

Talking Points for Nov 5 Meeting Hosted by RPCL Rolden Community Association

My name is Anne-Elizabeth, and as president of the Rolden Community Association I want to thank the Roland Park Place board members and management for coming to the church tonight to share their parking proposal with us. I also warmly welcome our neighbors from RPP, Hampden, Roland Park, Hoes Heights, and Rolden. We'd also like to thank RPCL for arranging for the meeting space and for helping walk us through a process that they are familiar with but is new to our group. To all of you here: thank you for taking the time to join this conversation

Before we begin I want to say a little about how I ended up in this room tonight. I'm here because I really like where I live. I used to live in an apartment at 4130 Roland. When my husband and I were ready to buy a house, the realtor asked where we wanted to look, and we told him on the same block. He laughed at us, but now we live at 4139. Since then we have been fortunate to walk two dogs around the block countless times, and to have had two children who have grown up in this special patch of Baltimore and gone to school just down the street at Elmhurst Nursery School. This small part of the world has shaped their childhoods and our life as a family, and I feel a strong connection to it.

My guess is that many of us here—from Rolden, Roland Park Place, Hampden, etc—have similar stories, similarly strong ties to this place, and that that is what brings you here as well. I feel strongly that our work here tonight is to find a way for us all—no matter what our particular addresses are—to continue to enjoy our neighborhood together, as we do now. Clearly we need to make some changes to account for change and growth in the neighborhood; our work here is to figure out how best to do that.

For some of us in the room, this parking plan is new information, and we look forward to your fresh insights. For those of us on the Land Use Committee of the Rolden Community Association, the parking plan has been something we've been thinking about and talking with RPP management about for several months now. What we'd like to do, then, is summarize for where our thoughts are so far, and then invite your comments and questions.

I'd like to start with what frames this whole conversation for us. As neighbors of Roland Park Place, we see this parking problem as an opportunity to work together on a neighborhood issue. Frankly, that's the only accurate way to look at it, and it's the most productive way. That is, **we fully recognize that a parking crunch at RPP is our *mutual* concern.** And our goal is to resolve that problem in a way that preserves the character of the neighborhood where we all live and that we all cherish. The job for all of us here tonight is to think carefully and creatively about our shared parking challenge, and to work towards a solution together in good faith. We thank you all again for coming to contribute to this process.

Now, on to Rolden Community Association's working position. As you have seen, there are three parts to RPP's parking plan: (1) to expand parking within the current property (2) incorporate

4021 into the PUD and put parking behind the house and (3) tear down the church to make room for a parking lot. The first proposal involves a minor change to an existing PUD; it means that the Roland Park Place management will reconfigure the parking on the existing Roland Park Place property. The second two proposals are different. They both involve a major change to the existing PUD (requiring approval of City Council).

Let's look at the minor change first, and then the two major changes together.

- (1) We are quite open to RPP's reapportioning its current parking spaces, given their (a) willingness to meet our needs for lighting, screening, noise, and so on and (b) RPP's agreement to renew the relevant covenants with the neighbors in both Rolden and Roland Park Civic League communities. We are drafting a list of requests in this regard, and in the interest of time we suggest that we *not* talk in detail about this part of the parking plan during this meeting. If you have questions or concerns about the parking changes in the existing PUD, please see Julia after the meeting so we can incorporate them into the working document.
- (2) The second two proposals regarding 4021 and the church require a change in city law that would allow RPP management to incorporate these properties into their PUD. And here lies our deepest concern. In the short term, adding two properties on Roland Ave to the PUD creates two holes in the residential character of Roland Avenue. For instance, on the lot where we now have green space and an old church building, we would have parked cars and asphalt. We see this as a dramatic and serious change for the neighborhood, just in the short term. Additionally, in the long term, we are very concerned that having these two properties in the PUD will create incentive for RPP to purchase the properties in between for future expansion. Or speculators may purchase the properties in hopes of packaging them for further commercial use

Our current position is that we are absolutely opposed to RPP incorporating 4021 into its PUD. To be frank, we feel to do so would be to poke a hole into our neighborhood. It would mean having a parking lot and an office building between Elmhurst Nursery School and a multi-family home. This hardly fits the character of any neighborhood. Certainly it does not fit the character of ours.

As for the church: The proposal to demolish the church and its green space would have an extreme negative impact on our neighborhood. There are corner churches for miles on Roland Avenue, and this one is ours. It anchors the beauty and character of the neighborhood on the southeast corner, as does the Water Tower to the north. There are emphatically *not* corner parking lots on Roland Avenue.

We are open to preservation possibilities for the church, and we are open to repurposing the church for alternative uses. But at this time, given what we know about Roland Park Place management's statement of parking needs, it is difficult to see that destroying the corner of our neighborhood is something we need to do.

And this leads us to underscore our hope that tonight, or in the very near future, we might come to a more concrete understanding of the parking needs. That is, we know that weekends are a busy time, and special events are crowded. But we also regularly see a significant number of open parking spots—40 or 50 at any given time. Twenty of those parking places are numbered spots – and they were empty every time we surveyed the lot. We also think that RPP could create 10 additional spaces on campus on top of the 33 that they already propose in the minor amendment.

We invite your comments and questions in a moment, but I hope you'll permit me a few closing comments. Whether we are residents of 4000/4100 Roland or of RPP, we share an odd little neighborhood of houses and apartments and small shops and a preschool and retirement community. We walk our dogs and do our shopping. We see Sparkle the Scarecrow on the porch with all the cute little kids at Elmhurst Nursery School. Lots of us honk and wave at the peace activists at lunchtime on Friday. This patch of Roland Ave has its own character—it's not quite Roland Park, not quite Hampden.

Our neighbors in Hoes Heights and Hampden and Roland Park and Roland Park Place appreciate our corner of the world as well, and of course decisions about this two-block stretch of Roland affect them directly. I say all this just to remind us that our situation is in some ways quite simple. We all like our little neighborhood, we like grass and trees . . . and we need to park some cars.

What we need to do now is figure out the least invasive, most community-friendly (and here I mean our larger community—*all* of the groups/areas represented here tonight), and **most environment-friendly solution to the parking problem. We need to *define* the problem precisely, and find a precise and mutually satisfactory solution.**