

Neighborhood NEWS

FALL • 2016

RUXTON-RIDERWOOD-LAKE ROLAND AREA IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

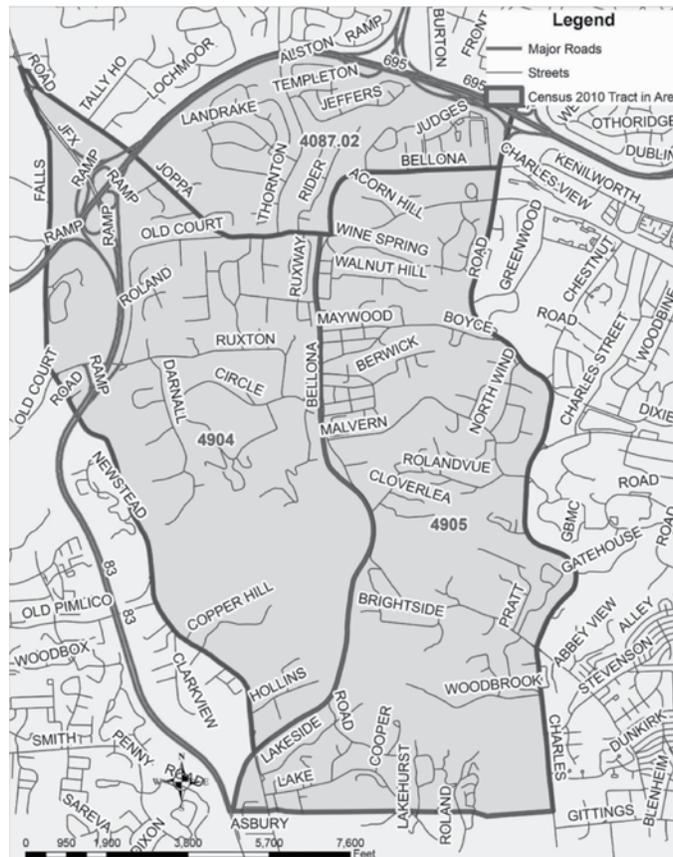
Who are We? Making Sense of the Census

by Lauren Madsen

Most of the residents in the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland area would probably agree that they have it good when it comes to quality of life. But have you ever wondered how our neighborhoods stack up against others in Baltimore County, Maryland or the nation as a whole? Have you ever thought about how our lives are changing over time in relation to the people who lived in these neighborhoods before us? Well, for those inquiring minds among us, there is a wealth of data available online from the American Community Survey, produced annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. Here are some highlights from the last five-year survey, which encompasses 2010-2014, to help make sense of the census.

The Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland area roughly corresponds with three separate census tracts, each with its own set of data. To the north lies tract 4087.02 which is roughly equivalent to the Riderwood area, bounded by I-695, Joppa Road running east from I-695 (near Greenspring Station) and Bellona Avenue running between Joppa Road and I-695 at Charles Street. To the west is tract 4904 which corresponds to the western half of Ruxton and the homes along Falls Road on the western side of Lake Roland. It sits south of Joppa Road, east of Falls Road, north of Lakeside Drive and west of Bellona. Finally, on the eastern side is tract 4905, or east Ruxton and areas south of Lake Roland. It lies north of Lake Avenue, west of Charles Street and east of Lake Roland and Bellona until it intersects Charles Street and becomes Kenilworth Drive.

As you may have guessed, all three tracts in the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland area are predominately affluent neighborhoods of mostly single-family dwellings with residents who are economically advantaged in comparison to the wider population in the county,



2010 Census Tract Reference Map for the majority of the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland area
Map courtesy United States Census Bureau

state or country as a whole. In 2014, the median household income ranged from \$94,063 to \$119,471 across the three census tracts. That's well above the median household income of \$66,940 in Baltimore County, \$74,149 in Maryland and \$53,482 in the U.S. In west Ruxton (4904) a whopping 32% of households had income over \$200,000 annually, versus 6% in the county, 9% in the state and only 5% nation-

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What is a Riparian Buffer and Why You May Want One

by Nancy Worden Horst

If your property is adjacent to one of the three streams that crisscross the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland area communities – Roland Run, Towson Run and the Jones Falls, culminating in Lake Roland – the shadows and sparkles that play on the water and the gurgling sound of the running brook may be part of what led you to choose the neighborhood. But if you've lived in this area for any length of time, you've probably also witnessed the awesome power of water when heavy rain turns your stream into a raging torrent. Planting a riparian buffer is a good way of mitigating flooding, improving drainage and stabilizing banks so you can enjoy the beauty of the water without the fear of negative consequences when Mother Nature rears her head.

