

RUTLEDGE PARK

Visioning Plan 2012



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Acknowledgements

Park Pride would like to thank all who participated in the public engagement opportunities and in the Visioning Plan at Rutledge Park. Without the efforts and dedication of those who participated, the plan discussed herein would have little, if any value. In fact, the true value of the results of the planning process is that it represents a wide base of support.

A special thanks goes to the Olmstead Linear Park Alliance for allowing the Steering Committee to meet five times in their conference room and to Emory Presbyterian Church on Westminster Way for hosting the three public meetings.

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The Friends of Rutledge Park have made great strides in guiding the development and planning for their park. The care they have demonstrated in building relationships with DeKalb County, Park Pride, and the neighbors will serve the Friends of Rutledge Park well as they carry the implementation of their plan forward.

Executive Summary

The property now known as Rutledge Park was purchased by DeKalb County fairly recently. It is interior to the block of houses that roughly comprise Ridgewood Drive and Burlington Road, just off North Decatur Road. The wooded site is approximately two acres of undeveloped land that has been choked with invasive species such as privet and bamboo for decades. The acquisition of the property begged the question: what, if anything should be developed to serve the neighborhood? The Friends of Rutledge Park was formed by neighbors to guide the planning and implementation of the park. Eventually, a master plan was identified as a critical step, at which point Park Pride's Visioning Program was engaged to guide the development of a community-supported master plan.

The visioning process for Rutledge Park began with a series of Steering Committee meetings that led to a public engagement plan. A key goal of the process was to interact with as many stakeholders, neighbors and interested individuals as possible in order to gain a broad understanding of what types of activities and amenities are desired and widely supported for Rutledge Park. Toward this end, a plan for encouraging people to attend a series of three public meetings was developed and put into place. At each public meeting, Park Pride facilitated discussions that led to a common vision for what Rutledge Park should and should not be.

Public meetings were held at Emory Presbyterian Church, at 1886 Westminster Way, very near Rutledge Park. The schedule for those public meetings was:

Public Visioning Meeting:	Sunday, March 18, 2012 – 4:00 PM
Design Workshop:	Tuesday, April 17, 2012 – 7:00 PM
Design Review and Prioritization:	Thursday, May 17, 2012 – 7:00 PM

During the public meetings and the Steering Committee meetings between, the community was encouraged to explore ideas, narrow their focus, and determine what activities and amenities should be included in the long-term vision for Rutledge Park. The most discussed amenities include: a playground, privacy and vegetative screening onto neighboring properties, pedestrian circulation, seating and an area(s) for park users to gather informally. It is generally agreed that the park should remain as natural as possible and that any amenities added should blend into the natural setting. It is also widely agreed that the removal of invasive species and debris from the site should take priority. In fact, DeKalb County, neighbors and Park Pride have already made great headway toward that goal through a series of work days in Rutledge Park. This effort must be ongoing, as invasive species are not easily dissuaded from growing.

What seemed a contentious issue involving the buffering or screening of neighboring properties garnered perhaps the most discussion. Some believe that neighbors should assume responsibility for providing as much privacy to their properties as they like. Others believe that the park and DeKalb County should use park land for a uniform screen. Please note that the rendering illustrates a scheme where dominant neighboring architecture

or views are softened by scattered, carefully placed vegetation that would include both evergreen shrubs that filter the most obtrusive views to neighboring properties as well as deciduous flowering trees and shrubs that offer a denser visual filter during summer months, when park use will be at its peak. Care should be given to use vegetation strategically to send unwanted views into the background while not isolating the park behind a wall of shrubbery that could harbor unwanted elements. Plant placement should be done as sensitively as possible and should be done on-site. Minimal plants should be used to filter views into the background while preserving view corridors into the park so that neighbors can monitor activities therein.

