

# 2019-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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**METHODOLOGY:** *This Plan was written by Executive Director Lori Salganicoff and President Eileen Javers, with the essential help of Leah Silverstein and under the guidance of the Strategic Plan Task Force. In addition to Eileen Javers, Task Force members included Carolyn Adams, Patricia Cove, Karren DeSeve, Charlie Dilks, Diane Drinker, Shirley Hanson, Larry Salva, and Randy Williams. Other staff, Committee Chairs, and Board members gave feedback on important elements of the Plan. Strategy Consultant and former Friends of the Wissahickon (FOW) Board Member Bob Harries generously advised this effort at critical stages of its development.*

*This 2019-2022 Plan builds from the successful 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, with updates to Goals and Objectives drafted (during the active years of that plan through today) by Committee leaders, during the March 30 2019 Board Retreat, by the Strategic Plan Task Force at its April 10th, April 25th, and May 3rd meetings, and by the Executive Committee at its April 15th and May 21st meetings. Committee leaders fleshed out the Goals and Objectives into action plans with measurable goals for each of the upcoming years of the Plan. The Plan was further informed by Board and Staff SWOT (Strengths / Weaknesses / Opportunities / Threats) analyses in February, an online questionnaire completed by 354 community members, over 40 interviews conducted with Key Stakeholders, an assessment of nonprofit life cycle models, discussions with other organizations, and a detailed analysis of the impact and resource viability of each program by Lori Salganicoff and Leah Silverstein.*



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

*As we lay out our strategy for the next three years, let's celebrate what we have achieved based on the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, which took us through our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and many successes.*



*The Chestnut Hill Conservancy finished 2018 with just over 100 acres conserved, and we are close to securing our 50<sup>th</sup> easement. We have protected dozens of historically significant buildings, and have worked with many small neighborhood groups and developers to encourage balance and harmony in new construction. These efforts preserve the open space and architectural significance that together define the area's character. With the help of the community, our archives have expanded and are now increasingly available to the public. Our tours and lectures illustrated the important contributions of the Italian Artisans who built Chestnut Hill, works of noted architects, beloved landscapes and gardens, and many histories. Our Visionaries Roundtable engaged hundreds in a discussion of balancing preservation with development, igniting and informing public discourse on the issue. The new Night of Lights public exhibit of our archives and the illumination of structures along Germantown Avenue gave the entire community the opportunity to meet together in appreciation of the history and beauty of our home.*

*The Conservancy was increasingly visible and impactful as we collaborated with nearby community organizations to define our future, first by leading the Chestnut Hill Residential Conservation, Preservation, and Development Study, and then by active participation and representation on the Philadelphia Historical Preservation Task force, the Upper Northwest District Plan of the Philadelphia 2035 City Plan, and the reinvigorated efforts to create Springfield Township's first historic preservation ordinance.*

*All the work by our staff, board and wonderful volunteers has helped to highlight the beauty and character of Chestnut Hill and nearby communities. This brings vitality and prominence but also increased development pressure and a need to balance growth with respect for what makes this place so extraordinary. We are pleased to present our plan for how we will work to do this and move forward to preserve our history, architecture, and open space.*

*Thank you for your continuing support.*

*Sincerely,*

Eileen Javers  
President

## HISTORY OF THE CHESTNUT HILL CONSERVANCY

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy is an educational center and advocate for the architecture, open space, and social history of Chestnut Hill and surrounding communities, founded in 1967 as the Chestnut Hill Historical Society. The Conservancy has fostered a state of positive evolution and continued vigor by protecting and celebrating the singular beauty of the area's landscape, significant architecture, tradition of innovative community planning, and neighbors' concerns for each other and their surroundings.



In 1966, the threat of drastic alterations to one deteriorating building, the VFW building at 8217-19 Germantown Avenue, rallied a small group calling itself "the Committee for the Preservation of Historic Buildings in Chestnut Hill." Although some said "there is nothing historic in Chestnut Hill," the majority of the community felt otherwise. Contributions from 50 cents to \$1,500 streamed in to the committee's mailbox and the building was saved.

