

APRIL/MAY 2023

THE ROELAND PARKER

Official Newsletter of the City of Roeland Park

Letter from the Mayor

Neighbors,

Spring is here, and so are the home projects we've been putting off all winter. The city has several grants and homeowner assistance programs available to qualifying residents.

I'm thrilled to announce the Roeland Park Homeowner Assistance Program - the City's partnership with Habitat for Humanity Kansas City. This first-of-its-kind program dedicates \$100,000 of federal grant money over the next two years to assist eligible applicants with down payment assistance for home purchases and interior home repair. City staff worked closely with experts at Habitat to identify these two areas as major barriers to homeownership and home maintenance.

This investment is a reflection of Roeland Park's ongoing commitment to maintaining our status as an affordable and accessible place to call home, a commitment also demonstrated by our track record of lowering the mill levy and budgeting over \$30,000 annually for our Property Tax Rebate and Neighbors Helping Neighbors programs.

For information on our partnership with Habitat for Humanity Kansas City, Neighbors Helping Neighbors and other available grants and assistance programs, please visit

<https://www.roelandpark.org/231/Home-Maintenance-Assistance-Programs>

All the best,

Mayor Michael Poppa



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Resident Survey

Be on the lookout for a mailer requesting your participation in Roeland Park's resident survey! Surveys can be returned via mail or completed online.

The time you invest in this survey will help the City understand the needs of the community, and improve existing programs and services. Thank you for your participation!

Thank You to our Mighty Bike Project Donors!

Joe Harrish

Becky Fast

Tim Hake

Jodi and Jason Wilson

Jodi Wilson

Emily Hanover

Carol Fields

Sarah Martin

Elinor Riley

Robert W Brown

Sherry and Paul Diederich

John and Joan Anderson

Nicki and Graham Johnston

Nancy and Ken Beckmann

Neighbors for a Better Roeland Park

Healthsource Sport+Spine

Paul Dorrell, Leopold Gallery in Brookside

Earth Day Litter Cleanup

Get to know your neighbors and help keep Roeland Park beautiful! We will meet in front of City Hall, weather permitting. Volunteers will split into groups and pick up litter along 51st Street, Roe Lane, and Roe Blvd. Gloves, trash bags, and grabber sticks will be provided.

Please wear sturdy shoes and bring gloves if you have them. A refillable water bottle is also recommended. Registering by email to MelissaLCastillo@hotmail.com will help us coordinate supplies but is not required.



- Saturday, April 22
- 10:00 a.m. – noon
- Meet at City Hall
- 4600 W. 51st St.
- Roeland Park



THE BENEFITS OF PLANTING NATIVE SPECIES

BY MELISSA CASTILLO

As the temperature warms up, many of us will be heading to the nursery to buy flowers, shrubs, and trees for our yards. Landscaping adds beauty and value to our homes, but plants do so much more than that! They provide a habitat for wildlife. We hear about the declining population of monarch butterflies, but did you know that monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed? Without milkweed, we will not have monarch butterflies. The native animals and insects of Kansas evolved along with the native plants of Kansas, and they need each other to survive. Yards that contain large expanses of non-native plants, like most turf grass lawns, are food deserts for native animal species. Plants need pollinators to create seeds and fruit, and we need those crops to feed us. Pollinators include butterflies, bees, moths, wasps, flies, ants, and even birds and bats. There are more than 400 species of native bees in Kansas, and they rely on native plant species to survive.



There are many websites out there that can help you find native plants and even plan a pollinator garden for your yard. K-State Research and Extension – Douglas County, the Grassland Heritage Foundation, and the Kansas Rural Center pulled together information and resources to help Kansans integrate native plants into their landscapes. Check out their website at www.plannativeks.weebly.com. Another good resource on the importance of native plants is www.homegrownnationalpark.org, which was co-founded by Doug Tallamy, a professor of agriculture in the department of entomology at the University of Delaware. He has written many articles and books explaining the necessity of native plants in our ecosystem, including *Nature's Best Hope*, a New York Times bestseller in 2020. When choosing native plants at the nursery, be careful to avoid cultivars, which are cultivated varieties, or plants that are produced by horticulturalists for particular traits, but do not produce true-to-seed. Cultivars are designated by single quotation marks in the plant's name. For example, 'Autumn Blaze' is a cultivar of a red maple (*acer rubrum*). A local nursery in Kansas City that specializes exclusively in native plants is City Roots Nursery (www.cityrootsnursery.com). Your native plant purchases may even be reimbursed through Johnson County's Contain the Rain program. Check out the particulars at www.containtherainjoco.com. Happy planting!



NEW NATURE INFORMATION SIGN FOR COOPER CREEK PARK



WELCOME TO COOPER CREEK PARK

YOU ARE AT THE EDGE of a riparian woodland ecosystem—a woodland bordering a waterway. Trees and other plants along the banks form a reciprocal relationship with organisms in the creek: each benefits the other. Healthy riparian ecosystems provide rich habitat for diverse plants and animals. The benefits to people include: scenic beauty, erosion control, water filtration, air purification, cooler temperatures, and carbon sequestration. Cooper Creek is a tiny tributary which flows into Rock Creek, then Brush Creek, the Blue River, the Missouri River, the Mississippi River, and finally into the Gulf of Mexico.

