



The Rockhill Times

Fall 2016

President's letter

The RHA Board and the Nelson-Atkins: We're Trying

The Rockhill Homes Association Board is a board elected to represent the neighbors in our association in a manner consistent with the by-laws governing the board, to protect the best interests of the neighborhood while reflecting the views and opinions of the neighbors. If the board has any chance of achieving these goals, we need to hear from you – whether or not you agree with what we're doing. The board and the neighborhood face important decisions in the weeks and months ahead.

One of the primary objectives I have had during my tenure as president of the Rockhill Homes Association is to help unify the neighbors. In working toward that goal, I meet with neighbors whenever I can to talk about a variety of topics. Sometimes this involves hearing from neighbors who disagree with the direction the board is headed. In one such recent meeting, a neighbor who has lived in Rockhill for several years said the way the board and most other Rockhill neighbors have dealt with the Nelson-Atkins Museum is “quixotic”. This neighbor is someone I know, like and respect. I thought I knew what quixotic meant, but wanted to double check before deciding whether the assessment was harsh or meritorious.

As you probably already know, the lead character in Don Quixote became delusional after reading too many books about chivalry and decided to roam the country as a knight looking for wrongs that needed correction. To call someone “quixotic” suggests they are an

impractical idealist, bent on righting imaginary wrongs.

From my perspective, there are at least a few distinctions between the RHA board and Quixote. He went out looking for problems to solve where there weren't any. At least from the board's perspective, the issues with the Nelson-Atkins have been brought to Rockhill, not the other way around. What kind of issues? First and foremost are zoning and land use planning issues.

According to the RHA by-laws, one of the first responsibilities for the board is to “seek to enforce zoning laws”. This is important because zoning's purpose is to promote the general welfare of the community, to protect and conserve property values, and encourage the most appropriate use of the land. Zoning laws act to preserve the existing character of an area by excluding prejudicial uses and to provide for the development of regulated areas in a manner consistent with the uses for which they are suited.

At the August 23rd meeting to present the museum's needs assessment, the Nelson-Atkins displayed a slide with this quote: “Nelson-Atkins has both desire and need to use its own property and to continue enhancing the neighborhood.” Based on information shared at that meeting, the museum's desire and need to use its own property includes several phases that would eventually include using its property for offices, displaying sculptures and other museum operations. In proposing these changes, the museum states a desire to “continue enhancing the neighborhood”, but it appears the usage proposed would require zoning changes. (If you would like to see the slides presented at the meeting, here is a link:

http://www.nelson-atkins.org/about-us/news/?utm_source=NA&utm_medium=HP&utm_content=update8.16&utm_campaign=CMP

To bring us back to Quixote, if the Rockhill Board encourages the city to enforce present zoning, is the board being “quixotic” by naively clinging to principles (in this case, zoning) against an imaginary foe? If not, is the board instead doing what it is charged to do by being diligent in seeking to enforce zoning laws? Is it possible for the museum to use its own property in ways that enhance the neighborhood even though that use may be inconsistent with present zoning? After the Kansas City “Star” article August 26th regarding the museum's plans for expansion, a Rockhill neighbor sent an e-mail saying based on the museum's track record it would be “totally naive” to suggest any kind of compromise regarding zoning. Is this correct?

You have a chance to help the board answer those questions. Please take advantage.

You should have already received an invitation to the second all neighborhood meeting to discuss how the museum might use its properties on 45th Street and the Kirkwood property. The meeting is scheduled September 7th starting at 6:30 PM in room 101 in the Katz Hall on the UMKC campus at 5005 Rockhill Road. Come and make your voice heard.

On September 21st, the museum is hosting a second meeting discussing its needs assessment. Attend and learn what the museum is thinking and if you don't hear answers to your questions, use this opportunity to ask questions.

Thank you to Jim Wanser, Bill Berkley, and Brian Ball for organizing and leading the July 18th and September 7th meetings and to all of you who attended the July meeting or who will participate in September.

Thanks also to the neighbor who took the time to meet and whose comment triggered the self-analysis and the neighbors who took the time to send e-mails with their opinions.

