

April 28, 2023

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DRAFT: Roeland Park Historical Research and Community Engagement Project Proposal

Executive Summary:

Roeland Park City Councilmembers formed the Adhoc Roeland Park Historical Committee in January 2021 to take on the task of preserving and teaching the city's history. The two projects the Committee has chosen to focus on are: creating interpretive signage for sites significant to Roeland Park's history and updating *Roe'ling Thru the Years in Roeland Park, Kansas*. This work has served as the official city history since it was written by Historical Committee member John R. Scott in 1996. These projects were proposed to Mayor Kelly and members of the Roeland Park City Council in April 2022 by Committee Chair, Chris Wolff.

The Roeland Park Historical Committee understands the importance of uniting residents through an understanding of their shared history. With this in mind, they began to seek out historian consultant services to conduct research and community engagement efforts in order to ensure the inclusion of underrepresented groups, such as but not limited to, Native Americans and Black residents. Because of the Historical Committee's belief of unity through understanding their shared history, it is especially important for all aspects of that shared history to be documented and understood. The Historian Consultant would be responsible for conducting historical research and outreach to underrepresented groups, to ensure the history of Roeland Park can be understood in its fullest form.

Project Background:

This project seeks to engage and partner groups underrepresented in Roeland Park's documented history, to amend and update the written record, and show a more complete picture of the city's history. The current city history book, *Roe'ling Thru the Years in Roeland Park, Kansas*, was written in 1996, and while an impressive account of local history, it was written without significant input from non-white residents, such as Black and Native Americans. To document a wholistic history of the city, historian services have been sought out by the Historical Committee to fill in this narrative gap in Roeland Park's history and to bring the written record of Roeland Park's history to the present.

The historian is to create amendment and update recommendations for *Roe'ling Through the Years in Roeland Park, Kansas* and the currently existing signage copy. The City Council would like a historian to ensure the inclusion the histories of underrepresented groups, such as Black residents and Native

Americans in Roeland Park. Overall, this project seeks to offer a complete picture of Roeland Park's history and assist the work currently being conducted by the Historical Committee.

Approach:

I, Anna Jacobson, am offering my services as a public historian with a background in local Kansas history. My approach to history is informed by the knowledge that American history disproportionately focuses on people of European descent and the need to “decolonize” this historical perspective. My work primarily focuses on how place informs identity and vice versa, with experience in public history in the Kansas City, Kansas area. My approach and previous experience is compatible with the Roeland Park Historical Committee's stated goal of pursuing unity through understanding of their shared history, and how place informs a collective identity in Roeland Park.

As a relationship minded professional, I believe that community engagement and partnership are essential to the success of this project. Often, efforts to include underrepresented groups into historical projects end up *extracting* from those communities, which risks leaving them feeling unheard and alienated. To avoid this, I am offering to coordinate conversations that would give groups a seat at the table, and an opportunity to share what they feel is important to be documented in the official city history. This approach will be executed in the work concerning amending and updating the current text of *Roe'ling Through the Years* and the interpretive signage copy. A proposed timeline for work and deliverables are outlined in the table below:

Timeframe:	Directive:	Objectives:	Deliverable:
2 Weeks:	1.1 Orient Myself with Roeland Park History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Careful Study of the Book as it exists -Careful Study of the current signage as it exists -Identify questions concerning Roeland Park history since 1996 -Create Questions and bring these to the Historical Committee for an orientation/introductory meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bi-weekly reports¹ - Scheduled meeting with the Historical Committee
8-12 Weeks: Phase 1: 2-4 Weeks; Focus on	1.2 Begin Archival Research and Plan Outreach	Phase 1: Updating the history as it exists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Begin with answering following questions: -Who are the Relevant Parties in terms of Indigenous Peoples, prominent Black 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bi-weekly reports -Create an outreach plan in collaboration with the Historical Committee -Create an agenda of questions to be answered through partnership with

¹ Throughout the course of this project, bi-weekly reports will be sent to Keith Moody and the Historical Committee for updates on project progress and as an opportunity for input/feedback.

