

## Roland Park says future starts now

*Master plan draws support from city*

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Posted 5/25/10



*(Enlarge)* A rendering shows how the Roland Park Water Tower would look with a pedestrian area around it. Fixing the tower is a priority of the Greater Roland Park Area Master Plan. (Rendering courtesy of Roland Park Civic League)

Restored from a dilapidated relic to its original grandeur, with a pedestrian mall rather than a safety fence around it and park benches on its perimeter, the Roland Park water tower looks as pretty as a picture.

That's all it is for now, a picture. But the architectural rendering on display during the presentation of the Greater Roland Park Area Master Plan showed great possibilities for the crumbling, 106-year-old structure that still symbolizes the community.

"The water tower is such an iconic representation of Roland Park," said Amy Bonitz, a planner who helped the Roland Park Civic League draft its master plan.

About 200 people turned out at Roland Park Elementary/Middle School on May 19 to hear about a plan that is chock full of possibilities, from restoring the water tower and turning Baltimore Country Club land into a park and recreation area, to repaving Roland Avenue and making Falls Road look

more like the state-designated scenic byway it is.

"I think we have a pretty good plan," said outgoing league president Phil Spevak, who initiated the master plan process late last year and has involved dozens of architects, planners, engineers and other experts in city and state government and the private sector.

"The goal wasn't just to write a book," Spevak said.

City planners, some of whom live in Roland Park, helped area residents draft the plan. It was clear at the meeting that city and state officials who represent Roland Park endorse it.

"This is a wonderful plan," said State Del. Shawn Tarrant, father of a seventh-grader at Roland Park Middle. "Roland Park has always been a beautiful community. However, this plan says it could even be better."

The plan calls for projects large and small, some long-range and expensive, others to be done cheaply and quickly, what Spevak calls "low-hanging fruit."

Highlights include:

\* Sidewalk seating outside Eddie's grocery store on Roland Avenue.

- \* Traffic islands and curb bumpouts to slow traffic along Roland and Cold Spring Lane.
- \* A path for strolling and jogging along the Stony Run.
- \* Negotiation of a memorandum of understanding with the city to repair and upgrade infrastructure and stop basements from flooding, a big problem.
- \* Improved street lighting and storm water management.
- \* Making Roland Avenue a "complete street "with extra space for bicyclists, "giving them some breathing room," said Matthew Fitzsimmons, of Hoes Heights, an architect and planner who chaired a master plan transportation subcommittee.
- \* Building a median of trees down Falls Road to make it more scenic and slow traffic so students from Poly and Western high schools can cross the road safely.
- \* Repairing sidewalks and constructing ones where there aren't any. "They flood; they get muddy; they have cracks, so people stumble," said civic league member Jean Mellott.
- \* Negotiating to buy 17 acres of green space from the Baltimore Country Club and preserve it from development. The master plan envisions shade trees, tree swings, a community garden and a practice playing field where the former tennis courts are, at Falls and Hillside Avenue. The league has also talked about developing and selling tastefully built townhouses on Falls as a way to pay for and maintain any land the community is able to buy.

While the city government prepares for comprehensive rezoning for the first time in three decades, Roland Park made drafting a master plan a top priority. The community wants more sway over traffic, development, infrastructure, transportation, commercial growth and historic preservation in the area.

The master plan includes not just Roland Park but neighborhoods, schools, businesses and religious institutions around it, including Wyndhurst, Hoes Heights, Keswick, Roland Springs, Evergreen and Tuscany-Canterbury -- as well as schools, including Roland Park Country, Friends, Gilman, Byrn Mawr, Boys' Latin, Calvert, Cathedral of Mary Our Queen and Roland Park Elementary/Middle.

The plan now will be presented to the city for official review. At least one city official is already on board.

"I support your plan 100 percent," said Sharon Green Middleton, District 6 Baltimore City councilwoman whose district includes Roland Park and Cross Keys, as well as Evergreen and Coldspring Newtown.

"You are a fine example of how a community should operate," Middleton said.

To read the Greater Roland Park Area Master Plan, go to [www.rolandpark.org](http://www.rolandpark.org).

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