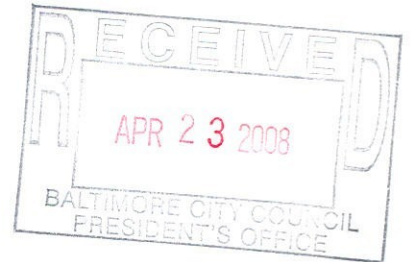




April 9, 2008

Honorable President Stephanie Rawlings Blake
Members of the City Council
Baltimore City Council
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



RE: **Council Bill # 08-0084**
Bond Issue-Recreation and Parks Loan \$16,000,000

Dear President Rawlings Blake:

The Department of Recreation and Parks submits its support of Bond Issue #08-0084. The bond is for the purpose of authorizing the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore (pursuant to Resolution XII of 2008 approved by the members of the Maryland General Assembly representing Baltimore City) to create a debt, and to issue and sell its certificates of indebtedness as evidence thereof, and proceeds, not exceeding \$16,000,000 from the sale of such certificates of indebtedness. Our position is in support of the Bond Issue # 08-0084 Recreation and Parks Loan.

The Department of Recreation and Parks will utilize the funds in the following manner:

1. Recreation Center Expansion in Patterson Park for the new Audubon Center:
FY2010 \$3,000,000

The Patterson Park Recreation Center will be expanded to allow a partnership in programming with the Audubon Society. A second floor (4000 sq ft) will be added for the Audubon environmental education programs. Improvements include a green roof, conversion to geothermal heating/cooling and other LEED upgrades. Expansion of the Patterson Park Recreation Center in partnership with the Audubon Society will increase the environmental education opportunities by providing indoor programming space to complement existing outdoor programs and encourage merging of environmental education with traditional recreation programming. Demand for Audubon programs by families and school groups currently exceeds program capacity. The project is compatible with the park master plan and supported by Friends of Patterson Park. The Audubon Society will enter a partnership agreement with the Department of Recreation and Parks for the Expansion of the Patterson Park Recreation Center that will allow the city and Audubon to combine their programs. Audubon has funded office space and full time staff for outdoor environmental education programming in Patterson Park since 2002. Audubon will relocate all its operations to recreation center and they are raising an endowment to fund staff and programming. Following

renovation, building systems will operate more efficiently. The Department will be able to expand center hours of operation and offer a unique blend of traditional and environmental recreation programming without increasing staff. Audubon will be able to expand their programs to both indoor and outdoor activities, which will allow them to increase capacity and eliminate weather related program cancellations. Attendance in the park and the recreation center is expected to increase. The project supports Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan goals (LIVE 1, 2) (PLAY 1, 2, 3) (LEARN 1).

2. Druid Hill Park Pool and Bathhouse: FY2010 \$1,250,000

Renovations at the Druid Hill Pool include site work to comply with ADA codes, installation of a new spray pad and interior renovations of the bath house to meet ADA codes and allow year round use of the building. Renovation of the Druid Hill Park pool and bathhouse is necessary to comply with Federal Department of Justice requests for improved accessibility. Following the building renovations, the pool bathhouse will be suitable for year round use, not just the 6 weeks of swim season. The project is compatible with the park master plan. Renovation of the Druid Hill Park bath house from a “summer use only” facility to a park facility that can be used all year is more cost effective than building another structure. The new facility will benefit park visitors by offering indoor programming space in an area of the park already popular for outdoor sports. The project supports Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan goals (LIVE 1, 2) (PLAY 1, 2, 3).

