



## Can Roland Park find money for club's green space?

*Community already fundraising for firehouse, water tower*

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Roland Park might go into fundraising mode

Roland Park residents are accustomed to the challenge of raising money for various projects, from library expansion to water tower and firehouse renovations.

Now the community might face its biggest challenge -- preventing 17 acres of land from becoming a retirement community.

Many residents are upset that the Baltimore Country Club has agreed to sell the land near Falls and Hillside roads to Hampden-based Keswick MultiCare Center, which wants to build a retirement center on the site.

And they are angry that club officials didn't consult with them about plans to sell the property for \$12.5 million.

The sale is subject to approval by two thirds of the club's membership. The outcome of a club vote is expected by July 15.

At recent meetings to discuss the sale, residents said they realized if they want to see the land preserved, they would have to try to buy it from the club. The Roland Park Civic League held special meeting on July 1 to talk about the sale, and pickets at the club property were being organized before the meeting.

The land is only the latest of several projects for which the league and its fundraising arm, the Roland Park Community Foundation, hope to raise money.

Also on the neighborhood's fundraising plate are helping renovate the 100-year-old firehouse at Roland Avenue and Upland Road. Renovations could cost \$250,000, say city fire officials. They say the station, still in use as a firehouse, has holes in its walls, floors are falling in and new bathrooms and a new electrical system are needed.

Residents are also trying to raise funds to save a historic water tower. It's estimated renovations to the 148-foot-tall tower would cost \$1.5 million. The League wants to use the tower for offices and a museum of local history.

The water tower, which sits at the corner of Roland Avenue and Keswick Road, was built in the 1890s and has been out of service since the 1930s, when Baltimore City went to a reservoir system.

The community has been trying to rehab the tower for four years, but a conflict with the city over the price of buying the surplus property delayed action. The community recently purchased the tower from the city for \$1 after the city comptroller's office deemed the property worthless.

Although state legislators who represent Roland Park have said they would pursue state funds for the project, a nonprofit was not formed in time to begin fundraising for the matching funds needed for state grants.

To complicate matters further, residents just finished raising \$2.7 million to renovate and expand the library.

Despite having three projects in need of funding, league members say they're optimistic they will be able to fund all three.

"The community steps up to challenges and has a record with the library," said Phillip Spevak, president of the league.

He said the civic league is currently looking at all its options for raising money for the firehouse. But although the neighborhood would be willing to contribute financially to the restoration of the firehouse, much of what needs to be done is the responsibility of the city, he said.

Spevak said he spoke to Fire Chief Jim Clack, who attended the league's annual meeting, about the condition of the firehouse.

"Our goal is help elevate the importance of the fire station" in the city's capital projects budget, Spevak said.

David Blumberg, a civic league member and former president, is also optimistic.

"When there are a lot of things going on, it has always been the history of our community that we step up to the plate," Blumberg said.

Blumberg, who was president when fundraising for the library restoration began, said having projects stacked up will most likely galvanize the neighborhood.

"I find it exciting," he said.

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