THE TRUSTEES of the ESTATE of HENRY H. HOUSTON

present

LAND FOR LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENT IN SUBURBAN PHILADELPHIA
Today—there is a 4 square mile assembled area of unimproved land in Metropolitan Philadelphia's northwest—

This very large holding of well-located unimproved land has such a high position in the real estate market that we are making this presentation show liabilities as well as advantages.

1. COMMUTING DISTANCE—

This land is in an extremely favorable position—being quicker by rail to downtown Philadelphia than all similar competing areas except perhaps the inner end of the Main Line. The map shows the number of trains per day and the time to downtown.

For commuting by road, existing facilities require either a pleasant route around through Chestnut Hill or the narrow, rather congested but direct Ridge Road. The Philadelphia Department of Public Works and the City Planning Commission, however, have scheduled the construction of Cathedral Road and its bridge over the Wissahickon for 1948-1949. This will make the drive to town as pleasant and easy as it now is from Chestnut Hill.

2. SOCIAL AMENITIES—

Over the past fifty years most well-to-do Philadelphians have been making their homes to the north and west of the city. Today Philadelphia's "Northwest Territory" is divided into two, with Chestnut Hill and the "Main Line," the city's two highest rent areas separated by a crest of hitherto undeveloped land, undeveloped for reasons which now make this project of eminent value, both for large-scale, long-scale investment and for fine residential living. In such a location the "address" is pre-made; in fact, a newly-planned constructively controlled residential segment in the heart of such an area inevitably tends to increase the value of the whole. And immediately, this location can offer home-owners all the well-established social, recreational, and shopping facilities in Chestnut Hill and the outlying areas, as well as the new shopping and recreational areas shown in the plan.

3. NATURAL AMENITIES—

There can be very little argument as to the scenic beauty of this land, which includes some of the most dramatic topography and views found in the entire Philadelphia region. With the Schuylkill on one side and Wissahickon Creek on the other, and open farmland to the north, the estate is almost entirely surrounded by land that will naturally remain open green. The highest elevations within the city limits are here and in Chestnut Hill.

4. GROWTH TRENDS—

It is interesting to note that recent growth around Philadelphia lacks any single dominant direction or pattern. The estate's policy has been to hold its land off the market rather than sell any portion for development of a type which might injure the character of the remaining land. In fact, in the past where false starts have been made by private developers nearby along lines considered sub-standard by the Estate's trustees the sub-divisions were bought up.
—with the natural advantages and the expected metropolitan improvements it now stands in prospect as the most stable real estate investment in the Philadelphia area.

Our planners have worked with official agencies in the scheduling of these highway improvements so that each of the projects will be of maximum advantage to the general public and of basic value to the development of the Estate land.

The projects are itemized below in probable order of completion:

1. CATHEDRAL ROAD—

   The construction of Cathedral Road and its bridge over the Wissahickon (scheduled by the Philadelphia Department of Public Works and the City Planning Commission for 1948-1949) will, of course, be of the most immediate value. Its effect will be to tie the proposed neighborhoods directly onto Chestnut Hill, and also to open up all of that stable community’s facilities in commuting, shopping, schools and recreation. This will also make readily available the McCallum Street-Lincoln Drive-Pinehurst Park route to the heart of the city.

2. SCHUYLKILL VALLEY EXPRESSWAY—

   The Schuylkill Valley expressway, as proposed, is a water-level route and would be Philadelphia’s main super-highway westward. It is one of two routes being considered to connect Philadelphia with the Harrisburg-Pittsburgh Turnpike and other major feeder routes. Its importance to our development is that it will serve as an alternate high-speed route to the downtown area and, being 200' below our property, will pull the heavy, long-distance traffic away from Ridge Avenue which now traverses the Estate area.

3. HENRY AVENUE EXTENSION—

   The extension of Henry Avenue (perhaps to be more appropriately called Lafayette Parkway) has been officially scheduled for construction and offers an additional alternate route to the downtown area.

4. CROSS-COUNTRY PARKWAY—

   The Cross-Country Parkway, a suggestion of the City Planning Commission, connecting Bryn Mawr to Chestnut Hill, will of course increase the accessibility of our development to the Main Line communities.

*The firm of Saarinen, Swanson and Saarinen, Architects & City Planners.
natural advantages will attract the top income group of Philadelphia residential buyers.

1. COMMUTING—
In Chestnut Hill on the Reading Railroad there are 70 trains per day. In Chestnut Hill on the Pennsylvania Railroad 75 trains per day are available. In the Schuylkill Valley there are 88 trains per day on the Reading Line and 30 trains per day on the Pennsylvania.* Highland Station on the Pennsylvania Railroad in Chestnut Hill, which now serves a clientele similar to the people we expect to interest in our community, will be more easily reached after Cathedral Bridge has been built. We now own land at the station which has been earmarked for parking space for Cathedral Hills commuters.

2. NATURAL AND SOCIAL AMENITIES—
The entire eastern boundary of our land is the Wissahickon Creek extension of Fairmount Park. This affords the Estate land recreational and park facilities far superior to those of any other area in Metropolitan Philadelphia. Playgrounds and small local parks are a part of the plan and will be developed.

A large number of Country Clubs already exist in this section of the City, and in adjoining Whitemarsh Township.
At present the adequate market facilities in Roxborough and the more exclusive shopping center of Chestnut Hill are available. Local shopping facilities of unified architectural effect and with adequate parking space will be provided to meet the needs of each stage of development.