The committee's tenacity and the community's zeal ultimately spawned the Chestnut Hill Historical Society, incorporated in February 1967. The driving goal was to treat Chestnut Hill as a unit and preserve the key characteristics to retain its essence and ensure its vitality into the future. Those characteristics quickly grew beyond historic architecture to include the landscape and history of Chestnut Hill and surrounding communities. In 2017, the organization changed its name to Chestnut Hill Conservancy to reflect that growth. Now, more than 50 years after its founding, the Conservancy remains dedicated to preserving and interpreting the area's heritage.

### Defending the built environment

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy holds facade easements on 19 extraordinary buildings, has listed many more on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, and is now working with Springfield Township to introduce preservation protections there. Both easements and City designation provide protection in perpetuity, benefiting the community forever. We are committed to working diligently, and collaboratively, on practical solutions to preserve significant architectural and environmental resources. We are proactively mapping and planning to identify preservation priorities as well as beneficial development opportunities. We review proposals for new projects that require a zoning variance as an official part of Philadelphia's Registered Community Organization (RCO) process. And we provide consultation on projects affecting the Chestnut Hill Historic District's thousands of historically significant structures.



## Protecting open space



As the nation's first urban accredited land trust, we understand that maintaining open green space is essential to the cultural landscape and to the health of the Wissahickon Watershed that provides drinking water to over 350,000 Philadelphians. Easements, or donated development rights, are a powerful tool. Generous conservation-easement donations from homeowners, protected by our accredited land trust, ensure that vital

natural lands will remain forever. Our innovative Conservation and Easements Program, managed in partnership with Friends of the Wissahickon, is one of the strongest tools available to protect the Wissahickon watershed and Wissahickon Valley Park. To date, the Chestnut Hill Conservancy has facilitated the permanent conservation of 150+ acres of open space in the watershed.

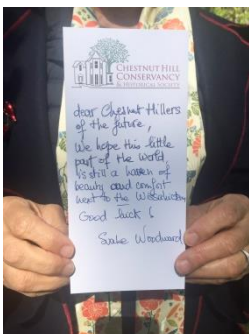


## Celebrating history

The Chestnut Hill and Wissahickon Archives hold the stories of Chestnut Hill and surrounding communities. The Chestnut Hill Conservancy maintains a rapidly growing, professionally managed collection of more than 21,000 items documenting the community's architectural and social history from the 1680s to the present. The collection



contains architectural drawings and other records; more than 8,200 photographic images; maps including real estate atlases from the 1870s through the 1930s; prints, drawings, deeds, diaries, genealogical materials, books, taped and transcribed oral histories, and selected objects. The collection is available to the public for research purposes in person and online, and reproductions from the collection can also be seen decorating the walls of many area businesses and institutions.



The Conservancy consistently employs the synergies created by these integrated mission elements, and seeks collaboration and partnerships across disciplines and other boundaries. These have been a guiding principle of the organization since its founding in 1967 and have only grown in importance in recent years.

90% of the Conservancy's funding comes from the community through contributions, memberships, sponsorships, and program participation. More than 80% of the Conservancy's funding is spent to protect and celebrate the architecture, open space, and social history in the Chestnut Hill area. This work is made possible by the vision, energy, and devotion of board, staff, members, and supporters, which will continue to drive the Conservancy's actions.

**VISION**

We envision Chestnut Hill as a green, vibrant, historic urban Philadelphia village that respects and celebrates its historic resources and open space; takes advantage of the social and economic value of preservation and conservation; and prioritizes contextual harmony and enduring quality in new development.

**MISSION**

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy is dedicated to preserving the historical, architectural, and cultural resources and the open spaces that define the character of Chestnut Hill and surrounding neighborhoods.

**ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE****OVERARCHING GOALS** of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy

- To become a center for ideas on encouraging balanced growth and preservation to sustain the vibrant, green, historic urban village character of Chestnut Hill and surrounding neighborhoods.
- To advance integrated preservation, conservation, and archival efforts, collaboratively protecting and educating about the open space, built environment, cultural landscape, historic character, and social history of Chestnut Hill and surrounding neighborhoods.
- To remain an active, well-governed, and well-funded community-based organization.

**PURPOSE**

To engage in any activity permitted as non-profit corporation under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania including, without limitation, the following specific purposes:

- To preserve land in Chestnut Hill and its adjoining neighborhoods for historic, recreational, scenic, agricultural, water quality, or open space opportunities.
- To preserve architecturally and culturally significant buildings in Chestnut Hill and its adjoining neighborhoods.
- To preserve the natural and designed landscape features that characterize the Chestnut Hill Historic District as listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- To maintain an archive of historic documents, photos, and other items depicting Chestnut Hill and its adjoining neighborhoods.
- To provide educational programs and information relating to conservation, preservation, and history.



## GOALS AND SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

The strategic plan seeks to achieve the following goals and supporting objectives:

**GOAL 1. Protection:** Actively protect properties and community character through a variety of existing tools including:

- Conservation and Preservation Easements
  - Continue to cultivate and secure new conservation easements, in partnership with Friends of the Wissahickon
  - Continue to cultivate and secure new preservation easements
  - Strengthen planning and easement cultivation tools through maps/other analysis
  - Defend existing easements in accordance with best practices
- Historic Designation through regulatory tools, and related work
  - Protect significant historic properties through designation to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
  - Preserve and revitalize area Railroad Resources
  - Create “Preservation Priorities” to guide strategic protection of resources based on significance and risk
  - Update the Chestnut Hill National Register Nomination and Inventory
  - Strengthen the Preservation Committee
  - Assist in creating historic preservation protections in Springfield Township
- Zoning, Planning, and other creative engagement
  - Present preservation resources and “best practice” examples for public access
  - Strengthen integrated planning and engagement efforts
  - Engage neighbors and neighborhoods in active preservation
  - Recognize and celebrate preservation-minded professionals and businesses, as appropriate
  - Celebrate historic resources through Preservation Awards, the Architectural Hall of Fame, educational lectures and tours, and features in the “Chestnut Hill Local” and other key publications

**GOAL 2. Role of RCO:** Provide advice and guidance for real estate project development, and be a venue for public input as a Registered Community Organization (RCO) as created by the city’s zoning laws

- Continue to provide preservation and development guidance as an RCO through the Conservancy’s Historic District Advisory Committee (HDAC) in collaboration with the Chestnut Hill Community Association (CHCA) and other RCOs
- Seek opportunities to provide information about the character-defining features of the area and proactive guidance on appropriate future development & alteration
- Strengthen HDAC
- Strengthen historic preservation within the Chestnut Hill Development Review Committee (DRC)/Registered Community Organization (RCO) structure

**GOAL 3. Archives:** Ensure a sustainable archives, museum, and library collection documenting the community's architectural, social, and Wissahickon Valley history from the 1680s to the present, with increased public access, use, and support

- Professionally collect, preserve, manage, maintain, and share/disseminate items from the collection to the public
- Increase public access to and knowledge of the general collection
- Increase use of archival materials for public programs, paid programs, self-tours, external exhibits, other programs as appropriate
- Increase use of archival materials to support the conservation and easement programs and preservation activities
- Pursue funding opportunities such as grants, specific donor outreach, and revenue-creating ideas to help support the operational costs of the Archives
- Communicate the value and benefits of a professionally-managed Archives to the Board, staff, and membership

