

ROLAND PARK NEWS

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The 'New' Neighbor across the Street Revitalizing the Rotunda

By Hilary Paska

When a well-known neighbor moves out of the neighborhood and a new one moves in, the change is often viewed with mixed emotions. On one hand, the old friendship and comfortable familiarity is missed; on the other, the newcomer may prove to be a terrific addition to the community.

Such is the case with the Rotunda, a Hampden landmark sitting on West 40th Street across from Roland Park's southern border. This familiar structure with its notable bell tower has undergone previous overhauls, but the reincarnation currently underway to make it part of a mixed-use commercial and residential campus is the most radical yet.

demolition. With the new Rotunda poised to open, it seemed opportune to find



The new Rotunda campus will be an ambitious mixed-use retail and residential development. Illustration courtesy of The Design Collective and Hekemian & Co.



The Rotunda served as the Maryland Casualty Company's main administrative building.
Photographer unknown. Source: Postcard postmarked 1926, publisher I & M Ottenheimer, Cardcow.com.

As the owners of older homes, many Roland Park residents grapple with the challenges of transforming a period building into a modern space, while preserving certain features. On a wider scale, underused historic buildings abound in Baltimore City and readapting them is often preferable to

out more about the history and future of this local landmark, and what the redeveloped space will offer to surrounding neighborhoods.

The construction of the Rotunda building in 1921 heralded the 20th-century trend of moving offices away from congested urban locations to spacious suburban business campuses. In 1919, the Maryland Casualty Company purchased the Dulin Estate with a view to establishing a 25-acre business complex outside the densely populated downtown. The original campus offered both business and recreation facilities to employees, featuring a clubhouse, an auditorium that seated 1,500 guests, a landscaped park, tennis courts and even a baseball diamond. The terracotta building that we now think of as the Rotunda was the company's main administration building, an impressive structure featuring a bell tower as its centerpiece.

By the late 1960s, Maryland Casualty had outgrown its campus and considered replacing the Rotunda

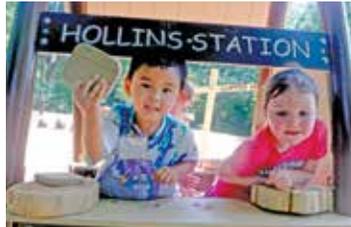
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Natural Selections

Fall events at Robert E. Lee Park include:

■ September 5 or September 6, 2 to 4 p.m., **Choo Choo! Tracks & Trains**. All aboard for an adventure! Explore the old, hidden tracks of trains from the past in Robert E. Lee Park. Children can enjoy games, learn all about past trains in the park and make their own wooden train to ride the rails! Ages 4 to 10, \$5 per person (\$3 members).

■ Saturdays, through October 10, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., **Nature Drop-in at Acorn Hill**. Each Saturday we will have nature crafts, live animals, water fun, bamboo teepees or other fun activities in the play area. Ages 5 & up (accompanied by an adult), registration not required.



Zachary Cheng and Amelia Auvil sell tickets to the train at Acorn Hill's 'Hollins Station' in Robert E. Lee Park. Photo: Susan King-Byrne, Master Naturalist.

Ongoing Programs:

■ Every Friday, 9 to 10 a.m., **Friday Strolls**. Join us for some exercise while enjoying the sights and sounds of Robert E. Lee Park. The terrain is varied, but mostly flat with some hills. Hiking boots are recommended. Please bring water with you. Adults only, free!

■ 2nd Saturday of every month, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., **Habitat Trail Team**. Join a ranger and the Habitat & Trail Team to help maintain the beauty of Robert E. Lee Park. We have some of the best trails in Baltimore, so come get your hands dirty! Please wear closed-toe shoes and bring water. Ages 12 & up, free!

■ Tuesdays 8 to 10 a.m., **Tuesday Bird Walks**. Baltimore Bird Club's weekly walks will follow the progress of fall migration. Beginning birders are welcome! We will meet at 8 a.m. at the light rail boardwalk entrance. See baltimorebirdclub.org for more information. Cancelled in conditions of snow, rain, or ice. All ages, free!

■ **Art On The Trail, Fall 2015**. A unique opportunity for Maryland artists to showcase their work in the natural beauty of Robert E. Lee Park. Art on the Trail, Fall 2015 celebrates the combination of art and nature with engaging installations that are stimulating and thought-provoking. Park visitors can view these sculptures as they hike along the Red Trail just beyond the Light Rail tracks. Please note that all proposals for Art On The Trail, Fall 2015 are due to the proposal review committee no later than October 5, 2015. For full details visit relpnc.org/art-trail-2.

■ **Story Walks**. Children and their families can meet at the Acorn Hill play area and enjoy reading a story as they walk along the paved loop. Look for new stories to be posted throughout the year. All ages, free!

■ **Nature Quest**. Have an adventure in your own backyard with Baltimore County Nature Quest. Pick up your Nature Quest Passport booklet at participating parks, online, or at your local Wegman's grocery store. The Passport directs participants to hiking, biking and canoeing opportunities at the County's nature sites. Complete just 5 trails to earn prizes. See the park website at relpnc.org or the Nature Quest Passport for more information.

