

## Country club pact contentious

### *Civic league upset that it wasn't in process earlier*

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Many Roland Park residents aren't happy that the Baltimore Country Club has signed an agreement to sell 17 of its 30 acres in north Baltimore to the Keswick Multi-Care Center, which wants to build a continuing-care retirement community on the site.

The deal, confirmed by Keswick Chief Executive Officer Libby Bowerman on June 17, was made public June 16, when Roland Park Civic League President Philip Spevak sent an e-mail to civic league members announcing it.

The retirement community would house 323 residents. Some 225 of its slots would be for independent living, 40 for assisted living, 18 would be memory support slots and 40 would be nursing home beds. The plan also calls for 403 underground parking spots.

Tennis courts on the site would be removed, Bowerman said. Club members now play tennis at the club's Five Farms location in Baltimore County.

Keswick's 174-bed facility on West 40th Street would be unaffected.

The planned retirement community would be bordered by Falls Road on the west, extending south to Hillside Road and north to Harvest Road.

Baltimore Country Club members must approve the sale by a two-thirds majority at their July 15 meeting, Spevak and Bowerman said.

Building the community would also require an amendment to the area's Planned Unit Development that dictates what kind of development is allowed on the land, Spevak and Bowerman said. A PUD is required because the property is zoned R-1 residential, Bowerman said.

The plan for the new retirement community has left a sour taste in the mouths of a number of Roland Park residents.

"I was disappointed there was no involvement -- actively -- of the civic league earlier in the process," Spevak said.

If the country club had included the civic league, he feels there might have been a better

chance of a compromise that would have served both the country club and the community, Spevak said.

Maggie Marra, who has lived on Hillside Road for 19 years, was upset to hear about the proposed community, but not altogether surprised.

"It's not a surprise. The country club hasn't been a part of the neighborhood in a long time," She said.

Marra said the scale of the project upsets her, as does the additional traffic it would bring to the neighborhood.

"It's not particularly good news," she said. "I was hoping it would be on a much smaller scale."

Bill Sharpe, who is one of the area representatives to the civic league, said his neighbors are concerned about the loss of green space and the possibility of increased traffic.

But Sharpe, whose house along Ridgewood overlooks the property, said he doesn't feel as if he and his neighbors have been wronged.

"I'm fairly neutral," Sharpe said. "I understand their point of view. I don't feel either side has been treated unreasonably."

Bowerman said she and Keswick board members would reach out to the community to answer any questions residents might have. She said she might post an interactive Web about the proposed center, with opportunities for feedback.

And Bowerman said people could call Kewswick at 410-235-8860 -- "and ask for me" -- to comment or ask questions about the plans. "We must create something that (people) feel comfortable with," she said, adding that Keswick would try to make the project look aesthetically like the surrounding area.