An article in the winter 2015-16 edition of *Neighborhood NEWS*, entitled "Water: The Fight Against Nature Continues" by Cynthia Allen, points out that "Flooding and drainage problems have existed in our area for many years." This is especially true

in the area of Essex Farm, with issues going back to at least the early 1970s, as noted by County and community association efforts to combat or solve the problems, all with varying results.

Ms. Allen discusses the complex issues surrounding flooding, flood insurance, property values and so on in a most compelling fashion. She also gives examples of what homeowners can do to help with the problems of flooding: "Keep waterways on/around your property clear of litter and debris; keep your house and garage gutters clear; and don't [dump] logs or garden waste [in or] near a stream or drainage channel" as they may clog water drainage systems in a heavy rain. An additional way to mitigate the potential for damage from such storms is by paying attention to the riparian buffer between your house and the stream.

What is a riparian buffer? It is simply another name for streamside plantings

of water-tolerant shrubs, trees, native grasses and other vegetation that help hold the banks in place, especially during times of heavy water flow.

Plants native to our Piedmont area of the Chesapeake Bay watershed that can tolerate water are the best choices for a riparian buffer. The benefits of such plantings include:

- protection from flooding and its subsequent damage;
- slowing the flow of water and improving water quality;
- improving water quality by reducing sediment and nutrients;
- stabilizing stream banks and preventing soil from washing away;
- providing habitat for birds, fish and reptiles, and
- adding natural beauty.

For those interested in native plants, two sources for retailers of mid-Atlantic native plants are The Maryland Native Plant Society (www.mdflora.org/publications/nurseries.html) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/bayscapes/bsresources/bs-nurseries.html). You can also check with your local nursery. In our own backyard, Lake Roland now has an annual native plant sale each spring. As you can see from the photographs from this spring's sale, many volunteers make this happen and a large variety of plants is available for sale.

There are also more global, eco-friendly advantages of planting trees and other vegetation to make an 'urban forest' and few other community resources offer such a varied and extensive benefit package:

- carbon dioxide, the primary culprit in the 'greenhouse effect,' can be reduced in the atmosphere;
- strategically-placed trees can reduce summer cooling costs by up to 50 percent and heating costs may be reduced by as much as 30 percent when trees are planted as windbreaks;

Autumn Native Plant Sale at Lake Roland

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■ property values may be increased by 5-20%, depending on the size, number, species and lot location of trees, and

■ buffers add natural beauty and reduce noise in the area.

What can you, as a homeowner of a property near a stream or as an interested community resident, do to help prevent or at least help control periodic flooding?

#1 – Don't mow your grass to the edge of the stream. Why not? The clippings, as well as fertilizers and herbicides used on the lawn, get into the stream and feed algae blooms. More heat reaches the stream and aquatic life and generally undermines the stability of the stream bank when the grass is kept short.

#2 – Stop fertilizing and spraying insecticides anywhere near a stream. Again, rain will wash the fertilizer and insecticides into the water, poisoning it and affecting aquatic creatures and water quality.

#3 – Educate yourself about which trees and other plants are best suited to hold banks and prevent or slow water flow. Consider planting native grasses or sedges to help stabilize the banks. The Maryland Native Plant Society's recently published booklet *Landscaping with Native Plants* is an excellent resource. It contains a list of Maryland native plants and areas where they are appropriate, indicating sun, shade, wet or dry conditions. It can be downloaded from the website (<http://mdflora.org/resources/Publications/GardenersGuidelines/Landscaping-Natives.pdf>) or ordered for \$2.00 each thru the MNPS publications. Other resources include:

- https://extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/_docs/programs/riparianbuffers/FS727.pdf (trees and shrubs for understory riparian buffers)
- www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/nativesMD/pdf/MD-Piedmont.pdf (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping*)
- www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/toc.htm (invasive plants *Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas*)

#4 – Report silt runoff from building sites. The increasing number of infill housing projects in our community means that when part of a lot is stripped of existing vegetation, the resulting bare earth is subject to runoff and erosion whenever there is a significant rainfall. Muddy water draining from a construction site usually indicates an incorrectly installed or damaged silt fence – or none at all. Report the problem to Baltimore County so an inspector can visit the site and require the builder to fix the silt fence to prevent the runoff from draining into a nearby stream. Contact Code Enforcement at 410-887-3351 or Sediment Control at 410-887-3226, send an email to gberry@baltimorecountymd.gov, file a complaint at www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/permits/codeenforcement/codecomplaint.html or contact The Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association (office@rrlraia.org or 410-494-7757).