Cylburn Arboretum (4915 Greenspring Avenue) is a 207-acre, nature preserve and public garden located in northwest Baltimore. The property takes its name from the Civil War-era mansion, which was once the private estate of industrialist Jesse Tyson. The house, designed by Baltimore City Hall architect George Aloysius Frederick, was completed in 1888. Now it is home to the Cylburn Arboretum Association and the Horticultural Division of the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks. This partnership has preserved and protected the Arboretum as a place of beauty and open space for more than half a century.

Cylburn has an extensive and expanding collection of trees and shrubs, including groves of magnolias, hollies, conifers and Japanese maples. The grounds include 13,000 square feet of greenhouse space, more than three miles of walking trails, wildflowers and natural habitats. The grounds are open to the public from dawn to dusk, 365 days a year.

Fall events include:

Every Wednesday, year round, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., **The CLF Aquaponics Project Open House**. The CLF Aquaponics Project Hoophouse. Open Hours are drop in sessions designed for individuals who would like to learn more about the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future Aquaponics Project. We'll offer tours of the project and help answer your aquaponics questions. Group visits should be scheduled separately. For scheduling, e-mail LGenelli@jhu.edu. For more information, call 410-502-7578 or visit jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/projects/aquaponics/. All ages, free.

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A stylized illustration of three women in yellow dresses and large, colorful hats (blue, red, blue) walking in a line. The background is a simple sketch of a building.

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Green Corner

A Design for Shade

By Peter Bieneman, Green Fields Nursery

Shady streets and cool leafy backyards are a hallmark of many established neighborhoods. As an Olmsted-planned community, Roland Park was fortunate enough to have these precedents literally built-in from the earliest planning stages. It amazes me to see historic photos showing lanes lined with immature trees and houses surrounded by new plants. Although many of the wooded hills were preserved, and houses, roads and other infrastructure were sympathetically placed, much of the beauty we perceive as natural was deliberately planted.

It is clear that the landscapes we now see in Roland Park have evolved and changed. Increasing shade has naturally had a significant impact, affecting what we grow and how we grow it. An established tree-canopied neighborhood is not easily replicated. Thriving under them are the classic Baltimore azaleas, dogwoods and rhododendrons combinations. These shade-tolerant plants along with hosta, fern and redbud grace many homes here. Although we value these plant combinations, current trends look to make our landscapes easier and friendlier to the environment. There is an extraordinary interest in native plants, bay friendly landscapes and the need to reduce our reliance on chemicals. Great landscaping opportunities await us in the most subtle, natural ways. Initial design steps can help clarify the process.



Large indigenous oak trees such as *Quercus rubra* are an investment for the future and provide nuts for squirrels.



Viburnum lentago. Anchoring shrubs are seasonally colorful and shade-tolerant.

The first practical approach to designing a landscape is to do a site inventory and analysis. This will determine basics like cardinal direction, drainage, boundaries and easements, and

help you proceed in a more informed way. Second, evaluating trees (professionally for health and safety issues) is extremely important. Determine what surrounds you, including the trees belonging to neighbors. Find out how to best to preserve these valuable specimens, as it typically costs more to remove than treat. Third, make a plan with your wish list close by. Covenants and site conditions will add reality to your vision — be flexible! A professional Landscape Designer or Landscape Architect will be a big help with envisioning projects, both large and small.

In Roland Park, working with the shade and shallow tree roots is a common challenge. Honoring the character of the neighborhood is also important in this historically significant neighborhood, and landscapes are no exception. Not that we can't have our own mini Versailles with endless parterres, but both time and money could be huge limiting factors. Who wants a challenging landscape?

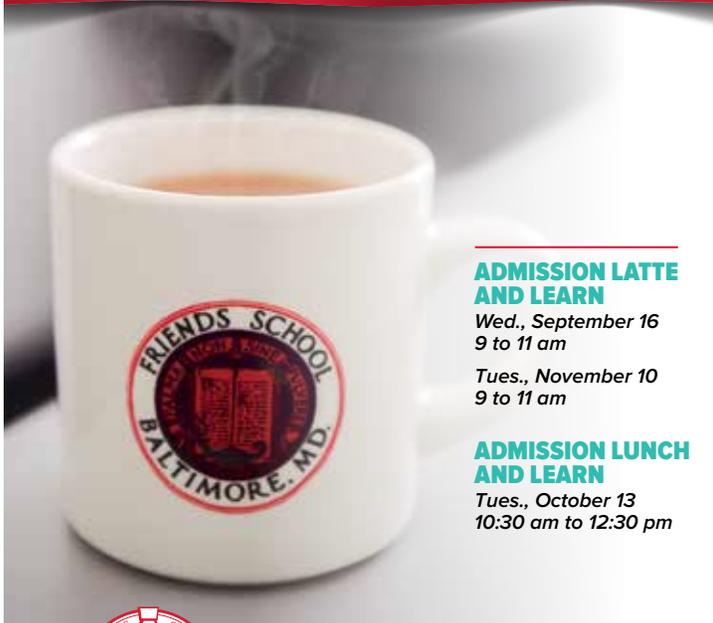
This is where natives excel. Replanting, with large growing, indigenous oak trees such as *Quercus rubra*, *Q. phellos* and *Q. alba*, will be an investment in the future and provide oak nuts for squirrels. Using anchoring shrubs like *Viburnum nudum* or *V. lentago* will provide food for birds and bees in addition to being seasonally colorful and shade tolerant. Massing plants, a principle of many designs, will also serve to cover precarious slopes, curb erosion and lessen the need for mulching. Try low growing *Rhus aromatica* 'Gro-Low' or a planting of *Chrysogonum virginianum* var. *australe*, both shade-tolerant and mat-forming.

