

No razing of house in Rolden for parking

Roland Park Place will use vacant property for offices

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(Enlarge) An old church in the 4000 block of Roland Avenue would be demolished to make room for parking for Roland Park Place, but a nearby vacant house would be spared and would be used as Roland Park Place offices under the retirement center's new parking plan. (Staff photo by Alex Stawinski)

Bowing to community opposition, parking-strapped Roland Park Place has scrapped plans to raze a vacant house next door to make room for additional parking spaces. Instead, Roland Park Place will use the old house as administrative offices, most likely for its finance or development offices, officials say in a new letter to the community.

But the senior living community, 830 W. 40th St., has submitted a revised plan that would allow it to create 74 new spaces.

Roland Park Place now proposes to create 12 spaces by tearing down two garages behind the old house at 4021 Roland Ave., and to create 30 more parking spaces by demolishing a vacant church at 4001 Roland Ave. Roland Park Place also proposes to build another 32 spaces on the west side of its campus.

Residents in the Rolden neighborhood wanted to preserve the old house, which came to symbolize the community's reclaimed identity.

That set up a potential showdown between Roland Park Place and the neighborhood.

The Rolden Community Association was recently revived -- partly to fight the original parking plans.

The community of 1,000 households in the 4000 and 4100 blocks of Roland Avenue borders Medfield, Hoes Heights and Roland Park. Businesses there include Roland Park Wines & Liquors, Venus Cleaners & Alterations, Elmhurst Nursery School and Vogue Revisted, a women's consignment shop. Around the corner are the Rotunda mall, Keswick Multi-Care Center and Roland Park Place.

With its new plan, Roland Park Place is trying to defuse tensions that surfaced at a community meeting March 3.

"... We have significantly revised our parking plans to address some of the perceived areas of concern," Snyder wrote in a July 1 letter to the community.

Julia Pierson, who helped revive the association, declined to comment on the revised parking plan, saying it will be studied by Rolden and the Roland Park Civic League.

In its letter, Roland Park Place officials express some remorse at not being able to tear down the old house, which it said is the victim of a lack of maintenance and repeated vandalism.

"Our preference would be to demolish it and replace the blighted structure with attractive landscaping and fencing."

Roland Park Place owns both the house and the church building.

Roland Park Place officials have complained that that they have a shortage of off-street parking for their residents, staff and visitors, and currently rent 40 spaces at the Rotunda shopping mall for their employees.

Another 15 employees park on Elm Street during the day. And even with extra parking at the mall and on Elm, there's sometimes a lack of parking and staffers are encouraged to ride MTA buses to work, Roland Park Place officials say. They say they have even looked into the possibility of having a ZIP car rental center at the retirement community.

Roland Park Place originally wanted Baltimore City to amend its Planned Unit Development so it could put parking space behind the old church and the old house. But neither property is included in its current PUD, Roland Park Place President Teresa Snyder said last month. Snyder was out of town and could not be reached for comment about the new plans.

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