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James Freas
Acting Director

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Dear Chestnut Hill Historic District Resident,

As an owner or resident in the Chestnut Hill Historic District, we hope you are aware that the purpose of the District is to preserve the historic characteristics and qualities that make the area a unique and desirable place to live. The District also protects against inappropriate development and radical change that would diminish the properties and streetscapes, fosters pride and a sense of neighborhood within Chestnut Hill, makes residents aware of their history and roots, and encourages home improvements that strengthen and restore the visual cohesion and fine craftsmanship of Chestnut Hill's architectural legacy. A map of the Chestnut Hill Historic District can be found on the City website in the Planning and Development Department's Historic Preservation section at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/histpres/districts/chesthill.asp>.

The Chestnut Hill Historic District was established in 1991 and includes almost three hundred properties. Designation as a local historic district recognizes Chestnut Hill as a historically important and architecturally intact neighborhood reflecting the early subdivision plans of the mid-nineteenth century and more than a century of affluent suburban residential development. The District is characterized by lushly landscaped lots and winding streets that respond to the natural terrain and large, architect-designed residences intended to fit into their surroundings. Among the better known architects who worked in Chestnut Hill were William Ralph Emerson; Henry Vaughan; Charles Follen; Chapman and Frazer; Little and Russell; R.C. Sturgis; Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott; Bigelow and Wadsworth; and Derby and Robinson. Landscape gardening holds a special place in the District; mature trees, plantings and informal streetscapes evoke the feel of an open, rural area.

The Chestnut Hill Historic District Commission oversees the maintenance of the District and **reviews all changes to the exterior of all properties located within the District**. Commission membership is by mayoral appointment and includes representatives from the citywide Newton Historical Commission, as well as Newton architects, attorneys, realtors and residents committed to neighborhood preservation. **Reviewable exterior changes include, but are not limited to, new construction** (additions, secondary structures, fences, etc.), **repairs and replacement** (doors, windows, roofing materials, siding, etc.), **hardscaping and site elements** (driveways, walkways, retaining walls, markers, lighting fixtures, etc.), and any proposed **demolition**. Commission meetings to review and vote on applications are open to the public and are usually held on the third Thursday of each month beginning at 7:30pm in Newton City Hall, Room 205. Meeting dates and deadlines can be found on the City website in the Planning and Development Department's Historic Preservation section at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/histpres/agenin/default.asp>. **The Commission encourages neighbors to come to meetings to learn about proposed projects and to provide input.**

Any change to the exterior of a structure located in the District requires an application to the Commission. Most applications require Commission review; however, some projects such as repair or replacement in-kind may be approved by Staff. The *Historic District Review Application* and *General Permit Form*, and all required information, must be submitted 15 days prior to the meeting. A meeting agenda is posted to the City website and also sent to the applicants and the abutters. The owner or owner's agent must attend the Commission meeting to present the application. After reviewing the application and providing the opportunity for public comment, Commission members may vote to approve or deny the application, or to continue the review at a future meeting. A record of the vote is sent to the applicant and is filed with the Inspectional Services Department and the City Clerk's Office. Once a project is approved, the applicant is responsible for any additional permits that may be required, and is required to return to the Commission if any changes are proposed to an already approved project. Completed projects are inspected to confirm that they meet the plans approved by the Commission; non-conforming projects will not receive final approval from the Inspectional Services Department. The application forms and instructions can be found in the "Form Listing" section on the main page of the City's website at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/featured/formlisting.asp>.

The City of Newton has the resources to facilitate the Commission review process and staff is available to provide assistance regarding the application and review process. The *City of Newton Historic Preservation Design Guidelines* were published to assist owners and residents in developing appropriate plans for exterior alterations; the Design Guidelines can be found on the City website in the Planning and Development Department's Historic Preservation section at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/histpres/reports/default.asp>.

Additional information, including a walking tour brochure and reports on the history and architecture of the District and Newton's neighborhoods, is available on the City website. Historical information on individual properties can be found in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's MACRIS database (<http://mhc-macris.net/>), and at the Newton Historical Society at 617-796-1450. The Newton Free Library also has a number of resources and historical collections (<http://guides.newtonfreelibrary.net/newtonhistory>).

You can find this letter, with the active links, on the Chestnut Hill Local Historic District and Commission page of the City website. If you have any questions about the Chestnut Hill Historic District, or the application and review process, please contact me at 617-796-1129 or bkurze@newtonma.gov.

Sincerely,

Barbara Kurze
Senior Preservation Planner