



# RED MOUNTAIN PARK

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### David Dionne

The move from Maryland to Alabama has proven to be a very pleasant change and we are adjusting nicely. But while life at home has settled into a peaceful routine, life at Red Mountain Park is still a whirlwind of activity and progress.

Before I report on our progress let me admit that we are in the most difficult and sometimes challenging phase of a park's development. We are all anxious to open the site and provide you with first class facilities operated by a highly trained staff. But we find ourselves in the development stages. It is hard to recognize our progress because the public can't yet visit the park. I have no good short cuts to offer. But rest assured the work we are completing right now is vital to our long term future success of a park Birmingham will be proud to claim.

The Commission and the staff are observing two complementary stages in our park development plan. The first is "Build the park in the community." To accomplish this first stage we have begun work on three important initiatives. First, we have engaged Wallace, Roberts and Todd (WRT), authors of the park's master plan, to provide the Commission with specific design concepts for the first phase of the park's



Photo by Wynter Byrd

David Dionne, Executive Director

development. They are looking in detail at potential sites for Red Mountain Visitors Center, the comprehensive trail system and other park features. Once the Commission settles on the parameters for Phase 1 of development we will begin engineering and then building.

The second initiative centers on a number of important surveys that are underway on site. The first is a survey of the park's physical boundaries. This information will assist us as we manage the site and protect our natural and cultural resources. The second survey is a comprehensive survey of all of the

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*"Our goal is to provide a park that you cannot imagine living without."*

# RED MOUNTAIN GREENWAY AND RECREATIONAL AREA COMMISSION

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## 2008: A RED MOUNTAIN PARK YEAR!



Steve Jones,  
Commission Chair

It has been an amazing year for Red Mountain Park. There were a number of firsts that have made this year both memorable and historic. This was the first year of organized tours by the Friends of Red Mountain allowing the public to set foot on the land which will

soon be developed into Red Mountain Park. Tours were conducted from May to September, followed by the Fall Color tours in November. More exciting opportunities to visit the land will be available in 2009.

The tour response exceeded our expectations and demonstrated the excitement the community has for Red Mountain Park. I would like to commend the Friends group for their dedication to promoting the Park through their website and extensive network of friends and the media. We could not have gotten this far without the hard work of John Cobbs, Thomas Spencer, Nick Timkovich, Mike Mahon and numerous other volunteers.

The Commission conducted a successful national search resulting in the hiring of its first Executive Director David Dionne. David, a native of Maryland with an extensive background in public land and greenspace development, brings the knowledge, vision

and focus needed to turn a 1,100 acre nature park into a resource for all to enjoy. We are pleased that David, accepted our offer to make Birmingham home for his family who include 13 year old Natalie and 11 year old Cameron.

The Highline, a raised rail trestle system where mined iron ore was transferred from the mines to the steel producing plant and is contiguous to the Red Mountain Park property, was acquired in August by the Park Commission and will be integrated into the Park plan. A very generous purchase agreement with U.S. Steel

made this acquisition possible and will allow us to include an important part of the mountain's history in our Park.

A priority is to open the Park to the public by creating the Round the Mountain Loop Trail. The Commission is committed to the stewardship of the land entrusted to

it by the public and looks forward to the continued partnerships with the surrounding neighborhoods, businesses and public entities that can make that stewardship possible.

We look forward to hearing from you. Stay tuned as Red Mountain Park continues to evolve.

Steve Jones, Chair  
Red Mountain Greenway and  
Recreational Area Commission

*“The tour response exceeded our expectations and demonstrated the excitement the community has for Red Mountain Park.”*

To receive updates on Park developments,  
upcoming tours and volunteer opportunities  
please visit [www.redmountainpark.org](http://www.redmountainpark.org)

# Red Mountain Park Moves Forward With Help of City of Birmingham

The City of Birmingham approved the donation of a critical piece of property to Red Mountain Park. The 71 +/- acre piece of land has been valued at \$700,000 and will allow the Red Mountain Park Project to move forward in its design and construction plans. Next steps for the Park include building an initial round the mountain loop which the land donation will make possible. Mayor Larry Langford and members of the Birmingham City Council convened with members of the Red Mountain Greenway and Recreational Area Commission to jointly announce this significant land donation on August 8, 2008. The city property was officially transferred to Red Mountain Park as Steve Jones, Red Mountain Park Commissioner and Chairman, alongside Birmingham City Mayor Larry Langford signed the agreement.