Moving forward, the Friends of Rutledge Park will need to work closely with DeKalb County and with non-profit partners such as Park Pride so that implementation of the plan becomes a reality. Coordinated fundraising efforts and a comprehensive strategy will be needed to steer each project toward successful completion. As plans become more solid, details may need to be vetted publically. It may be helpful to organize small committees to shepherd each project. As with most parks, the success of Rutledge Park will be determined over the years and by the commitment and persistence of its neighbors.



The entrance to the park might benefit from aesthetic improvements that identify it as a park and draw attention to the amenity.



Appropriate screening for privacy was prioritized for neighbors facing the park.

Design Process Summary

Public Meeting Schedule

Public input throughout the visioning of Rutledge Park is the core of Park Pride's community design process. The first step of the process was the formation of a Steering Committee made up of community members. The Steering Committee's first act was to pick a schedule for both steering committee meetings and public meetings. They met monthly to develop and report on community outreach strategies as well as to review input given at public meetings.

The schedule Steering Committee meetings was as follows:

- Public Meeting I: Sunday, March 18
- Public Meeting II: Tuesday, April 17
- Public Meeting III: Thursday, May 17

The schedule of Public Committee meetings was as follows:

- Steering Committee Meeting I: Sunday, February 28
- Steering Committee Meeting II: Tuesday, March 27
- Steering Committee Meeting III: Tuesday, April 24
- Steering Committee Meeting IV: Tuesday, May 22

Overarching Project Guidelines

At the first public meeting, community members in attendance compiled a list of goals and desires they had for their park. Once vetted with the Steering Committee, a clear list of overarching goals was drafted to serve as the guide for decision making throughout the Visioning process. The guidelines, as directed by the community, are as follows:

- Rutledge Park should follow a sustainable model for development including ease of maintenance, use of native plants, bio-diversity, and minimal impervious surfaces.
- Rutledge Park should be inviting, friendly and easily accessible for users of all ages and abilities.
- Rutledge Park and should be a safe area where park users and neighbors feel secure.
- Rutledge Park should be well utilized by neighbors within walking distance.
- Available active and passive uses at Rutledge Park should encourage park users to be respectful of each other and park neighbors.
- Opportunities to educate park users should be included in a beautiful and well-designed green space.
- Rutledge Park should be a platform for friends and neighbors to casually socialize.

Project Wish List

The wish list was compiled from the community members in attendance at the first public meeting. This list served as the starting point for Visioning within and around the park. As the design process proceeded and reviews from the community took place, some of the projects were dropped from the list. The initial list includes:

Meditation Area	Creek Access
Island of Tranquility	Leave No Trace Site (No Garbage Cans)
Community Garden	Turkey Habitat
Keep Existing Trees	Open Grassy Lawn
Protect the Canopy	Kids Play in Front
Vegetative Barrier (Green Buffer)	Playground with Slide, Seesaw, Swings
Picnic Area (Uncovered)	Appropriate Supervision
Benches	Eyes on the Park
Daylight Park (No Lighting)	Dogwood Trees
Nature Walk/Trail (possibly paved)	Perennial Flowers
Exercise Stations with chin up parks	Flowering Trees
Bird/Wildlife Sanctuary	Understory and Shrub Level Vegetation
Zip Line	Drinking Fountain/Water Spigot
Retaining Wall at Emory Drive	Fenced Dog Park
Stream Bank Restoration	
Seating	



Rutledge Park is predominantly wooded, which may limit uses and amenities to those which work well with the extensive and established root systems.

Design Workshop

The second Public Meeting was held on Tuesday, April 12th. During this meeting, community members in attendance were divided into groups, given maps of the park and surrounding land, and asked to use the wish list to draw where they felt the desired amenities and programs should be located. The illustrated maps are on the following pages. Park Pride designers used these drawings as a jumping off point to generate one design concept for Rutledge Park, which eventually became the Visioning Plan.

