

Statement opposing Governor's commercialization/privatization proposals

which include a hotel, conference center, company to book large-scale admission-fee events on waterfront lawns, commercial amphitheater, amusement park, restaurants, second marina, etc.

DEP Commercial Plans - <http://www.nj.gov/dep/sustainableparks/docs/dep-lsp-report.pdf>

Where the public sees priceless and inspiring free open space behind Lady Liberty, Gov Christie sees wasted space to lease out to companies. He wants to turn LSP into a commercial venue.

The Governor's "Sustainable Parks" goal of wanting LSP "to pay for itself" is a dead-wrong philosophy. Parks serve the Public Good and should not have to pay for themselves. LSP was envisioned and funded with state and federal funds to be a free and green open space park behind Lady Liberty and chunks of this special American landmark shouldn't be leased out in long term leases. LSP already contributes \$1.5 million annually (from marina, two restaurants, ferry concession and special events) to the annual \$3.5 million in operational costs. The drop in the bucket \$2 million comes from legislature's \$39 million allocation for state parks

Governor Christie has launched a war on LSP as the free and green open space park behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island. His DEP announced its open space-taking, historic landmark Terminal confiscating, traffic jam-causing commercialization/privatization proposals which include a hotel, conference center, a company to book large admission-fee events on a waterfront lawn, commercial amphitheater, amusement park, restaurants, indoor sports arena, second marina, etc.

LSP is The People's Park - a special gift from the People to the People – NJ's Bicentennial gift to America. LSP is sacred American public space due to its adjacent national shrines to democracy. Its very scarce and peaceful urban open space and its dramatic views should be fully accessible public land for the urban people and all visitors to enjoy forever. Let LSP be a Park!

These proposals cast aside 39 years of the overwhelming majority support - the broad public consensus for a free and green LSP and strong opposition to commercialization and privatization - no matter what revenue was promised. From the beginning LSP was envisioned and supported as a peaceful open space urban state park in the "Olmsted" Central Park tradition. People have always wanted lawns for unstructured recreation, picnic areas, playgrounds and paths.

The proposals are an attack on the urban people's quality of life and an attack on the park's purpose and meaning to people's lives. LSP is sacred NJ and American public land because it is next to the world's greatest symbol of democracy and freedom. Liberty State Park is one of our nation's and world's most special public spaces, a national and international treasure. There is no better neighbor and no better tribute to Lady Liberty than a free and green, pristine open space park with panoramic views where people of all cultural backgrounds, religions and colors can enjoy themselves together. The park is a powerful spiritual public resource, an inspiring public space with deep emotional force for all Americans to enjoy.

The park is essential for the quality of life of the urban people, as a much needed green haven, oasis, sanctuary, refuge and escape – the backyard for the urban people. Thousands more people are moving to JC in next couple of years and many more after that so the impact of these plans on open space, traffic and parking spaces, will have even more of an impact in the coming years. The plans will inevitably take away priceless urban open space, and restrict public access by traffic jams and confiscate free parking spaces, especially on summer weekends when LSP is jam-packed and it's already difficult to find free parking spaces for people wanting to enjoy the park as a park. The quality of life of urban people needing full access to the park will suffer.

LSP's green openness, beauty and views of Lady Liberty, Ellis Island, NYC, the harbor and the Verrazano Bridge uplift visitors from around our nation and world and they don't need more tourist attractions. The Statue Cruises ferries, restaurants and Liberty Science Center are enough.

The Governor must provide public hearings and a public comment period – we have the democratic right to such an open, full public process. The DEP commercialization and privatization proposals document and DEP media statements had NO mention of holding public hearings or having a public comment period and ONLY referred to a “stakeholder process”. EVERY PARK USER and EVERYONE WHO CARES TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES ON LSP'S FUTURE IS A STAKEHOLDER The Governor must honor America and not subvert democracy – by living up to the highest standards of public participation for this priceless park behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island, our powerful national shrines to democracy.

Appropriate, small-scale privatization would seem fine such as a small Terminal restaurant/cafe (but no hotel), temporary skating rink, food carts, kayak rentals, current bike rentals, etc. but not leases for large scale facilities, and extra park staff must manage special events, including periodic weekend concerts, not a private corporation.

Summary of Negative Impacts

Commercial amphitheater, amusement park, giving a private company the right to book many large-scale events on waterfront lawns would inevitably lead to non-winter weekend traffic jams, taking of free parking spaces and severely harm LSP's public access, enjoyment and serenity.

