

# chestnut hill local (http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com)

## As home buyers demand change, local experts think Hill's historic charm is safe for foreseeable future

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<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2018/04/12/as-home-buyers-demand-change-local-experts-think-hills-historic-charm-is-safe-for-foreseeable-future/> by Brendan Sample (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/author/brendan/>)



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(<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Ardleigh-Street-homes.jpg>)

*New homes under construction on Arleigh Street. (Photo by Pete Mazzaccaro)*

**by Brendan Sample**

With its official status as a nationally recognized historic district, Chestnut Hill is known best for its abundance of historic and architecturally significant homes. Even after undergoing plenty of renovations and general upkeep, these houses have maintained their historic facades, thus continuing to add to the charm of the neighborhood.

Over the past several months, however, dating back to late last year, there has been an influx of new construction in the community, with new houses and condos beginning to spring up at an increased rate. Just last week, this paper reported on a planned 17-unit condo development on Rex Avenue.

While it's certainly not the start of a complete neighborhood overhaul, the arrival of several new structures in a relatively short period of time still is a notable change for an area that has had its development so deeply rooted in history.

The Local asked local real estate and preservation experts what they thought about the trend in new housing construction and whether they felt the trend was a threat to the neighborhoods

According to local Realtors, one of the main reasons why Chestnut Hill has seen an increase in new development is changing demands from a new generation of homeowners. Houses that were built in the 1920s using Wissahickon Schist, for example, may not necessarily be losing their overall appeal, but newly constructed residences without an overabundance of space are becoming more appealing. With many couples having little time on their hands because both spouses are working, a home that is fully built with no renovations needed in the near future and minimal upkeep required is becoming more of a perfect fit for new homeowners.

"In today's market, there is an increased demand for new construction primarily due to a shift in consumer lifestyle," said Bruce Glendinning, senior vice president and regional sales manager of Berkshire Hathaway, Fox and Roach Realtors in Chestnut Hill. "Many consumers want less living space, less land and easier lifestyles with less maintenance. New construction on smaller lots seems to be the answer for this shift in lifestyle."

Though this demand for new houses may be a general trend in the housing market, Chestnut Hill's high property values do make it a good fit for its high-priced home shoppers, Glendinning said. Modern homes typically don't come cheap, but considering that prospective homeowners looking for space in the neighborhood are already willing to pay a premium, many of them may decide that having the extra conveniences will be worth it when they're already looking to spend a lot.

While new houses are the trend, many of the old homes that make Chestnut Hill what it is are not going anywhere.

"While we have experienced an uptick in new development here, Chestnut Hill has also experienced a significant increase in property owners doing their part to protect community character," said Lori Salganicoff, executive director of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy. "Through conservation and preservation easements, addition to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and simply being great stewards of their homes and open spaces, an increasing number of property owners are quietly working to protect the homes and the community they love."

In addition, new housing is not the only thing that attracts prospective residents to the region. Factors such as the walkability of the neighborhood, various local businesses and the overall look of the area remain strong reasons why people want to live in Chestnut Hill. Moreover, while plenty of people are looking for new housing accommodations, it has not necessarily come at the expense of those looking to move into the historic houses as well.

"When somebody's buying a house, they're balancing the inside, outside and the location," said Janice Manzi, a realtor with Elfant Wissahickon and a Chestnut Hill resident. "It's not about pitting one house over another. Even if it's a 100-year-old house that's been renovated by the owners, it's going to be more appealing than one that hasn't been fixed over the past 20 years ... There's probably an equal amount of people who want the beautiful house built of 18-inch stone walls than who want the new houses."

Even in the wake of this new construction, there's no reason to believe that the fabric of Chestnut Hill will be at all threatened. The housing market, like any other major institution, will certainly continue to change with the times, but the neighborhood's unique historic roots are still strong, and will almost certainly continue to be for quite some time.

"Change is hard, but it's reality," Manzi explained. "We don't change in Chestnut Hill as fast as other neighborhoods, but we'll still be OK. This will still be known as the place with all the old stone houses."

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