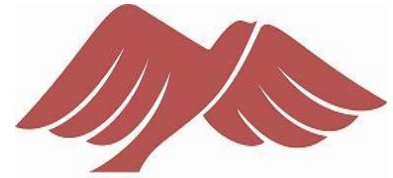


Red Mountain Park Master Plan

Volume 1, Issue 1

Summer 2006



RED MOUNTAIN PARK

About Red Mountain Park

What is Red Mountain Park?

Red Mountain Park is the newest park initiative in Greater Birmingham, and it could be among the largest public parks in the nation. When developed, it will be a valuable regional amenity with the potential to attract visitors from all over the nation.

In 2005, U.S. Steel offered the Freshwater Land Trust, a local nonprofit organization, 1,108 acres of historic land in southwestern Jefferson County- entirely within the city limits of Birmingham. This land was once home to iron ore mines that helped put Birmingham on the map at the turn of the 20th century. Now, it will put us on the map again, but this time at the top of a national list of cities with the most open space per capita, beating out Minneapolis and Seattle!

The Red Mountain Park property was independently appraised for \$16.5 million. U.S. Steel is offer-

ing it to the Freshwater Land Trust under a two year purchase option for \$7 million, a \$9.5 million discount. In addition, U.S. Steel pledged an additional \$1 million in cash towards the development of park amenities. The total \$10.5 million donation is U.S. Steel's largest philanthropic donation in the company's history.

The Freshwater Land Trust's mission is the acquisition and stewardship of lands that enhance water quality and preserve open space. They, along with many partners, are working to make Red Mountain Park and area greenways a reality so that Greater Birmingham can be home to a network of parks, trails and greenways for everyone to enjoy.

Where is Red Mountain Park?

The park is about 5 miles southwest of downtown Birmingham, along the same ridge as Vulcan Park to the east. The park is northwest of Homewood and Vestavia Hills, north of Hoover, east of Bessemer and south of Midfield, Wenonah and Ishkooda. The whole park lies within Birmingham city limits.

The park lies between the Oxmoor Corporate Park to the south and Wenonah and Ishkooda on the north. Venice Road crosses the park, and Ishkooda-Wenonah Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Road trace the northern and eastern edges. Lakeshore Parkway is the closest road to the south.



Who owns Red Mountain Park, and who will own it in the future?

US Steel currently owns the Red Mountain Park property. Upon purchasing the property from US Steel, the Freshwater Land Trust will transfer it to the newly created Red Mountain Greenway and Recreational

Area Commission. This

Commission was created in the Alabama legislature and signed into law by Governor Bob Riley on April 21, 2006.

The City of Birmingham owns a 67 acre parcel in the middle of the US Steel property, and a media station owns a small parcel in the east end.

Inside this issue:

History of Red Mountain Park 2

Master Planning Process 2

Cost of the Park 3

How can I help Red Mountain Park? 4



FRESHWATER
LAND TRUST

How big is Red Mountain Park?

Red Mountain Park is 4 ½ miles long and varies in width from 300 to 2,500 feet. The park's area is 1,108 acres: it's bigger than New York's Central Park and San Francisco's Golden Gate Park! The park property also includes the historic elevated High Line Railroad. This two-mile long former rail line once ferried iron ore mined from Red Mountain to Fairfield Works.



Red Mountain Park photo by Dave Borland

“Red Mountain Park is a proposed 1,108 acre recreation and greenway area located in Jefferson County. The goal of this project is to meet the needs of a growing community and to allow area residents a location for outdoor activities close to the city.” Senator Richard Shelby

What is the current condition of Red Mountain Park?

The park site is now mostly wooded with some open patches of kudzu. It was once the location of iron ore mines developed by the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company and Woodward Iron Company.

Former mining operations stripped the top of the mountain to reach the iron ore seam and then developed over ten mine openings.

The mountain was completely sheared of trees, terraced extensively to build railroad

access to the mines, and covered in areas with mine spoil and ore tailings, mostly on the north side. Almost all evidence of mining structures has been removed.

What is the history of Red Mountain Park?

Red Mountain is primarily known for its reserves of iron ore. It was recognized in the Civil War era for its potential to produce the abundant red iron ore that gave rise to the growing iron industry in the region.

the investment in the iron industry and railroads for transportation, ore mining operations rapidly claimed the mountain. Buildings were erected and rail lines were established which threaded along the mountain from Ruffner to what is now Vulcan Park, along the ridge to Graces Gap, and, with the

exception of the Sloss mines in Raimond to the south, was concentrated primarily along the area now designated for park development.

The major investments were driven by Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, the predecessor of US Steel.

After the war, with the founding of Birmingham and



Hydrangeas at Red Mountain Park photo by Aja Hazelhoff

What is the Master Planning Process?

The process will include three phases of work: (1) **inventory**, (2) **alternatives**, and (3) the **draft master plan**.

its importance to the long term park plans.

stage of development.

The inventory phase will allow the project team and public to understand what features of the property should be preserved and the opportunities for development of new facilities. During this phase, important information about the site’s natural and cultural history will be collected and evaluated for

The **alternatives** phase will allow the public to review three different ways that the park could be developed and have input on which parts of the alternative plans will be carried forward into the final plans.

A previous concept plan was developed by Nimrod Long & Associates to help us see the tremendous potential for the property. The ideas contained in that plan will be evaluated as a part of the planning process.