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Save the Date



**Rockhill Homes Association Picnic
Sunday, September 18
4:00-6:00**

Held at 45th street at Kenwood
William Rockhill Nelson Memorial Park

What to bring:

- Lawn chair
- Beverages
- Favorite dish to share
- Plate and eating utensils (go green)

This is an annual affair and a great way to see old and new neighbors.

If you'd like to help with set-up, cooking, clean up please let me know
--Joy Payne 816-916--4071

Congratulations ...

To Gloria Everhart who has retired after 56 years in the designer consignment business, most recently as owner of Act II.

To Linda Lighton Adkins who will be opening her exhibition, “Sex and Death” in New York this month at the Patrick Parrish Gallery and another show later in Spain, where she will also be working.

Share your or your neighbors achievements, announcements and accolades in the winter Rockhill newsletter. Email them to kostnerlinda@gmail.com

Dear Rockhill Neighbors:

You are invited to participate in the second session to share ideas to share with the Nelson-Atkins Museum about how the museum might use its properties on 45th Street and the Kirkwood Property. Once again, neighbors Bill Berkley and Brian Ball will be facilitating the meeting.

If you attended the first meeting, you are not only welcome, but encouraged to come to this meeting as well.

WHERE: Room 101 in Katz Hall at 5005 Rockhill Road on the UMKC Campus.

WHEN: 6:30 PM on September 7, 2016

Please note that parking can be a challenge at Katz Hall. Try finding a spot to the east of the building off 50th Street.

Special thanks to Jim Wanser for organizing the meeting and finding meeting space, to Mr. Berkley and Mr. Ball for facilitating the meeting, and to all of you for your interest in helping maintain Rockhill as a great neighborhood.

Rockhill ... A Look from the Past

- Submitted by Libby Gordon

Before the Kauffman Center property was developed there were a row of quaint houses on Holmes Street, south from Cleaver II to the Brush Creek. Here are a few of them.



These houses on Holmes Street are typical of those on Charlotte and Campbell which ran all the way south to above Brush Creek. The back yards met so those of us on 47th Street looked behind us over yards and gardens...and pets! The first house, not pictured, was a two story red shingle, the driveway still visible. The house with white picket fence was next belonging to Mr. McHugh with his little black terrier, Kelley. The one next was rented in later years by our esteemed neighbor, Bill Berkley in his bachelor days. There is no space here to go into all the history and changes I remember except to add that Esther O'Conner in the Star article was at the very end of Holmes Street in her small forest above the Creek in the rock house built for her by her brother. She was known to all of us with affection. As long as she was able she walked her little dog through the neighborhood. I am happy to have her Virginia Blue Bells and Peonies growing in my back yard.

---Libby Gordon

The following article appeared in the Tuesday, January 30, 1990 issue of the Kansas City Star.

Resident lost her home to UMKC park “The Nature Lady” planted carpet of flowers on her lot



Esther C. O'Connor and her dog Brownie sit among unpacked boxes in her new home, a double-wide trailer. O'Connor was forced to move from her home of 17 years at 4829 Holmes to make way for a 68-acre research park at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. (staff photo by Craig Sands)

Esther O'Conner already has let go of her piece of the Trolley Barn neighborhood.

Several weeks ago, the 91-year-old O'Conner moved from her three-lot home at 4829 Holmes St. into a mobile trailer near Raytown. The house is scheduled to be razed next month for construction of University Park at Kansas City.

But Bulldozers will have to take out more than just a few walls to remove O'Conner from the area.

During her 36 years in the

Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired home, O'Conner literally planted a forest in her yard,

Thousands of wildflowers were replanted in the area, and are said to be like a carpet for the hundreds of trees of different kinds and sizes.

So much foliage filled the area that the temperature inside the house was 10 to 15 degrees cooler than outside in the summer.

Many people know O'Conner as “Mother Nature,” Grandma Nature,” or the “Nature Lady.” The nickname changed with the generations of children O'Conner watched grow up. She gave many of them lessons on birds, trees and wildflowers in her forest.

Many of the flowers have been transplanted by nature specialists, O'Conner said. But she has doubts about whether she'll thrive in her new location. “I don't know what I'm going to do,” O'Conner said. “I haven't lived here long enough to really know . . . You can imagine how I felt.”

--- Mary Sanchez