

# Philadelphia Inquirer

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### **Condos, cafes, and the dream of a river walk**

#### **Modern Manayunk's evolution, long delayed, undergoes a revival.**

Author: Henry J. Holcomb INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

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The renaissance of Main Street Manayunk, now nearly 20 years old, is still changing.

Kildare's Irish Pub has opened where Kansas City Prime steak house used to be, and other new places are attracting a younger clientele.

Court fights held up major condominium projects, and that in turn delayed long-dreamed-of improvements like storefronts and cafes facing the canal and river.

But work has finally started on two big condo projects, and two others are planned. These projects will add 800 to 1,000 new residences to a neighborhood of 12,000 residents.

When the condos are finished, the average age on the street will climb back to around 30, predicts Dan Neduscin, Manayunk's biggest retail and residential landlord.

Modern Manayunk's popularity began 17 years ago with the first of what has become an annual arts festival each June, attracting 100,000 visitors to Main Street.

To the sorrow of long-timers in Manayunk's hillside row houses, who want more places to work, factories and mills have been converted or torn down to make way for apartments and condominiums.

Main Street Manayunk, seven miles northwest of Center City, has become home to an eclectic array of trendy shops, galleries, spas, and places to eat and drink, as well as offices for doctors, lawyers, architects, and public relations and marketing firms.

It has grown popular with suburbanites, particularly women. Neduscin recently surveyed the occupants of his 300 residential units and found that 75 percent of them are employed in the suburbs and that 65 percent are women. Their average annual income is \$65,000. Only one reported having a child.

A five-year moratorium on liquor licenses, which ended several years ago, has turned out to be a good thing - it helped the street diversify, Neduscin said.

Main Street has become a furniture-store mecca. Two years ago, it had 22. Now there are 30, and more are planned.

The restaurant scene has grown more diverse. "We have Irish, Thai, Indian, Russian, Japanese and Italian restaurants now. It is a little like going to New York," Neduscin said.

The diversification also helped extend the Main Street retail district. Originally concentrated in about four blocks, from Green to Cotton, it now extends nearly a mile southeast to the Main Street Cinema complex.

The dream of storefronts and cafes along the old canal, akin to the famed River Walk in San Antonio, Texas, has been postponed but not forgotten. "It's pretty hard to ask retailers to open onto a construction site," said Kay Sykora, executive director of the Manayunk Development Corp., an economic development agency.

But when the condo projects are far enough along to be interesting, that project will be revived, along with plans for boat rides in the canal and on the river. Five acres of public park access to the river are in the planning stages, she said.

Three new condo projects are on the 300-acre Venice Island, between the canal adjacent to Main Street and the river.

Carl Dranoff is building his \$45 million Venice Lofts. It will have 128 units, some in a restored soap factory, just north of Leverington Avenue.

Dennis Maloosian's Realen Properties is clearing the old Connelly Paper Mill Inc. site, near the Cotton Street canal bridge. His \$80 million Waterford complex will include 270 luxury units with an indoor pool, and a wine-tasting room with temperature-controlled lockers for each resident.

Neduscin plans to demolish the former Carmella's restaurant and begin work next spring on 275 units, each with a fireplace and a wall of glass overlooking the canal or river. The six-story complex will have a rooftop swimming pool and gymnasium. Forty penthouse units will sell for under \$1 million, and there will be some studios for \$150,000, he said.

The anticipated new residents will strengthen the retail and night life on Main Street, said Dave Magrogan, a chiropractor who missed the excitement of restaurants where he worked as a youth.

His Manayunk Irish pub, Kildare's, is the most successful of the four he has opened since May 2003. All were built in Ireland and assembled here.

"We want to be a reason somebody would want to buy one of the new condos," Magrogan said. "We're not a dollar-beer place. We're a place where you can bring the kids for Sunday brunch and stay to hear an Irish band."

Neduscin, Magrogan's landlord, began buying property in Manayunk in 1988, when 30 stores were boarded up. He remains on the lookout, he said, for opportunities to improve the retail mix and the quality of life.

Until now, the available sites have not been large enough for a good bookstore or a boutique grocery, which require parking, he said.

But as the population and popularity of the street grow, he said, that could change - continuing Manayunk's evolution.

Contact staff writer Henry J. Holcomb at 215-854-2614 or [hholcomb@phillynews.com](mailto:hholcomb@phillynews.com).

Caption:

BONNIE WELLER / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Chairs at Pompanoosuc Mills, one of dozens of furniture stores in Manayunk. Three condo projects are under way on Venice Island, between the canal adjacent to Main Street and the river. When the condos are far enough along, the canal project will be revived. Copyright (c) 2005 The Philadelphia Inquirer

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