The City of Birmingham's commitment to Red Mountain Park will assist the Commission in moving forward with plans for creating a greenspace for all to enjoy.



(l-r) Steve Jones, Mayor Larry Langford, Tom Howard, Council woman Valerie Abbott, and Jim Bennett sign agreement.

photo by Becky Rogers

*(Letter from Red Mountain Park Executive Director, David Dionne continued from page 1)*

historic mining sites within Red Mountain Park. Park Ranger Eric McFerrin is leading this project assisted by dedicated volunteers. Ranger McFerrin is using historic documents and photographs to research the locations of buildings, railroad beds, crushers, tipples and other infrastructure from Birmingham's industrial past. After locating these places in the park, he is clearing the areas of vegetation and recording his discoveries with photographs and other documentation. Finally, we will soon begin a survey of the flora and fauna. College interns will assist us as we record the native species of plants and animals currently found at the park. We will also identify the plants and animals that have invaded the site and begin a program to manage and reduce

their presence while promoting our native species.

Our last initiative is administrative. I am in the process of developing the administrative documents and programs that will support your expectations and dreams for Red Mountain Park. I am writing, and the Commission is adopting, the policies, rules and regulations, operations programs and manuals that will ensure a pleasing and safe facility for all. This work is vital as it will ensure the safe, smooth operation of the facility, as well as the selection, training and evaluation of staff.

The second stage of the park's development is to "build the community into the Park." We plan to give you every opportunity to love this park and weave

it into the fabric  
of your

lives. This stage is still in development but in the future you will see Boy Scouts and other youth organizations completing service projects at the park, you will have opportunities to honor a loved one with a dedicated park bench, or to serve your community by volunteering your time and talents. Our goal is to provide a park that you cannot imagine living without.

I predict that Red Mountain Park will one day define our city and our citizens. It will become the place where we meet as a community and where the world will meet us. This will take time. It will be a process, not an event. But we will get there and when we do we will find that today's efforts have allowed us to arrive with style. You deserve nothing less.

David Dionne,

Executive Director, Red Mountain Park

*"I predict that Red Mountain Park will become the place where we meet as a community and where the world will meet us."*

# Park Acquires Highline and Prepares for Phase I Projects of Park Development

The Red Mountain Greenway and Recreational Area Commission signed a land deed on August 28, 2008 to acquire the Highline property previously under the jurisdiction of U.S. Steel. Plans for this parcel of land may include connecting the northside of the Park to across the valley to the Valley Creek Greenway, Midfield High School, Midfield Park, the Homer Hayes Soccer Complex and Glen Oaks Elementary School.

The Highline Trail is the former highline rail grade that was built to connect

the ore mines on Red Mountain with TCI/ US Steel's Fairfield works. Sloping on a very slight grade from the mines to the furnaces, the grade was built to provide a continuous route unobstructed by rail grades, creeks or roads. The trail crosses five major bridges and follows this route on an embankment over thirty feet high, passing through a tunnel of trees that have grown up since the mines' closure.



Highline Railroad Photo by Beth Maynard Young

## FRIENDS OF RED MOUNTAIN PARK

### Public Steps Foot on Red Mountain Park on Guided Tours with Friends

This past Spring, Summer and Fall Red Mountain Park welcomed hikers interested in catching a first glimpse of what is to become one of the largest urban parks in the country. The community was eager to get outdoors and enjoy the vibrant scenery as well as learn about the history of Red Mountain Park when it was mined by U.S. Steel. Nearly 750 visitors participated in the tours and the Park hopes to host many more in the months to come.

The Park is not yet open to the public however these guided tours with the Friends of Red Mountain Park are a way to be one of the first to visit the land. Please visit or [www.redmountainpark.org](http://www.redmountainpark.org) to receive updates on Park developments, upcoming tours and volunteer opportunities.