- taking away open space for hotel parking lot where a field was, relocation of maintenance complex, taking away public space under shed and a company regularly doing large events on waterfront lawns would restrict public access to the park.
- company booking large scale events on waterfront lawns, a commercial amphitheater or amusement park would restrict public access on crowded summer and warm fall & spring weekends by inevitable traffic jams and taking away of free parking spaces
- regular large-scale lawn concerts & amphitheater concerts harming LSP's tranquility.
- Shameful to lease out historic landmark Terminal (cost \$150 million to restore it plus J\$10 million to do Sandy renovation. Concourse is used for variety of festivals, etc.
- historic sheds - HOTELS SHOULD BE OUTSIDE LSP as in CENTRAL PARK.

Corrections to facts stated in Development Proposals report

- **Liberty State Park is 1200 acres, approximately 600 acres of land and 600 acres of water/marsh** and not 1600 acres as stated in the Development Proposals Document. The Interior nature restoration which will start this spring is 240 acres of the 600. Not counting buildings, roads, parking lots, Liberty Walk, already leased land, swamp area N. of Nature Center, uplands of Richard Sullivan and Caven Point natural areas, etc. the 38 acres is a much higher percentage of available park open space. Also the report states that 38 acres is “contemplated” so it could be more and lawns could become parking lots.
- **LSP is already a “world class destination”**, with the expansive open lawns, beautiful gardens, incomparable, powerful dramatic views of Lady Liberty, Ellis Island and Manhattan, with the ferries to those national shrines to democracy and with Liberty Science Center. The gradual nature restoration of the park’s Interior, with diverse ecological areas, will make the park even greater and an eco-tourism destination.
- **Liberty State Park is not “underutilized”**. On summer weekends and also warm spring and fall weekends, especially Sundays, LSP is jam-packed and parking lots are full. The park is heavily used for free recreation without admission fees - for relaxing, picnicking, barbecuing, flying kites, fresh air, open space, enjoying nature, uplifting our spirits, for hearing free music, and periodic admission-fee weekend events, approved by LSP staff.

Please see middle of page 7 for this Facts/False section

Summary of economic points

Governor’s Sustainable Parks goal of wanting LSP to pay for itself is dead-wrong, ludicrous obscene Parks should not have to pay for themselves! Parks serve the Public Good. LSP was funded with state and federal funds to be a free and green open space park. Chunks of this special American landmark shouldn’t be leased out in long term leases.

*DEP Report: MAKING LSP PAY FOR ITSELF – “ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE”
“WITHOUT THE NEED FOR FUNDING FROM GENERAL REVENUE”*

(LSP only needs \$2 million a year from the State Park Service budget – a drop in the bucket.)

It is the states false premise and deceptive spin that states LSP has a "deficit". Liberty Park according to the state costs \$3.5 million a year out of the \$39 million legislative allocation for all State Parks - and the park actually raises and contributes \$1.5 million so the park only costs \$2 million a year - a drop in the bucket for this priceless urban state park behind Lady Liberty. What is wrong in continuing to take LSP operational costs from the annual State Parks budget. What’s broken – what are we trying to fix. Taxes pay for parks and schools.

- Support for parks, through the Green Acres Program bonds and funding, is one expense that has enjoyed taxpayer approval time and again.
- New York state has launched “NY Parks 2020 – Renewing the Stewardship of our State Park System” and will invest \$900 million in its state parks in the next five years; What will be the infrastructure costs and bonding costs to support these proposals and it is also

necessary for any so called master planner to do major traffic studies with the park already jam packed summer weekends.

- LSP brings in \$1.5 million annually from the Liberty Landing Marina and the two restaurants it sublets to – Liberty House and Maritime Parc – and Statue Cruises ferry lease, and special use permits. LSP already has two major admission-fee tourist commercial attractions – ferries to Lady Liberty & Ellis Island & Liberty Science Center.
- Also LSP makes additional money from periodic special events such as music festivals like Star Ledger Jazz Festival, All Points West rock festival, Red Bull Air Race Tuffmudder, etc. when promoters come to the park for “one-off” events and the park and not a private company approves their dates and amount of events.
- Many weekend special events occur. FOLSP OPRAed to find out about 2016 bookings.
- **LSP has economic benefits to local and state economy** -already adding immeasurable money to the local and state economy. LSP with its dramatic and inspiring views and Liberty Science Center and ferries to the national monuments, attracts visitors from around NJ and nation, and makes JC more attractive to people and businesses considering relocating to JC or already here. When the Interior opens with its nature paths, eco-tourism will benefit local and state economy.

