

LOOKING BACK ON 12 MONTHS OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CHESTNUT HILL AREA

July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

The Conservancy's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan was completed to guide the organization's work as an educational center and leading advocate for the history, architecture, and open space of Chestnut Hill and surrounding communities in the Wissahickon watershed. The Plan seeks to collaboratively encourage balance in growth and preservation, strengthen successful programs, and improve governance and community investment. Almost 400 community stakeholders gave feedback and guidance for the Plan.

The Conservancy encouraged and facilitated Springfield Township efforts to create its first Historic Preservation ordinance following the unfortunate loss of two historic homes. In Philadelphia, the Upper Northwest District Plan was adopted, with further work continued to balance growth with resource protection in collaboration with other Chestnut Hill organizations, and with community groups throughout Philadelphia's Upper Northwest. The Conservancy also participated in Philadelphia's Historic Preservation Task Force.

Several notable preservation successes included averting the demolition of a significant part of the Keewaydin complex and managing complicated next steps. Rehabilitation work commenced on properties listed by the Conservancy on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places including the Chestnut Hill Fire Station and 2 E. Chestnut Hill Avenue, typically with the organization's input. 30 W. Chestnut Hill Avenue, protected with a Conservancy preservation easement, was also renovated with a great deal of input on exterior work.

Two preservation easements were placed on historic houses on West Willow Grove Avenue and Crefeld Street. With these easements, the owners sought to preserve facades and roofs, but also the novel concept of the planned community pioneered by the Houston/Woodward family, streetscapes and viewsheds, and other features that contribute to the unique character of Chestnut Hill.

A conservation easement was placed on 3.54 acres along Bethlehem Pike, Stenton Avenue, and Bells Mill Road, ensuring that this environmentally-sensitive gateway to Chestnut Hill will be protected in perpetuity. This and an earlier easement on the property brings the total land protected by this one family to 11.62 acres, an astounding amount of protected land within a city.

With this easement, the Conservancy now holds 48 easements preserving 19 historic buildings and conserving over 100 acres of privately-held watershed land and trees. That's an area over 20 times the size of Rittenhouse Square! This innovative, accredited Conservation and Easements Program, managed in partnership with Friends of the Wissahickon, is one of the strongest tools available to ensure the area's historic, green, village character remains.

The Conservancy hired its first full-time Conservation and Easements Manager – a role made possible by generous Leadership Circle commitment and an overwhelming response to the new Catalyst level of membership. Additional funding for the position came from the Friends of the Wissahickon and the Philadelphia Water Department.

Our Archives tells the story of the rich and multi-faceted history of Chestnut Hill and environs through the ever-expanding collection of photographs documents, maps, deeds, books, oral histories and more. Professional Archives staff welcomed hundreds of researchers in person, by phone, and online. Donations of items to the collection rolled in every week of the year, including the papers and photographs of Ann and George Spaeth as well as the photographs, documents, and business ledgers from the Dwyer family business. The staff of the Archives created a dozen photos essays and film compilations for Night of Lights. Images were posted weekly via social media, and several Local articles were written highlighting aspects of Chestnut Hill and vicinity history. Over 90 oral history interviews are now part of our collection, which are now being organized, transcribed, and made publicly available. College student volunteers and others have continued to help us expand our outreach by working on a variety of cataloging and other projects in the Archives. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission began supporting the Archives with grant funding.

The Conservancy presented its second annual Night of Lights public exhibit in October, welcoming hundreds to stroll a Germantown Avenue commercial corridor vibrantly transformed with projected photos and films from the Archives, architectural lighting, live music, and interactive elements. The event inspired a new level of community storytelling, with residents and businesses moved to share and donate their own histories to the Archives.

Chestnut Hill's historic railroad resources enjoyed special Conservancy attention in 2019 as the focus of tours and lectures, and with the proactive work of our Preservation Committee to evaluate their preservation and reuse potential. The Conservancy's goal is to determine strategies to encourage preservation and appropriate reuse of these underutilized community treasures, to be implemented by SEPTA and neighborhood preservation leaders.

Other public programming included Discovering Chestnut Hill lectures and tours covering such topics as "The Illustrated History of Fairmount Park," "Pocket Parks," and "the Chestnut Hill Water Tower and Water History." The Great Houses Tour of the Conservancy with CHCA welcomed more than 300 visitors to five renovated historic homes hosted by the owners, designers, and contractors responsible for their renovation. The free quarterly series Ask the Experts shared professional wisdom on such topics as native plants and mechanical systems in historic houses. And the Conservancy and friends gathered to bury a community Time Capsule with publicly-donated items representing a snapshot of what we love about Chestnut Hill today, for future generations to discover on the 100th anniversary of the Conservancy in 2067.

Leadership Circle and CHAOS members enjoyed visits to unique places including the Oaks Cloister, Skyspace at the Chestnut Hill Meeting House, the urban oasis of the Discovery Center at Philadelphia's East Park Reservoir, the fields (and wine) of the Karamoor Vineyard in Fort Washington, two spectacular private historic car collections, and Undine Barge Club's Castle Ringstetten. These excursions were organized to provide unusual access and foster appreciation for mission-related area wonders.

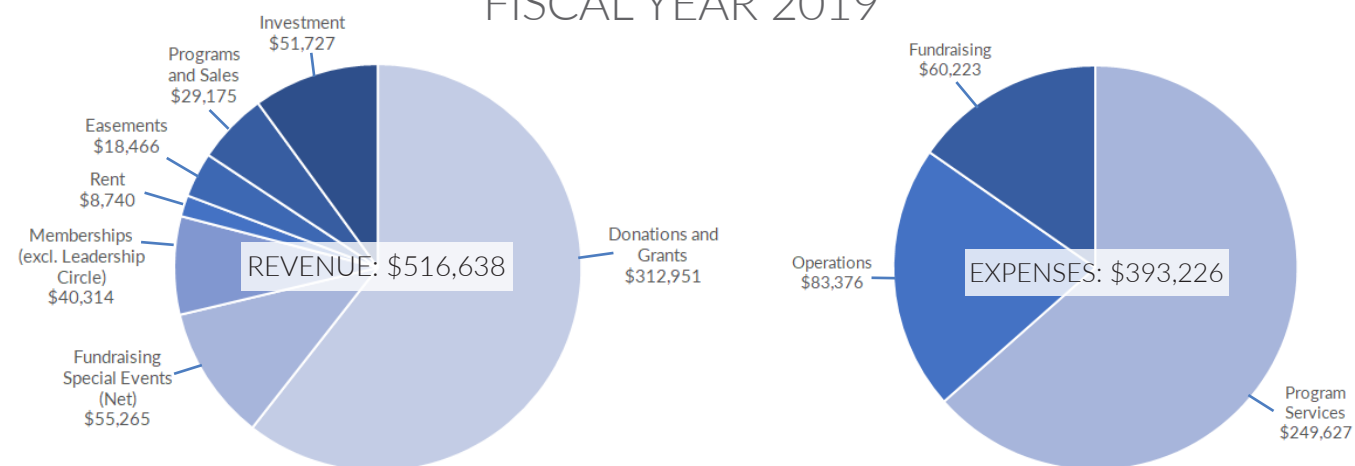


SNAPSHOT FY-2019

July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019



FISCAL YEAR 2019



FISCAL YEAR 2019

JULY 1, 2018 TO JUNE 30, 2019

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