

## Land controversy binds community

*Roland Park Civic League's ranks and coffers swell*

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Civic league benefits from furor

Although deeply unpopular in Roland Park, the Keswick Multi-Care Center's proposed continuing care retirement community has been a godsend in one respect.

It has swelled the Roland Park Civic League's ranks and coffers.

Anger over the proposed development apparently has driven more residents to sign up to be civic league members -- and to pay their dues.

A treasurer's report during the league meeting Sept. 4 revealed that the community association has \$9,000 more in its bank account than it did last year at this time.

Treasurer Jesse Halvorsen said the bulge in the bank account is the result of nearly \$8,000 in donations and new membership fees since Keswick announced its plans in June.

Other factors are also in play, including \$1,500 from advertising on the league's Web site, [www.rolandpark.org](http://www.rolandpark.org).

In addition, the league didn't have to make a \$2,000 insurance payment as it did last summer, Halvorsen said.

But league president Philip Spevak said after the meeting that he believes the bump in donations and memberships has a direct correlation to the Keswick project.

"People realize the importance of community organizations because of this issue," he said.

The project has resulted not only in more cash for the league but also in greater civic involvement in the neighborhood, he said. There were five different meetings in one five-day period last month on neighborhood issues other than the proposed development.

The Baltimore Country Club's membership has approved the sale of 17 acres of green space at Falls and Hillside roads to Hampden-based Keswick Multi-Care, which is planning to build a 323-bed retirement community with underground parking for about 400 vehicles.

But the civic league is asking city officials to help stop the development.

League members have met with Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon and the city's planning department to discuss their opposition to the project.

The civic league is planning a meeting in October to present alternative plans for the land.

Keswick and the country club reached agreement in July on Keswick's plan to buy the land contingent upon City Council approval of amending planned unit development status, which restricts the density of development.

Residents said they opposed the project because of concerns about the loss of green space, increased traffic in the community and the ability of the sewers to keep up with development.

Keswick officials have maintained that the project would be environmentally sensitive and would preserve much of the green space in the area, while providing much needed senior housing in north Baltimore.

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