

Rolden Community Association
Response to Roland Park Place Parking Proposals
November 15, 2009

Summary of Rolden Community Association's Position:

The Rolden Community Association is firmly opposed to Roland Park Place's proposed plan to replace a century old neighborhood church (at 4001 Roland Avenue) with a parking lot and to the addition of a parking lot to the grounds of the residence at 4021 Roland Avenue, as these major amendments to the PUD would have a negative impact on the surrounding community. In addition, while the Rolden Community Association has strong reservations about Roland Park Place's plan to change the parking layout at its campus, we offer our *conditional* approval to a minor amendment to the PUD for those changes. Both of these amendments to the PUD are discussed in detail below.

1. Major Amendments to the PUD: 4021 and 4001 Roland Avenue

As neighbors of Roland Park Place (RPP), we see this parking problem as an opportunity to work together on a neighborhood issue. We fully recognize that a parking crunch at RPP is our mutual concern. 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. We have carefully and creatively considered this parking challenge and hope that we can come to a solution that is mutually acceptable.

The Rolden Community Association is opposed to the major amendments that Roland Park Place proposes, to increase its parking spaces by incorporating 4001 and 4021 Roland Avenue into the PUD. We do not wish to see either property turned into a parking lot, and we are concerned that such an encroachment on the residential character of the neighborhood will open the door to future expansion.

In the short term, adding two properties on Roland Avenue 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 a beautiful century-old church building, we would have parked cars and asphalt. We see this as a dramatic and serious change for the neighborhood. In the long term, incorporating these properties into the PUD invites minor amendments that could permit future uses of these properties that are not in compliance with the current zoning or that fail to honor the residential character of our neighborhood. Additionally, 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. Alternatively, speculators may purchase the properties in hopes of packaging them for further commercial use.

1.1 House at 4021 Roland Avenue

We feel that to incorporate the house at 4021 Roland Avenue into the PUD 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. Therefore, we are absolutely opposed to RPP incorporating 4021 Roland Avenue into its PUD. Additionally, we oppose the use of 4021 Roland Avenue for any use other than the residential use allowed by zoning. Although it is legally permitted, it is not acceptable to the community that RPP tear down the building, leave the space vacant and unused with the intention of land banking the property for 10 or 20 or 30 years for future use. This will continue to have a destabilizing effect on the neighborhood and everyone's property values. We want the property to be left in responsible hands so that it fits the residential nature of the community. We would prefer that RPP sell it so that it can be turned back into housing. If RPP wants to hold on to this property, then we would like RPP to lease it to someone who will complete the renovations and rent it out.

1.2 Church at 4001 Roland Ave

There are corner churches for miles on Roland Avenue, and this one at 4001 Roland Avenue, built in 1889, 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 *no* corner parking lots on Roland Avenue. Given this, the limited scope of RPP's parking needs, and our broader concerns about RPP's expansion onto Roland Avenue, we strongly oppose the demolition of the church and the incorporation of 4001 Roland Avenue into the PUD.

1.3 Immediacy of RPP's Parking Needs

Underlying our opposition to the major amendment to the PUD is our perception of the Roland Park Place parking needs. We agree that they need more parking and that the potential loss of spaces at the Rotunda is a serious concern. But, given the size and degree of the need for parking, it seems to us that to create parking lots at 4001 and/or 4021 would be rash, expensive, and would have a negative impact on the neighborhood. There are a few reasons for this:

- A. There is no apparent urgency for RPP's parking crunch. To the best of our knowledge, there is no hint of construction on the Rotunda beginning anytime soon. We understand that RPP needs to plan for construction there that we assume will eventually happen, but there is time to consider other options and spare the church and the neighbors of 4021.
- B. Along with the wait for the Rotunda project, there is also the wait for the sale of the Zurich building. It's entirely possible that the new owner would be able to lease the necessary spaces to RPP. Such a solution would be cost-effective for RPP and better for the environment.
- C. In the latest design, RPP has not maximized the number of parking spaces that it can place on its own property. We conducted our own survey of parking at 5 different times. We found that there were always between 45-55 spaces available, and that the same 13 numbered spots were always empty; another 6 numbered spots were empty four out of the five times when the survey was conducted.

Given all of the above, it is difficult to imagine that rezoning properties in our neighborhood or demolishing a century old church on our corner is the best solution to RPP's parking problem.

We suggest that RPP resolve its parking needs on its current campus and believe that this can be done. Our position on this subject is discussed in detail below.

2. Minor Amendment to the PUD: Changes to the Existing Campus Parking Layout

Rolden Community Association has strong reservations about RPP's plan to add a large number of parking spaces within its campus as this would greatly affect the residential properties immediately surrounding RPP. Rolden's support of the minor amendment to the PUD is subject to a number of issues that we would like RPP to address. The list is not intended to be comprehensive nor definitive because RPP has not yet provided a final plan. We reserve the right to be consulted on and to approve the specific ways in which the issues would be addressed and the final plan.

Design/Landscaping Issues to be Considered:

- A. Installation of effective screening along the entire perimeter of the property that will provide for adequate privacy and mitigate lights from cars shining through to adjacent properties. The fencing, landscaping materials, and their placement depends on many factors and there are many attractive, affordable and easy-to-maintain solutions, so Rolden Community Association will make specific comments to these, once RPP has more concrete plans.
- B. Upgrading of the screening along University Parkway properties where they are no longer attractive or providing adequate privacy.
- C. Considerable backfill will be required to accommodate the elevation changes along the perimeter. We want all these elevation changes clearly specified and outlined so that we can understand how they will impact the neighbors.
- D. Installation of lighting that does not shine light into back yards, but also offers a high level of nighttime safety for RPP personnel walking to their cars.
- E. Retaining of large trees and replacement of greenery in the proposed parking areas as much as possible. If some large trees need to come down, these will have to be replaced by trees that will grow to a similar height.

