

## Public gets first look at master plan designs

*Gateways to Roland Park would look more like town centers*

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Posted 4/13/10



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*(Enlarge)* This 2001 photo of a crosswalk in Annapolis is an example of the kinds of ideas to be recommended in the Greater Roland Park Area Master Plan, participants say. (Photo courtesy of Chris Schein)

Imagine a Roland Park with sidewalk seating outside the Eddie's grocery store.

Imagine aesthetically pleasing traffic islands and curb bumpouts to slow traffic along Roland and Coldspring Lane, and a continuous path for strolling and jogging along the Stony Run.

Imagine the Roland Park Foundation buying part of the Baltimore Country Club land, then selling tastefully built townhouses on Falls Road as a way to pay for and maintain the green space.

The Greater Roland Park Area Master Plan is a nice dream -- and community leaders hope to raise "millions of dollars" to make it a reality in the years to come.

"All of us feel we can create something spectacular with this master plan," said Phil Spevak, president of the Roland Park Civic

League, which gave an audience of 200 its first comprehensive look April 8 at the ideas and designs that are growing out of the process of drafting a master plan for the area.

While the city government prepares for comprehensive rezoning for the first time in three decades, Roland Park wants to have more say over traffic, development, infrastructure, historic preservation, transportation and commercial growth.

Spevak said he hopes to have a text of the draft master plan available for residents to read online in the next 10 days, and then to present a finished document May 19, at the next master plan meeting

The league hopes to give the plan to the Baltimore City Planning Commission in June, he said.

Symbolically, the highlight of the master plan is its new name, which will include not just Roland Park but the communities, schools and religious institutions around it. The master plan study area encompasses the neighborhoods of Wyndhurst, Hoes Heights, Keswick, Roland Springs, Evergreen and Tuscany-Canterbury.

Meetings have been or will be held in recent weeks with Roland Park Country, Friends, Gilman, Byrn Mawr, Boys' Latin, Calvert and Cathedral of Mary Our Queen schools, and with Roland Park Elementary/Middle School, where the April 8 meeting was held.

Smaller meetings have also been held with many of the area's businesses, although some are still being contacted. Restaurateur Eddie Dopkin hosted a recent meeting for retailers on Coldspring Lane, Spevak said.

But he said the plan, which contains hundreds of ideas, is still evolving and that some issues need to be

addressed, such as zoning designations to put "teeth" in the plan.

Also still being worked out is how much it would cost the city and the league to do all of the proposals in the plan.

"Certainly, we're talking millions of dollars," Spevak said after the meeting. He would not give an overall cost assessment but said that more details about "costing" will be in the plan when it is presented to the public in its entirety.

The money would have to come from public, private and foundation sources, he said. It would cost an estimated \$1.5 million alone to restore and renovate the Roland Park Water Tower, which will be included in the master plan, he said.

The league is still negotiating with the country club to buy some of that land, at Falls and Hillside roads, Spevak said. The community last year stopped plans by the Keswick Multi-Care Center to buy 17 acres of country club land for a reported \$12.5 million for use as a retirement community. Now, the league is trying to buy a portion of the land from the club to preserve it as green space.

To finance such a purchase, the community could develop and sell townhouses near the club, said architect Steve Ziger, one of the many architects, land planners, urban designers and landscapers who live in the Roland Park area and are volunteering their time and expertise to help draft the master plan.

Ziger, of Ziger/Snead LLP, is serving as facilitator for all the concept designs being introduced in the master plan. He gave a presentation at the April 8 meeting in which he broached the idea of townhouses on the theory that if the community could buy the club land, "What would we do with it?"

Spevak said the league isn't talking in a vacuum about possible acquisition of the land because negotiations with the club are getting "closer."

The community has proven itself adept at raising money for various causes, including more than \$2 million to renovate and expand the Roland Park Library and \$250,000 to renovate the Roland Park fire station.

One of the goals of the master plan, which is being drafted with the support and help of Baltimore City planners, several of whom live in the area, is to find shared interests among residents, businesses, schools and religious institutions.

"Community support is absolutely essential," Spevak said.

Other goals include preserving the area's historical and park-like character, fostering walkability and cycling, promoting alternative forms of transportation including buses and shuttles, and reinforcing a town center feel in key commercial areas.

Spevak said the master plan will contain short-term, mid-range and long-term goals, with short-term goals seen as those being being achievable in 1 to 2 years and mid-range goals achievable in 5 to 10 years.

Short-term goals could include the repaving of Roland Avenue, which Spevak said is the kind of "low-hanging fruit" the master plan needs in addition to goals that may be cost-prohibitive or need more research.

Spevak said participants in the master plan process have already scrapped one idea they liked a lot -- a pedestrian walkway over one of the area's roads, Spevak said.

He would not name the road, but said the idea was rejected when participants found out it would cost \$300,000.

The entire proposed master plan will be rolled out for public review May 19, at 7 p.m. at Roland Park Elementary/Middle School.

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