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Web Editor's E-letter August 2008

Friends,

By the time you read this web-site editor's e-letter, you will already have received an e-letter from Roland Park Civic League President Phil Spevak. In addition to expanding on one or two points made by Phil, I wanted to take a moment to tell you about a couple of new web pages we have created at the RolandPark.org site and to remind you of some important goings-on in August. Most important, I wanted to thank you all for your continuing interest in, and hard work on, the BCC/Keswick affair.

1. MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD CONVERSATION.

Please remember that August 12 is a vital day. This is the date of Mayor Dixon's "Neighborhood Conversation" at Loyola College. This will be a perfect opportunity to let the mayor and her entire cabinet know our views on the proposed development of the BCC land. The event will be at Loyola College, Andrew White Student Hall, 2nd Floor, 4501 N. Charles Street Baltimore, MD 21210. Aug. 12, 6-8 p.m. For more info, call the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods at 410-396-4735. A show of force at this meeting will be a great coup for our efforts.

2. WHY DOES THE WOULD-BE PUD COVER ALL 33 ACRES?

Over recent weeks, I have sometimes been asked, "Wouldn't Keswick's assisted-living facility be a better use for the BCC land than residential development?" Leaving aside the issue that RP does not propose to see residential development on the land either, if at all possible, the short answer is, no. Land development for a facility such as that proposed by Keswick would in fact not be better than residential development. The reason lies in the nature of institutional development.

If the land were sold for the development of, say, 40 new high-end houses, then, once bought, the owners of those houses would have as much incentive as the rest of Roland park to prevent further encroachment. The development would, in effect, contain its own built-in brake.

No such condition obtains in the case of institutional development. The new Keswick facility would be a business before all else. There is nothing inherently wrong with that, except that a static business is a failed business. To remain competitive, Keswick would probably need to expand. To be sure, it might possibly keep its footprint small on the BCC land — supposedly only 10 of the 17 acres it is buying — and go purchase some more land elsewhere. Or it might not. Let's be realistic here. Which is more likely, (a) the

purchase of more land in another part of town or (b) the development of the other seven acres? Maybe not next year. Maybe not next decade. But what about 50 years from now?

Unsure? Let history be your guide. In the 1930s, the Johns Hopkins University occupied but a tiny fraction of its 124-acre Homewood campus. By the late 20th century, success had built upon success. Bursting at the seams, the university went on to expand over thousands of square feet of Wyman Park (on its western border), another of Baltimore's unsung Olmsted gems. This is not to blame the university; it is simply to point out the obvious, namely, that institutions grow over time.

Unconvinced? If no one is contemplating even the potential for development beyond that already proposed by Keswick, why does the "planned unit development" requested by Keswick of the City Council cover, not just 10 acres, not just 17 acres, but all 33 acres of the BCC land? That's right, all 33 acres.

A reasonable person might conclude there to be only one reason: because all parties concerned would like to keep their options open to permit the sale of the rest of the land for high-density development in the future. If the whole 33-acre lot is rezoned now, even if not immediately developed, then in the future BCC could sell the remaining land to an institution, possibly such as Keswick, and no community protest would be able to stop it. If the land is rezoned, it will in all probability be built over — perhaps not immediately, but almost certainly one day.

Our strength is in the zoning/PUD battle, which, as Phil noted in his August 3 e-letter, will be as political as it will be legal. Zoning protests are nothing to be ashamed of. Zoning exists to balance the rights of property owners with the rights of impacted, neighboring parties — us, in this case.

3. NEW ROLAND PARK BCC/KESWICK COMMITTEES' BULLETIN PAGE.

We have created a new page at the RolandPark.org site, a "bulletin board" page for the RP ad hoc committees formed to respond to the BCC/Keswick matter. The page is at this URL, <http://rolandpark.org/BCCAdHocCommittees>. Its purpose is to allow the committees to quickly get the word out on their needs and activities. The bulletin board's first-week content is as follows:

Communications Committee. The Communications Committee concerns itself with the development of the preservationist message and the best means to broadcast it, along with the organization of volunteers. To contact this committee, e-mail volunteer@rolandpark.org.

- 8/3/08: Here is the weekly update for the first week of August: 1. Our team working on the future plan will have completed the first draft in late August. 2. New signs are in and available. Contact signs@rolandpark.org for more. 3. Sixth district Councilwoman Sharon Middleton (our councilwoman) has said again that she is 100 percent behind the

community. Here are the action items for the week: A. Put on your calendar to attend the Mayor's Neighborhood conversation on August 12th at Loyola College from 6-8 p.m. It will be held in the Andrew White Student Hall, 2nd floor. (The White Student Hall is next to the Geppi-Aikens turf field on the corner of Cold Spring Lane and Millbrook.) B. Write or e-mail Councilwoman [Sharon Green Middleton](#) and thank her for her support of our neighborhood. Write Mayor [Sheila Dixon](#) and City Council President [Stephanie Rawlings-Blake](#) and ask them to support our neighborhood by stopping any changes to our rezoning through a PUD request.

Plan Development Committee. The Plan Development Committee (PDC) is charged with developing Roland Park's use of the land if the BCC/Keswick rezoning request is turned down by the city. If the request is rejected, Keswick is released of its purchase obligations and will walk away from the deal, at which point the land will presumably be offered for sale again, allowing Roland Park to put in another offer. (It has already put in three.) Write plandevlopment@rolandpark.org to find out more.

- 8/3/08: The PDC would like to request that people send photos of what they value about the BCC property and images of the ways that they use it now and how it has been used by their family during the past 100 years. If you have electronic images, please send these to plandevlopment@rolandpark.org. If you only have hardcopy photos, please mail these to the Roland Park Office, attn: Plan Development Committee, P.O. Box 643, Riderwood, MD 21139.

Sign Committee. The Sign Committee coordinates the production and distribution of preservationist signs in Roland Park and the surrounding neighborhoods. Contact signs@rolandpark.org for more.

- 8/3/08: We are beginning new phase of our campaign to increase the display of signs across our community expressing our strong opposition to the BCC/Keswick proposal. We have heard clearly from many other communities that have succeeded in similar land disputes that a key success factor is for community members to make their views loud and clear by placing signs all over the community and keeping them up until the dispute is resolved. To that end, if you don't have a sign yet and are interested in getting one, starting today yard signs will be available at these locations/times: (a) **Schneider's Hardware**, Wyndhurst Ave. (normal business hours 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday-Friday; (b) McQuestion house at **214 Ridgewood**; and (c) Heller/Inglesby house at **9 Beechdale** (preferably between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. or 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. to avoid dog waking up 2-year-old). Feel free to pick up as many signs as you feel you (and your neighbors) can make good use of.

4. NEW VIRTUAL READING ROOM PAGE.

We have also created a new page to serve as a repository for scholarly articles on environmentalism in an urban context and the history of 19th century suburban development. The new page is here: <http://rolandpark.org/BCCUrbanHist.html>. Thanks

are due to Mike McQuestion for providing all the initial articles for posting. Anyone with PDFs of other writings that might be suitable, please e-mail them to me at rpcommunication@rolandpark.org.

Best regards,

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