



Chestnut Hill Local

(/)
Wednesday, May 8, 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

<p>Sat, May 11 @2:00pm Sponsored (</p> <p>Musical YunYoungAh</p> <p>Philadelphia, PA mi</p> <p>Wed, May 08 @2:00pm</p> <p>Homeschool at Riverbend</p> <p>Riverbend Environmental Education Center</p> <p>Wed, May 08 @9:00am</p> <p>Color Fields</p> <p>The National Apartments</p> <p>Wed, May 08 @3:00pm</p> <p>Golden Yoga -- WIDENER HALL</p> <p>Center on the Hill</p> <p>See All Events (https://chestnuthilllocal.com/events/)</p>	<p>Sat, May 11 Sponsored (</p> <p>Finish Your Project Workshops - Lovett Memorial Library</p> <p>Lovett Branch</p> <p>Add Your Event (https://hub.cityspark.com/event/submission/ChestnutHill?utm_medium=internal&utm_source=widget&utm_campaign=add-ev)</p>	<p>Sat, May 11 @11:00am Sponsored (</p> <p>LUDINGTON: Casey Cooks with Kids</p> <p>Ludington Library</p>
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THE LATEST

A farewell brings a new era and a new coach to winning SCH track and field program (/stories/a-farewell-brings-a-new-era-and-a-new-coach-to-winning-sch-track-and-field-program,32176)

There's been a major development in Springside Chestnut Hill Academy's track and field program: Coach Paul Hines officially retired.



(/stories/a-farewell-brings-a-new-era-and-a-new-coach-to-winning-sch-track-and-field-program,32176)



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

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

More than 115 years after Anna Jarvis established the first Mother's Day, with the help of John Wanamaker, the second Sunday of May has become a shared moment.



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

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

The nearly 200-year-old Valley Green and Bells Mill Road bridges in the Wissahickon Valley Park will soon undergo a much-needed reconstruction.

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

This special report is in recognition of Historic Preservation Month.



(/stories/nw-philadelphia-unprotected-and-vulnerable,32170)

May 7, 2024 issue (/stories/may-7-2024-issue,32113)

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celebrating the Long Run
SCH coach crosses the finish line after 43 years page 8
City narrows 5th pouring after 50 years page 13

Grateful for moms, and memories
Moms don't just raise their children; they also help them find their way in the world. For many mothers, the days of their children's lives are filled with memories that will last a lifetime. In this special Mother's Day issue, we celebrate the women who have shaped our lives and the memories that will last a lifetime.

Feds fund park bridges repair
The newly \$100-million federal investment in the Washington Valley Park will cover critical infrastructure repairs to the park's bridges. The project is part of a larger effort to improve the park's infrastructure and enhance the visitor experience.

NW Philadelphia: Unprotected and vulnerable
Local heroes are building the future by preserving the past. In the heart of Northwest Philadelphia, a group of dedicated citizens is working to preserve the historic architecture and character of the neighborhood. Their efforts are crucial in ensuring that the area's rich history is not lost to time.

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