Construction Issues to be Considered:

- A. RPP will meet with a committee of residents from Rolden and RPCL to discuss any concerns the committee may have relating to the construction process.
- B. RPP will provide reasonable security for the property.
- C. RPP will provide at least the amount of dust control required by law.
- D. To control construction noise, the use of noise generating equipment and machinery will be restricted to normal construction working hours. If RPP shall find it necessary for such equipment to be used outside normal construction working hours, RPP shall seek prior specific approval from Rolden and RPCL.
- E. RPP will control run-off from the construction site to prevent runoff from the construction site across the property of adjoining residents.
- F. RPP will take preventive measures to protect trees and shrubs on adjacent properties during construction and will replace any damaged due to construction.

- G. Screening and landscaping along the perimeter of property adjacent to homes on Roland Avenue and University Parkway will be completed promptly as the weather, season and construction access requirements and activity permit.
- H. In order to maintain as many mature trees as possible, RPP will agree not to remove additional trees as a result of construction unless a qualified landscaper certifies that a specific tree should be removed because of age or disease or because of inadvertent damage to the tree during the construction process.

3. Suggestions for a More Effective Parking Management

We think that a better management of the parking spaces inside RPP's campus, as well as new and creative ways to address this issue will significantly decrease RPP's need of a large number of parking spaces outside of its campus. Some ways to achieve this are presented below.

- A. RPP can add 10 more spaces on its property, in addition to those in the current proposal:
 - 1) Some parking spaces can be created along the Keswick side of the property. There is a shed that could be traded out for a parking space; the shed could be moved to the University Parkway side off the parking lot. There are some other small green areas that may be removed to make more parking.
 - 2) There are green areas close to the historic houses that could become parking without compromising the historic properties. Consider setting back the sidewalk along these houses and put a few parallel parking spaces there. Cut out the hedge between the small parking lot near the historic houses and put in two parallel spaces there.
 - 3) Designate spaces for compact cars and then restripe the spaces to accommodate the smaller cars. This could allow for several spaces.
- B. There seem to be many reserved residential spaces that are not being used at any given time of day. We are not certain whether these spaces have not been assigned to residents or whether in some cases they are assigned to residents who are unable or do not desire to use them. Consider changing the way reserved spaces are handled so that RPP more efficiently uses the spaces it has:
 - 1) Do not provide a particular space for each person so that there is more flexibility on which spaces are available. We have seen many residential spaces available in the evenings. For special events, RPP could know how many spaces would be available for guests and could put them all in one area. If someone is away for a month, then their space can be available for visitors that month.
 - 2) Alternatively, RPP could find out which residential spaces are not being used during an event and open those particular spaces for visitors. Again, if someone is away for a month, then that space can be available for visitors that month.
 - 3) If some of the numbered spaces are not assigned to residents or are assigned to units whose residents will not make use of them, they should be made available to visitors rather than simply having them sit vacant.
- C. Consider using valet parking for special events. Perhaps a special arrangement can be made with a nearby parking lot for this occasional use. Or ask staff to park off campus for those events and make the back lot available for visitors. If valet is used, more cars can be put into the space because they can be double parked.

- D. Consider the use of Zip Cars to reduce the need for residents to own cars. However, we understand that there would need to be demand from the residents in order for this to be a successful program.
- E. Consider resolving the parking crunch by renting spaces at multiple locations. Two nearby parking lots of 20 spaces each may be sufficient. Or lots that are only available on weekends may alleviate the weekend crunch for visitors.

4. Covenant Issues

We would like to have the current covenants extended for an additional 30 years, and expanded to require RPP to assure that the expansion of its parking area will not cause any annoyance to the residents of neighboring properties, including requiring RPP to maintain, repair, and replace as necessary all screening, fencing, and landscaping in such a manner as to ensure privacy, reduction of noise, and mitigation of lights from cars shining through to neighboring properties.

5. Noise Issues

Continue to keep the community informed of efforts to reduce the noise from the chillers on the nursing center. We appreciate the work RPP is doing on this and hope in the spring that we will find that the noise levels have been successfully reduced.

6. Conclusion

In summary, we oppose the incorporation of both 4021 Roland Ave and 4001 Roland Ave into the Roland Park Place PUD. Such changes to these properties would have an extreme negative impact on our neighborhood. Such zoning changes—and certainly the construction of parking lots next to our homes and our nursery school—would severely damage the residential character of our neighborhood. Furthermore, to permit such encroachment into our neighborhood would be to set the stage for declining property values and the continued growth of RPP onto Roland Avenue.

We support RPP's proposal to increase parking within its current campus, provided that RPP adequately addresses the community's concerns about the impact on surrounding properties.

We ask that RPP give thoughtful consideration to our comments and develop a new approach. Fortunately, given that the Rotunda project is not imminent, there is time to explore fresh options and solutions. Ultimately, what is needed here is for RPP to reconsider this parking situation with an eye toward creative solutions, preservation of green space, and respect for the integrity of our shared neighborhood.