MONARCH WAYSTATION

Throughout the park, you will find beds of native plants selected to benefit native pollinators, including the endangered Monarch butterfly. Keystone plants such as milkweed, goldenrod, and asters serve as host plants for many species of caterpillars. They also provide nectar and pollen to butterflies, moths, bees, and other pollinators such as hummingbirds. These creatures, in turn, sustain birds, reptiles, and other animals further up the food chain. Cooper Creek Park, by virtue of its native plantings, is an official Monarch Waystation.



NATIVE ANIMALS

Every animal, simply by following its natural instincts, plays a vital role in keeping an ecosystem in balance. Some help grow new plants by pollinating flowers or spreading nuts and other seeds. The plants then make the food, oxygen, and shelter that animals need to survive. Carnivores eat herbivores, keeping their populations in check so they don't eat all the plants. Finally, animals die, and with the help of flies, beetles, and larger scavengers, decompose into the soil where their nutrients are ultimately taken up by plants—and the cycle continues.



NATIVE TREES AND PLANTS

Native trees and plants are naturally adapted to the climate and soil of the region, so they're able to thrive without supplemental fertilizer or watering. Their deep root systems help reduce erosion and stormwater runoff. The number and diversity of native trees and plants in Cooper Creek Park provide increased resilience: the ability to withstand threats from extreme weather, insect infestation, disease, pollution, and invasive species. Native trees and plants provide essential habitats for a wide range of animals.



THREATS: INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

In a healthy ecosystem, native plants and animals form complex, interdependent relationships. When non-native species invade the ecosystem, they disrupt these vital connections, threatening the entire ecosystem. This happened at Cooper Creek when bush honeysuckle and wintercreeper spread thickly along the banks, crowding out the native plants. To restore the habitat, these invasive plants, along with Callery Pear and Tree of Heaven, were removed and replaced with hundreds of native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers.



RUSSELL MCCORKLE

Roeland Parkers will add some new words to their vocabulary and learn some fascinating information about nature when they read a new interpretive sign which will be installed soon in Cooper Creek Park. For example, "What's a Riparian Woodland Ecosystem?" or "Which plant species support the life cycle of a Monarch Butterfly?" Did you know that the gently flowing creek in Cooper Creek Park carries water that will eventually flow into the Mississippi River and finally into the Gulf of Mexico? That information and much more will be found on the interpretive sign in Cooper Creek Park.

A QR Code on the sign will link to the City's website where further information and resources can be found that pertain to a healthy Riparian Ecosystem, the restoration work done in the park during the last 3 years, and how homeowners can benefit nature in their own yards.

The Cooper Creek Park Restoration Project is in its third and final Phase. This City project was initiated by Councilmember Trisha Brauer who is working with the Parks Committee and a group of residents who neighbor the park. Cooper Creek Park is located at 5730 Roeland Drive.

Written by Ardie Davis

Graphic Design of the Interpretive Sign by Russell McCorkle



APRIL 29TH

1:00 -3:00 PM

Join us for the
Opening of the new
R Park Playground!



BIKE PARADE

Grab your friends, decorate your
bikes, and parade with us around
the new Traffic Garden

REFRESHMENTS

Fresh Popcorn, Cookies and Lemonade

mighty BIKE

Meet the artist behind R Park's
next exciting play structure!
Get your "Mighty Bike" sticker!



RIBBON CUTTING

The moment we've all been waiting for
with our Mayor and giant scissors

fun & GAMES

Enjoy yard games and activities and
make a tree mural for Arbor Day

EDUCATION

Learn about bike safety from
BikeWalkKC and meet your
local RPPD bike officers

PLANT TREES



New Public Works Building

The new Public Works building will be housed at 1800 Merriam Lane in Kansas City, KS. The current Public Works facility is on the site of the new Rocks development, and will be there until October of 2023.

The City will process bids to renovate the existing structure at 1800 Merriam Lane, and plan to move operations by October. The new facility will house offices, conference space, work space, shop and garage areas, and crew space.

Street Reconstruction Updates

The City is organizing pre-construction and will be sending out a letter to residents on Canterbury with details about the project in early April. Details will include the construction timeline, impacts residents may experience during construction, access to/from their homes. The City will also post this information on the city website and our social media outlets. Updates during the project will be provided on those platforms.

Meet Miel!

Miel Castagna-Herrera has lived in Roeland Park for 7 years, and is passionate about investing in her community. She is the co-founder of Cafe Corazon, has served on numerous boards and organizations in the metro, and is the newest Roeland Park Ward 4 City Council member.

Her cultural identity has inspired her business, and her desire to serve Roeland Park. Miel is the daughter of an Argentinian immigrant, and was raised in Northern New Mexico with a Hispanic and Indigenous cultural background. Representation is a key part of her heart for service, and she believes that the best ideas come from diverse groups of people willing to work together in respect and acknowledgement. Miel has run her own Flamenco dance studios, speaks three languages, and is always up for a chat over a warm cup of coffee.



City Contacts



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Gateway Sculpture Project Winner

The winner of the Gateway Sculpture contest is **Nathan Pierce** of Cape Girardeau, Missouri for his submission titled "Origin".

He is a nationally recognized sculptor. His proposal is to be about 20 feet high and made of stainless steel and colored cast acrylic. It represents Community Growth through natural form.

ROELAND PARKER

