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2nd farmers market opens in city

*By Michael Valkys
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The City of Poughkeepsie has a new farmers market in Mount Carmel that officials hope will help promote the business and residential district near the Metro-North station.

The market is run by Erik Morabito, who grew up in Mount Carmel and opened his Cafe Bocca there in April. It soon occurred to him the neighborhood would be an ideal spot for a farmers market.

"I said to myself 'this would be a great location to host one,'" Morabito said of the market that opened July 19. It is set to run each Sunday into the fall and is the city's second farmers market, joining one held Fridays from June through October in Mural Park off Main Street.

Morabito and others want to rejuvenate Mount Carmel, which has witnessed several businesses close during the past few years. The neighborhood lost a key anchor when a Mexican restaurant at the corner of Dutchess Avenue and Delafield Street went out of business. Prior to that establishment, Pippy's operated at the site, which has been home to restaurants for decades.

Provenzano's Pizza also closed and Our Lady of Mount Carmel School shut its doors two years ago, although the parish remains vital and plans to celebrate its centennial next year.

While neighborhood mainstays such as Caffe Aurora, La Deliziosa and Noah's Ark remain, city officials hope the farmers market can help promote the area and attract new shoppers and visitors.

Mayor John Tkazyik, whose family owns the nearby Andy's Place restaurant, said the farmers market can help the area.

"Mount Carmel at one time was a very vibrant neighborhood," Tkazyik said. "Now it's being transformed once again...We're excited to see these events take place and bring people into the city." Morabito's business is part of the revitalization effort. Cafe Bocca is in the building that was once home to neighborhood favorite Sardi's, a grocery that for years catered to Mount Carmel's many Italian-American residents.

"I would love to see new businesses coming into the area," Morabito said.

Business owners are also looking forward to the fall opening of Walkway Over the Hudson. Officials hope the renovated railroad bridge, which will be open to cyclists and pedestrians, serves as another attraction in Mount Carmel — where the bridge rises above the neighborhood.

Local farms taking part in the Mount Carmel market include Athanas Farm in Hyde Park, Wright's Apple Farm in Gardiner and Cronin's Maple Farm in Hopewell Junction. Other vendors include The Pampered Chef and Organic Meg's Cookies, both in New Windsor, and Amenia-based Cascade Mountain Winery.

Morabito is looking to add more vendors and seeing the market, and Mount Carmel, prosper.

"We give people the opportunity to come downtown," he said.