



August 9, 2011

Dear Sustainability Commissioners and Citizens of Baltimore,

In 2010, the Board of Estimates approved a five year agreement with Baltimore Racing Development to bring the Indy Car street racing event to Baltimore. The planning, design and operations of an event of this magnitude takes a great deal of cooperation and creativity. To assure that the race would be successful and meet the needs of City residents, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake assigned key city staff to work closely with the Baltimore Racing Development (BRD), the promoter of the Baltimore Grand Prix, to evaluate and prepare strategies for all aspects of the event.

Recently there has been a great deal of public discourse regarding the removal of trees along the race route. It is unfortunate that this anxiety and concern was fed by misinformation before accurate information by authorized city officials could be presented. As you will see in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) attached, the City never approved the removal of 136 trees for the Grand Prix. City staff and local downtown organizations have worked hard over a year to preserve the trees during the race planning process.

The race course runs along some of our most prominent thoroughfares in downtown Baltimore, requiring thoughtful design solutions to preserve both the integrity of our street systems and accommodate the needs of the Grand Prix. BRD presented its initial plans for grandstand placement to the City in June 2010. BRD's initial proposed design plan was flatly rejected by the Mayor. The BRD team stated that if the proposed design was to be comprised they would be forced to have less seats, affecting the team's and the City's revenue. The Mayor stood firm that they were not cutting down as many trees as proposed and if it meant there would be no race, then there would be no race.

It was at this time that the Mayor assigned me, as the Director of the Office of Sustainability, to coordinate input from all parties and to develop a final, acceptable tree preservation program. The Office of Sustainability was the appropriate choice because we are charged with enforcement of Baltimore's Forest Conservation Program and the Critical Area Management Program. The Office of Sustainability staff has a great deal of experience working with developers to balance environmental preservation with economic development. Our staff includes a certified arborist and licensed landscape architect. The Mayor instructed BRD that the final design plan for the grandstands had to receive final approval from the Office of Sustainability before she would approve the grandstand locations.

The Office of Sustainability staff worked with key city staff and with Baltimore Racing Development representatives for nearly a year. All of trees along the race route were inventoried and evaluated as part of the race track design. Mahan Rykiel Associates, an award winning landscape architecture firm based in Baltimore City, was hired by BRD to provide additional technical and design expertise. Representatives from the Waterfront Partnership, the Downtown



Partnership and key property owners along the race route were included in the discussion for important feedback.

The final MOU shows the success of that hard work. While thousands of people will be able to sit in bleachers and enjoy the race, only 31 trees will be removed on city property by BRD for grandstands. An additional 9 trees will be relocated from the front of the Hilton Hotel and these 9 trees will be replanted on Hilton property in another location as determined by the Hilton. Never, at any time did, the Mayor or any person in City government or our partner's downtown approve of the removal of 136 trees.

The BRD will replace trees removed from all areas either on site in custom made movable pots, or nearby out of the way of bleachers for next year's race. The integrity of the design elements of our major streets downtown has been preserved. Baltimore Racing Development has agreed to plant 194 total new trees as mitigation for removing 31 trees for the race event to take place. Fifty-five trees will be planted along the race course and 139 trees will be planted within tree pits in downtown Baltimore that need to be filled by BRD as a condition of the MOU. These pits have already been evaluated and approved by the City Arborist and the Downtown Partnership. In addition, the MOU specifically outlines maintenance requirements, planting specifications and penalties for failing to comply with the MOU. The Mayor has instructed BRD and the Office of Sustainability to post the MOU on our websites immediately.

By planting 194 total new trees, the Grand Prix is increasing our tree canopy downtown by 163 trees. This is just the beginning of what we can accomplish working as a team with Baltimore Racing Development and our downtown partners.

I want to thank the people that have been working with me on this MOU over the past year. I know that it took time and energy to complete the tree assessments, research appropriate tree pot designs, make engineering changes to bleacher designs and draft legal language. Despite all of the challenges, we have a great agreement in place that we can be proud of. I am looking forward to the race over Labor Day weekend, and to celebrating the planting of 194 trees in downtown Baltimore this fall.

Sincerely,

Beth Strommen
Director
Baltimore Office of Sustainability

Cc: Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mayor
Tom Stosur, Director, Baltimore City Department of Planning