The design workshop maps 1-6 are shown in the following graphics. While no single plan was ultimately drafted as is, the similarities between the Visioning Plan and each plan developed at the Design Workshop are evident. Almost all work groups at the Workshop narrowed the wish list similarly. Many agree on relative playground size and even location, although two of the six groups explored the possibility of scattering play equipment into ‘pods’ all through the park. This option was not ultimately preferred, but the concept lives on in the built-in sliding board that is proposed near the entrance to the park. Most groups illustrated naturalistic, soft-surface paths with gentle curves and an informal layout, also reflected strongly in the final Visioning Plan.

As anticipated, the amount and placement of proposed screening to adjacent properties varied widely among the proposals. Much time was given to debate this concern at most tables. Consensus on this matter was not yet reached at this meeting.

Park Pride appreciated both the impressive number of attendees and their willingness to engage in thoughtful dialog. This willingness to participate that the community demonstrated is a key reason that the planning process was productive and was able to eventually draw to a successful conclusion.

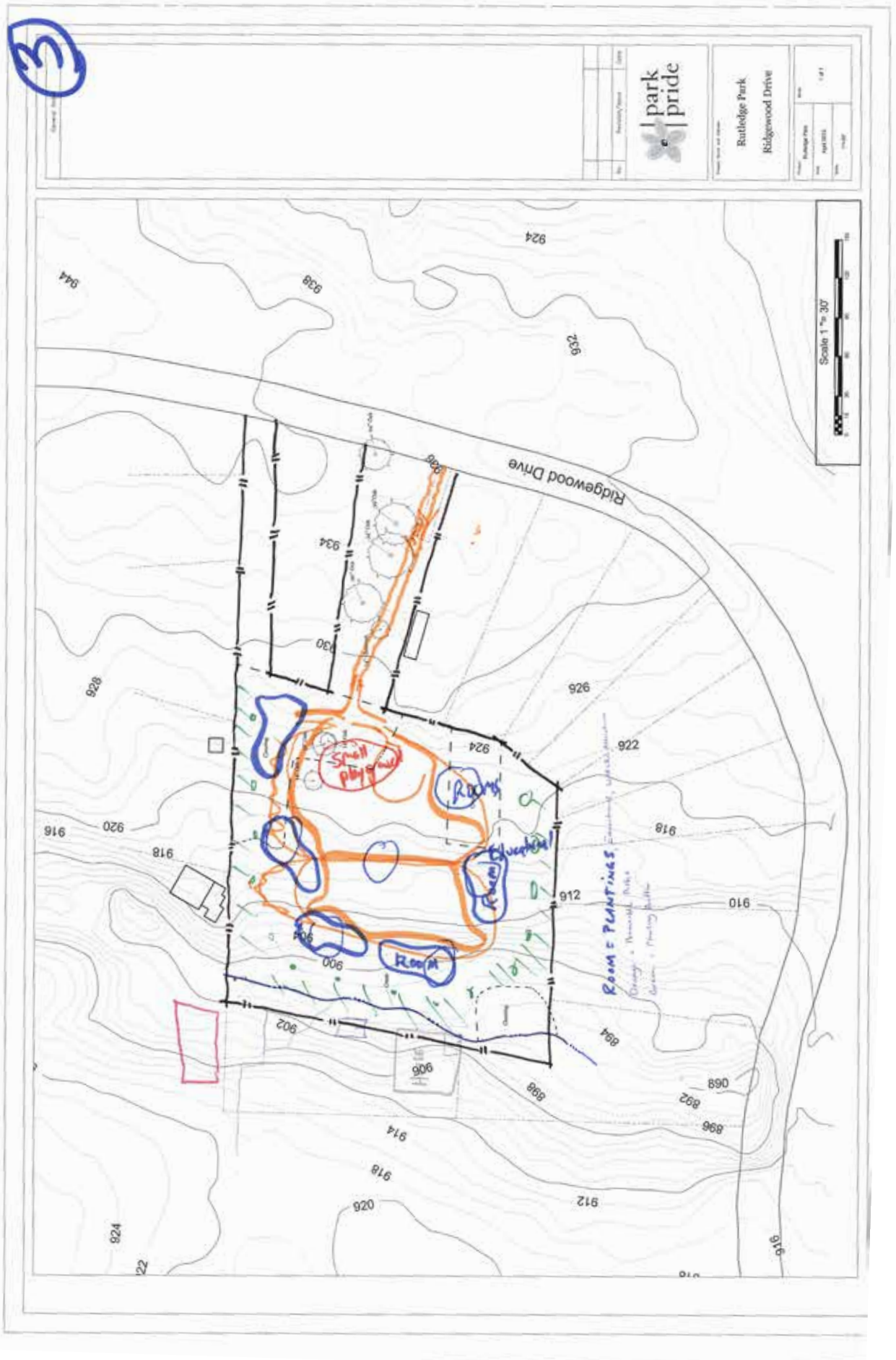
Design Workshop



Design Workshop



Design Workshop



Vision Plan

Park Pride's team of design professionals used the community's feedback from the second public meeting to form a draft plan. This plan is a combination and refinement of parts of the community vision designs. It illustrates the relative size, shape and location of features that the community desires to see implemented in its park. Descriptions of projects are found in the project list, which follows the illustrations. This draft plan was presented and discussed at the Steering Committee meeting on April 25, 2012, where it was widely supported and where minor alterations were suggested.

At the third public meeting, the Rutledge Park Visioning Plan was presented to the community. Those in attendance participated in a prioritization exercise. They were asked to imagine that small green dots were blank checks with unlimited money. They were then asked to place their green dots on the projects they would write checks for first. This exercise helped to map which projects the community as a whole felt were a priority without the limitations of cost.

