



City approval sought for Alzheimer's care facility

Some neighbors concerned about building, parking, patients

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The developers of a proposed 63-bed Alzheimer's care facility, hoping for the support of neighbors in Roland Park, go before the city's zoning appeals board April 14.

The developers presented redesigned plans to the Roland Park Civic League on April 2 in hopes of getting a letter of support to present to the five-member appeals board.

While the league did not approve a letter, Phil Spevak, president of the organization, said a letter was being drafted and indicated that the league's board would more than likely send it to the appeals board.

The developers must get approval from the zoning board to tear down the two-story building on the 1.5-acre lot at 4301 Roland Ave. The building was erected in the 1920s and formerly used as retirement home for members of the Roman Catholic Marianist order.

Frank Harvey, the project's developer, said it would be impossible to remodel the building for use as an Alzheimer's facility.

"Because of the grades (of the land), because the building ... it doesn't work for us programmatically," Harvey said at the Roland Park meeting.

David Blumberg, a civic league board member, said he had been in the building and it was obvious that it couldn't be renovated for modern uses.

"The rooms make college dorms look big," he said at the meeting.

The revised plans added a story to the planned building but reduced its footprint on the property, which the league had requested.

Members of the league's board were complimentary of the way the developers have handled community input on the project.

Spevak called Harvey a "model" developer for his willingness to work with the community.

However, not all residents are as supportive of the project.

Many residents of the condominiums at 4401 Roland Ave. are still skeptical about their possible next door neighbors.

They said they are concerned about how the Alzheimer's facility would impact them.

Heather Landheim, a resident of 4401 Roland Ave., said she and her neighbors feel as if they've not been kept in the loop about the project. She also said that she doesn't buy the developers' explanation that they didn't know who to contact at the Roland Avenue condos to discuss the project.

"(We're) in the phone book. We have a phone number. Anyone could have called the front desk. We have a concierge at this desk from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., five days a week," Landheim said April 1. "We were never contacted. This has kind of come to us through the jungle telegraph."

The condominium residents said they were concerned about parking because the proposed facility would have 63 residents plus employees. But the city would require only 20 parking spaces and the developer plans to build just 26.

"We can't possibly go along with believing they are only going to have 25 people there in the day with 69 people and everything that will going on," Landheim said.

Joan Burrier, a resident of the condos and former chief of staff to former Mayor William Donald Schaefer, said she was upset because she feels the Marianist building has historical value.

"I think the building should be left alone. You preserve the facade, but you could gut the interior," Burrier said.

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