Finally, rethink the use of invasive plants. Invasive exotics establish themselves by wantonly edging out natives, even in shade. We see Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), for example, displacing native species. Those spring ephemeral plants like Trillium grandiflora and *Thalictrum thalictroides* have a similar spring blooming cycle and are also at risk from invasives. Visit the Maryland Department of Natural Resources website at dnr2.maryland.gov for a list of invasive and exotic plants. Eliminate the worst offenders in your garden.

Shade is a desirable attribute in a garden. Hike the woods at Robert E. Lee Park or walk the trails at Cylburn Arboretum and get inspired by places where nature and shade has been allowed to run its course. ♦

Peter G. Bieneman is the General Manger of Green Fields Nursery and has his Master's degree in Landscape Architecture. To contact him, please call (410) 323-3444 or visit Green Fields Nursery at 5424 Falls Road at Northern Parkway. For more information, visit greenfieldsnursery.com.

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Save Our Songbirds!

By Susie Creamer, Director, Patterson Park Audubon Center

Can a cute kitty be a killer? Indeed, cats are top predators and stealthy hunters. Nearly four billion birds and small mammals are killed by cats each year in the United States. Outdoor cats, a combination of pets and feral cats, are the largest source of human-related bird deaths, more than the total deaths by pesticide poisoning and collisions with buildings, communication towers or vehicles. As fall migration begins, we need to be mindful of our pets' behavior for the sake of migratory birds stopping to rest and refuel in Baltimore's green spaces.



Photo: NPR

Outdoor cats are a particular threat to songbirds, both migratory and local species. Unfortunately, when cats kill mice, chipmunks, squirrels, and rabbits, they are taking food away from native predators such as hawks, owls and foxes. Cats are animals but they aren't part of nature; they were introduced by humans into our ecosystem. While adorable and lovable pets, their impact when allowed outdoors is devastating to important species.

The University of Georgia completed a study that observed outdoor cats and predation. In their study, 30 percent of cats successfully caught and killed their prey at an average of one every 17 hours, or

2.1 per week. Prey included lizards, voles, chipmunks, birds, frogs and snakes. To the surprise of many pet lovers, the cats brought home only 23 percent of their kills — 49 percent of prey were left at the capture site and 28 percent were eaten. Of the outdoor cats studied, 85 percent took part in risky behavior such as interacting with strange cats, which increases the potential for fighting or disease transmission, or entering narrow spaces and storm drains, which raises the possibility of becoming trapped.

Keeping cats indoors is safer for both birds and cats. My colleagues at Central New Mexico Audubon Society summarized a few key points for responsible pet ownership:

- Cats are pets that belong indoors. They are not wild animals but instead are companions, domesticated by humans thousands of years ago.
- Cats that are allowed outside are more likely to lead shorter lives. Exposure to transmittable and deadly diseases, the constant threat of being hit by a car and being attacked by a dog or larger predator are very real.
- Cats can make their owners sick when they contract diseases, such as toxoplasmosis, which can be transmitted to humans. They can also bring home parasites.
- Cats will kill wildlife no matter how well they are fed. They are highly efficient, instinctive predators.
- Bells are not always a sufficient deterrent since wildlife does not recognize the sound of bells as dangerous, and most cats learn to hunt silently.

What is the solution? Happy cats indoors:

- Provide window shelves so your cat can watch outdoors from the safety of your home.
- Play with your cat daily for exercise.
- Plant kitty grass in indoor pots so your cat can graze.
- If possible, provide a safe, outside enclosure, such as a screened porch.

"Birdsbesafe" collars are one possible alternative. Dr. Susan Willson, an avian ecologist at St. Lawrence University, observed her own "killer cat" and found that the brightly colored, reflective, noise making collar was "100 percent effective" in eliminating her cat's ability to prey on birds.

To learn more, visit these helpful websites:

National Audubon Society: audubon.org/news/how-stop-cats-killing-birds

Central New Mexico Audubon Society: cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org

Wildlife Management Institute: wildlifemanagementinstitute.org to read the article, "New Research suggests Outdoor Cats Kill More Wildlife than Previously Thought," based on the University of Georgia's study of outdoor cats.

For more information on Audubon's bird-friendly habitat program in Baltimore, please visit or contact us at 410.558.BIRD or ppaudubon@gmail.com, pattersonpark.audubon.org, or facebook.com/PattersonParkAudubonCenter. ❖



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