



## Parking problems targeted at Riverdale Square

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Since two high-volume restaurants have been operating at the Riverdale Square for the past two years, parking has become an ongoing problem for neighboring businesses, the borough, the property owner, and of course, customers. But plans for a remedy are underway.

For the past year, borough officials have been working with the property owner, Glenmore Management of Secaucus, to restripe the parking lot in a way that will provide more spaces.

During peak hours, generally in the evening and from Thursday through the weekend, finding a parking spot can be tough.

Local businesspeople who share the spaces with the Blu Alehouse and New Jersey Buffet restaurants have said they have seen customer activity drop off since the two restaurants opened, and they blame this on the shortage of parking.

At the Sept. 24 Planning Board meeting, Sandy Nouri, owner of Santina's Pizza & Restaurant, also in Riverdale Square, said she has seen patrons getting up from their tables and leaving because their car's driver gave up looking for a spot.

At the Planning Board meeting, the owner of Pearl Vision in the Riverdale Square said she has also seen business drop off, and she now finds the parking lot to be unsafe when she and her employees leave in the evening.

In an interview with Suburban Trends, Alex Amirsaleh of Glenmore Management said the parking lot meets the legal limit for the number of required spaces.

Mayor William Budesheim said the Planning Board could not predict that the Blu Alehouse and New Jersey Buffet would be this successful and that parking would become problematic when their applications were approved.

The property currently has two vacant units totaling around 17,000 square feet. At the meeting, the mayor told the property owner the borough would not issue a certificate of occupancy for a new lease until the parking problem is resolved.

According to Glenmore Management owner Steve Brown, the property currently has 315 spaces. It has a conceptual drawing for the lot to contain 344 spaces without an area designated for valet parking, and also a plan for 379 spaces that includes a designated area for valet parking.

To create the additional spots, the current parking spaces would lose a foot in length, going from 24 feet long to 23 feet.

Planning Board member Dan Strum, who is also the chief of the Fire Department, had concerns that a fire truck would not be able to get around the building if the proposal were realized.

Strum said the department had this problem once before at the Riverdale Square, which is located off Route 23 North. He said the truck had to back in from the opposite side to get to its destination.

Planning Board member Michael Reilly said even though the proposal would create more spaces, these additions would not completely fix the problem.

Brown said Glenmore Management has reached out to neighboring property owners, but Target would not let them use its property. Also, the lot beside the Riverdale Square has been demolished, but he has not been successful in securing space there either, he said.

Brown said Glenmore offered to purchase the lot at the market rate plus 20 percent, but the owner was not willing to sell. Brown said he had also inquired about leasing it, but the owner wanted almost \$150,000 a year for a lease.

The Planning Board advised Glenmore to get approval from the fire sub-code official showing that the new design would be safe for fire trucks. Glenmore was also advised to bring representatives from the valet company and Blu Alehouse when it comes before the Planning Board again. No follow-up meeting has yet been scheduled.

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