



Chestnut Hill Local

(/)
Saturday, March 30, 2024

MAIN MENU



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Easter
Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields

Easter Sunday
Sunday, March 31st at
8:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:15 a.m.

CHURCH OF
ST. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS

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BY DESIGN

The historic character of our neighborhood is a design all its own



(https://beta.creativecirclecdn.com/chestnuthilllocal/original/20240327-200450-201610_robertsons_bradleymaule.jpg)

Preserving the character of a historic streetscape like that in Chestnut Hill is an intentional design choice.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHESTNUT HILL CONSERVANCY

Posted Thursday, March 28, 2024 12:00 am

by Patricia Cove

When most people think about design, they usually immediately think of interiors. But we are surrounded by design no matter where we are. I am generally referring to the design of our total surroundings; namely the elements that maintain character and historical reference within a city, a community, or even a single block.

It seems like every suburban community and shopping district is touting itself as “historic” these days. But the truth of the matter is that no community can label itself as “historic” unless it truly is.

And even though an area might have been founded in the 1700s, if the historic elements are not preserved and maintained, it cannot help but fail in being truly historic.

But if a community is lucky enough to have been formally recognized as a historic district, as Chestnut Hill has, there is a responsibility to preserve the features that contribute to that honor.

Several years ago, a group of interested local people built a team to research and develop a set of guidelines meant to preserve and maintain the character-defining features of Chestnut Hill. That team included myself and three other business and community leaders. We devoted more than two years of research, discussion, and in-person meetings with designers, architects, and planners of several national and local historic districts across the U.S.

Over those thirty months, we identified numerous character-defining features throughout Chestnut Hill, and a tailored set of guidelines to preserve them. These came to be known as the "Germantown Ave. Urban Design Guidelines."

There are always challenges to endeavors like this, when a smaller community belongs to a much larger city, and the city's budget or priorities are not focused on specific historic elements. A large city, for example, may or may not have the budget or impetus to maintain a cobblestone street. Or a developer may not consider that the expansive façade of his or her proposed building detracts from the existing pedestrian scale of the street. A shop owner may not understand that a proliferation of window signs or a shiny neon one easily becomes a distraction to the look and feel of a "historic village."

Unfortunately, the loss of historic character can often go unnoticed, as it happens little by little over time. The brick of one historic building is replaced with vinyl siding. A muted aggregate sidewalk is replaced with white cement. A backlit laminate logo replaces a modest wooden sign. A multi-paned window becomes a piece of solid sheet glass. Air handlers are affixed to a historic façade. An incandescent light fixture transforms into a glaring LED.

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It is a fact that one of the main reasons people come to live and work in Chestnut Hill is because of its appearance and real historic character. And it takes real effort and true dedication to not only preserve the features listed above but also to convince others who do not quite understand their importance to the way that they feel about their surroundings and their overall quality of life.

Character matters. And if any community or shopping district is going to call itself "historic," it has to be strong enough to preserve and maintain the qualities that make it so.

Patricia Cove is principal of Architectural Interiors and Design and chairs the Historic District Advisory Committee of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

The historic character of our neighborhood is a design ... (/stories/the-historic-character-of-our-neighborhood-is-a-design-all-its-own,31644)

Sometimes you need a contractor who can say 'no' (/stories/sometimes-you-need-a-contractor-who-can-say-no,31545)

When sleuthing helps you care for your historic home (/stories/when-sleuthing-helps-you-care-for-your-historic-home,31459)

Some budget-friendly ideas to decorate your home (/stories/some-budget-friendly-ideas-to-decorate-your-home,31378)



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Donate to CHCA Annual Appeal (https://www.paypal.com/donate?hosted_button_id=HNBT34YY8VANC)

LOCAL CALENDAR

<p>Thu, Apr 04 @3:00pm</p> <p>Build-It! Club</p>	<p>Fri, Apr 12 @4:30pm</p> <p>Decibel Metal & Beer Fest...</p>	<p>Thu, Apr 18 @7:30pm</p> <p>Silas Stewart Sextet</p>	<p>Thu, Apr 04 @3:00pm</p> <p>Build-It! Club</p>
<p>Sat, Mar 30 @7:30pm</p> <p>SANCTUARY Sound Bath Saturdays</p>			
<p>Practice Yoga Co-op</p> <p>Sat, Mar 30 @6:00pm</p> <p>Live Music with Aaron Quarterman</p>			
<p>Chestnut Hill Brewery Company</p> <p>Sat, Mar 30 @8:30pm</p>			

A Cabaret To Save Philadelphia From Climate Change

All Events
[\(https://chestnuthilllocal.com/events/\)](https://chestnuthilllocal.com/events/)

Add Event (https://hub.cityspark.com/event/submission/ChestnutHill?utm_medium=internal&utm_source=widget&utm_campaign=add-ev)

THE LATEST**Josephine Bonitatibus, 101 (/stories/josephine-bonitatibus-101,31655)**

Josephine Bonitatibus, 101, passed away on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, in her daughter's home in Erdenheim surrounded by loved ones. She was born May 6, 1922, the sixth of seven ...

[\(/stories/josephine-bonitatibus-101,31655\)](/stories/josephine-bonitatibus-101,31655)

**Joan Levy Coale (/stories/joan-levy-coale,31654)**

Joan Levy Coale, adored mother and grandmother, lover of the arts and the Wissahickon, and resident of Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill for nearly 100 years, died peacefully at home on February 25th, aged ...

[\(/stories/joan-levy-coale,31654\)](/stories/joan-levy-coale,31654)

Alexa Kane (nee Charbonneau) (/stories/alexa-kane-nee-charbonneau,31653)

Alexa Kane (nee Charbonneau), 89, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, passed away on March 25, 2024, in the presence of her loving children. Alexa was born of the late Exilda (Pelletier) and Arthur ...



(/stories/alexa-kane-nee-charbonneau,31653)



Mar 28, 2024 issue (/stories/mar-28-2024-issue,31652)

(/stories/mar-28-2024-issue,31652)



'From Womb to Womanhood' through March 31 (/stories/from-womb-to-womanhood-through-march-31,31651)

(/stories/from-womb-to-womanhood-through-march-31,31651)



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