

Chapter 7

ROELAND PARK PUBLIC SERVICES

Over the years Public Services in the City of Roeland Park have been provided by the City, by independent governmental districts and agencies, and by private and corporate business. Prior to incorporation some services were provided by various homes associations.

Public services provided by the City of Roeland Park include police protection, maintenance of streets and roadways, and establishment and maintenance of parks and other recreational facilities.

Public services provided by independent governmental agencies and districts include fire protection, water service, wastewater and storm water collection, treatment and disposition, and public transportation. Additionally, library services and some recreational support are provided by independent agencies.

Public services provided by corporate agencies include natural gas service, electricity services and telephone service. Trash and garbage collection is also provided by a corporate entity. In the early years, a private corporation operated a golf course in the area between 53rd and 48th Streets, Neosho to Mission Road. With the construction of the St. Agnes Elementary School, and later the Roe Bowl Building, bowling was made available to the residents by institutional or corporate entities.

PUBLIC SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF ROELAND PARK

Police Protection

Prior to the incorporation of the City of Roeland Park, police protection was provided by the Johnson County Sheriff's department. Mr. Carl Johnson recalls that immediate response by the Sheriff's department was not usually available. Because of the delay, Mr. Johnson reports that in one incident, several ladies organized and captured a man who had been robbing couples parked along 53rd Street, then known as a "lovers lane." He also recalls that, typically, there was no response to a serious accident on 47th Street because the Sheriff's departments of both Wyandotte and Johnson County could not agree on who had jurisdiction.

With incorporation, a police department was established with a paid Town Marshall. During the first 18 months of the City's existence, this position was filled successively by E. R. Hawkins, Elery Stroup, and James Wilmeth. In December 1952, Mr. Felix Gottner became the Town Marshal, a position he held for two years. He was assisted by four volunteer deputies. The use of volunteers created some problems when one overzealous volunteer issued an excessive number of tickets during one weekend of duty. The first police chief was N. Orville Moody, who served from September 1954 to August 1959. He was succeeded by Lyle Martin who served until 1961 when Albert Yonnally became Police Chief. At that time the department had four paid patrolmen. As additional areas were annexed by the City, the police department was expanded. Chief Yonnally served until 1977. At that time the City's police department consisted of the Chief and seven officers.

During Chief Yonnally's term of office, a written policy manual was prepared that is still in use, although some modifications have been made. Professionalism was encouraged and officers were sent to a State of Kansas Police Academy. During his career with the City, Chief Yonnally served as

president of the Greater Kansas City Police Board. While in that capacity, he was instrumental in organizing what is now known as the Metro Squad, a response team to major crime activities in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

In mid 1996 the department was headed by Chief Ken Carpenter. His staff consisted of 13 full time officers and 16 part time officers. The staff was organized into three patrols for the daytime and evening shifts; and two patrols for the late night shift. Professionalism continues to be emphasized. The Department conducts a police academy for its own personnel and for personnel from other communities. The department responds to an average of 500 calls per month. Traffic control personnel issue an average of 300 tickets per month.

ROELAND PARK STREETS

Maintenance of streets and roads in the City of Roeland Park is the responsibility of the City's Department of Public Works. Generally, all streets were in place at the time of the City's incorporation. The exception was in the Fairway Manor area that had not yet been subdivided, and miscellaneous areas east of Roe Avenue and North of 51st Street.

Over the years, streets were established as areas were platted and developed. As early as 1875, two roads were in use in the area that is now the City of Roeland Park. The first was located on what is now Mission Road, running south and west past the Shawnee Indian Mission. It then went south on what is now Neosho to about 55th Street then angled southwesterly to about 59th and Nall. It is interesting to note that a map of the area, in a 1902 Atlas, shows this road as passing north of the site of the Roe family home. In later years, the section of this road south of a point near 55th and Buena Vista was realigned and squared off south of the Roe family home where it followed the general route of present day Johnson Drive.

The second road entered the area, from Wyandotte County, just west of what would now be an extension of Neosho Street. It then followed the high ground in a southwesterly direction to what is now Nall, turning south to a junction with the first road at about what is now 59th and Nall. At least seven farms were in the area at that time and undoubtedly farm roads existed that were not shown on the map.

As late as 1902 these were still the only dedicated roads in the area. However, streets were laid out with the development of the Southridge, Beers and Shawnee Place subdivisions. Never-the-less, only one additional through street was developed. This was Roe Boulevard which was located as Roe Avenue existed until the extension of the 18th Street Trafficway altered its route north of 51st Street.

In the mid 1800's much of the Midwest was surveyed and provisions were made to divide the area into townships of 36 square miles each. From this survey, section lines were developed. In the area that is now the City of Roeland Park, north-south section lines were located at what is now Neosho Street and at Nall Avenue. East-west section line roads were located at 47th Street and at 55th Street. Eventually the grid that is now the City's streets was developed.

