



Chestnut Hill Local

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Friday, May 10, 2024

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Agencies team up for zoning protection



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Posted Wednesday, May 1, 2024 12:00 am

by **Carla Robinson**

A group of board members from the Chestnut Hill community’s three institutional civic organizations have been meeting over the past year to develop stronger protections for the Germantown Avenue business corridor – and are now ready to present a draft proposal for a new zoning overlay.

The Chestnut Hill Overlay Working Group (OWG)’s proposed zoning overlay is designed to ameliorate some of the increased density called for in the city’s 2035 zoning plan. It now needs approval from all three member organizations – the Chestnut Hill Conservancy (CHC), the Chestnut Hill Community Association (CHCA), and the Chestnut Hill Business Improvement District (BID).

According to CHCA board member Matt Rutt, who has been leading the group, Germantown Avenue’s existing overlay is “extremely sparse.”

“The one we’re proposing – while it is still in the early stages and still has a long way to go – would include a much more robust consideration of the city’s 2035 zoning plan,” he said.

That plan, which allows for taller buildings and more density along commercial and transit corridors like Germantown Avenue, has resulted in new “by right” developments along the Northwest Philadelphia corridor that have upset residents in Chestnut Hill, Mt. Airy and Germantown

In Chestnut Hill, two examples are the proposed high-density buildings for the former Sunoco site at 10 Bethlehem Pike and the building now being built by developer Michael Young on the spot where the Santander Bank building once sat at 8263 Germantown Ave.

“We learned from the development applications that have happened recently – both the good and the bad – and both of those served as case studies to help inform the process,” Rutt said.

With this new effort, working group members say, they are working to continue Chestnut Hill’s long – and proud – history of preserving its historic character,



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“We’re not against additional density, in fact, we favor some additional density if it’s done in the right way, and see it as being important to the future vibrancy of our commercial corridor,” Rutt said. “So our goal is not to keep all development out. Rather it’s to protect and preserve the character of the corridor that makes Chestnut Hill as special as it is.”

Rutt said “it’s impossible to predict” whether the proposed overlay would be in place soon enough to have any impact on what happens to the historic Hiram Lodge, which was destroyed in a 2022 fire and has recently been listed for sale at \$1.4 million.

“My guess is not, just because this needs to go through the legislative process, and these things take time,” he said.

The group now has a draft, which it is presenting to and discussing with the board members of all three member organizations. They’ve already presented it to the board of the CHCA and will be making similar presentations to the boards of both the Chestnut Hill Business Improvement District and the Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

After those three boards give their input, Rutt said, they’ll take it back to the City Planning Commission for further review. At the same time, he said, they’ll be presenting the proposal to City Councilwoman Cindy Bass, who would need to submit legislation to City Council for the proposal to become law.

Rutt said he fully expects there to be further revisions throughout the process.

“We’ll be engaging the public more broadly, to build awareness and also to get feedback,” he said. “After that, the last step is moving forward with a bill.”

OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

NW Philadelphia: Unprotected and vulnerable (/stories/nw-philadelphia-unprotected-and-vulnerable,32170)

Feds fund reconstruction of aging Wissahickon bridges (/stories/feds-fund-reconstruction-of-aging-wissahickon-bridges,32174)

Grateful for moms, and memories (/stories/grateful-for-moms-and-memories,32175)

EPA to Philadelphia: Get the lead out (/stories/epa-to-philadelphia-get-the-lead-out,32091)



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LOCAL CALENDAR

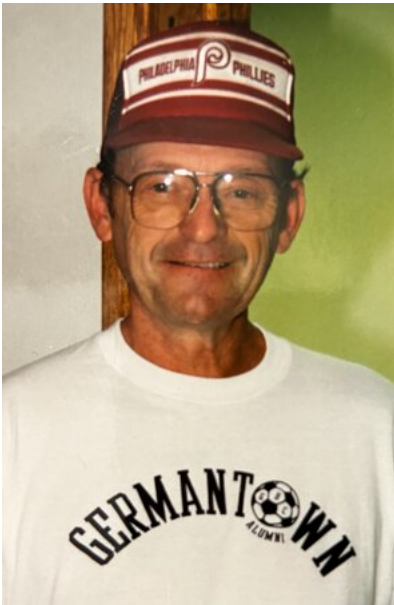
- Sat, May 18 @11:00am Sponsored (< **Music of the Beatles for Kids + More!** The Ardmore Music Hall Fri, May 10
- Fri, May 24 @8:00pm Sponsored (**Little Big** Brooklyn Bowl Philadelphia
- Sat, May 11 @10:30am Sponsored (**Second Saturdays at Cliveden** Cliveden of the National Trust
- PA CareerLink Job Search Assistance - South Philadelphia Library** South Philadelphia Branch Fri, May 10 @6:00pm
- Erev Shabbat Dinner & Service with Machon Ayalon Performance** Old York Road Temple-Beth Am Fri, May 10 @6:00pm
- GSC Designer Bags (and More!) Bingo** Good Shepherd Catholic School

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THE LATEST

Timothy V. Alexander (/stories/timothy-v-alexander,32202)

Timothy V. Alexander, 86, of Chestnut Hill died peacefully on May 5, 2024 at Fox Chase Cancer Center after an unexpected complication related to his Esophageal Cancer which he courageously battled ...



(/stories/timothy-v-alexander,32202)



Roy Book Binder brings his 25-city tour to NW Philly (/stories/roy-book-binder-brings-his-25-city-tour-to-nw-philly,32201)

Roy Book Binder, who insists that he is “more of an entertainer than a musician,” will open Historic Germantown’s series of six concerts on May 11.

(/stories/roy-book-binder-brings-his-25-city-tour-to-nw-philly,32201)



Prolific Mt. Airy author chronicled mixed-race kids' lives (/stories/prolific-mt-airy-author-chronicled-mixed-race-kids-lives,32200)

Lise Funderburg, of Mt. Airy, boasts an impressive and extensive resume, full of journalism credits as well as teaching the intricacies of writing.

(/stories/prolific-mt-airy-author-chronicled-mixed-race-kids-lives,32200)

Mt. Airy Day celebrates spring, and community (/stories/mt-airy-day-celebrates-spring-and-community,32199)

The annual Mt. Airy Day street festival is scheduled for Saturday, May 11, and organizers are inviting residents to “embrace the spirit of community.”



(/stories/mt-airy-day-celebrates-spring-and-community,32199)



(/stories/big-night-the-foodie-film-thats-so-much-more,32197)

Big Night: The foodie film that's so much more (/stories/big-night-the-foodie-film-thats-so-much-more,32197)

The Chestnut Hill Film Group's spring 2024 season closes out with a screening of Big Night (1996) at Woodmere Art Museum on Tuesday, May 14.



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