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From Tuesday's Sun

Club land-sale proposal protested

Residents urge veto of Roland Park plans

By Brent Jones

Sun reporter

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About 30 Roland Park residents waved signs Monday outside the Baltimore Country Club, urging the club's members to scrap plans that would sell off 17 acres of its property to a care facility.

Neighborhood leaders say they have collected hundreds of signatures opposing the club's proposal to sell the property, north of Hillside Road, to Keswick Multi-Care Center, which plans to build a \$195 million continuing-care retirement community.

The residents acknowledge that the club has the right to sell its land but protested by holding multicolored signs saying such things as "Save the Park in Roland Park" and "Keep Roland Park Green" as club members drove into the facility for a meeting.

Ian MacFarland, a Roland Park resident, said the protest was organized so that club members would realize the overwhelming opposition to the plan. The sale requires approval by two-thirds of the club's 2,000 voting members, with a vote set for July 15.

Officials from the Baltimore Country Club could not be reached for comment.

Most of the residents holding signs outside the facility were children.

"We want to give it to them in our own words," MacFarland said. "The kids play there. They play there a lot. They go sledding in the winter, and that will be a bygone era if they develop that property."

Keswick plans to buy the land for \$12.5 million. Officials from the care facility have pledged to keep 7 acres open and available for the community, but some of the residents say that will not be enough.

"We'd love to see Keswick prosper and have its project but just put it in another site," said Michael J. McQuestion, a Roland Park resident and a protester. "Surely we can find another spot without destroying what's left of the green space here in Baltimore."

If club members approve the sale, the City Council then would need to take up a request to rezone the property to accommodate the retirement community.

The Roland Park Civic League will hold a formal meeting at 7 o'clock tonight at 7 p.m. at St. David's Church to discuss the potential sale. Neighborhood leaders say they are considering attempting to raise enough money from the nearly 1,500 residents to present a bid to the club for the property.

"I don't know if we can raise \$12.5 million, but we'd like to give it a shot," said Mary Page Michel, a Roland Park resident.

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