

ROLAND WATER TOWER PROJECT

Location

- 4210 Roland Avenue, between Roland Avenue and Evans Chapel where the Roland Park, Hoes Heights and the Rolden communities meet.

Owner

- The City of Baltimore with the custodian being the Water and Waste Water Division of the Department of Public Works. Baltimore City is currently reviewing documentation to move the Tower to the Department of General Services, where city monuments are assigned.

History

- The Tower was constructed in 1905 to serve as a potable water supply station for surrounding communities. It was taken out of service in the 1930s.
- In 1974, the Tower was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 2008, the City designated the Tower a City Landmark Building.
- In 2011, Preservation Maryland, one of the State's oldest historic preservation organizations, included it on its Endangered Maryland List, a list of Maryland's most endangered historic sites.
- Most recently, Preservation Maryland awarded the Roland Park Community Foundation (RPCF) a \$2,500 grant. The grant was matched by \$2,000 of RPCF funds and \$500 from the community group, Friends of the Roland Water Tower. The grant has been used to complete a structural engineering analysis of the Tower.

Multi-Community Support for Restoration and Creation of a Community Park

- There is strong community support for stabilization and restoration of the Tower with the creation of a surrounding park. This was a stated goal of the recently developed Greater Roland Park Master Plan that includes the communities of Roland Park, Hoes Heights, Rolden, Wyndhurst, Keswick, Evergreen, and Cross Keys.
- Concerned residents have joined together to form the Friends of the Roland Water Tower, an advocacy group that has organized community events at the Tower.
- The Hoes Heights community, one of the earliest African-American neighborhoods in Baltimore, has expressed a wish to display its rich history within a potentially renovated interior space at the base of the Tower.
- The Roland Park Community Foundation (501c3 organization) has raised matching dollars for the tower as has the Friends of the Roland Water Tower. Contributions of in-kind support have been received as well.

The Tower's Current Condition Adversely Impacts the Surrounding Communities

- Currently, the Tower is a public safety and public health hazard.

- In 2009, the City determined that the exterior deterioration of the upper portion of the Tower was serious, even dangerous to the public, and enclosed the Tower and its environs with a tall chain-link fence.
- The recent structural engineering analysis determined that the foundations and structural components of the Tower are sound, but that the roof, parapet elements and upper floor require stabilization work to prevent further deterioration.
- Stabilization/restoration of the terracotta upper part of the building and roof is required to prevent large portions of the exterior structure from falling and causing damage.
- The ugly, fenced-in condition of the site is depressing to the vitality of the surrounding neighborhoods and will negatively affect property values.
- In October 2012, the interior of the Tower was cleaned of animal excrement. The \$37,300 clean up included the removal of 300 bags of animal excrement. The interior of the Tower was screened and sealed so no further animals can enter.

The Need for Restoration of the Tower

- There is an immediate need to begin a three phase Project: tower stabilization and restoration, park creation, interior space viewing.
- Funding from the 2012 State Bond Bill, coupled with \$250,000 in already secured matching funds and in kind support would complement efforts underway to raise additional matching dollars.
- With \$250,000 in 2012 Bond Bill funds, Phase One would include remediation of environmental and health hazards and a design plan for a full interior and exterior restoration.
- If stabilization work is not completed in a timely manner, further deterioration will occur at an accelerated pace, possibly requiring a more costly restoration.
- Further deterioration of the Tower could lead to the need for a complete demolition of the building, resulting in the loss of an important neighborhood asset and an architecturally significant City registered historic landmark.

Community Benefits of a Fully Restored Water Tower and Community Park

- Open Space: Landscaping of the exterior grounds would allow the creation of a small park for use by all of the surrounding communities. Senior housing and schools are nearby, and there is no other park in proximity to use.
- Community Space: A redesigned and restored interior would provide a gathering place for community events and support space for outdoor festivals.
- Educational Programming and Museum Space: Future Phases of the project envision restoration of the interior space for possible use as a museum. Displays could include the history of the Hoes Heights neighborhood, exhibits on the history of surrounding neighborhoods, the Water Tower's origins and related background on Baltimore's early water supply system.
- Observation Space: A renovated viewing area at the top of the Tower would allow public access to panoramic views of Baltimore.

- Historic Preservation: This project preserves a beautiful and iconic symbol of Baltimore's early history.

*Elisabeth Sachs, Allison Barlow
and Matthew Fitzsimmons
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