



**Chestnut Hill Conservancy
Executive Director Search
July 2024**





About the Chestnut Hill Conservancy:

Founded in 1967 as the Chestnut Hill Historical Society, the Chestnut Hill Conservancy (the Conservancy) is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the historical, architectural, and cultural resources and the open spaces that define the character of Chestnut Hill and surrounding communities in the Wissahickon watershed of Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties. For more than 50 years, it has creatively advocated for the preservation of historic architecture. In the past 35 years, it has protected over 130 acres of land through its easement program as the nation's first urban accredited land trust. It houses a professionally maintained archive with over 52,000 items accessible to the public. The Conservancy engages the community through educational programs, advocacy, and events. The organization has also documented thousands of structures, contributing to Chestnut Hill's designation as a National Historic District.

Mission:

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy is dedicated to sustaining the historical, architectural and cultural resources, and the open spaces that define the character of Chestnut Hill and the surrounding communities in the Wissahickon watershed.

Preservation

Balancing beneficial development with protection of significant resources, the Chestnut Hill Conservancy holds facade easements on 13 extraordinary buildings and has listed many more on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Both easements and City designation provide protection in perpetuity, protecting the integrity of the area's built and natural environments.

The Conservancy works proactively on mapping and planning to identify preservation priorities as well as development opportunities. It reviews proposals for new projects that require a zoning variance and provides consultation on projects affecting the district's thousands of historically significant structures.

Conservation

Ensuring Chestnut Hill remains green as the nation's first urban accredited land trust involves utilizing easements, or donated development rights, as a powerful tool. Generous donations of conservation easements from homeowners guarantee that essential natural lands will be forever preserved.

To date, the Chestnut Hill Conservancy has facilitated the permanent conservation of over 130 acres of open space in the Chestnut Hill area. Open space is essential for protecting the Wissahickon Park, urban water quality, native flora and fauna, and the area's matchless urban village character.

The Archives

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy maintains a rapidly growing, professionally managed collection of more than 52,000 items documenting the community's architectural and

social history from the 1680s to the present. The collection contains architectural drawings, more than 40,000 photographic images, maps, prints, drawings, deeds, diaries, genealogical materials, books, taped and transcribed oral histories, and select objects. The collection is available to the public for research purposes

The First Urban Land Trust:

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy has earned national recognition for land conservation work that meets national quality standards, upholds the public trust, and ensures that conservation efforts are permanent. This includes accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, whose seal represents the land trust's following standards of excellence. The Chestnut Hill Conservancy is one of only 471 land trusts in the country that have earned this distinction — *and the first designated urban accredited land trust.*

Advocacy to Sustain Architectural Heritage:

Chestnut Hill has a rich tradition of architectural diversity, beginning with 18th-century houses, barns, and mills. After the Revolutionary War, Federal architecture of the village gave way to a myriad of Victorian styles.

Nearly every notable architect practicing in Philadelphia over the past 170+ years is represented in Chestnut Hill. From the early Italianate Victorian designs of Samuel Sloan to the exuberant Queen Anne buildings of the G. W. & W. D. Hewitt firm; from the groundbreaking European influenced work of Wilson Eyre to the exquisitely designed country houses of Mellor, Meigs & Howe; and from the ornate classical design of Horace Trumbauer to the early modern works of Louis Kahn and Robert Venturi. Commensurate with the work of these architects, Chestnut Hill is also fortunate to have parks and personal properties designed by the famed Olmstead Brothers.

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy leads advocacy efforts to protect this extraordinary architectural and environmental heritage and to ensure that Chestnut Hill remains a vibrant and distinctive community.

Public Programs:

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy offers a wide range of educational programs and community events aimed at celebrating and preserving the area's architecture and natural environment. These initiatives include an engaging speaker series, informative walking tours, captivating exhibitions, and interactive 'Ask the Experts' forums. Each program is designed to engage and educate the community about the unique history and cultural significance of Chestnut Hill, fostering a deeper appreciation and commitment to preserving its legacy.

About Chestnut Hill:

The Conservancy serves Chestnut Hill and surrounding neighborhoods, but the seat of the organization and much of its work is in Chestnut Hill. Located in the northwestern corner of Philadelphia, Chestnut Hill is one of the region's most beautiful and architecturally distinguished communities. Flanked by the spectacular Wissahickon Gorge and Cresheim Valley, Chestnut Hill began as a rural farming and milling community in the early 1700s and became the site of one of the first planned suburban communities in the 19th century. Chestnut Hill was added to the National Register of Historic Places as an historic district in 1985. It remains a vibrant, green, walkable community today.

For more information visit: www.chconservancy.org

Executive Director Responsibilities:

Reporting to the Chair of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy will assume overall strategic and operational responsibility to ensure that the organization's activities align with its mission and ensure its long-term impact and viability.