Below are the main proposals in their 18 page report with Friends’ opposition comments.

“North Zone” DEP Plans

Train Sheds Plans

- **A low-rise hotel within the envelope of the train shed;**
- **Recreation of famous restaurants (past and present) from all over New Jersey;**
- **A museum tied into the historic use of the space and its location, such as a national museum of immigration or a museum of transportation and technology.**

“DEP recommends that these ideas (and others that may arise) be further explored by an outside project planner and that the planner present to DEP those options for the use of the space that address the rapidly deteriorating condition of the train shed, honor its history, attract increased numbers of visitors, and generate revenue for the Park” “The first challenge is parking, which is already insufficient for any event of significant size.”

This means they want the S. Field behind Terminal for parking. The ferry lot is fine for large events and large scale events must have transportation plans that emphasize mass transit with ferries from NYC, light rail and shuttle buses (but regular large scale events on waterfront lawns or in a commercial amphitheater would lead to taking of free parking spaces and traffic jams).

Train Sheds Plans - Opposition Comments

- There should be no hotel inside Liberty State Park. Hotels and conference centers should be built in Jersey City and the surrounding area for ratables. New Yorkers would never allow a hotel inside Central Park. The document says a hotel would need parking so that would mean taking open space such the riverside South Field on the south side of the Terminal for parking lot.
- An admission-fee train museum sounds good. Its main flaw seems to be that it also would require parking spaces and that also would inevitably lead to the taking of the South Field for a parking lot unless there was a system on weekends that museum attendees would have to show proof that they parked in ferry lot or light rail lot (and took a shuttle bus). The DEP wouldn't seriously consider this museum anyway since museums don't make money and DEP wants a hotel probably with NJSEA bonding. Liberty Science Center and the ferries to Lady Liberty and Ellis Island are all LSP really needs in the way of tourist attractions which have their satisfactory parking lots.
- A couple of studies have recommended the space under the sheds for a variety of uses such as a few trains to display, historical signs and open public space for festivals extending from the Terminal Concourse, craft and green markets, etc. and that flexible kind of space if the Sheds can be restored cheaply in the future, may work out best.

Historic Landmark CRRNJ Terminal Building Plans:

“The historic Central Railroad of New Jersey train terminal building has impressive architecture and interiors. Unfortunately, its layout, designed to move rail passengers quickly and efficiently to ferry boats, is not terribly practical for other use, and its size limits what activities might be possible within it. The interior layout has been changed radically at least three times over its life; most recently the interior was destroyed by Superstorm Sandy. As the State completes rehabilitation from storm damage we do not intend to reintroduce security screening for the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island into the building. Previous efforts to rent the building for events and conferences were not successful. The biggest obstacle is the lack of an adjoining hotel, which makes the market for such events almost non-existent. Lacking an on-site caterer or commissary, the facility is at an even greater disadvantage. “

Four possible options have been discussed.

- **Lease the building to an adjoining hotel in the Train Shed**
- **Restaurant/bar with indoor and outdoor seating to take advantage of the incredible views of Lower Manhattan and New York Harbor, along with shops and stores**
- **Event/conference center**
- **Small event/catering hall**
- combined with smaller cultural uses-artist studios, art galleries, theater.(smokescreen ideas -Producers can already arrange with park staff to have theater shows at Terminal.)

“DEP recommends that these ideas (and others that may arise) be further explored by an outside project planner and that the planner present options ...that **generate revenue for the Park.**”

Historic Terminal Building Plans - Opposition Comments

The historic 1889 CRRNJ Terminal cost \$150 million to restore in the 1980's and it opened full time to the public in 1993 – from a structure abandoned in 1967. \$10 million was just spent on renovating the Terminal after Sandy. **So this historic landmark must be kept as public space with its Concourse for varied festivals**, and its beautiful Waiting Room and Blue Comet Auditorium. The hotel and conference center, and several restaurants (though one may be fine as in the Terminal commuter days) would be the only proposal they want for Terminal and Sheds to start to pay for the “up to \$100 million” cost of reusing the sheds with asbestos in the concrete. The Terminal, LSP's historic “cornerstone” is a national treasure, where commuters and sixty percent of Ellis Island immigrants passed through, and it is part of the Historic Trilogy with Lady Liberty and Ellis Island, and no part of this great public building should be given on a silver platter to a company with a lease. The Concourse must be open to the public for various festivals, rainsite for different events, etc. **It would be fine to have after hours events in the Concourse or Waiting Room but to protect the public historic landmark Terminal's use, the DEP can just hire qualified additional staff** (to add to the one current special events staffperson) -instead of a private company booking after hours events. The only idea that may be fine would be a small Terminal restaurant/cafe (as Terminal had a restaurant in its commuter era) in the room next to the “Waiting Room” where the National Park Service did security for ferries.

