

# PRESERVE PIONEER PARK



A resident committee to keep Pioneer Park  
Clean, Green and Serene



<http://geocities.com/preservepioneerpark/>  
preservepioneerpark@yahoo.com

Submitted To: Montgomery Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council at  
Joint Meeting 3/9/2006

Re: Statement from Resident Committee to Preserve Pioneer Park

Hi, my name is Deb Leonard and I live at 10426 Londonridge Court. What I would like to talk about tonight is riparian buffers. A riparian buffer is the vegetated land adjacent to a river or stream. In this case, I'm talking about the forest and the meadow land adjacent to Sycamore Creek in Pioneer Park. To protect the stream, one must protect the buffer.

The OLRA report states that it used the most restrictive set back requirements for a recreational area in the City of Montgomery Zoning Code. That has translated to the proposed dog park being 70 to 95 feet away from adjacent residential properties.

What the OLRA report does not mention is that the City of Montgomery's Zoning Code has nothing to do with protecting Sycamore Creek, which is located BETWEEN the proposed dog park and the residences. The zoning requirements are just to put a buffer between residences and a recreational area. They have nothing to do with water quality or protection of aquatic or wildlife habitat.

In researching this proposed dog park, Montgomery city staff consulted the Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District. Although there are no federal, state or local laws requiring a riparian buffer, the folks at Soil & Water referred the city staff to a document that they use as a guideline for protecting streams.

This document, which was prepared in 1999 by the Institute of Ecology at the University of Georgia, is a literature review of more than 140 scientific articles and books on riparian buffers. Its main purpose is to help municipalities establish the most protective distance between a stream and a use that could potentially impact it. And yes, a dog park can impact a stream because dog poop contains nitrates, phosphates and pathogenic microorganisms such as E. Coli.

According to this document, the most protective distance between Sycamore Creek and the proposed dog park should be 140 feet! And that distance is measured from the creek, not the residential property line.

This document also suggests that to provide optimal habitat for wildlife, municipalities should consider buffers of up to 300 feet. This area of Pioneer Park is a known nesting ground for hawks, which hunt for mice and other rodents in the meadow. There are 4 hawks there right now. If the dog park goes in, these hawks will be chased away because their food source will be destroyed.

The OLRA report also neglects to mention there is an adjacent pond in Pioneer Park that discharges directly into Sycamore Creek. Research has shown that ponds are even more susceptible than streams to E. Coli bacteria contamination due to lack of shade and higher surface temperatures.

While it is great that the city of Montgomery wants to restore part of the riparian buffer by planting trees in the grassy space between the perimeter fence of the dog park and the edge of the forest, the distance between the proposed dog park and the creek is simply not wide enough to protect it adequately.

This picture shows quite clearly how much of the meadow would be left for the dog park if a 140-foot riparian buffer was used on the creek side and the pond side.

I would like to quote now from the guidance document. A (municipal) ordinance that establishes 100 feet or wider buffers on all perennial streams may sound unrealistic or too heavy-handed for most local governments. But such an ordinance is not as draconian as it first sounds. ... Several studies have shown that people will pay a premium to live or work near greenways or other protected areas."

I suggest that one of Montgomery's best marketing strategies is to keep its green space. I think people would rather move to Montgomery because of a park like Pioneer Park than for a dog park.

Thank you.

Dated this 9<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2006

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah Leonard