#5 – Get to the source of the sediment that clogs our streams by supporting attempts to limit up-stream development.

Requiring Baltimore County to enforce existing regulations providing for stream protection is one way and becoming an advocate for our streams is another. When new projects are planned for Timonium, Lutherville, Towson and the Valley, speak up to defend your stream from siltation and pollution.

#6 – Join your neighbors in the street and stream clean-up efforts in our communities. While flooding may be an act of Mother Nature, it is up to each of us to do our part to keep our waterways clear of debris and silt.

For information about how to design a riparian buffer, see article on page 14.

Editor's Note: Lake Roland Nature Council has several educational programs that 'teach through doing' the importance of planting riparian buffers, such as Trails Over Truancy, whose school-age participants have planted native trees along the Jones Falls. Volunteers working with the Lake Roland Nature Council Trails Committee have installed water bars (logs placed diagonally across a trail to help divert water from washing out the trail) and spread stone in perpetually muddy areas. The Trails Committee is always seeking people to help clear invasive plants, cut up trees and so on. Interested parties should email the Committee at recreation@lakeroland.org.



LRNC native plant sale's native Eastern shooting stars (*dodecatheon media*) awaiting a new home.
Photo courtesy Elise Butler



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Kids Corner – Rescued Animals at Lake Roland

by Charlie Nuernberger

If you have attended any of Lake Roland's animal programs, then you probably have already met Picky, Cornelia or one of the other native animals housed there for the long term. The rangers care for a limited number of animals who have been injured near the park or who have been donated after spending extended time in captivity. Currently, the rangers feed and care for a red bellied turtle, a common snapping turtle, a box turtle, a diamondback terrapin (see photo), an amelanistic albino corn snake (see photo), an eastern black snake and an American toad.

Ranger Mel, more formally known as Melissa Til-

lery, reports that the park does not shelter any mammals or birds because they require more intensive care, including specialty cages and meals multiple times per day. This could be a problem during large snowfalls when rangers have trouble accessing the park on a daily basis. Ranger Mel's favorite animal she cares for is Cornelia, an albino corn snake that has a beautiful pattern of orange and red scales on her back and is described as incredibly "gentle and easy to handle." The rangers took in Cornelia after she was found on a nearby construction site and was determined to be unlikely to mature to adulthood due to a lack of camouflage.

Ranger Mel recently acquired an eastern black snake, now known as Mousetrap, that was found attached to a glue trap. The snake was frail, thin and had injured her skin on the trap, but was safely removed after greasing the trap with cooking oil. Another of Ranger Mel's favorites is Picky, the box turtle. Many people take box turtles out of their native habitat to keep as pets, but

this is a bad idea because the box turtle has a selective diet and needs very clean water. The box turtle is a valuable part of the native ecosystem and serves as an essential seed distributor. The diamondback terrapin is interesting because it is the mascot for the University of Maryland and serves as the Maryland state reptile. It is endangered and so illegal to own as a pet. However, the park has one that was rescued from captivity during a house fire in Baltimore City. It had burns on its skin and shell but is now thriving. It's even comfortable and friendly with people.

These animals are educational ambassadors for the students and adults who attend the many educational programs at the park. The rangers use them to educate the public about reptiles and amphibians – how they fit into the native landscape of Lake Roland and Maryland. They are not treated as pets but are well cared for and fed specialized diets that meet their nutritional needs. The common black snake and the American toad are the two animals most likely to be found in the wild at Lake Roland.

Ranger Mel hopes that the new Lake Roland Nature and Environmental Education Center will provide more space to showcase and rehabilitate animals donated to the park. She aspires to have a turtle run that will allow the turtles to bask in the sun and have access to pond-like features while in the safety of captivity. Lake Roland has many regular programs that showcase the animals and the rangers anticipate they will be more available for display in the new educational building. To learn more about programs highlighting these animals, go to www.lakeroland.org. Please support the park by attending a nature walk or program or donating money to the Lake Roland Nature Council.



