

Roland Park E-letter

Web Editor's E-letter January 1, 2010

1. Master Plan Charrette Part II.

Next weekend will see the second Roland Park area master plan community forum or charrette. This will be a two-parter, and an important one at that:

Session 1 — Friday, January 8, 7 to 9 p.m.,
Session 2 — Saturday, January 9, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Both meetings are at Roland Park Elementary/Middle School, 5207 Roland Avenue. The sessions are sequential, which is to say that the second is not just a repeat of the first. The purpose is to refine strategies for addressing the issue areas under study. The issues in question are:

- Commercial & retail matters.
- Housing, historic preservation & architectural standards.
- Infrastructure.
- Livability, education and intergenerational issues.
- Green, open & recreational space (including the water tower).
- Transportation.

If you go to this web page on the Roland Park web site, <http://rolandpark.org/MasterPlanMetaBlog>, you will find a list of the issue-area committee leaders and links to on-line forums associated with each topic. From this web page, you may e-mail the committee leaders and leave your comments on one or more of the issue forums. We've made it all very easy — really supremely easy — for you, so go right ahead.

But why? you ask. Between them, Roland Park and its immediate neighbors represent one of the nation's largest surviving and best preserved 19th century streetcar suburbs (Guilford and Homeland are 20th century). Many such developments around the country have been "edge chipped" to death, a fate that we can all agree should not be allowed to befall greater Roland Park. Once we lose a building, once we pave over an open space, once we allow an incompatible use — eventually there will be nothing left.

The planning process is soliciting area residents' views on zoning and land use, historical preservation and resource sustainability, transportation and many other topics. The idea is to turn these views into a comprehensive plan that in turn can be used to inform city zoning regulations for this area. Remember, the city is currently rewriting the municipal code for the first time in nearly 40 years. It is important that Roland Park have a master plan whose tenets can be used to inform the city about what is best for us. If we don't undertake this, who will? If someone else does, will you trust them?

As an aside, the city's TransForm Baltimore web page is here: <http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/planning/transformBaltimore.php>. TransForm Baltimore is the name of the code-rewriting process.

2. Civic League Meeting to Discuss Temporary RP Firehouse Closings.

What and when: Roland Park Civic League, Thursday, Jan. 7, 7 p.m.

Where: Roland Park Presbyterian Church, 4801 Roland Avenue.

Issue: Forum on frequent closures of Roland Park firehouse.

The Civic League this December found out to its great surprise that the Roland Park firehouse — for the restoration of which area residents last year raised thousands — has for the past several months been periodically closed as a cost-saving measure.

The Roland Park station on Upland Road is home to engine 44 and truck 25. (Fire trucks are used for search and rescue and to open up burning buildings. Fire engines and their crews bring water to the fire.) Since July 11, 2009, engine 44 and truck 25 have been removed from service, termed “closed,” more than 50 days or nights between them. That means that, on average, one or other of them is out of service more than twice a week! “Closed” usually means that the equipment remains in the station but is unusable because the personnel are moved to another station to work. On some occasions, however, the actual equipment is also physically moved from the station.

Until December 10, closures were up to 14 hours in duration. But beginning two weeks ago, the equipment itself has been out for days at a time. This past week, equipment was out of service for three days in a row. During these periods, this leaves RP dependent on equipment coming from longer distances. This particularly effects those areas towards the north and east of our neighborhood, such as the colleges/schools like Loyola, Friends, Cathedral, etc.

Moreover, because of deficiencies in medic units throughout the city, the RP station is also required to participate in a rotations, months at a time, to cover medical calls. This pulls the equipment and staff from Upland Road off site even more.

There has apparently even been talk of moving truck 25 permanently out of the Roland Park station to the Hampden station. On December 19, the mayor scotched this and announced that no more permanent closures, such as the moving truck 25 out, were being considered “for now” — but would be considered with the new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010.

As soon as the RP Civic League became aware of the above, it suggested that a community forum would be an appropriate way to understand the facts. This forum will be a component of the Civic League meeting, Thur., Jan. 7. Present will be Fire Chief James Clack and Fire Commissioner Stuart Nathan. The league has also invited our council representatives, Sharon Middleton (Sharon.Middleton@baltimorecity.gov) and Mary Pat Clarke (MaryPat.Clarke@baltimorecity.gov). This will be the first item on the meeting agenda. All are welcome.

3. Alley Trash Collection Resumed.

Now that the snow has melted, the city has resumed alley trash and recyclables collection, so please do not put your garbage out on the front sidewalk any longer. Details here: <http://rolandpark.org/documents/AlleyDec2009.pdf>.

4. City Xmas Tree Mulching.

To every child’s dismay, it will soon be time to toss out the Xmas tree and resume winter. The city is offering a tree-mulching service every Saturday in January at 701 Reedbird Ave., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. From Jan. 5 through Jan. 29, there will also be curbside tree pickup. Unwanted trees

should be set out next to your trash cans on trash-collection day. All tinsel and the like must be removed. For details, see this press release: <http://rolandpark.org/documents/XmasTree2009.pdf>.

Phil Spevak contributed to this e-letter.

A happy new year to you,

D.P. Munro
Web-site Editor
RolandPark.org