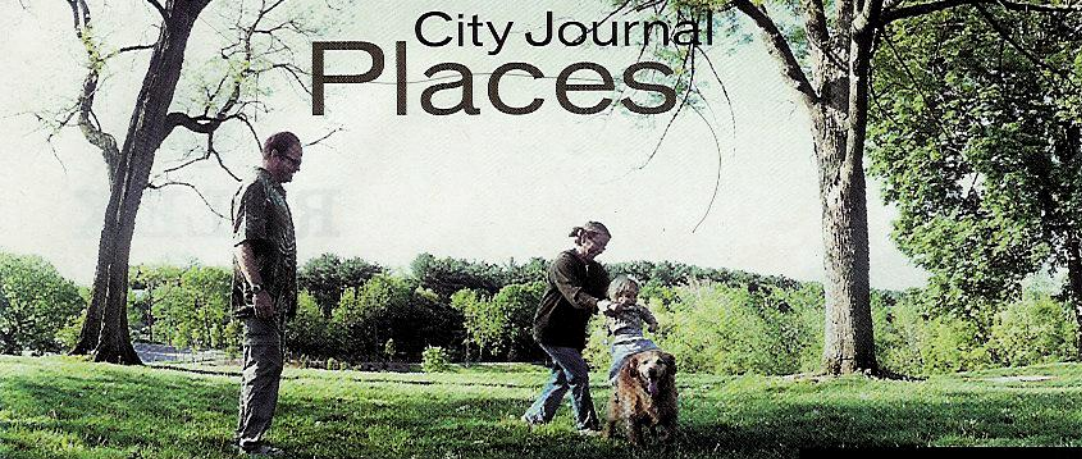


City Journal Places



POND LIFE: Clockwise from above, residents frolic around Fresh Pond; gourmet fixings at Formaggio Kitchen; sleek home furnishings at Oblio.

Village Voice

It may be flush with upgrades, but Huron Village maintains a character all its own. By MARGIT FEURY

The staple storefronts of Huron Village, along Huron Avenue just north of West Cambridge, seem frozen in time. Huron Pharmacy and Fresh Pond Market, for example, have been there for as long as anyone can remember. "Longer than me," says an older gentleman buying greeting cards in the pharmacy. "And that's a long time."

But then there's the rest of the neighborhood. Nestled discreetly behind Harvard Square, the line of shops and eateries along Huron Avenue has been going upscale. Oblio, the sleek home-furnishings shop on the street's east end, started the trend two years ago. And Rene Becker, owner of the neighborhood's immensely popular Hi-Rise Bread Co., replaced an old sub shop with his gourmet pizza joint, Real Pizza.

Even given such additions, something here maintains the area's small-town, bygone-era character: the residents' behavior. Cars actually stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk, while restaurateurs write IOUs on slips of paper for customers short on cash. It's not uncommon to walk into a shop, find no employee in sight, and spot a note directing you to pop into another store a few doors down for help. "The spirit of the village is the same as it's always been," says Libby Cooper, owner for more than 20 years of Mobilia Gallery, which sells decorative arts and paintings. Cooper owns the gallery with one sister; another owns the nearby children's shop, Susi's: A Gallery for Children.

Susi's and its neighbor, Full Moon Restaurant, cater to the neighborhood's families with children. The restaurant has a blackboard for drawing, plus a cozy play space with a train set and a play kitchen. Susi's peddles everything from mobiles to *Wizard of Oz* costumes and hosts art classes for kids. Classes for adults (aerobics and ballet, among others) are held down the street at the Cambridge Center Exercise Studio. That workout is all the justification needed to indulge in the oysters baked with mascarpone at nearby Trattoria Pulcinella.

"Everything you need is right here," exults Judy Cronin, president of Huron's Dawson Cronin Realty. "Residents can walk to the market, take an evening stroll around Fresh Pond, eat at any one of the splendid restaurants, and then return to their quaint home around the corner. City living doesn't get much better."

On the Avenue

The shops, galleries, and eateries on Cambridge's Huron Avenue run the gamut from traditional to trendy.

1. Armando's Pizza & Subs

When it opened in 1971, Armando's sold seven or eight pizzas a day. Today the number hovers around 200. 163 Huron Avenue, 617-354-8275.

2. Cambridge Center Exercise Studio

Part of the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, the studio runs aerobics, tap, and ballet classes. 357 Huron Avenue, 617-864-6671.

3. Formaggio Kitchen

A superlative collection of exotic cheeses, cured meats, prepared foods, olive oils, fresh pasta, and produce. 244 Huron Avenue, 617-354-4750.

4. Full Moon Restaurant

Parents and kids can eat together in peace, with a menu and décor to please both. 344 Huron Avenue, 617-354-6699.

5. Hi-Rise Bread Co.

This locally adored bread company now serves weeknight takeout dinners. 208 Concord Avenue, 617-876-8766.

6. Il Buongustaio

One of the best pizza joints on Huron. 370 Huron Avenue, 617-491-3133.

7. Mobilia Gallery

Decorative arts and paintings from all over the world, plus an extensive collection of studio jewelry. 358 Huron Avenue, 617-876-2109.

8. Oblio

Both chic functionality and rustic rarity are found in this elegant home shop. 135 Huron Avenue, 617-499-9984.

9. Real Pizza

A sister to Hi-Rise, Real Pizza spotlights delicious thin-crust or deep-dish pies topped with the likes of arugula pesto, white bean purée, and creamy sliced red bliss potato. 359 Huron Avenue, 617-497-4497.

10. Susi's: A Gallery for Children

Don't miss the collection of funky clocks, dog and cat mugs, or the eclectic jewelry. 348 Huron Avenue, 617-876-7874.

11. Trattoria Pulcinella

Fine Italian dining with an atmosphere straight out of Naples. 147 Huron Avenue, 617-491-6336.