The Prioritization Exercise map is shown following the Visioning Plan. The prioritization exercise demonstrated that building a playground is the highest priority for Rutledge Park's community. Closely following is the creation of soft surface trails throughout the park. The community also loved the proposed slide that follows the hill from the entrance path to the playground.

It should be noted that this Visioning Plan is just that, a plan. It should not be used for construction, rather it should be used to guide the community in determining which projects to focus on in the near future.

It is anticipated that it will take years or even decades to implement the projects identified in the community's Visioning Plan. At this time, there is no dedicated funding to implement these projects. The community will need to facilitate fundraising. This completed, community-supported plan will be a strong tool toward this effort.

Visioning Plan





Rutledge Park Project List

Key	Item	Priority Level	Cost	Description	Volunteer Opportunity	Possible Funding Source
Existing Park Property						
A	Riparian Planting	High	\$8,000	Along the park-side of the property, design and include plants to stabilize soil, provide wildlife habitat, and to disguise pipes along edge of property and stream bank.	Yes	DeKalb County & Neighborhood Fundraisers
B-1	Priority Wood Lawn	High	\$3,500	In flat areas relatively free of trees, seed shady grass seed mixture and encourage shade-tolerant grasses by hand-watering until established and mowing on a regular cycle.	Yes	
B-2	Wood Lawn	Medium	\$1,500	In flat areas relatively free of trees, seed shady grass seed mixture and encourage shade-tolerant grasses by hand-watering until established and mowing on a regular cycle.	Yes	
C	Butterfly Garden	Low	\$3,000	In sunny area at bottom of hill, design and plant flowering perennials and shrubs that will attract, feed and house butterflies through their life cycles.	Yes	
D	Packed Earth Trail	High	\$5,000	Remove leaf litter and possibly duff layer to create a narrow footpath/nature trail. Rustic steps (national park style) may be needed on steeper slopes. Consider location and direction of trail to avoid erosion.	Yes	
E	Naturalistic Screening	High	\$30,000	Strategically place evergreen trees or taller-growing shrubs to filter views to visually-dominant neighboring buildings. Supplement with flowering native understory trees. Naturalistic 'drifts' of landscaping in key areas should be as minimal and as unobtrusive as possible while softening nearby architecture.	Yes	