Photos by Becky Rogers and Wynter Byrd



Friends of Red Mountain Park President, John Cobbs, with hikers



# Collaborations Count at Red Mountain Park

Local Birmingham chapter Audubon Society joined Red Mountain Park Executive Director David Dionne and Commissioner Bob Green on a half-day hike through Red Mountain Park on January 10. Nearly 30 bird and nature enthusiasts showed up, despite the rainy weather, to enjoy a first look at the Red Mountain Park and bird watch during the height of hawk season. Some of the wildlife spotted on the hike include cedar waxwing, Carolina wren, Carolina chickadee, eastern towhee,



red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, ruby-crowned kinglet, golden-crowned kinglet, tufted titmouse, blue jay, northern flicker, mourning dove, pine warbler, yellow-rumped warbler, song sparrow, white-throated sparrow, American crow, American robin, northern mockingbird, pine warbler, red-tailed hawk, brown creeper, winter wren, American goldfinch, field sparrow, Cooper's hawk, American kestrel, and a chorus of frogs in a pond on the loop back.



Photos provided by Birmingham Audubon Society



## Red Mountain Park Finalist for Birmingham Business Journal's Going Green Awards

The Birmingham Business Journal kicked off their inaugural Going Green Awards to recognize area companies, industries, and projects that are finding new and innovative ways to go green. Red Mountain Park is honored to be named a finalist for this year's "Green Project of the Year". Community members gathered to recognize award nominees at the luncheon held October 2, 2008 at the Harbert Center. Other categories included Green Business Leader, Educator, Advocate, Innovator and Builder of the year.

## Surrounding Neighborhood Associations Work with RMP Executive Director

Red Mountain Park recognizes that strong communities have strong leaders and Birmingham Neighborhood Associations have shown a keen interest in neighboring Red Mountain Park. With the Park's first Executive Director, David Dionne, on board a community luncheon was held on December 1, 2008 to introduce Dionne to nearby Neighborhood Association presidents and leaders. Guests had the opportunity to hear about new park developments and discuss Red Mountain Park's role as a resource for their neighborhoods and the role

neighborhoods will serve as a resource for the park.

Dionne then joined Neighborhood Association leaders and City Councilor Miriam Witherspoon, who represents District 7 (Red Mountain Park's home), at the Boutwell Auditorium for the City's annual tree lighting ceremony.



## Red Mountain Park Vision Shared with Area Garden Clubs



Executive Director, David Dionne, and President of the Friends of Red Mountain Park, John Cobbs, visit with the Mountain Brook Garden Club Photos provided by Alice Gordon



## RED MOUNTAIN PARK

Red Mountain Greenway and  
Recreational Area Commission  
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*How can  
you stay  
involved  
with Red  
Mountain  
Park?*

### *Give the gift of Red Mountain Park*

You can make a lasting contribution to Red Mountain Park on behalf of a friend, family member, co-worker or client! Send contributions to Red Mountain Park at 2201 5th Avenue South, Suite 100, Birmingham, A L 35233.

### *Join the Friends of Red Mountain Park*

You can join the Friends of Red Mountain Park to find the most current information about Red Mountain Park as well as find ways to volunteer your time to support the development of the Park. Visit [www.redmountainpark.org](http://www.redmountainpark.org) for more information.

### *Attend Monthly Commission Meetings*

Every third Wednesday of each month the Red Mountain Park Commission holds its standing meeting to discuss the Park's development. These meetings are open to the public and we encourage you to attend. For meeting information visit:

[https://www.openmeetings.alabama.gov/generalpublic/display\\_notices.aspx](https://www.openmeetings.alabama.gov/generalpublic/display_notices.aspx)

### *Help Us Clean-up Red Mountain Park*

Your help is needed to remove trash and debris accumulated in areas of the Park. Red Mountain Park has organized a clean-up day in the Spring on Saturday, April 18 and will be seeking volunteers to help. Please check back at:

[www.redmountainpark.org](http://www.redmountainpark.org) for details to come.



Photo by Wynter Byrd



View from Grace's Gap at Red Mountain Park  
Photo by Eric McFerrin