The Executive Director will possess a passion for the Conservancy and its work including preservation, conservation, and its extensive archives and will bring proven professional experience in these areas. They will be an effective leader who demonstrates expertise in strategic management and thrives working in collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders including Board, staff, volunteers, members, donors and partner organizations. Key responsibilities of the Executive Director will include:

- **Strategic organizational leadership:** Assume responsibility for the leadership of the Conservancy including the stewardship and safeguarding of its mission and vision.
- **Operations:** Oversee the day-to-day operations of the Conservancy including the creation and implementation of efficient processes and procedures.
- **Team management:** Inspire and lead a talented, passionate and dedicated team. Foster a transparent, collaborative and inclusive culture aligned with organizational mission and vision.
- **Fundraising:** Support the identification and cultivation of new and existing donors to ensure that the Conservancy has sufficient financial resources to maintain, sustain and grow programming and operations. Serve in an external capacity to continue to build and strengthen the Conservancy's brand with a new generation of members, volunteers and donors.
- **Financial management:** Guide the organization with sound fiscal management practices and a strategy that maximizes resource utilization while ensuring the organization remains financially healthy.
- **Relationship building:** Cultivate and maintain mutually beneficial relationships that support the Conservancy's mission, goals, and sustainability within Chestnut Hill and neighboring communities, the City of Philadelphia, and within greater preservation circles.
- **Communications:** Utilize strong and effective verbal and written communications skills to strategically articulate a compelling vision, inspire others, and build consensus among diverse stakeholders.
- **Project management:** Plan, organize, lead, and allocate people and resources to achieve specific goals within a defined scope, budget, and timeline.
- **Program management:** Balance the needs of the three mission elements of the Conservancy: architecture preservation, land conservation, and the archives.
- **Board partnership:** Partner with a dedicated and passionate Board to execute upon organizational priorities and strategies.

Key Experience and Skill Set:

- Professional experience in preservation, land stewardship, conservation and archives including a keen understanding of property rights, zoning, easements, and legislation and regulations related to historic preservation, and/or archive and museum management.
- Knowledge of government agencies and partner organizations that could collaborate or assist with advocacy efforts, with some creativity.
- Significant leadership experience within an organization aligned with preservation, land stewardship and/or conservation. Specific strengths in strategic planning, communications, financial management, team leadership, fundraising and operational management.
- The ability to promote and maintain the Conservancy's identity, values, mission, and reputation to ensure it resonates with current and future donors, volunteers, members, and the broader community.
- Previous experience and willingness to raise funds or support these efforts on behalf of an organization as well as success building and elevating an organization's external brand.
- A personal and professional commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive organizational culture.
- Previous success managing and developing high performing and passionate teams with a focus on transparency and communication.
- Exceptional operational management skills including planning, prioritization, delegation, and execution.
- Demonstrated experience establishing and maintaining strong professional relationships internally and externally.
- Exceptional communication skills and willingness to serve as the external spokesperson for the Conservancy, effectively conveying its mission, values, and impact to diverse audiences.
- Possessing nonprofit financial acumen including planning, budget preparation, analysis and strategic financial decision making.
- A proven ability to successfully manage multiple complex projects and initiatives concurrently.
- Demonstrated experience, instincts, and knowledge to make timely and informed decisions, even under pressure.
- A natural ability to effectively engage, motivate, and manage a dedicated group of volunteers.

Key Personal Characteristics:

- Possessing a passion for the mission of the Conservancy and its work.
- A consensus builder, able to clearly articulate and execute upon a vision while building agreement among stakeholders.
- The ability to build bridges between groups with varying interests and perspectives.
- The ability to act with agility and urgency, adapting quickly to changes and new information including anticipating potential issues or opportunities and addressing them promptly.
- A confident transparent leadership style that fosters teamwork and leverages diverse perspectives and skills to achieve common goals.
- The ability to prioritize, delegate and remain flexible and responsive to changes in circumstances in a dynamic environment.
- Possessing a clear and effective oral and written communication style with teams and stakeholders to promote understanding and collaboration.
- Highly self-motivated with a hands-on approach to leadership and management and an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Innately curious. Continuously seeking out new knowledge and skills, staying up to date with trends, technology, and methodologies in the field.
- Creative with the ability to find innovative solutions to complex problems.

Nominations and Applications: Nominations and applications, including resume and cover letter, should be directed to Courtney Disston at: cdisston@disstonsearch.com.

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy is an Equal Opportunity employer and provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, creed, ancestry, national origin, citizenship, sex or gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, and pregnancy-related conditions), gender identity or expression (including transgender status), sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, genetic information, service in the military, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws and ordinances.

About Disston Search:

Headquartered in Philadelphia, PA, Disston Search is a retained executive search firm committed to partnering with education, non-profit, and mission driven organizations to identify and recruit their leaders. Disston Search works across the non-profit sector in all major functional areas with a focus on organizational culture and diversity.