**GOAL 4. New Tools:** Advocate for creation of new tools such as incentives for adaptive reuse, preservation, and conservation; implications of property assessments; preservation-friendly tax abatements; stricter zoning laws; and watershed conservation ordinances or overlays that relate to our mission elements

- Participate in and, where appropriate, lead area planning and protection efforts
- Evaluate new tools for unintended consequences; advocate for new tools
- Participate with community greening initiatives to protect our historic landscapes and improve conservation values
- Encourage best practices for energy efficiency in historic buildings
- Prioritize contextual Harmony and Enduring Quality in New Development

**GOAL 5. Policy:** Act as policy driver, leader, and/or participant for enforcement and defense of laws that relate to our mission elements

- Understand, inform, and where appropriate, advocate for beneficial tax abatement/tax assessments, zoning laws, and watershed conservation
- Actively participate in mission-relevant Philadelphia and Springfield Township issues
- Partner with other organizations where possible, appropriate, and beneficial

**GOAL 6. Organizational Sustainability and Efficiency:** Ensure good governance to promote organizational stability, professionalism, efficiency, and effective communications

- Board remains active, strategic, and fundraising, and represents a balance of skills that support the mission and operations
- Retain and attract highly energetic, talented staff
- Create/support workplans detailing ideal staff and volunteer leadership for "invited" events and public programs
- Maintain and enhance high professional and ethical standards by using best-industry practices such as the Land Trust Alliance and archival museum standards and practices as a basis
- Learn from "exemplary" nonprofits – groups doing similar things at the top of their game
- Maintain and maximize use of 8708 Germantown Avenue building



**GOAL 7. Education and Communication:** Engage and educate the community with high impact/resource viability programs and communications, consistent with three mission elements

- Provide engaging educational programming consistent with *screening criteria*\*
- Disseminate information directly to members and constituents through web, mobile, social media, and published communications
- Develop Strategic Communications – for fundraising, engagement, and to demonstrate that the Conservancy is efficient, effective, and well-governed

**GOAL 8. Funding:** Develop a sustainable diversity of funding sources and community support to be an effective leader in preservation, conservation and Archive resources

- Cultivate and secure new major donors and supporters
- Seek multi-year support commitments from Leadership Circle members and Business Sponsors to assure stable funding sources and engagement
- Improve development and outreach capacity – staffing, administration, and MGC/other committees
- Recognize and engage current and future members
- Create more sustainable fundraising structure with strengthened staff and Major Gifts outreach, and fewer large fundraising events
- Continue to build Endowment Fund to sustain continued operating expenses
- Continue to build Restricted Funds to sustain/grow the easement program, and to defend threatened properties
- Seek foundation funding for core programs and capacity building; pursue collaborations with other organizations whenever possible
- Seek partner-organization funding for programs of mutual interest, and for opportunities to monetize skills and services

*\*Screening criteria to evaluate existing and potential new programs for alignment with mission, effectiveness, and resource viability:*

What are we putting into it?

- *Funding*
- *Volunteer Time and Effort*
- *Staff Time and Effort*
- *Opportunity cost*
- *Credibility*

What are we getting out of it?

- *Funding*
- *Furthering mission elements*
- *Fills community need*
- *Reaches target audience*
- *Engages key volunteers*
- *Organizational connections*
- *Education toward community action*
- *Promote and benefit brand*

**ABOUT US – 2019 Board of Directors**

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**Treasurer**

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**Vice President, Conservation & Easements**

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**Vice President, Preservation**

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**Vice President, Programs**

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Sarah L. O. Smith

Nancy Williams

## ABOUT US – 2019 Staff

**Lori Salganicoff**, Executive Director

**Leah Silverstein**, Director of Operations and Special Projects

**Liz Jarvis**, Curator/Archivist

**Alex Bartlett**, Archivist

**Kevin Hughes**, Conservation and Easements Manager

**Clarissa Shanahan**, Executive Office Assistant



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HISTORY ∴ ARCHITECTURE ∴ OPEN SPACE