

Caution on Changing the Roland Park Shopping Center

By Kathy Hudson
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Friday I learned that changes to the historic Roland Park Shopping Center have been discussed with the [Roland Park Civic League](#). Long and Foster realtors are leaving, so is the beloved Roland Park Bakery and Deli. A casual, moderately-priced eatery is a possible new tenant, as is a drive-through branch of Bank of America, which already holds the spot where Victor's market was located for decades.

At first hearing, I am all for the restaurant and opposed to a drive-through bank. Another restaurant at the center of Roland Park would not be a bad idea, IF traffic and parking could be accommodated so the already dangerous intersection of Upland Road and Roland Avenue would not become worse, IF valet parking were provided so adjacent, tax-paying homeowners would be able to park in front of their houses, and IF lighting and exhaust issues were carefully and tastefully addressed so no violations of the strict, architectural covenants governing this Baltimore City landmark would occur.

I see absolutely no need for a drive-through bank at the Roland Park Shopping Center, and I am a longtime client. If drive-through branches are so important, why did the bank already close two nearby drive-through branches? One was on Cold Spring Lane; the other was at the Rotunda. Each was in an area much more commercial than the center of this residential neighborhood and in spaces not as tight as the Roland Park Shopping Center.

The Roland Park Shopping Center cannot handle the current level of traffic and parking at lunchtime, let alone more traffic from a restaurant and a drive-through bank. A drive-through on the side and back of the building might be risky in terms of security and traffic on Long Lane, not to mention more traffic beside the fire station. High -intensity lighting is not in keeping with this area so close to the Park Lynn Apartments. With violent crime being what it is in Baltimore City, there's also no reason to create more public safety issues.

How would a drive-through be accommodated architecturally without changing the historic structure? The architecture of the shopping center should not be modified to accommodate a stream of cars going through a parking lot to a bank window. This neighborhood needs to reduce the number of cars currently on Roland Avenue, not increase their numbers, speed, sound or pollution.

While I look forward to hearing how the Civic League might work with the shopping center and future restaurant owners, I hope the board will say, thanks, but no thanks, to a drive-through bank window.

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Kathy Hudson is a freelance writer who lives in in Roland Park. Her interests include gardening, literature and city life. She's a terrible cook, so she's always on the lookout for a decent meal, carryout or otherwise. She's written for "The Baltimore Messenger" since 1995 and has had a bi-weekly column, "Hudson's Corner," since 1998. For "Style" magazine she writes spotlights on people and regular garden features.