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Wednesday, July 2, 2008 - 2:56 PM EDT | Modified: Thursday, July 3, 2008 - 8:59 AM

Keswick CEO says changes possible to Roland Park development

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The chief executive of **Keswick Multi-Care Center** is willing to discuss potential changes on a controversial 17-acre development with neighborhood opponents in Roland Park -- but said the project is moving forward, with the next key step being a vote of **Baltimore Country Club** members on the deal.

Keswick **entered into an agreement last month to purchase a highly coveted piece of land** from the Baltimore Country Club for \$12.5 million, and the deal has sparked a huge outcry from neighboring residents worried about the loss of green space and other negative impacts of the planned 300 housing units and underground parking.

"We'll be happy to engage in a dialogue about any part of the project," Keswick CEO Libby Bowerman told the Baltimore Business Journal Wednesday.

The sale of the land must be approved by two-thirds of Baltimore Country Club's 2,000 members. The vote is slated for July 15.

Neighbors have been outspoken about the planned development -- and about 400 of them attended a meeting Wednesday night organized by the **Roland Park Civic League** -- and would like to see the property remain as open space. Currently, seven acres of the planned Keswick project are slated to stay as green space.

"We're only two weeks into our initial announcement," Bowerman said of the project and the reaction it's received. "I think it's too early in the project for everyone to have completely settled on the design."

Keswick Multi-Care offers a variety of health care services for senior citizens and has been in business in Baltimore since 1883.

Bowerman said Keswick has worked with the Roland Park Civic League twice in the past seven years on two other projects it has constructed by its campus on 40th Street in Baltimore.

The next step for Keswick, Bowerman said, will depend on the outcome of the vote from

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Baltimore Country Club's members.

Should the project fall through, Bowerman said Keswick does not have another site in mind for the project. Keswick officials looked at 35 sites in and around Baltimore during the past five years but "none met the needs for our vision," Bowerman said.

The BCC land, a portion of which sits along Falls Road, was formerly home to a tennis complex that was relocated to the Baltimore Country Club's Five Farms in Timonium last year. The Five Farms operation also includes a swimming complex, two golf courses and dining rooms. The Roland Park location is strictly a dining facility that is home to banquets and receptions.

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Margaret Fairfax Fielding July 2, 2008 3:20PM EST

For years, the club has been trying to sell the property along Falls Road, most of the time not consulting the neighbours until word got out.

The sale has always depended on the vote of the club's membership, which has changed greatly over the past decades. They do not have the close association with the Roland Park facility as the old members do.

Having Keswick build there will change forever the character of the roads surrounding the property and lessen the value of the adjacent houses. The building and construction will make driving on Falls Road even more of a nightmare.

This project should not be allowed to move forward.

PS... My family has lived in Roland Park since the 1920's.

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