

Final Opportunity for Public Input to the Bowman Field Tree Removal Program

--Draft Environmental Study Fails to Commit to Mitigate Tree Losses and Explain the Purchase or Condemnation of Airspace Rights over Homes



The public has a final opportunity to talk to the Louisville Regional Airport Authority (“LRAA”) about the need to provide more mitigation for the trees lost around Bowman Field. The final hearing is Tuesday, June 28, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Breckinridge Inn at 2800 Breckenridge Lane.

“When it’s all said and done, between 250 and 300 trees will have been permanently destroyed,” said Michael Hayman, Seneca Garden resident and arborist. “Over 80% of those trees are native hardwoods and evergreens that are 90 feet tall or higher or that would have grown to those heights. The large canopy of oaks, maples, elms, ash, and spruce that have shaded homes and Seneca Park and the Pee Wee Reese walking trail for decades will never be seen again. The permanent loss of this canopy can never be replaced, even if smaller trees are planted.” He added that the targeted trees include the Living Memorial Grove of Trees along the Pee Wee Reese walking trail, created by donors for their cancer survivors and lost loved ones.

“The LRAA does not seem to understand that the community at large will suffer a loss from all of the trees that are destroyed whether they are in someone’s yard or in the Living Memorial Grove or in Seneca Park,” said Leslie Barras, Plea For The Trees. “Replacing a 100-foot tall pin oak in a private yard with two dogwoods is a start on mitigation for that homeowner, but doesn’t compensate for the larger loss to the community. The Mayor’s Urban Heat Management Study shows that these trees provide important cooling effects to Metro as a whole. The planned mitigation needs to be expanded. The Draft Environmental Assessment doesn’t describe what trees will be lost or what the real environmental and community impacts will be. There are no commitments in the study for mitigation for tree destruction in Seneca Park and no commitments in writing for any replacement trees even in private yards.”

“My kids call the giant oak in our back yard the ‘Tree of Life,’” said a mom in the 3100 block of Taylorsville Road. She describes their yard as an “oasis” because of the oak, and cannot imagine what a loss it would be and why it’s targeted because it’s not near a runway that’s used much.

The other issue not explained in the Draft Environmental Assessment is the LRAA’s proposed purchase or condemnation of airspace rights over at least 40 homes to be able to remove trees now and in the future. Airspace rights over 51 homes in the Drayton Drive, Landor Avenue, and the Taylorsville Road neighborhoods were acquired by LRAA in the early 1990s, and homeowners may not even know they do not have rights to the air over their house. “My house is targeted for airspace acquisition,” said a concerned homeowner on Drayton Drive.” “What does that mean? Can I even put an addition on my home? What will it do to my property values?” I expected the draft study to explain all this and there’s no discussion whatsoever. The study is not the ‘full disclosure’ document it’s supposed to be. The LRAA should be prepared to answer these questions and more at the June 28 hearing.”