



## Turnout for Roland Park's annual meeting shows involved citizenry

*Hudson's Corner*

*Kathy Hudson  
hudmud@aol.com*

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The annual meeting of the Roland Park Civic League took place on May 19 at Roland Park Elementary/Middle School. More Roland Park homeowners, Baltimore City Council members, Maryland State legislators and residents of surrounding communities attended than in any year in recent memory.

Living in a responsive, engaged community is stimulating. This year's large turnout was undoubtedly triggered by the events of the past year: the proposed sale of Baltimore Country Club land; the redevelopment of the Marianist property; the campaign to repair and renovate the historic Roland Park fire station.

The response to those issues seems to have stimulated Roland Parkers' community involvement. A new Civic League beautification committee joined forces with the Roland Park Roads and Maintenance Corp. and reported improved islands, restored footpaths and breadboard signs and a first-ever community native plant sale.

Action in Roland Park seems also to have fostered community outreach to others in the city. The first Roland Park spring lecture series included speakers on topics ranging from the Olmsted vision in Roland Park and throughout Baltimore to urban ecology and the Baltimore Green Map to green space policy options for the city.

A new education committee of the Civic League was formed this year, and Andres Alonso, chief executive officer of the Baltimore City Public Schools, spoke at the civic league's annual meeting, thanks to the efforts of the education committee's chairwoman, Muriel Berkeley.

Alonso's priority of students came through loud and clear. He spoke of coming to Baltimore two years ago and finding tall grass at the high school where he first addressed school principals, trash at the entrance of another school and "Soviet-style" cinderblock schools with permanently closed, yellowing windows throughout the system.

Like many Roland Parkers, Alonso showed an understanding that the physical condition of a property reveals the mindset and priorities of its owners. He said he "wants to let the light in" for city children.

Having schools in good shape shows respect for the children and their families and fosters a better climate for learning. While having to slash the budget and trim the workforce, Alonso has succeeded in having more students enrolled in the city schools than in decades.

He reported that no teacher vacancies existed at the beginning of the past school year and none is anticipated for the beginning of the next school year.

Acknowledging that much must be done to improve the quality of the education in most Baltimore City schools, Alonso called for the involvement of all Roland Parkers. While some are already involved professionally, and others are through their children at area public schools, Alonso is right: the education of all city children affects our personal future and that of the city itself.

As City Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton said when she spoke at the Civic League meeting, events in Roland Park last summer were not so much about nimby-ism as about principles.

Clean air, clean water, easy access to the city and education were cornerstones in the founding of Roland Park.

The 2009 Roland Park Civic League meeting showed that those issues continue as priorities for community involvement.

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