

## A GUIDE TO THE COVENANTS IN ROLAND PARK

The covenants placed by the Roland Park Company in each deed have proved to be instrumental in preserving Roland Park as an attractive residential neighborhood. The covenants vary from plat to plat and within Plat 1 from house to house depending on the year the lot was sold.

The Architectural Review Board of Roland Park Roads and Maintenance (“the Board”) sincerely strives to balance the best interests of the community with your individual needs. The Board is comprised of your neighbors and we understand the need to integrate modern life with hundred year old homes. Our Board members often have familiarity with alternate materials or sources to help you better achieve your home improvement goals while maintaining the architectural integrity of Roland Park.

As a courtesy, The Board notifies neighbors who are themselves under covenant that a resident plans to make a change. The advance notice gives them an opportunity to voice any concerns and helps to avoid hard feelings and helps to encourage compliance among others.

### WHEN TO APPLY:

#### **You do not need to submit an application to the Architectural Review Board of Roads and Maintenance:**

- To duplicate or to renew original elements of your home. Examples: installing replacement slates or cedar shingles on your roof, applying clear sealants to wood shakes, and re-pointing brickwork. Homeowners are strongly urged to contact the office before starting any significant repairs to confirm that the scope of work doesn't require an application.
- To install or place of temporary or seasonal items or equipment such as window air conditioner units, patio furniture, lawn ornaments, or Christmas lights.
- To re-landscape your property **unless those plans include new walks, gates, patios, walls, decks, pergolas, gazebos, or other structural elements.**
- To put any plantings in the space between the sidewalk and the street (this is Baltimore City property).
- To erect a “for sale” or partisan election sign which does not exceed 30” by 30”. Political signs must be removed once the election is over.

#### **You do need to submit an application to change original elements or materials, to construct additions and new outbuildings, and to repair, change, or renew components of your home or property which are not original:**

- All asphalt, fiberglass, and asbestos based roofing materials in use are substitute materials and their replacement must be with a currently approved material.
- All existing fences should be assumed to be later additions to your property.
- Paint colors must be approved, whether to change or to renew the current color. There is no “approved” color list for Roland Park; the homes are of many different styles and what is appropriate varies from house to house. Consulting a chart of “historical” paint colors is a good place to start.
- Items or equipment that involve structural changes or which can be viewed as structures in themselves, such as decks, through the wall air conditioner units, awnings, tree houses, flagpoles, play sets, patios, driveways, sidewalks, fire pits, walls, swimming pools, hot tubs, gazebos, playsets, parking pads, etc. must be approved.
- Exterior lighting including, lampposts, flood lights, landscape and path lights must be approved.
- Residential machinery such as heat pumps, compressors, air conditioning systems and generators must be approved.
- Solar panel and satellite dishes require approval and shall not be placed on the front of houses or where they will be visible from the street.

- Approval is required to put any planting, fences or retaining walls along the right of way of a path or lane, as these are owned by Roland Park Roads and Maintenance. The right of way for a lane is 10 feet from the center of the lane to each side and for paths is 5 feet from the center of the path to each side. The lanes and paths are for the use of all residents, and are to be kept unobstructed.
- Any other sign requires permission. Approval can be given for temporary contractors' signs for a maximum of 30 days with the understanding that after this time Roads and Maintenance may remove the sign and store it at the contractors' expense.

Please remember that not everyone is under covenant and many houses have signed covenants after a period during which they lapsed. Do not assume that existing conditions or material in use around you are automatically accepted. Specific design information can be found on the Design Guidelines and Applications page on the Roland Park Civic League website.

#### **SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION:**

- The application is on the Roland Park website ([www.rolandpark.org](http://www.rolandpark.org)) under the "Roads and Maintenance" heading. Applications should be submitted electronically so that they can be distributed to Board members for review prior to the meeting.
- The Board typically meets on the third Wednesday of each month. Due to availability of members or conflicts with holidays, the meeting may occasionally be held on a different day of the month. The deadline for submission of applications is noted in the monthly Roland Park E-letter. Meetings are not open to the public but applicants may be invited to attend a meeting to answer specific Board Member questions about an application.
- Names of Board members are on the web site.
- Only applications received at least one week prior to the meeting will be reviewed, to allow time to disseminate the proposal to Board members ahead of the meeting and notify neighbors under covenant, as well as allow time for members to make in-person visits to the look at the property.
- Applications which arrive less than one week prior to a meeting will be deferred to the next month's meeting.

#### **FAILURE TO FILE AN APPLICATION:**

- There is no automatic penalty for failing to file an application. However, the Board does not grant special consideration for applications filed during or after construction. The Board votes on the merits of the project and will require modification or removal as needed. Over the years, the Board has successfully defended the covenants in court.
- Neighbors, passersby, and Plat reps frequently contact the office to confirm that work in progress has been reviewed and approved. If unauthorized work is discovered later, the Board generally relies on a long term removal order and will bring the matter to the attention of realtors and title firms as an unsettled violation if the house is placed for sale.