The **draft master plan** phase will enable the public to see and comment on the plan for the park in its preliminary



High Line Railroad photo by Beth Maynor Young

What will be in the Red Mountain Park Master Plan, and what is the schedule?

The master plan is both a map and a course of action. It will be the blueprint for the future development of the park. It will specify public use of the property for recreation, nature and historic appreciation preservation purposes. The plan will describe the activities the public will be able to enjoy at Red Mountain Park and the facilities needed to support those activities.

The project team is currently reaching the end of the first phase of work which is the

inventory of the site features. The process will take about six months to complete. It began in June with information gathering sessions, interviews and a public meeting to introduce the project. It will conclude in December with a public presentation of the draft master plan.

The next public meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 24 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm in the Arrington Auditorium of the Birmingham Public Library downtown. The meeting will include a brief pres-

entation of the major features of the site, and an interactive workshop to discuss the public's ideas for the park. Please check www.redmountainpark.org or call the Freshwater Land Trust at (205) 214-8613 for more details of this meeting as plans are finalized.



Neighborhood Association meeting at Lawson State Community College

Who is running the planning process?

The planning process is being directed by the Red Mountain Park Steering Committee, a hard working group organized by the Freshwater Land Trust that includes private, public, civic, and government leaders. This Committee is working to raise the money necessary to purchase the property from U.S. Steel. They were responsible for selecting Wallace Roberts and

Todd from Philadelphia, a nationally known landscape architect firm, to develop the park's master plan.

In addition, the Committee hired Tom Martin of ConsultEcon in Cambridge, MA, who will conduct an economic analysis and business plan for the park. Mr. Martin has served in a similar capacity for the Railroad Reser-

vation Park project in Birmingham and has extensive expertise in evaluating sites for tourism planning, historic rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

Finally, the Steering Committee also drafted the bill that was passed in the state legislature in April that lays out the park's future ownership and management.

"We have an opportunity that is not going to come along again, to do something for our city, for our quality of life," Wendy Jackson, Executive Director of the Freshwater Land Trust

Whom will Red Mountain Park serve?

The park will be open to the general public and is considered to be a regional park accessible by all residents and visitors. It will be a place for neighborhood residents to stroll and a place for visitors from the city and county to come for recreation.

Can I visit Red Mountain Park?

Not yet. The land is still private property. The park will be developed for public access in the near future after it is purchased from US Steel and as funding and construction get underway. The master plan will include a timetable for park development.

How much will the park cost?

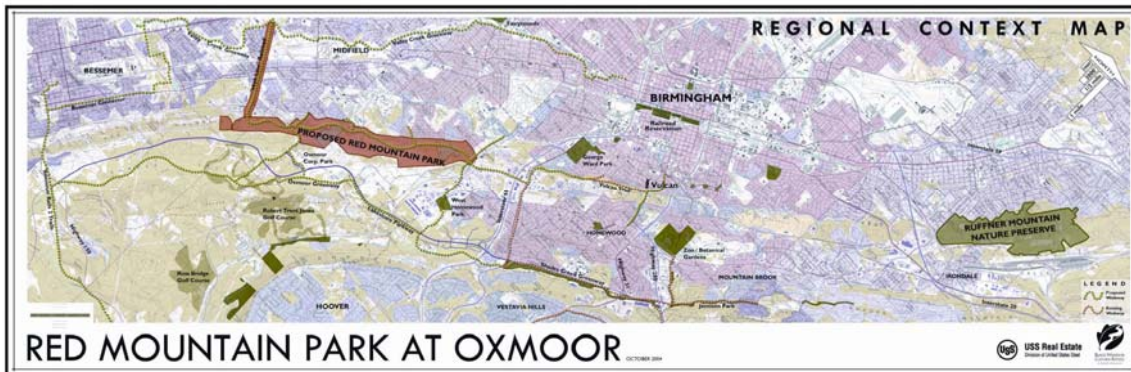
The land cost is \$7 million. The budget for park amenities is not set at this point and will be determined by the master plan process. To date, \$1.3 million in federal funds have been secured, including \$1 million by Senator Richard Shelby and \$350,000 by Congressman Spencer Bachus. The Jefferson County Commission also

pledged \$7 million over six years for the project.

Other major funding for project support has come from the Hugh Kaul Foundation, the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, and the Alabama Power Foundation.



Working group at the first Public Meeting



Red Mountain Park Regional Map

How can I help Red Mountain Park?

There are so many ways you can help!

Attend public workshops— share your opinions and learn about the development of the plan.

Contribute to the Red Mountain Park Fund—make a tax deductible donation to the Red Mountain Park Fund to help support park efforts.

Please call the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham at (205) 328-8641 or visit them at www.foundationbirmingham.org/rmpark.htm.

Visit and join the Friends of Red Mountain Park website— find the most up-to-date information about Red Mountain Park and the planning process, and sign up with the Friends group at www.redmountainpark.org.

Visit the Freshwater Land Trust's website— find out more about the Land Trust at their website: www.freshwaterlandtrust.org

Spread the word—tell your coworkers, car-pool, running crew, biking group, soccer team, etc. about Red Mountain Park—this is the easiest way to make a difference.



Freshwater Land Trust
 2121 8th Avenue North, Suite 802
 Birmingham, Alabama 35203
 phone: 205.214.8613
 fax: 205.214.8614
www.freshwaterlandtrust.org



FRESHWATER
 LAND TRUST

*Additional Photo Credits: Page One, Beth Maynor Young;
 Page Three: Allison Odom and Aja Hazelhoff*