



Photo by Brian Branch-Price

John Tichenor, standing next to a model of the Statue of Liberty torch, says the concept of Liberty State Park should 'be like Central Park'

## GREEN DREAMS

### Advocates favor a passive Liberty Park

By AL FRANK

A Liberty State Park green and free of the fancy development proposals that have caused so much turmoil in the 12 years since it opened on Jersey City's waterfront is the goal of a new citizens group.

Friends of Liberty State Park Inc. hopes letter-writing campaigns and other actions will persuade state officials the time has come to end talk about turning valuable acreage into marinas, golf courses and parking lots.

Even with 70 percent of its land area devoid of facilities, Liberty State Park, with its dramatic views of the Statue of Liberty, New York Harbor and the Manhattan skyline, still manages to attract more visitors than any other park in the state's system, said John Tichenor, the president of the friends group.

"We'd like it to be like Central Park," said Tichenor 41, a marine surveyor for an insurance company who moved to Jersey City in 1980. "You have enough room here just to walk, and look at birds, go on a picnic—passive recreation, not basketball courts or baseball fields."

Already more than 400 people find the idea appealing and have contributed from \$2 to \$150 to join the Friends.

In many ways, Tichenor's comparison with the Manhattan landmark is apt. At 840 acres, Central Park is similar in size to the 700-acre Liberty State Park. Also, when all the residential and office development projected for the Hudson River waterfront is finished, the New Jersey park will provide an oasis similar to its Manhattan counterpart.

Yet, despite a plan released by the state a week ago that would designate 150 acres of the New Jersey park for passive recreation other plans call for

facilities that Tichenor said will deprive Hudson County residents of badly needed space to simply breathe the air and take in the view.

The other plans call for a golf course to take up most of the park's center, and more than half the \$45 million needed for the New Jersey Museum of Science and Technology in the park's northwest corner has already been raised.

Saving it was short of public funds, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which administers the park, formed the Liberty State Park Development Corp. in 1984 to find private entrepreneurs to build park facilities in exchange for long-term operating leases.

The development corporation's first contract was signed last year with a Philadelphia company for a \$12 million marina complex, a project that has been opposed by the city.

Tichenor was one of the plaintiffs in Jersey City's first lawsuit against the project but the Friends group, though founded as a result of the controversy, has now evolved into one that wants to shepherd the park's future, he said.

"Why does this state park have to be different from all the other state parks?" he asked, adding it is now evident that the DEP's plan to foster "public-private partnerships" is just not suited to Liberty State Park.

"The development corporation has been going for four years and hasn't put in one bench, one picnic table, one blade of grass," he said. "I think we need people in charge of the park who are willing to plant trees they are willing to let grow for their children to sit under. That's how we have to approach the park, not that everything has to be done

instantly.