

## Lake Roland & Robert E. Lee Park The Dawn of a New Day

By Jeffrey Budnitz

I have frequently been asked by members of the community, "What has the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association done for me and my family?" Well, let me give you an example that goes a long way to answering that seemingly simple yet complex question.

Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland are often referred to as the 'hidden jewels' of our community. The Park represents 453 acres of wooded park land with the lake at its heart. Lake Roland is an approximately 100 acre man-made lake created by damming the Jones Falls in 1861 to serve as one of the first municipal water supplies for Baltimore City. The City stopped using the lake as a source of drinking water in approximately 1915.

One of the most significant complexities that has plagued the area for decades has been the status of the lake being a reservoir that no longer provides potable drinking water. Further compounding the problem is that the Park and Lake Roland, Baltimore City-owned assets, are located in Baltimore County. It is understandably difficult for Baltimore City Parks and Recreation, an agency that has significant economic pressure placed on it regarding the assets that it manages, to justify allocating resources to an asset located in Baltimore County. As a result, Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland, in essence, have been relegated to second class status.

In 2000, RRLRAIA's Robert E. Lee Park Committee established an initiative and agenda for the long term rehabilitation and stewardship of the Park and Lake Roland. The Committee, building on the significant works of another organization, the

Robert E. Lee Conservancy, began to assess what had worked and what had failed regarding previous Park-based initiatives. The primary objective chosen was to restore the Park to its former glory—a place everyone in the community could enjoy. In addition, we focused on the replacement of the pedestrian bridge, significant capital maintenance, beautification initiatives, general Park restoration, and environmental remediation, to name a few. In 2001 RRLRAIA developed a Community Plan, which was adopted as part of the Baltimore County Master Plan, in which many key Park-related issues were incorporated.

As a strategy, the Committee decided to take a three-pronged approach. Initially we would focus on working with Baltimore City, then Baltimore County, and finally with the State of Maryland. The long-term outcome we hoped for was a new custodian for the Park.

In August 2003, the Park Committee invited key individuals from the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, Roland Park Civic League, Robert E. Lee Park Conservancy,

Mount Washington Association, and Baltimore County Police for a roundtable discussion on a broad range of issues impacting the Park. The issues ranged from environmental erosion, criminal activity in the Park, the state of existing structures and the capital improvements required to restore them, off-leash dog issues ranging from community-driven complaints to potential health and environmental



Alex Shchetinkin and his dog, Jack, cross the pedestrian bridge in Robert E. Lee Park that has been closed because of structural damage. Sun photo by Lloyd Fox / July 22, 2008

### INSIDE

[Hello Mr. Fox](#)

Page 3

[Summertime and the Livin' Is Easy...?](#)

Page 4

[Happenings in Towson](#)

Page 5

[Project Clean Stream Sponsors Most Successful Cleanup Yet!](#)

Page 6

[Going Buggy](#)

Page 7

[Crime Tips](#)

Page 8

[Delightful Devon Hill](#)

Page 10

[West Towson Elementary School Update](#)

Page 12

[Your House May Be Historic](#)

Page 13

[Home Sales](#)

Page 15

# Lake Roland & Robert E. Lee Park

continued from page 1

impact, cutting of new trails, and last but not least, individuals who had actually taken up permanent residence in the Park. This approach created a groundswell of interest.

Two important developments resulted from this meeting. First, Baltimore County Police officially accepted law enforcement responsibility and committed to be the first responder if a public safety and/or criminal event occurred within the boundaries of the Park. Second, a joint City/County Parks Department Concept Plan was developed that included a variety of objectives for the Park. These included replacing the pedestrian bridge, erosion control, and remediation of the soil on the peninsula. The remediation request was a direct byproduct of the Baltimore City Health Department's findings of excessively high bacteria levels due to dog excrement, a public health threat to which our organization first alerted them.

When Baltimore City proposed the selling of park lands adjoining Racquet Road, Copper Hill Road and Lakeside Drive for residential development, the Association and the Committee requested that the County rezone all of Robert E. Lee Park to RC7, which would reduce the density of homes permitted from one per acre to one per 25 acres. The request was approved, and the Park is the only property lying within the Baltimore beltway to receive an RC7 zoning designation, which effectively makes development in the Park economically untenable. Councilman Kevin Kamenetz was instrumental in this effort, and he has been a key ally in the Association's efforts to rehabilitate and preserve the Park.

In 2004, based on Baltimore City's unwillingness to invest in the Park, our Committee

turned its focus to Baltimore County. Our initial meeting with Bob Barrett, Director of Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks, was rather memorable.

When we posed the idea of Baltimore

County taking over Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland, he thought we were kidding. Yet after a series of meetings, Barrett realized the potential of Robert E. Lee Park's becoming Baltimore County's version of New York's Central Park. Our organization cited the example of Fort Smallwood Park, a Baltimore City-owned park located in Anne Arundel County and how that County had been able to establish a long-term lease with Baltimore City, in effect taking over the Park.

Through 2007 and 2008, Barrett shepherded the Park takeover concept through various Baltimore County agencies building

widespread support and culminating in a meeting between Bob Barrett, Councilman Kamenetz, County Administrative Officer Frederick J. Homan and our Park Committee. The long-term outcome of that meeting was Baltimore County Executive Jim Smith's 2009 budget request to the legislature focused on funding for Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland. Smith went to Annapolis twice in March of 2009 to formally make his request before both the House and Senate Finance Committees.

Smith requested \$3 million in State funds to address "critically necessary repairs" in the Park infrastructure that would be matched with \$3 million in County funds for a total of \$6 million. The transfer of Robert E. Lee Park to the County would be contingent upon receiving full funding from the State.

