

Baltimore neighborhoods get first part of Grand Prix money

By [Rachel Bernstein](#), *The Daily Record*, July 7, 2011

Downtown Baltimore's neighborhoods are about to see some of the benefits of the Baltimore Grand Prix, in terms of cash.

Officials from Baltimore Racing Development LLC, the organizer of September's Grand Prix, agreed in their contract with Baltimore City to pay \$100,000 annually to the neighborhoods most affected by the race. The first set of checks to the neighborhood organizations went out two weeks ago, with about \$33,000 being split among nine neighborhood associations, said Baltimore City Councilman William H. Cole IV.

Many of the neighborhoods are using the money to clean and fix landscaping, Cole said.

"This is our way of saying 'We know we're affecting you, here is our effort in giving back to you, in helping the neighborhoods,'" said ChiChi Nyagah-Nash, director of special projects for Baltimore Racing Development.

The groups that will receive a share are Ridgely's Delight Neighborhood Association Inc., Otterbein Community Association, Harbor Way Condominiums, Harbor Way East Condominium Association, Harbor Walk Townhouse Association, Sharp-Leadenhall Planning Committee, Federal Hill Neighborhood Association, Federal Hill Main Street Inc., and Pigtown Main Street.

Ridgely's Delight will use its total \$18,000 to hire members of Downtown Partnership of Baltimore Inc.'s cleaning team to help clean the neighborhood a few times each month, said association President Chris Comlon. Other projects will include other landscaping and putting up new flags on neighborhood light poles. Comlon said the association's happy it's getting a good sum of money for improvements usually done by neighborhood volunteers.

"We've always been broke," Comlon said. "So we'll see what kind of improvements this could make."

Jane Seebold, executive director of Federal Hill Main Street Inc., said the neighborhood's \$6,000 allotment will buy eight large planters to place around key intersections at Charles, Light and Cross streets. The bulk of the money will go toward the \$300 planters, soil and flowers, so the neighborhood will have a total of 28 planters, she said. The neighborhood is also expecting to hang a welcome sign for the Federal Hill community in time for the race to lure visitors to the area, and to replace decorative flags with Federal Hill's name.

Seebold said the association will also launch a storefront campaign to encourage store owners to reinvigorate shops by painting and cleaning up, and will work with owners of vacant properties to make the properties look more attractive.

“It’s always nice to have some money to help with beautification,” Seebold said. “We’re excited to have all these visitors so close to our business district, and we want to attract them to see around up here.”

BRD has also offered to assist affected neighborhoods in cleaning and landscaping efforts, and has already spent a weekend working with residents of Ridgely’s Delight preparing the neighborhood for the race, Nyagah-Nash said.

To further engage the communities about the Baltimore Grand Prix, the Baltimore City Department of Transportation has released a schedule of three open house informational sessions. The sessions will inform citizens of the traffic management plans for the race, including modifications to traffic and transit routes in the downtown business district.

Representatives from the Baltimore City Department of Transportation, along with the Maryland Transit Administration, the Maryland Transportation Authority and the Baltimore City Parking Authority will be available at the sessions to provide information about road closings, detours, bus diversions and parking changes.

Officials from Baltimore Racing Development will also be on hand to provide details as to how employees who work inside the racing area will be able to get to their job sites during the event.

The sessions will be held July 13 to July 15 at the Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore Marriott Waterfront and Tremont Grand, respectively.

Starting Friday, Sept. 2, and continuing through the race weekend, Light, Conway, Pratt and Russell streets will be closed between 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., city officials have said.