

Hudson's Corner: How credible is a study that thinks Hillside is an avenue?

Commentary on planned sale of country club land to Keswick Multi-Care Center

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A traffic study conducted for Keswick Multi-Care Center claims the development of a retirement community at Falls and Hillside roads in Roland Park "will have no significant impact on the existing road system." It deduces this by saying the main entrance would be from Falls Road and that would reduce the potential for traffic cutting through the surrounding neighborhood.

The phrase "main entrance" worries me. Does that mean there would be another, and where would that one be? A complex with 323 beds and an underground parking garage for 403 cars is slated. How could that number of cars not impact surrounding neighborhoods?

With 1,100 households in Roland Park, 403 more cars would equal one additional car for about one-third of the homes. It's almost double the number of cars now parked at one area private school. Traveling the streets in addition to residents and employees would be ambulances, trash removal and delivery trucks and contractors, such as aides who are often hired by residents of upscale retirement communities.

Recently, on Club Road, I watched a fully loaded, multi-ton construction truck try to navigate a sharp turn at Beechdale Road while grinding up to Roland Avenue. It barely missed hitting a parked car.

Schools are re-opening. I wish the traffic study group would spend early mornings and afternoons weekdays observing area side streets. While schools are clustered along Falls Road, Roland Avenue and Charles Street, east-west streets such as Ridgewood, Oakdale, Club, Hillside, Edgevale, Englewood, Beechdale, Wyndhurst and Deepdene roads become twice-daily cut-throughs.

When Cold Spring Lane, Northern Parkway and Roland Avenue are congested, drivers seek side streets and ways to avoid stoplights. Narrow, turn-of-the-century byways begin to resemble dodge 'em car courses or the Monaco Grand Prix, not residential roads built when horses were "parked" at community stables.

Sometimes a steady stream of traffic or clusters of speeding cars travel the side streets. Sometimes lead-footed drivers take curves at a screech, sideswipe mirrors on parked cars and narrowly miss children and oncoming cars. Making side streets one-way would not solve the problem. It often encourages higher speeds.

Changing the first portion of Ridgewood Road to one-way in the 60's is an example. At least one child has been struck by a speeding car. For years, a neighbor has begged me to write about the speed cars travel here just before the bell rings on school mornings. While cut-through traffic on Beechdale Road was diminished by making the first block one-way, cars still fly up that hilly road to Roland Avenue. Some Hillside Road residents say they preferred its previous pot-holed incarnation to the slick, new surface that will surely become a raceway as schools open this year. That winding street would definitely carry more traffic with the proposed development.

To think that area side streets would not be impacted by at least 403 more cars is delusional. How many side streets were studied? How familiar with the community was the company that did the study?

When Hillside Road is cited as "Hillside Avenue" in the study, I wonder.

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