

Roland Park Area Master Plan, 2009-2010

Green, Open and Recreational Space Subcommittee

Charrette 1 Notes

November 21, 2009

The Green, Open and Recreational Space Subcommittee spent its time during the breakout session, Nov. 21, discussing some of the issues the Roland Park is facing and issues that need to be addressed. The following notes aim to capture the topics that were discussed and the main issues that our group, as representatives of the community, would like to see addressed in the Roland Park master plan (RPMP).

1. Ownership.

Tracts of land that have been identified as potential open-space preservation priority areas in RP are both publicly and privately owned. RP seeks to engage in a cooperative/collaborative discussion and negotiation process when determining the future for key parcels, particularly those that are privately owned.

2. Uses and possibilities.

For priority parcels, current use should be understood and the opportunity for other possible uses should be explored.

3. Funding issues.

RP should develop its capacity to purchase land when necessary to guarantee the land is used for parks and open space. There needs to be an assessment of existing funding mechanisms that could be enhanced, such as the RP voluntary service fee which is only supported by 50 percent (estimated) of the resident households. Additional funding sources need to be identified, such as the state Program Open Space program. The community's appetite for private contributions and/or a "park district" which would charge residents a fee for the preservation of open space should be assessed.

4. Inventorying and mapping.

In order to plan for, determine ownership of and encourage use of RP's parks and open space, many people in the group highlighted the need for good mapping. Existing maps are either inaccurate or outdated. One suggestion was to work with Google Maps to update satellite images of RP maps. RP needs updated trails maps that can be distributed throughout the community. Currently, the Baltimore City web site can be utilized to find block lot numbers. Block numbers can then be used with the state assessment of taxation website to figure out the owner of each parcel of land.

5. Aesthetics/maintenance/landscaping.

The aesthetic component as well as maintenance of the community needs to be addressed in the plan. The group recognized that RP values a well-maintained, but not too manicured, look and feel. Sometimes overgrown bushes may look relaxed but be dangerous to people passing along the sidewalks. Landscaping standards for lawns, streets and trails should be established to achieve the look we desire.

These issues led to a discussion on maintenance of privately owned trees and covenants regarding property landscaping and maintenance.

6. Trees.

Residential trees and the policies that govern property maintenance need to be addressed in the plan. Many people in the community cut down trees simply because they don't want to deal with their maintenance. RP needs to articulate a vision to preserve and maintain its trees (on residential and non-residential land), restore tree canopy and use native plants where possible. The RPMP should also include a plan to replace trees, including "right tree in the right place" guide. Additionally, a planned effort for eradicating invasive species and diseased trees may be beneficial. A landscape plan may also be included in the RPMP.

7. Covenants.

RP covenants need to be reviewed and revised in the RPMP process WITH SUFFICIENT INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITY. Covenants will need to reflect RP's current thinking on standards such as landscaping and address enforcement procedures.

8. Connecting trails and green spaces/ parking and visitor uses.

The group expressed a strong desire to link parks and open space to create a more contiguous recreational and environmental asset for the community. A couple of examples were highlighted and suggestions were made:

8.1. Linkwood Park — a green space that has been beautifully restored and has seen a dramatic increase in the number of visitors. As we develop and encourage increased use of other open spaces, parking and other broader issues should be addressed. It was suggested that the median around Centennial Park (the landscaped green space between east- and westbound University Parkway) could be used for a green space similar to Linkwood Park.

8.2. The old Ma & Pa (Maryland and Pennsylvania) railroad — Currently people throw their trash in the ravine (north of Northern Parkway), but it could be used to develop a new recreational/green space.

8.3. Linking parcels — Analyze biking, walking and running trails and determine whether they can be integrated or should be kept separate.

8.4. At the request of the Transportation Subcommittee, explore the trail/bike lane connection to the Cold Spring Light Rail.

8.5. Kids, schools, transportation and pedestrian traffic — Explore bridges or tunnels for kids to get to school so they don't have to interact with traffic.

9. Specific key sites for preservation.

9.1. Roland Park pool: Currently it is leased and may have recently been renewed for as much as 50 years. Need to confirm/clarify this.

9.2. St. Mary's Seminary: Does the Seminary have any plans for the land? If so, what are they? This property was identified as a key open space in the community.

9.3. Baltimore Country Club (BCC): It is desirable to transform this amenity into a multi-functional park for RP. Some ideas included:

9.3.1. Establishing orchards. Trees do not require as much maintenance as recreational areas and the fruit could be used at the schools.

9.3.2. Creating informal community meeting space/gathering place.

9.3.3. Ensure it's multi-functional — passive and active recreation

9.3.3.1. Pool/other recreational use.

9.3.3.2. Woods.

9.4. Stony Run: New satellite images of Stony Run are needed. The current images are 2-3 years old. Further explore north and south connections.

10. Topics for future discussion.

Define what RP would like to preserve and things RP would like to change. Identify trends and threats in the community; address how issues are currently defined; establish boundaries; and prioritize issues. Additionally, a discussion about citywide initiatives is necessary. We would also like to compile a “wish list” of what we would like to see added to the community (e.g., central meeting space).

Jacqueline M. Carrera

Subcommittee Chair

November 25, 2009