

Roland Park E-letter

Web Editor's E-letter
November 2, 2008

With the leaves reaching their brightest hues of red and orange, it is an opportune moment to reflect on what makes Roland Park so special and to contemplate what we can do to preserve it.

1. Baltimore City Zoning Code Re-Write: Ways to Give Your Feedback.

Baltimore City is in the midst of garnering feedback on its zoning code; the feedback will be used in the first major re-write of the code since its adoption in 1971. The goal of the revision is “the adoption of a new and more effective zoning code that successfully supports and guides City investment, enhances and protects neighborhood character, and guides private development.”

The Baltimore City Planning Department has established the TransForm Baltimore program to guide this process. The timeline establishes a review phase, ending in the winter 2008. The city is now evaluating what works, what doesn't, and what new techniques and tools have been used effectively in other cities. Baltimore will be re-writing the zoning code with the assistance of the Chicago consultants who wrote that city's new zoning code; it has been widely touted. The projected period to start the rewrite phase is this coming winter. A draft code and new zoning maps are expected by the summer 2009.

For readers interested in the progression of the BCC/Keswick project, this code re-write may have potentially major implications, especially since Keswick's contract allows it to continue trying to obtain approval for the project through 2010. As Keswick CEO Libby Bowerman's most recent interview with Baltimore Magazine indicates (<http://rolandpark.org/documents/BaltMagazineArticle102808.pdf>), Keswick intends to move forward with the project. Should the zoning code re-write or its companion revisions to the zoning maps result in an easier means to obtain planned unit development (PUD) legislation or by-right use of the land, this would make Keswick's task a whole lot easier (and all this would occur before the contract expiration).

Now is the time for Roland Park and all city residents to give input into constructing the laws that will dictate the development of our neighborhoods for years to come. The Planning Department has established two venues for giving input: on line and in person. The TransForm Baltimore web site (see links below) provides a schedule of the working group meetings and a portal to access the area for on-line input after a simple registration process. The meetings span a variety of zoning/planning topics, the final one being on Monday, November 17, 6-8 p.m. at Poly High School. This final meeting will be the working group wrap-up and will provide results from all of the meetings and the opportunity to add suggestions. (See also <http://rolandpark.org/civicleague/documents/TransformSchedule.pdf>.)

Input areas on which to consider concentrating with Roland Park development in mind include: R-1 residential zoning designation, planned unit development creation and amendment, variances, and conditional uses. For those who want a little more depth or background in their research and input, a number of links are provided below for sources to complimentary information.

Planning professionals and government officials have the privilege and opportunity to spend their working lives on these issues and processes. For the average citizen, it can be difficult to find the time to become part of the process; yet, it is so important as zoning directly affects the quality of our neighborhoods and their future. Probably the simplest route in this process is coming to the meeting on the 17. I hope to see you there!

To register to review the zoning documents online:

<http://www.transformbaltimore.net/portal>

For the calendar of meetings:

<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/planning/downloads/1008/Transform%20work%20group%20Handout.pdf>

For an overview of zoning and the TransForm Baltimore Process:

<http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/planning/downloads/OpenHousePP.PDF>

To view the current Baltimore City Zoning Code:

<http://cityservices.baltimorecity.gov/charterandcodes/Code/Art%2000%20-%20Zoning.pdf>

Link to Maryland State Annotated Code 66B. Section 2.01 details the state's delegation of power to Baltimore City:

<http://www.naco.org/Content/ContentGroups/County/Codes/Zoning/ZP007.pdf>

Link to the Chicago Zoning Code:

http://egov.cityofchicago.org/city/webportal/portalDeptCategoryAction.do?BV_SessionID=@@@@1118736420.1225547107@@@@&BV_EngineID=ccccadefiighhhecefecelldffhdfhm.0&deptCategoryOID=-536899039&contentType=COC_EDITORIAL&topChannelName=Dept&entityName=Zoning&deptMainCategoryOID=-536886525

By guest contributor Carole Schreck.

(The opinions expressed in the above writing are those of the author and do not

necessarily reflect the views or stated policy positions of the Roland Park civic associations.)

2. E-letter Rules.

I have recently been asked if anyone can write an e-letter for general e-distribution. The answer is that anyone can submit items for inclusion (which is not quite the same thing), at the discretion of the editor and subject to certain conditions. To ensure that all submissions are treated equally, I have devised rules for guest submissions for the e-letter. These rules may be found at the e-letter archive page at <http://rolandpark.org/ELetters.html>.

These rules govern only e-letter submissions. Items for the community calendar (http://rolandpark.org/cgi/Calendar/RP/long_calendar.cgi) or the community e-bulletin board (<http://rolandpark.org/CommunityBoard>) have their own sets of rules.

3. Then and Now.

Though not live yet, the Roland Park “then and now” web page is well under way. When launched, I expect there to be 60 or 70 pairs of photos — each pair comprised of a historic and a modern shot of the same scene. The launch date will probably be in spring. I have yet to take the “now” photos, and winter will be the best time to do this because of the comparative lack of foliage to obscure the views.

Since my last e-letter mentioning this, I have received a number of offers of help. But I am always looking for more contributions. Please rifle through those old photo albums for old views of RP and environs.

If you have electronic copies of photos, please e-mail them to rpcommunication@rolandpark.org (the larger the size and higher the resolution, the better). If you only have paper glossies, you can mail them to me at 4815 Keswick Road, 21210. I will scan them and immediately return them. To the best of your ability, please state (a) when the photo was taken, (b) what it is of (if not immediately apparent), and (c) who took it.

Thanks very much and best regards,

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