As the area expanded some historical street names continued to be used. However developers named new streets in their area pretty much as they pleased. In 1933, the Johnson County Commissioners were requested to change the name of Rosedale Street to Roe's Land Street. This was a street from Wyandotte County, south into the City's area. The name, Roe's Land Street was corrupted at some time between 1933 and 1947 to Roseland Street.

In late 1947, the Mission Township Zoning Board standardized street names so that they conformed within Mission Township. Generally, all streets that ran north and south or east and west were designated as "Streets." Streets between named north-south streets were to be referred to as "Lanes." Streets between numbered east-west streets were to be referred to as "Terrace."

Streets that were laid out obliquely or with excessive curves were to be named, not numbered, and were to be referred to as “Drives.” A few exceptions to these rules permitted the use of “Road” instead of Street or Drive.

Few people living in the City of Roeland Park today remember living on one of the following streets. These streets were renamed at the time of the 1947 standardization. Streets that were renamed and the new names are shown below:

Old Name	Present Name
Arapahoe	Falmouth - 47th to 48th
Bernice	Fontana - 47th to Elledge
Cherry	El Monte - Vawter Drive to 53rd
Cypress	Birch Drive - 55th and Birch to Roeland Drive and Johnson Drive
Elmwood	Juniper - 49th to 50th Terrace and Rosewood - Alder Drive to 55th
Forest	Delmar - Vawter Drive to 53rd
Grace	Delmar - 47th to Elledge
Hawthorne	Catalina - Buena Vista to Elledge
Holmes Road	Mohawk - 47th to 48th
Kirn Avenue	Alhambra - 47th to Elledge
Kiowa	Windsor - 47th to 48th
Maple	Fontana - Vawter Drive to 53rd
Olive	Clark Drive - Elledge to 51st
Parish Lane	Catalina - 47th Terr to Elledge
Quapaw	Canterbury - 47th to 48th
Rosedale	Neosho - 47th to 48th
Roseland Lane	Neosho - 48th to 53rd
Walnut	Granada - 50th Terrace to 53rd
Washita	Reinhardt - 47th to 48th
Wornall	Buena Vista - Elledge to 55th

In the 1947 street redesignation there were many other changes involving City of Roeland Park area streets. Most of these changes were limited to realigning numbered streets with those to the east and to the west. Other changes included the designation of avenues to streets or drives and similar designations that did not change the basic name of the street. Typical examples were the renaming of Roe Boulevard as Roe Avenue; Briar Lane as Briar Street; or 53rd as 54th Street from Buena Vista to Roe.

Since the Mission Township Zoning Board's ordinance was enacted, other changes have taken place. In May 1994, the City of Roeland Park Council passed Ordinance No. 628 that redesignated that portion of Roe Avenue and the 18th Street Expressway, lying within the City's boundaries as Roe Boulevard. Documentation for other changes has not been located. Vawter Drive is shown on the City of Roeland Park street map as Sycamore Drive, although a street sign, Vawter Drive, stood until recently at Roe Blvd. The City's map shows the street in front of the City Hall as Santa Fe Drive. Again, street signs show this street as 51st Street which conforms with the 1947 ordinance.

For several years after the incorporation of the City, the principal efforts of the Department of Public Works related to existing streets. This effort consisted of limited snow removal and an annual sealing of the streets. Eventually the latter resulted in diminishing returns and major improvements were required.

As previously discussed, the first major change in the City of Roeland Park streets occurred when 18th Street was extended by the Kansas Turnpike Authority. Initially, this limited access street was to continue to Johnson Drive with no provision for cross traffic. Mayor Willis Moore and Councilman Melvin Ostenberg objected to this plan and street crossings were negotiated. Initially, the Turnpike

Authority was adamant in opposing the crossings. Mayor Moore and Councilman Ostenberg pointed out that if crossings were not permitted, the City would be divided in half. That was neither reasonable nor acceptable. They stated that if crossings were not permitted, the City would impose a 20-mph speed limit on Roe with numerous stop signs. A compromise was reached and crossings were installed at 51st and 55th Streets.

Other major street projects have included the resurfacing of 47th Street and the relocation of the 47th and Roe intersection. Again, difficulty was experienced in reaching an agreement with Kansas City, Kansas on how the work should be completed and financed. Mayor Michael Shartzner negotiated the final agreement. Another project, completed in 1995, was the upgrading of Elledge Drive.

With the establishment of the redevelopment district, described in Chapter 6, street changes were required in the vicinity of 51st and Roe Avenue. 51st Street was abandoned between Cedar and Roe. Cedar Street was extended to the North to the Venture Plaza. 50th Terrace was rerouted into the Venture Plaza area. In 1995 major changes were completed on Roe Avenue providing a new access to Venture Plaza, and into the Roe Village Apartment area. The changes also rerouted the access to Roe Lane and to the 18th Street Expressway.

