

FROM
Baltimore
MESSENGER

Bad sign: City removing placards in Roland Park

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Yard signs are a big part of the Roland Park community's campaign to stop the sale and development of 17 acres of Baltimore Country Club land.

But the signs have been disappearing -- and City Hall is responsible.

After the announcement last month that Keswick Multi-Care Center was negotiating to buy the green space off Falls Road for development as a 323-bed retirement community with underground parking for 400 cars, community leaders led by the Roland Park Civic League mobilized to fight the sale.

One of their weapons was having yard signs to be placed around the neighborhood.

But while driving on Roland Avenue last week, resident Christopher Corbett -- one of the most active opponents of the sale -- saw a white, Baltimore City pickup truck was stopped along the road and a city worker was pulling signs out of the ground.

"It was an unexpected service," Corbett said sarcastically. "We didn't realize the city had time to remove signs."

Corbett said he stopped to talk to the worker and found the bed of the pickup full of yard signs that read, "Keswick NO!" and "Keep the Park in Roland Park."

When he asked the worker why she was taking the signs, she replied that she'd been told to do it, he said.

Corbett acknowledged that some signs were in the median, where they were not supposed to be placed, but he said some of the signs were being pulled from private property.

Kurt Kocher, a spokesman for the Department of Public Works, said that any sign in a median would be removed by the city.

But Kocher said his agency was not responsible for removing the signs and that most likely it was done by the Department of Transportation. Calls and an e-mail to that department were not returned.

Corbett said he called the city and he hasn't seen anymore city employees removing signs since then, but signs are still disappearing.

Residents put up 250 to 300 new signs last weekend to replace ones the city took down.

But they made sure the new signs were on private property to avoid any future problems.

The signs, including the wire stand, cost about \$2 apiece. Corbett estimated the community has spent \$1,000 on them altogether.

Despite the aggravation and expense, Corbett said, the neighbors aren't giving up on the signs.

"We intend to keep signs up as long as necessary," he said.

Corbett also said that neighbors should go to the Roland Park Civic League Web site, www.rolandpark.org, if they want their signs replaced.

"If someone takes your sign down, we'll get you another sign," he said.

Ninety percent of the Baltimore Country Club's membership -- far more than the required two-thirds majority -- voted last week to approve the sale of the club land to the Keswick Multi-Care Center.

Keswick is buying the property for \$12.5 million, contingent upon the city approving the rezoning of the land to allow denser development.

Keswick plans to meet with community leaders before asking the city to rezone the property, Chief Executive Officer Libby Bowerman said last week.

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