

August 3, 2008

To my fellow Roland Park residents:

Since the Baltimore Country Club issue is important and likely to continue to exist for some time, I believe it is imperative to begin more regular communication with Roland Park residents.

In so doing, our goals are to inform and involve our community. I remain quite confident that, with an engaged community, we can affect the outcome of this process and achieve something very good for Roland Park and Baltimore City.

The community conversation has been and will continue to be principled. We all must realize that as we oppose the Keswick plan, because of its adverse effects on the residential fabric of the community, we must do so in a way that allows us to continue to talk with representatives of the Country Club and Keswick. *That continued dialogue is absolutely essential for us to reach the goal we desire:* the community purchasing the land as one element of a plan to preserve open space in Roland Park.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since I last wrote to you on July 14, much has happened.

July 17: Community leaders met with representatives of the Country Club, Keswick, and the Baltimore City Council. We expressed our goal of working towards a compromise more positive than the current situation for all parties: that being the community purchasing the land at a fair price from the BCC, assisting Keswick in finding another location for the continuing care retirement community in Baltimore City, and helping BCC to find the means to renovate their clubhouse and remain in Roland Park.

At this meeting, Al Barry representing Keswick indicated that they would ask the Baltimore City Council to pass an ordinance, called a Planned Unit Development (PUD), to allow building of the very large development they have proposed. Subsequent communication from Keswick to the Civic League indicated that "...we anticipate that the *entire 33-acre BCC property* would be included in a Planned Unit Development ordinance."

At the July 17 meeting, we asked Keswick and BCC meeting to provide additional information to our community concerning the proposed development. On July 28, we received a site analysis booklet along with civil and traffic engineering reports. We immediately provided this information to our Land Use Committee to begin a review process so as to advise the Civic League.

An early review of the information shows that the buildings in the project will cover 466,900 square feet not including the underground parking lots. The plans continue to show capacity for 323 units: 225 independent living, 40 assisted living, 18 memory support, and 40 private rooms. We do not know yet the number of units with more than one resident but the independent living units are 1250 square feet in size.

July 17 and ongoing: Given that a PUD requires approval of the City Council, this is really a *political* as well as a *legal* process. Community representatives have visited City Hall and have met with key representatives expressing the community sentiment against the proposal.

July 26: A steering committee held its initial meeting to discuss the process to develop an alternative plan for Roland Park. This group has already had subsequent meetings and is making progress. They are an extraordinary group of individuals with great ideas, and they are organizing a process so that all residents will have an opportunity to participate. We have been encouraged by Baltimore City government representatives to continue this process. More information will be coming concerning the alternative plan(s).

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IN THE FUTURE

I have contacted representatives of Keswick to organize a meeting with the Land Use Committee so that Keswick representatives may answer questions that have already arisen in our initial review. We intend to follow our standard Civic League process for the Land Use Committee to make a recommendation to the Civic League.

We are for transparency of process. We are organizing a second community meeting and will invite Keswick representatives. We are working with Keswick to secure a date.

Some of the issues being discussed are new to the community, for example, a “planned unit development.” The community will need to understand this concept to fully participate and we will try to help to inform. A very good description of the PUD process is in the Transform Baltimore document, still in draft form, written by the BC Department of Planning:

<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/planning/downloads/0708/Draft%20Zoning%20Code%20Diagnosis-%20July%202008.pdf>

Beginning on page 47 is a description of a PUD. This is not light reading but it is important. As this document says, a PUD “...refers to both a type of land development as well as the regulatory process by which such developments are authorized. It is a method of land regulation which promotes typically larger-scale projects with a unitary plan of development that may not

otherwise be achievable under existing zoning or other applicable regulations.” That last phrase is relevant here — *not achievable under the existing residential R-1 zoning*. Since a PUD would overlay the current R-1 zoning its usage in this proposal is a critical and opposable move.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

This e-letter will be followed shortly by a message from residents in our advocacy committee. They will offer specific suggestions for individual and household involvement. Please do get involved and most importantly encourage those who have not yet participated to get involved. Only by so doing, will the solution reflect the community and only then, will the solution be something of which we can be proud.

Philip Spevak
President, Roland Park Civic League