“Central Zone” - Opposition Comments

from DEP report “Event Management”

“Park staff currently manages events. They do a great job with limited resources and have successfully brought and managed some large events to the park, but it is not their expertise and not the primary focus of their jobs. **DEP should contract with a third party event planning firm** who could market events, **book events**, negotiate fees, and help the event producer with applications and permits.” (yoga, art and fitness classes etc. are just a smokescreen for large-scale events as such classes can be arranged now with the park staff).

Document recommends an **event planning company having power to book major events on the waterfront lawns to generate revenue and profits for the company**. Such an event planning company would have a major negative impact on public access to LSP due to traffic jams and taking of free parking spaces. Though the document mentions innocent things like yoga, art and fitness classes, poetry readings, etc. (LSP's staff can work with anyone wanting to have these activities now, possibly in partnership with Jersey City), the major danger here is a private company would book way too many and too large events on a waterfront lawn which would cause spring and summer weekend traffic jams and the taking away of free parking spaces, just as an amusement park or commercial amphitheater would do in the South Zone.

DEP could just hire one or two extra event planning specialists to add to LSP's staff without a private company middle entity and the park staff would not have profits as its goal. Such an

event planner would turn the “Green Park” into an event venue with Director of Parks and forestry and LSP Superintendent not having the final say over how many events and what size events. This would be privatizing of the great lawn behind Lady Liberty where promoters have wanted to have as a regular venue for decades and this event company would turn this waterfront lawn into a commercial venue for major events, ignoring LSP’s purpose as a free park that must have public access on summer weekends without traffic jams and parking space confiscation.

“South Zone” - Opposition Comments

- Friends support a decade old plan for free athletic field only where old pool parking lot is.
 - The South Zone acreage of 16 acres, includes not just the essential, out of sight, Maintenance Complex (and there is no alternative to relocate it other than open space) but also the 42 year old **Camp Liberty**, a popular camp serving a diverse urban population.
 - an **amphitheater** causing summer weekend traffic jams and take away free parking spaces,
 - **marina** at south end. LSP already has major marina at north end. South end only needs the 3 jetties to be restored and is the peaceful side of park behind Lady Liberty and dominated by picnickers. Also walkers, joggers, bicyclists and those using the public boat launch use this area.
 - **amusement park** – LSP is a park not an amusement park, an idea defeated in 1977 and 1981.
 - **indoor sports field house**. A publicly financed one for free active recreation or even a multiuse athletic field where old pool parking lot was (Liberty National was supposed to pay \$500,000 toward such a field when their previously planned first of three towers opened), would be nice but not an admission fee complex. An admission fee sports house would also cause traffic jams.
- Private amusement parks, commercial amphitheatres, indoor sports facilities belong OUTSIDE OF LSP on private property.**

The facts in response to Development Proposals

Their proposals are at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/sustainableparks/docs/dep-lsp-report.pdf>

GET THE FACTS

The future of Liberty State Park is at stake. The Governor’s philosophy - that a park that doesn’t pay for itself is wasting money - couldn’t be more wrong. New Jerseyans have always supported spending on parks. LSP is a priceless public resource. Its vital role as a peaceful urban open space park - “green infrastructure” - and its true purpose as a free park would be severely diminished by these plans which would turn LSP into a commercial venue.

The Governor's 18-page report calling for LSP development is full of myths and misinformation: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/sustainableparks/docs/dep-lsp-report.pdf>

False: The Governor’s proposal only accounts for a small fraction of the Park’s total land area. Liberty State Park has 1600 acres – surely we can develop on 38 of those acres.

Fact: Liberty State Park is 1200 acres, 600 acres of land and 600 acres of water/marsh and not 1600 acres as the DEP report claims. The planned Interior natural area is 240 acres of the 600. Not counting buildings, roads, parking lots, Liberty Walk, already leased land, uplands of two existing natural areas, etc. the 38 acres is a much higher percentage of available open space. Additionally, there's the inevitable impact of weekend traffic jams, new parking lots etc. which will restrict and disrupt LSP's public access, enjoyment and peacefulness and permanently alter LSP's true purpose and landscape.