#### **APPROVAL RATES:**

The vast majority of applications received in advance are approved as submitted. Others are approved with minor revisions, a few require major revision, and a very few are rejected. As problems or nonconforming alterations are more likely to be brought to our attention, after the fact applications have a considerably higher rejection rate.

## **THE PHILOSOPHIES GUIDING THIS BOARD**

### **BACKGROUND:**

Roland Park was designed as a self-contained residential suburb. Its local religious, educational, and business institutions were confined to targeted sections of Roland Avenue. The Baltimore Country Club was unusual as it was promoted as a social center for the entire city in order to draw visitors and additional residents to the area. Many Roland Park commercial establishments lie outside the actual boundaries of the community. Think, for example, of Eddies Market and the businesses surrounding it. Although freestanding single family homes predominate, the original plan included duplexes, rowhouses, and apartments, mostly on the periphery of the neighborhood.

The street pattern in Roland Park was determined by the areas natural topography. The goal of the Roland Park design team was to set houses in an open, natural setting. The "Park" in the community's name was a serious appellation. However, a fair amount of latitude was allowed in housing styles within the framework of "building in a park", which continued for more than thirty years of original construction. All construction was vetted by a series of skilled architects to insure sound architectural principles were followed with respect to design and high standards were maintained with respect to materials. As a result of this exceptionally sound foundation, the philosophy of this Board is primarily conservative in nature. Our goal is to preserve this design heritage. Roland Park is not, however, a strict historic preservation zone and so sympathetic but not strictly "period" changes are allowed. The following summarizes the Boards position and its reasoning on a number of general issues.

### **LAND USE:**

Although the Maintenance Corporation opposed the trend, single family occupancy rules were compromised in Roland Park during the 1930s and 1940s as families subdivided houses and took in boarders to survive the Depression and as a patriotic effort to provide housing for workers who flocked to Baltimore for defense related work during the Second World War. Beginning in the 1950s, the covenants were strengthened to encourage single family use and the long term trend has been to return to the original land use patterns. The Board vigorously opposes the use of any property for non-residential use and does not allow exterior changes that would facilitate the subdivision of homes. In order to conserve community resources, we rely on the enforcement of City zoning regulations as a first step in cases where there are apparent violations and work with the Civic League in this regard.

### **CONSTRUCTION, ADDITIONS, RENOVATIONS:**

In new construction, matters of style are left to the judgment of the Board. Factors such as the quality of the building material and the use of correct proportions are often of greater concern than is the actual style of the proposed structure. With renovations, strong preference is given to the continued use of the original constructions materials.

### **COLORS:**

There is no approved color list, as mentioned above. The Board relies on a general consensus of opinion as to what is compatible with the surroundings and style of a given house. There are readily available sources for historically accurate paint colors.

### **CONSIDERATIONS GOVERNING ATTACHED HOUSES:**

Those groups of paired homes that exist in the neighborhood were all originally designed to be viewed as units and were occasionally designed to look like single family homes. The Board therefore requires that materials and predominant colors match within the units. A degree of latitude is permitted in the selection of the colors of minor elements, doors, and shutters.

## **SUBSIDIARY BUILDINGS, FENCES, AND OTHER STRUCTURES:**

In order to maintain a park-like setting, outbuildings and fences were forbidden or discouraged in the original plan. However, the owners of houses without garages have a reasonable need for storage of lawnmowers and other landscape equipment. Any shed type building must be as unobtrusive as possible in location and be screened by shrubbery. Shed applications are considered on a case by case basis. Prefabricated sheds are not permitted.

The original landscape architects (Kessler, Olmsted Brothers) differed in the approach to landscape design, but the general plan that emerged was more natural than formal, with hedges tolerated as a substitute for fencing. There was a distinction made between the treatments of front yards (kept open) and those to the rear (planted for privacy). The setback requirements forbade any structures in front yards, although waivers were given for the formal walls on blocks such as Goodwood Gardens, the Club Road approach to the Baltimore Country Club, and University Triangle. With the advent of the automobile, the community stables were abandoned and individual waivers were given to erect garages at the rear of lots.

The Maintenance Corporation continues to enforce the prohibition of fences and other structures in front of house lines. Fence applications are considered individually, with open picket fences no more than 48" tall being the most likely design to be approved. Screening planting along fences is strongly encouraged. A number of houses not under covenant have nonconforming fences and every year homeowners unsuccessfully cite these fences as justification for allowing similar fences to be erected on property under covenant. All fences must be completely within the property and outside of the right of way of adjacent lanes or paths, whether or not the property is under covenant. (You can't fence property that you don't own.) This is established by obtaining a property survey.