

## CHCA and CHC preservation survey provides roadmap to improved conservation planning

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by **Brendan Sample**

Since receiving a grant from the William Penn Foundation back in January, both the Chestnut Hill Conservancy and the Chestnut Hill Community Association have been putting together a study to gather information related to the conservation of historic property in the neighborhood.

With the study now concluded, representatives from both organizations gathered on Wednesday evening, May 31, in SugarLoaf Hill at Chestnut Hill College to present the findings of the Chestnut Hill Residential Conservation, Preservation and Development Study and their plans for the future.

"This is something we've been talking about doing for years now," said CHCA president Laura Lucas. "It's taken several more months to implement the study, but it's finally culminated in the results we have here today."

The survey of interested parties in the neighborhood provided both organizations with perspective on current shortcomings in neighborhood conservation and potential ways to improve.

A primary strategy to come out of the survey is a new set of Development Management Tools that will help guide both groups in further conserving areas of Chestnut Hill. The tools were divided into three groups that reflected what the community perceived to be certain major issues: Managing Subdivision and Redevelopment of Land, Preserving Architectural Integrity and Protecting the Wissahickon Watershed.

Some of the findings were also presented in the form of maps of Chestnut Hill that highlighted certain areas of the neighborhood. These areas were determined from factors related to the Development Management Tools, such as conservation priority, which determined what areas of the community were important to preserve, with some sections being more of a priority than others. With a number of buildings in Chestnut Hill that are already protected under the National Register of Historic Places, the groups are looking to ensure that more sections of the city remain preserved.

While the study has created a number of potential strategies that will ultimately help preserve the neighborhood while continuing to make it an attractive area in which to live, there is still plenty of work that needs to be done in terms of implementing the findings. Lori Salganicoff, executive director of the Conservancy, and Joyce Lenhardt, former vice president of the CHCA's Physical Division, both spoke to the need to add "teeth" to the study's findings. More specifically, they still need to figure out exactly how to use what they have.

Now that the study is over, both groups will begin the process of planning out how exactly to go about ensuring further conservation in Chestnut Hill. Nothing will be officially realized anytime soon, however, as it will be at least a few more months before anything is made official and any potential changes start to take effect.

Members of both groups also spoke about the initial motivations behind the study, as the efforts to finally put something in motion went beyond just the Conservancy and CHCA. A number of other committees in the neighborhood also came to realize at a certain point that their roles in Chestnut Hill had been mostly reactive for some time now. With this in mind, they sought to take a more proactive role in the community than they had before, which proved to be a necessary push in starting the study.

With a number of attendees signing up to assist the two groups in their conservation efforts going forward, it seems that their efforts will not be slowing down with the completion of the survey.

For more information, visit the Conservancy's website at [chconservancy.org](http://chconservancy.org).

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