<p><i>Roe'ling Through the Years</i> as it is currently written</p> <p>Phase 2: 6-8 weeks; Focus on researching Roeland Park history from 1996-present</p>		<p>families, and other underrepresented groups within Roeland Park history?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Are there local/living groups/individuals to contact? -If there are not significant records of prominent Black families or other underrepresented groups living within Roeland Park, why is that? -What is the archival record of the Kaw/Kanza in Roeland Park area -Who are the contacts with the Kaw/Kanza? -What is the archival record of the Shawnee in the Roeland Park area -Who are the contacts with the Shawnee? -Are there other Indigenous Nations to contact? -Are there other groups to consider? -Create a clear idea of the questions to ask <p>Phase 2: Bringing <i>Roe'ling Through the Years</i> up to present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What are the significant "locus points" in Roeland Park's historical timeline over the past ~30 years -Identify significant individuals/events/happenings -How has Roeland Park changed since 1996 -Research current happenings with the Shawnee's attempts to gain ownership of the Shawnee Methodist Mission -Coordinate with residents for what they remember/potential oral history project/open interview event 	<p>Black residents and the stated Indigenous Nations</p>
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		- Based on findings, coordinate with Historical Committee on their preference for the form of the <i>Roe'ling Through the Years</i> updates (epilogue, additional chapters, editor's note, etc.)	
4-6 Weeks	2.1 Begin Outreach *This timeline (as is the timeline for this project as a whole) is tentative and dependent on availability of persons contacted	-Begin engagement and partnership relationships with underrepresented groups to amend Roeland Park's recorded history as it exists. -Plan outreach for current Roeland Park residents -Plan and coordinate public oral history collection in Roeland Park in coordination with the Historical Committee and Racial Equity Committee to ensure this is an inclusive and affirming event	-Bi-weekly reports -Meetings/interviews with Relevant Parties identified through prior week's research -Set date for oral histories collections event, pending approval
8-12 Weeks:	3.1 Compiling and Writing: City History Book	-Assess the information gathered so far and create a list of recommended amendments to <i>Roe'ling Through the Years in Roeland Park</i> . -Draft final chapter(s) of <i>Roe'ling Through the Years</i> updating the book to the present -Review final chapter(s) draft with Historical Committee -Coordinate with Historical Committee -Coordinate with Relevant Parties -Assess the need for outreach to residents concerning my recommendations	-Bi-weekly reports -Document with recommended edits -Draft of <i>Roe'ling Through the Years</i> with edits and updates included - Presentation deck explaining my recommendations -Meeting with Historical Committee to discuss and assess project direction
3-4 Weeks:	3.2 Compiling and Writing: Interpretive Signage	-Assess the information gathered so far and create a list of recommended amendments	-Bi-weekly reports -Document with recommended edits to existing signage copy

		for signage copy as it currently exists ² -Coordinate with Historical Committee -Coordinate with Relevant Parties -Assess the need for outreach to residents concerning my recommendations	- Presentation deck explaining my recommendations -Meeting with Historical Committee to discuss and assess project direction
1-2 Weeks:	4.1 Project Close Out:	-Writing final reports -Wrapping up with Relevant Parties	-Final project report

Resources:

I am offering my historian consulting services at the rate of \$50/hour at an anticipated initial 24 hours a week. Actual weekly hours worked are subject to change as determined by need as the project progresses i.e., waiting for individuals' responses, inter-library-loan orders, meetings outside of normal working hours, etc. Hours worked will be kept in hard copies (physical journals) and soft copies (bi-weekly reports e-mailed to Keith Moody). The anticipated timeframe for this project is eight to ten months to completion and 30 weeks of active work on the part of the historian.

An estimate of actual expenses is likely to range between \$26,000- \$30,000. The total fee for this project is not to exceed \$36,000.³

Conclusion:

There is good work to be done for the benefit of Roeland Park residents past, present, and future through the careful research and documentation of this city's history. Roeland Park City Council and the Historical Committee have stated their commitment to uniting their community through their shared history. By enlisting the services of a historian, they are demonstrating their seriousness about this commitment. Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this proposal.

² Directives 3.1 and 3.2 may be possibly completed simultaneously

³ In the event of working the maximum number of hours weekly throughout the project: \$50/ hr x 24hrs x 30 weeks = \$36,000

Appendix:



Chris Wolff
Chair
Roeland Park Historical Committee

Dear Mayor Kelly and members of the Roeland Park City Council,

In January 2021, Councilmembers Rebne and Madigan helped to form the Adhoc Roeland Park Historical Committee to address the need to preserve and showcase a knowledge of the history of Roeland Park. They recognized that there is no better way to unite the citizens of Roeland Park than teaching our shared history. An earlier generation of Roeland Parkers engaged in this task and we are indebted to them. Their achievement was the 1996 history book *Roe'ling Through the Years in Roeland Park, Kansas*.

The focus of this manifestation of the Historical Committee was the possibility of updating this now 25-year-old book and also the exploration of creating historical signs and markers to document key places and features of Roeland Park's history. It was early decided that the committee would push off any updates to the historical book to a future phase of the committee's work because it would be difficult to consider and develop both projects at once. The committee's focus has thus been strictly on the development of recommendations for historic signage.

For the past year, the committee has surveyed the work done by many of our neighboring communities to preserve and showcase their local history. We quickly came to realize that Roeland Park has fallen far behind its neighboring communities. These neighbors have documented historical locations, partnered with the National Parks Service to trace the route of historic trails, and created virtual historic tours of their communities that one can follow on their phone. Some of them have even created historical parks which unfold the history of the community in a series of interpretive signs. All of this served as an inspiration to us and hence the projects in this proposal are hardly original. However, they are unique in that they could serve to tell Roeland Park's story.

Of the original 4 projects that the committee developed, we have decided to move forward with a proposal for the two largest projects, the historic location signs and the interpretive sign plaza. The other previously discussed projects, the Santa Fe Trail signs and the Otocast virtual history tour, we have pushed forward to an envisioned phase two of the committee in fall 2022.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. We hope that you will see its potential to promote Roeland Park through the revelation of its unique story as well as to bring together its citizens through an understanding of our shared history. This history is like the backing of a quilt upon which all the squares of the community of Roeland Park are sewn.

Sincerely,

Chris Wolff
Chair
Roeland Park Historical Committee



[History of Roeland Park, Kansas | Roeland Park, KS](#)

Pictures & Video. 1965
Roeland Park Pool; 1966
Roeland Park Pool; 1964
Field Day - Skyline School -
Roeland Park, Kansas; 1986
Motorcycle Tour of old
Roeland Park Shopping
District

www.roelandpark.org