Ranger Mel holding the diamondback terrapin

Photo courtesy Shannon Putman



Ranger Mel holding the amelanistic albino corn snake

Photo courtesy Shannon Putman



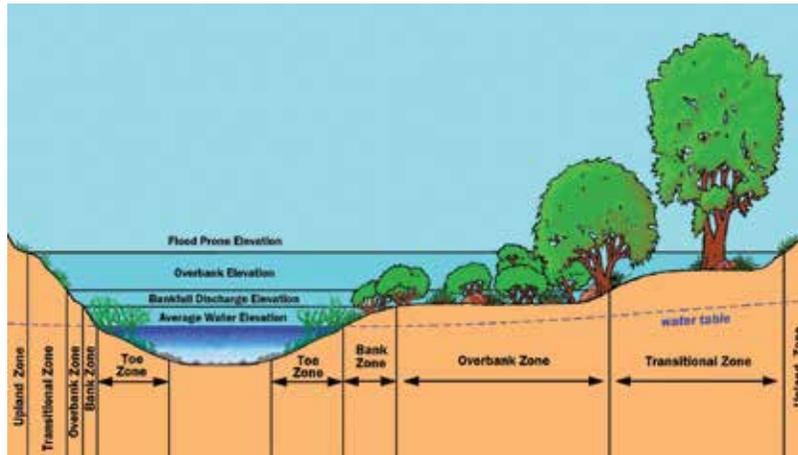
How to Design a Riparian Buffer

Riparian areas can offer natural beauty, cooling shade and a special sanctuary for birds and other wildlife. At the same time, they work to slow water flow by filtering and spreading water and helping to hold the soil in stream banks and trap nutrients.

A riparian buffer contains plants with flexible stems and rhizomatous root systems from the 'bank zone' to the 'overbank zone' and beyond. Tree species are usually planted in the upland zone, while wetland herbaceous species can be used to fill in the streambank cross section up to the upland zone.

According to riparian plant ecologist J. Chris Hoag of Hoag Riparian & Wetland Restoration LLC, the riparian planting area can be

divided into four zones: the toe zone (below the average water elevation or baseflow, where there is flow all summer long); the bank zone (the area between the average water elevation and the bankfull discharge elevation); the overbank zone (between the bankfull discharge elevation and the overbank elevation); and the transitional zone (between the overbank elevation and the flood-prone elevation). Based on these zones, a planting design can be developed showing where each species will be planted on the site. Plant shrubs with flexible stems in the bank and overbank zones on floodplains for diversity or stabilization or as a buffer. Plant trees up the bank from the shrubs or on top of the bank; the shrubs provide protection for the trees when planted this way. You can



Cross section of a riparian buffer Diagram courtesy J. Chris Hoag, Riparian Plant Ecologist

contact Mr. Hoag for a copy of his publication *Hoag Riparian & Wetland Restoration Guides #16*, March 2001. His email address is jchris.hoag@gmail.com or call 208-221-0944.

Art on the Trail at Lake Roland

By Kurt Davis and Nancy Kaplan

Art on the Trail is a unique exhibit allowing Maryland artists to showcase their work in the natural beauty of Lake Roland. These engaging installations connect the viewer to nature, art, aesthetics and function. The installations can be viewed along the red trail west of Lake Roland on the far side of the Light Rail tracks (shown clearly on the park's trail map at <http://lakeroland.org/trail-maps/>).

Originally the art works were meant to blend into the landscape with the understanding that they might eventually decay, be swept away by the elements or be reclaimed by the growing forest. However, the program has become so popular that installation guidelines were updated this year to include permanent works of art to be viewed year-round.

Started in 2014, the program was developed as part of the Lake Roland Master Naturalist program. The Art on the Trail committee, composed of six volunteers and park rangers, reviews and selects the artwork according to guidelines they developed. As a juried exhibit, Art on the Trail draws entries from talented professionals with impressive resumes who donate their ideas, supplies and time to the park.

A call for entries for Art on the Trail 2016 is now in progress with proposals for this season due by September 16, 2016. The chosen artists will have their installations placed in the park by December 2, with a "Meet The Artist" reception on December 11.



"Civilis Arbores," a grouping of frames overlooking the lake by artist Thomas Mulligan, is interactive, inspiring passersby to take pictures. Former Woodbrook resident and RRLRAIA Board member Elyse Jacob is pictured. Photo courtesy Kurt Davis



"Baby Mastodon" by artist Paul Rodriguez. This is Repo-Renaissance art, i.e., classical sculpture made from recycled material. The artist turns the debris he finds littering Maryland into art, inspiring ecological innovation and recycling of trash by others in hopes they will invent their own ways of making healing changes to the Earth.

Photo courtesy Kurt Davis



"The Edge Effect" by artist Elie R. Sollins. This sculpture of lumber, stone, wood and objects found within the park, suggests new edges where life in all its forms can meet, marry and evolve.

