



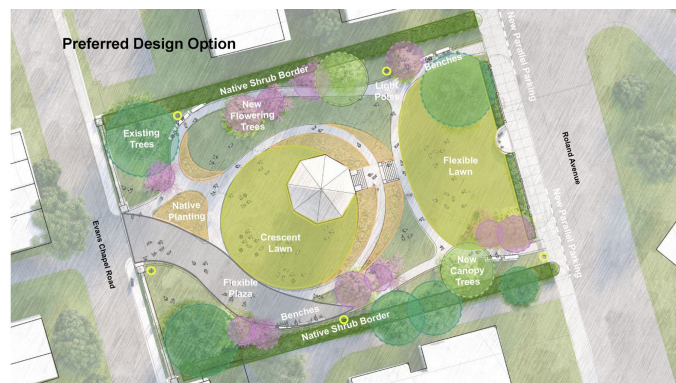
Roland Water Tower Park Design Update – Sept 14, 2021

After 10 years of planning and fundraising, the stabilization and restoration of the Roland Water Tower are just about complete! A huge thanks to all the donors, the tenacity of the community volunteers with a creative vision, and the Roland Park Community Foundation for making it possible.

We are in Phase 2 – design and construction of a community park. We want to update you on what has happened to date and the next steps. Community input and decision-making for the park is the responsibility of a steering committee of volunteers from Rolden, Hoes Heights and Roland Park.

Design started back in November 2020. Unknown Studio, a Baltimore-based landscape architecture firm, was retained to work with the community and design the park. They arranged for many opportunities for the community to give input into the design - by email, survey, onsite open-houses and comment boxes, and Zoom meetings. We had 3 rounds of input into the design. Numerous community residents completed surveys and made comments. The majority favored the option of closing the road around the tower to maximize the park.

In the spring of 2021, Unknown Studio presented a design with no road and curved paths. See below. Based on community input, the Steering Committee decided to accept this recommendation. However, for now, Maryland Historic Trust – which has veto power over the design – has rejected this design, feeling that it lacks sufficient symmetry. Discussions with MHT will continue.



This past summer, determined to do more outreach to connect with community members who are particularly impacted by the park, the road closures, and the changes in traffic patterns in the area more broadly, the Steering Committee paused the design process with Unknown Studio and focused on two areas:

First, a subcommittee has met with Councilmember Odette Ramos and the City's Department of Transportation to identify and address numerous traffic concerns that surfaced during the tower park design process. We are pleased to announce that DOT engineers have proposed changes to the intersections at 41st St and Roland Ave, 41st Street and Evans Chapel Rd, and Evans Chapel Rd and Providence St that are inexpensive and relatively easy to implement. We will be sharing those details shortly to the impacted neighbors and will invite them to a meeting to give feedback.

Second, the Steering Committee met with community members living west of the tower who are more directly impacted by a permanent closure of the water tower road. They took time to share their concerns and discuss possible solutions. These community members proposed a one-way, local traffic, road through the park from Roland Ave to Evans Chapel Rd. The Steering Committee decided that we should take their concerns into careful consideration.

Early on, the Steering Committee was advised that having a road through the park would be complicated because the loop around the tower was not a public road and reopening would require meeting public road standards. We recently learned that the Department of Transportation is responsible for overseeing any new public road and that it would require a City Council ordinance. We are continuing to gather information about city approvals, who would pay for the road construction and engineering, costs, the design implications of a permanent road, the impact on nearby residents, and alternatives to alleviate traffic and access problems.

Neighbors have asked if we can open the road temporarily while we wait for the park construction to start. This question is also complicated because the ownership of the property will pass this fall from the Department of Public Works to the Department of General Services. Therefore, the road cannot be opened now because DGS will need to make that decision.

As explained above, one other key stakeholder is the Maryland Historical Trust, which has final approval over any design. MHT has identified symmetry as an important historical feature. This may require changes to the more organic design preferred by the community.

The Steering Committee is continuing to gather the information needed to know whether DGS and/or DOT will allow a road and in what form, whether such a road would be an acceptable feature from MHT's perspective, and how to ensure that the park remains safe for pedestrians, a great neighborhood gathering spot, and causes minimal harm to those most affected.

The Steering Committee is grateful that our community has been so supportive in bringing this beloved landmark back to life. We will complete our fact-finding soon and come back to the community with the results and recommendations for moving forward. If you want to comment on any aspect of the Water Tower Park design process, please send an email to rolandwatertower@rolandpark.org.

Roland Water Tower Steering Committee

Zoe Clark-West
Kirsten Johnson
Nick Lindow
Michael Falk
Julia Pierson
Lydia Wilson
Mary Page Michel, Chair

P.S. – The male falcon has returned! We hope he and a mate will be taking up residence in the tower in nesting box this winter.

- **Immediate volunteer needs!**
 - Someone with Word Press experience to help with updating the RWT website.
 - Join the Events committee.
 - Contact rolandwatertower@rolandpark.org to let us know your interest.
- **Sign up at <https://rolandwatertower.org> for updates!**