3. Rash Field at Inner Harbor: FY2010 \$2,000,000

Rash Field will receive a comprehensive renovation in conjunction with construction of a new parking facility. Improvements will include event space, playgrounds, a dog run, volleyball courts and extensive passive areas. Rash Field is an underutilized park in a premier location on the Inner Harbor. Renovation will allow the current uses of beach volleyball and special events to continue while bringing in new uses including a “science” playground, a dog park, and a variety of passive areas that will attract both neighborhood and visitor use. Renovation of Rash Field, an underutilized area in the Inner Harbor will provide a new recreation experience in a major visitor area of Downtown Baltimore. The new design will encourage city residents as well as visitors to spend more time in the Inner Harbor. The project supports Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan goals. (LIVE 1, 2) (PLAY 1, 2, 3) and is included in the Inner Harbor Master Plan.

4. Druid Hill Park Urban Ecology Center: FY2010 \$375,000 and FY2011 \$375,000

The Parks and People Foundation plans to build a new headquarters in Druid Hill Park. The park location is the site of the former Zoo Keepers Mansion. The project, known as the Urban Ecology Center, will include classrooms, offices and environmental education gardens. The design includes construction of several new LEED buildings as well as renovation of existing park structures. The project

is compatible with the park master plan and supports Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan goals (LIVE1, 2) (LEARN 1).

5. Park Maintenance Program: FY2010 \$1,375,000 and FY2011 \$ 375,000

Critical park features will be renovated in City parks. The project will include installation of new benches and picnic tables, ornamental trash cans, ornamental fences, athletic fences, park lights and replacement of walks. Upgrading standard park features without changing a park's design can be considered maintenance when done on a "bench by bench" case, but has the same impact as a major renovation when done in a comprehensive manner. The project is a continuation of a successful comprehensive maintenance project begun in 2008 and supports Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan goals (LIVE 1, 2) (PLAY 1, 2, 3).

6. Expansion of the Cherry Hill Aquatic Center to include a new Recreation Center: FY2011 \$6,000,000

The Cherry Hill Aquatic Center will be demolished and replaced with a new recreation center including a gym and indoor pool. Expansion of the Cherry Hill Indoor Pool into a new recreation facility will allow the department to operate more efficiently and offer better recreation programming. The Cherry Hill Aquatic Center is difficult to maintain due to poor design. The two school wing recreation centers in Cherry Hill have insufficient space to offer attractive recreation programs. Demolition of the indoor pool and construction of a new recreation center that includes a gym and indoor pool will allow the Department to offer an attractive recreation program, consolidate staff now working at schools #163 and # 160, and return classroom space to the schools. Combining the staff from 3 poorly suited facilities into a single modern facility will save operations costs while allowing for increased programming hours. Attendance is expected to increase and the new center is expected to be a catalyst for other re-investment in Cherry Hill. The Cherry Hill Master Plan (2007 draft) recommends offering recreation in a more central location in the community. The project supports Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan goals (LIVE 1, 2) (PLAY 1, 2, 3) (LEARN 1).

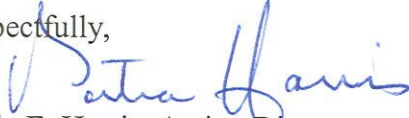
7. Expansion of the Middle Branch Rowing Center: FY2011 \$1,250,000

The Middle Branch Rowing Club will be expanded to create additional interior programming space and new boat storage space will be constructed to meet the demands of local youth and adult programs. The location of the new boat storage space will be determined following recommendations in the Middle Branch Master Plan. Expansion of Middle Branch Rowing Center is needed to meet the demand for more boat storage space as well as the demand for more rental space on the upper floor of the center. Expansion of the Middle Branch Rowing Center will generate increased revenue for the Department from rental fees for the meeting rooms and the boat storage space. Demand for boat storage is more than double the current capacity and larger events are currently turned away from the meeting rooms. The project supports Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan

goals (LIVE 1, 2) (PLAY 1, 2, 3) and is recommended in the Middle Branch Master Plan (2007).

The Department of Recreation and Parks supports Council Bill #08-0084.

Respectfully,



Portia E. Harris, Acting Director

PEH/VSO

cc: Angela Gibson, Legislative Liaison to the City Council