3. GROWTH TRENDS—
The Estate built and has been managing several small groups of rental homes to test out and set a pattern for the ultimate development. The enjoyment these high rent families take in living on Cathedral Hills and their discovery that even present commuting and shopping facilities are adequate indicate success.

4. SCHOOLS—
For the first large scale housing development inside the city Smith the public schools offer adequate unused capacity in the Shawmont Elementary School and in the Roxborough Junior and Senior High Schools. Public schools outside the City are not as able to take additional loads now.

Our plan reserves sites for elementary, junior and senior high schools to serve the ultimate development of the whole community.

A number of convenient private schools of the highest grade are in Chestnut Hill and in Germantown. Parochial schools are located nearby in Roxborough.

*From data compiled by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.
The beauty of natural scenery, well designed and controlled development, attractive shopping centers, churches, and country clubs are some of the social amenities which only the “top of the market” is willing and able to afford. When one can capture and keep an integrated system of these amenities then the “good address” reputation has justified itself and the return on this is very high compared to the cost of producing it.

This plan for the general development of Cathedral Hills shows to what extent the existing facilities have been incorporated and adapted into a very natural pattern, dictated by the rolling character of the land. In principle, this designed framework consists of a central core (the shopping center, Cathedral, and municipal group) surrounded by a medium-density area, whose perimetric road connects the centers of the four neighborhoods. The outer areas, consisting of single-family houses only, will either be developed by the Estate or sold in individual lots to selected owners.

Cathedral Hills has been designed for good urban living. The residential streets are narrow, quiet and safe for children. Through traffic is routed outside residential areas.

The shopping centers will be designed with efficiency and plenty of parking space. Unity of design made possible by single ownership and a calculable need—each center will serve 1000 families—will set a tone or character that is impossible in an unplanned development. The schools will be adjacent to the shopping centers, thus bringing the activities of mothers and children (the stay-at-homes of suburban life) into focus in one area. Homes are actually within easy walking distance of schools, stores, and transportation.

There are pleasant drives through the Estate land and the adjacent country. The completion of Cathedral Road and its bridge will make the McCollum Street-Lincoln Drive-Fairmount Park route to downtown Philadelphia readily accessible to Cathedral Hills commuters.
Data on actual physical conditions in Cathedral Hills, the first section we propose to develop, follows:

1. Land — The Houston Estate Interests control 2,540 acres of the overall area. Our holdings in the Cathedral Hills area comprise approximately 1000 acres. Of the remaining land, the greatest acreage is generally in 10 to 50 acre holdings.

2. Roads — A part of the major net of street circulation exists. The Estate is arranging for additional parts to be built in the near future. The scheduling can be adjusted to meet the needs of any large-scale developer.

3. Utilities — Sanitary sewers of adequate size are in the valley near the boundaries of the Estate land but mains serving no frontage must be brought to the high land. This operation could be financed in appropriate proportion by the City, the Estate, and the large-scale developer. Water in adequate supply is available in some areas. All other utilities are either available and of adequate capacity throughout the area or can readily be made so.

4. Existing structures — There are very few of these.

5. Improvement costs — The land scheduled for higher density, large-scale development is planned to avoid the steep areas where bed rock is close to the surface.

6. Zoning — The Philadelphia City Planning Commission is making a general study for appropriate revision of their entire zoning ordinance and toward this end has accepted our general development plan as a guide for whatever changes are made in zoning for Cathedral Hills. We, as the Trustees of the Estate, are in wholehearted agreement with the planners on the general pattern of this community. We feel that the plan is flexible enough to incorporate modifications, should large-scale land purchasers have individual requirements. In order that this plan can be fully understood, we will explain some of its features below and elaborate on them pictorially in the following pages.
adjacent developments will complement each other and total site costs will be minimized.

1. High Density Housing—a “garden terrace” type of development is contemplated for the gently rolling land comprising 200 to 300 acres near the center. A good precedent for this has already been set by our rental development of Grakyn Lane and Spring Lane.

2. Community Center—When completed, the shopping and office facilities offered will equal those of a suburb of 15,000 population. In the interim period as many shops will be constructed and rented by the Estate as can be supported by the simultaneous housing growth.

3. Schools—Each of the five elementary schools shown here serves a neighborhood of approximately 4,000 people. Adjacent to the school-neighborhood center facilities there will be local shops.

4. Green-belt “breathing spaces”—These park-like strips separating the various neighborhoods are actually those areas in which the land is too steeply sloping for use as building sites. These natural, forested green-belts are of enormous value as recreational land.

5. Roads—Types vary from the separated-lane parkways such as Cathedral Road down to the twenty-foot pavement residential lanes which serve small groups of dwellings.

6. Economies—All possible engineering economies compatible with good living have been incorporated into the design of Cathedral Hills.

In summary, the schedule of improvements within this district will give priority to:

a) the construction of Cathedral Road and its bridge.

b) the installation of a sanitary sewer from the low-level Wissahickon interceptor to the center of the community area.

c) the construction of the major ring road and its radiating arteries.

d) the erection of as much of the shopping center as will be needed in anticipation of five year’s housing development.

e) the expansion of school and neighborhood-center facilities to keep up with housing demands.
TODAY

magnificent scenery and existing local features...
supplemented by the most advanced techniques in modern multi-neighborhood planning.

Tomorrow, Pleasant commuting to downtown.

Completed Cathedral a dominant architectural accent.

Cathedral Road Bridge over Wissahickon Creek.

The community group activities brought together in one architecturally integrated center.

Neighborhood schools and playgrounds.