F	Interpretive Signage	Low	\$4,500	Design and install interpretive signage that will explain the history, culture and existing natural resources of the site. Consider placing in three to four spots throughout the park, including main intersections and possibly at the creek.	No	
G	Landscape Area		\$15,000	Several areas are noted for slightly more intensively planned and maintained landscape. Keep the designs very simple using masses of native ferns, shrubs and groundcovers. Autumn fern is not native, but is very well behaved, can anchor a space, is evergreen, and can make a solid addition to the landscape. Areas may be done in phases. Volunteers will most likely need to maintain landscape areas.	Yes	
H	Movable Tables and Chairs	Low	\$1,500	Purchase approximately 3 bistro-style tables and 6 matching chairs. Place on gravel (or slate chip) pad between playground and path. Allow enough room for several to gather/meet.	No	Local Retailer to Donate
I	Refurbished Existing Steps	High	\$4,500	Renovate existing steps. Secure and level risers where needed. Install soft-surface (gravel or similar) treads for stability of use.	No	Eagle Scout Volunteer Project
J	Playground	High	\$100,000	Design and build playground toward center of first terrace. Needs to cater to both children and tots. Exact location to be determined by technical considerations (location of existing trees). Protect existing trees to greatest extent possible. Contractor may be able to provide opportunity for volunteers to reduce labor costs.	Yes	
K	Exercise Station	Low	\$18,000	Install a set of four to six exercise stations spread throughout the park. Contractor may be able to provide opportunity for volunteers to reduce labor costs.	Yes	

L	Seating Area	Low	\$20,000	Using a professional mason, construct a circular seat wall and possibly a stone 'floor' to a small (16' +/- diameter), built in patio/seating area.	No	
M	Slide	Low	\$5,000	Consider constructing with the playground. Slide should roughly follow existing grade. Provide deep layer of mulch or rubber surface for landing.	No	
N	Bench (7 total)	Medium	\$10,500	Select a County-approved bench for use in the park. Given the character of the neighborhood, a steel version from Victor Stanley in a black finish might be a good starting point. Or faux bois ('fake wood' twigs) character made of aluminum or steel. For longevity and ease of maintenance, may want to consider avoiding wooden benches.	No	
O	Soft Surface Trail with Edging	High	\$35,000	Engineer and install a soft-surface path of either crusher run or crusher run with slate chip (mini) top coat. Install edging to maintain shape and keep gravel/slate chips from spreading. Grade and surface should be ADA compliant.	No	
P	Entrance Garden	High	\$5,000	Design and construct an attractive landscape to improve curb appeal of park property. Use native plantings that are well adapted to site conditions.	Yes	
Q	Entrance Sign	High	\$2,000	Install small sign identifying property as Rutledge Park. Consider adding park logo and DeKalb County logo. Consult with DeKalb County to ensure compliance with existing signage standards. Combine with Park Rules information and possibly Friends of the Park contact info.	Yes	
R	Maintenance Access	Low	\$3,000	Replace gate at end of maintenance access corridor. Add gravel as needed to prevent ruts from large equipment. May be delayed until playground construction is completed.	No	

Planning	Site Design/Engineering	High	\$6,500	Hire landscape architect to create grading and planting plan in key areas such the area for the new entrance and the area sloping down to the playground terrace.	No	
Planning	Site Survey	High	\$7,000	Engage survey firm to mark property lines, existing tree locations and types, topography, existing utilities and existing site features for park. Pay special attention to areas needing the most grading such as the relocated park entrance and the ramp down from the house parcel to the playground level terrace.	No	
Site-Wide	Invasive Species Removal	High	\$3,000	Continue removing all bamboo, privet, English ivy, and other invasive species. Will take several treatments and both mechanical and chemical applications.	Yes	DeKalb County & Volunteers
	TOTAL:		\$291,500			



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