it will continue. My dream would be for more retailers to consider staying open after 5 p.m. on the weekends. Even if smaller retailers keep their doors open until 6 or 6:30 p.m. on a Sunday, that would still attract more diners who could shop and then hit the restaurants for an early dinner.

We've always had a wonderful downtown center, but now it's even better. "Next time," I told my wife, "let's try outdoor dining at Molto or Fin or some of the other places in the Brick Walk area. It's a whole new gourmet paradise and it's right in our backyard."

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