Independent of these improvements, the Department of Public Works has been upgrading streets. Throughout the City new curbs and gutters have been replaced and streets repaved. During 1994 and 1995 substantial improvements were made, principally in the Southridge and related areas of the City. These improvements basically have been to establish curbs and gutters where they previously did not exist, and to repave deteriorated streets.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The City of Roeland Park has four parks in existence and one park being considered as this history is being written. The existing parks are the Alban Roe Park, the Nall Park, and two neighborhood parks.

The Alban Roe Park

In years immediately after the incorporation of the City of Roeland Park, families were young and most had several young children. Recognizing the need for recreational facilities, the City Council appointed a committee, headed by Councilman Marvin Katz, to investigate the feasibility and arrange for the construction of a swimming pool.

On July 4, 1957, the City of Roeland Park opened its swimming pool at 49th Street and Roe Avenue. On that day a sizable percentage of the citizenry of the City inaugurated the new park with a big "SPLASH." If that accolade was fitting, so was the timing of the opening, on a hot and humid day when underwater living had even greater appeal than suburban residents normally thrive on. That first year, family membership only cost \$10 because of the short season.

There was a primitive air to the occasion as more than 2,000 Roeland Parkers got their first full-scale view of the pool which was surrounded by cliffs and caves. Within part of the 25,000 square feet of limestone cave area were dressing and shower rooms, space for dancing, table tennis and other recreational activities.

At the opening of the pool, Marvin Katz, then a City councilman and chairman of the swimming pool committee, explained that the pool is a part of the 6.7 acre Alban Roe park. He reported that the total project cost \$150,000, the money being raised through a bond issue. Katz also stated that the ground had been donated by Miss Margaret Roe and Miss Isabella Roe.

Two years later, in 1959, attendance of more than 75,000 was reported for an average daily attendance of 780. On 18 of the 92 days that the pool was open that year, daily attendance exceeded 1,000 with more than 1,300 passing through the turnstiles on the 4th of July. This was typical well into the 1960s.

The pool was 120 feet long and 60 feet wide. It was three feet deep at the shallow end and ten feet deep in the diving area. Originally it had a three meter and one meter diving board. They were removed when safety requirements dictated that pool depth greater than ten feet were required in diving areas. A wading pool was provided for babies and small children.

In 1961 cave-ins were experienced in the dressing rooms so a separate bathhouse was constructed the following year. It was located on the southeast side of the pool. The bathhouse contained a sun or observation roof.

Over time, problems with the mechanical equipment occurred. In addition, the condition of the concrete pool deteriorated. Although these problems did not shut down the pool, the reconstruction of the Roe Avenue and 51st Street interchange created a hazardous condition. As a result, the City Council elected to close the pool for the summers of 1994, 1995 and 1996. The continued deterioration of the Alban Roe Park pool resulted in a committee being formed by the City to investigate the feasibility of a new pool. The committee met at various times during 1995 and 1996. A plan for the construction of a new swimming pool was developed. The plan was put to a vote of the residents on May 21, 1996 and was approved by a margin of 723 to 345. The new pool is to be located near the City's Community Center. It is to be operated by the Johnson County Parks and Recreation Department. Current plans include an air-supported "bubble" which will permit year around use of the pool.

Nall Park

The Nall Park, located on the east side of Nall Avenue, north of 48th Street, was dedicated on July 22, 1973. At the time of dedication, a plaque was installed honoring Charles L. Hoskins, a Roeland Park resident, who was reported "Missing in Action" during the Viet Nam war. The park was a combined project of the City of Roeland Park and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

The park contains 13.6 acres in a wooded, hilly environment. The topography of the park limits its use for team sports activities. However, it contains picnic tables, children's playground equipment, and sanitary facilities. A draw back is the proximity of a Johnson County Wastewater Treatment facility, located just to the west of the park.

Neighborhood Parks

The City of Roeland Park has two neighborhood pocket parks. They are located at Sycamore and Cedar Streets and at Neosho and Wells Streets. A third park was being considered in late 1995. It was to be located on 51st Street, across the street from the City Hall. No action had been taken on this proposal at the time this history was written,

Other Facilities

In addition to the parks it maintains, the City has also installed tennis courts at several schools in the area. It also owns the building housing the Roeland Park Community Center. The Community Center is operated by the Johnson County Parks and Recreation Department. Its functions are described later in Chapter 8.



Police Chiefs Ken Carpenter and Albert Yonally

These two police chiefs represent 30 years of service to the City of Roeland Park



Nail Park - January 1996

This park, located at 48th Street and Nall Avenue, contains playground equipment and a shelter house. It is located on hilly ground and provides a nature setting in an urban area.



The Cedar Street Neighborhood Park - January 1996

This park is located at Sycamore and Cedar Street. The Cedar Roe Library is in the background