Photo courtesy Kurt Davis



Spring 2016 Street and Stream Clean-ups

by **Carlton Sexton**

Our first street and stream clean-up of the year took place on April 2, followed by a second street clean-up at the end of May. The highlight of the morning emerged at the Circle Road bridge with a team of at least 21 neighbors, including four children, and a couple of chain saws and other major yard work weapons. Shannon Putman and Jill Heard organized and led the team. In addition to eight bags of litter dumped by our big February rain-storm along the banks of Roland Run, 25 cubic yards of branches and vines were untangled from the flood plain and piled near the bridge for collection by Baltimore County.

Meanwhile, back at the Association's street clean-up, four RRLRAIA Board members were able to tackle most of our sections of Falls Road and Old Court Road in a little over two hours.

Project Clean Stream, sponsored by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and supported by Blue Water Baltimore, supplied five volunteers from The Retreat at Sheppard Pratt's Ruxton House, along with a volunteer from the Church of the Holy Comforter to address trash in other stream sections. Along Roland Run north of the Royal Farms store, volunteers collected seven bags of litter, including an oversized tire (if you've ever tried to move one yourself, you know how much of a challenge it is). In addition, two exchange students from Shanghai, China, who were attending St. Paul's School, collected four bags of litter from Pimlico Road and Slaughterhouse Branch.

Fall 2016 and April 2017 will bring many more clean-up projects in our neighborhoods. Don't put that volunteer gear away just yet! Check the RRLRAIA website calendar (www.rrlraia.org) and watch for emails for the dates of our next events.



Stream clean-up by Boys' Latin School volunteers. From left to right: Michael Scandora, David Giordano, Sean Lezcano, Walker Campbell and Henry Purdue. Photo courtesy Carlton Sexton

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Outstanding Leadership Award Goes to Jeffrey Budnitz – a Dedicated Community Volunteer

by Nancy Worden Horst

Congratulations to Lake Roland Nature Council volunteer (and RRLRAIA Board member) Jeffrey Budnitz who won the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) Community Volunteer of the Year Award this spring. The MRPA award is given to “an individual recognized for outstanding service to a local/community park, recreation or leisure program within the state.” His significant trail restoration and trail clearing work in Lake Roland played a significant role in his selection for this award.

Always behind the scenes and without fanfare, Jeffrey can often be seen driving a ‘Gator’, a park trail dump truck or a bulldozer, as well as organizing crews to clear invasive vines and bushes from the serpentine and other areas of the park. Jeffrey and his crew wield clippers, loppers and chainsaws (crew members take chainsaw training, also organized by Jeffrey), and use park



Lake Roland Head Ranger Shannon Davis, Baltimore County Recreation and Parks representative Patrick McDougall, Jeffrey Budnitz, Baltimore County Recreation representative Beahtha Davis and Lake Roland Ranger Jeff Ruark. Photo courtesy Siobhan Budnitz

trucks for dumping and spreading stone. Jeffrey, his wife Siobhan and other loyal volunteers have organized clean-ups in Paw Point dog park and work tirelessly to keep up with the demands of this popular resource. Jeffrey also meets with elected officials, works with County employees and raises awareness (and much-needed funds) from neighboring businesses.

Also honored at the MRPA Annual Conference, held in Ocean City, was Lake Roland Ranger Jeff Ruark, who received the ‘Tree Hugger of the Year Award’ for lifetime achievement from the Park & Resource Conservation Branch of MRPA.

Editor’s Note. Jeffrey has been a Board member of RRLRAIA for many years, is a Lake Roland Nature Council Board member and its treasurer, and manages his own business in Bare Hills, working tirelessly with other stakeholders to implement RRLRAIA’s Community Plan 2010.

Home Sales in Ruxton / Riderwood / Lake Roland

Continued from page 22

ADDRESS	LIST PRICE	SOLD PRICE
617 Piccadilly Road	365,000	380,000
635 Piccadilly Road		475,000
6209 Pleasant View		233,888
3 Railroad Avenue		101,700
4 Railroad Avenue		97,500
429 Range Road	459,000	475,000
445 Range Road	370,000	365,000
8123 Rider Avenue		377,500
1710 Roland Avenue	198,000	198,000
1014 Rolandvue Road	525,000	510,000
1514 Ruxton Road	339,000	321,000
1714 Ruxton Road		830,000
8204 Ruxton Crossing Court	1,350,000	1,250,000
7906 Ruxway Road		350,000
7923 Ruxway Road	290,000	275,000
8120 Thornton Road	470,000	470,000
1407 Walnut Hill Lane	1,695,000	1,647,500
1411 Wine Spring Lane	1,325,000	1,260,000
102 Woodbrook Lane	2,785,000	2,700,000
8209 Yarborough Road	389,000	388,000



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