The Association diligently pursued our elected officials to keep this matter from drowning in the fiscal backwaters. We reached out to Chairman Conway of the House Appropriations Committee to voice our support for the County's request. Our state elected officials (Senator Brochin, Delegate Frank, Delegate Aumann and Delegate Lafferty) vigorously pursued their fellow House and Senate members to support the request. The combined efforts succeeded as both the House and Senate approved full funding. In April, Governor O'Malley signed the budget into law. The funds will become available July 1, 2009 at which point Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Department will begin their efforts in earnest. The community will be able to affect these efforts by contributing input at meetings to be held in the fall of 2009. Eventually, a Robert E. Lee Park Council will be formed on which RRLRAIA will play a prominent role.

Of course, the Association couldn't have done this without the support of countless individuals, public officials, and elected representatives who saw this initiative through. We would like

to thank Louise Hildreth, Jane Lawrence, and Robert Macht of the Robert E. Lee Conservancy, Baltimore City officials Nan Rohrer, Connie Brown and Gennady Schwartz, Sgt. Moffet and Sgt. Fink of the Baltimore County Police, County officials Bob

Barrett, Frederick Homan, John Markley and Jean Tansey, and our elected representatives Senator Brochin, Delegates Aumann, Frank and Lafferty, County Executive Smith and Councilman Kamenetz. All of these individuals and others too numerous to mention helped move the future of Robert E. Lee Park and Lake Roland in a positive direction.

The question posed at the start of this article is a valid one. I hope the Association's efforts on your behalf have been amply demonstrated by the long term and extensive work performed by many RRLRAIA individuals in order to facilitate the transfer of

## Proposed Budget for Robert E. Lee Park Improvements

Component	Design	Construction	Total
Bridge/Replacement	\$276,000	\$2,557,600	\$2,833,600
Roadway Improvements/Parking	\$121,000	\$1,122,720	\$1,243,720
Dog Park and Erosion Improvements	\$195,000	\$1,807,000	\$2,002,000
Total:	\$592,000	\$5,487,320	\$6,079,320



Robert E. Lee Park to Baltimore County. As Baltimore County gets underway toward healing the Park, the Association hopes you ask a very different question, "What can I contribute to the future of the Park?" Neither Baltimore County nor your elected officials nor the Association can save and preserve this community gem alone.

(Please visit [RRLRAIA.org](http://RRLRAIA.org) and click on "Current Topics" for Jeffery Budnitz's more comprehensive review of the history and process of the Park take-over.)

## Save the Date

**RRLRAIA Annual Meeting**

**Thursday, September 24**

**Members will receive a postcard with complete details.**

# Baltimore County's First Dog Park

The Reisterstown Recreation and Park Council's Dog Park Committee is now accepting registrations for the new, long-awaited Baltimore Animal Recreation Center (B.A.R.C.) Park at Hannah More—Baltimore County's first off-leash dog park. Registered dogs and their owners may use the park from sun-up to sun-down each day of the year. To become a member, all dogs must have proof of current rabies vaccination shots and licensing. Membership costs \$25/ family per year. The B.A.R.C. Park at Hannah More features two off-leash areas for dogs to roam and socialize with other dogs. The larger area is 1.5 acres and the smaller area is .75 acres. Each area features a dog water fountain.

The Dog Park Committee is looking for sponsors to help fund the dog playground equipment project. Registration forms and material can be found at [www.reisterstownrec.com](http://www.reisterstownrec.com) or contact [barcparkathannahmore@yahoo.com](mailto:barcparkathannahmore@yahoo.com) for more information.

## Home Sales in Ruxton / Riderwood / Lake Roland

Sold Properties from February, 2009 – June, 2009

*Courtesy of the Whit Harvey Group,  
Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage*

ADDRESS	SETTLE DATE	LIST PRICE	SOLD PRICE
700 Abell Ridge Circle	3/25/2009		425,000
712 Abell Ridge Circle	4/30/2009		400,000
1015 Boyce Avenue	6/9/2009		533,500
604 Brightwood Club Drive	6/9/2009	810,000	800,000
403 Brightwood Club Drive	4/28/2009		465,000
6325 Canter Way	3/31/2009	649,990	620,000
642 Charles Street Avenue	6/4/2009	439,000	420,000
3 Clan Chattan Lane	5/29/2009	849,500	840,000
4 Clan Chatten Lane	6/17/2009		1,495,000
4 Coldwater Court	3/24/2009		450,000
7920 Ellenham Avenue	4/7/2009	399,000	350,000
8213 Jeffers Circle	3/16/2009		281,500
8217 Jeffers Circle	2/5/2009		272,000

18 Lacosta Court	4/10/2009	349,900	309,400
6 Leadburn Court	3/3/2009		465,000
1408 Malvern Avenue	3/24/2009	849,500	800,000
312 North Wind Road	5/6/2009	1,498,000	1,400,000
538 Piccadilly Road	3/18/2009	499,875	480,000
513 Piccadilly Road	5/6/2009	445,000	430,000
6209 Pleasant View Avenue	4/7/2009	359,000	359,000
8104 Rider Avenue	6/3/2009		435,000
1218 Ridervale Road	5/13/2009	241,500	241,500
7919 Ruxway Road	4/30/2009	339,000	296,000
7900 Springway Road	1/22/2009		374,800
8120 Thornton Road	3/31/2009	469,000	440,000
1021 Wagner Road	4/8/2009	1,395,000	1,310,000
1300 Wine Spring Lane	3/11/2009		1,690,000
1218 Wine Spring Lane	4/28/2009	500,000	445,000
205 Woodbrook Lane	4/11/2009	2,150,000	1,850,000