- The park is heavily used for varied free unstructured recreation without admission fees - for relaxing, picnicking, barbecuing, bicycling, walking, jogging, flying kites, enjoying nature and views, spontaneous ballgames, free concerts, etc. Also, LSP is usually booked with a variety of special events on May through October weekends.

False: Governor Christie is right that LSP should pay for itself and that the park has a "deficit" of \$2 million a year.

Fact: Parks are a Public Good which New Jerseyans have voted in favor of time and again.

- A park is a park and don't have "deficits". Since LSP raises \$1.5 million annually, LSP only needs \$2 million from the \$39 million state park legislative budget. So instead of calling the \$2 million a "deficit", the \$1.5 million raised is a contribution to the park's budget, and decreases the park's share of the annual state park allocation. What is wrong in continuing to take LSP operational costs from the annual State Parks budget? The \$1.5 million comes from the marina and restaurant leases, the ferry concession and special events .LSP should continue to get its share of state park funding from the legislature.
- NY state has launched "NY Parks 2020 – Renewing the Stewardship of our State Park System" and will invest \$900 million in its state parks in the next five years; Governor Cuomo's letter to New Yorkers begins with "The NY State park system is one of our state's most treasured public assets, and one of the most prized services State government provides its citizens".

False: Liberty State Park is underutilized and millions more would come to LSP with the DEP's commercialization proposals.

Fact: Liberty State Park is jam-packed on spring, summer and warm fall weekends and runs out of parking spaces on many Sundays. Any urban park would naturally see its heaviest usage on weekends. LSP is regularly used by local residents for varied free, unstructured recreation and is enjoyed by New Jerseyans and by tourists from around our nation and world.

- **Over 4.5 million people come to LSP each year** with 600,000 going to Liberty Science Center, 600,000 going to the Statue Cruises ferries, and many for special events such as charity runs, festivals etc. The majority come to enjoy the urban open space and views.
- **Liberty State Park is booked almost every weekend with a variety of special events** every weekend from May through Oct and which are managed effectively by park staff.

False: Commercial development would improve the value of the park.

Fact: LSP is a priceless state and national treasure as the free park behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island. Green open space is an invaluable asset to local communities. Mounting evidence and numerous studies – including from the DEP itself – show that benefits from public parks include:

- **Increased property values.** Proximity to parks has been found to have a positive impact on property values. In addition to helping homeowners, local governments get increased revenue from property taxes. Some studies have shown this effect to be quite large – for example, one study estimated that the “Central Park effect” increased the aggregate market value of all properties within three blocks of New York’s most famous park by a whopping \$17.7 billion. More residential development is already planned near LSP.
- **An improved quality of life for urban residents.** Parks provide open space for recreational activities as well as a sanctuary from densely populated and concrete areas. No wonder studies show that the closer people live to parks, the happier they are.
- **LSP’s value to its primarily urban users as traffic jams would hinder and discourage weekend free use of the park.**
- **Sustainability and resiliency benefits.** Parks play an important role in preserving and supporting healthy environments. Trees help fight global warming by absorbing carbon dioxide and other pollutants; moreover, tree canopies, garden vegetation, grassy areas, and other green spaces in parks capture and filter rainwater, reducing the amount of oil, salt, and pollutants flowing from roads and lawns into nearby waterways.

False: Advocates like the Friends of Liberty State Park are against any development or commercialization efforts whatsoever.

Fact: Appropriate, small-scale privatization would be fine such as a small Terminal restaurant (but no hotel), temporary winter skating rink, food carts, kayak rentals, current bike rentals, etc. but not leases for large scale facilities, and extra park staff must manage special events, including periodic weekend concerts and Terminal after-hours events, not a private corporation. Governor Christie’s plans go far beyond these reasonable park-compatible proposals and would turn LSP into a commercial venue.

False: The Governor’s plans are needed to “create a world-class destination”.

Fact: LSP is already a “world class destination”, as a sacred American public space behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island and its dramatic and always inspiring views of those national monuments, Manhattan and the New York harbor. The Statue Cruises ferries and Liberty Science Center are enough “tourist” attractions and visitors from everywhere enjoy the expansive open green lawns and beautiful gardens. The nature restoration of LSP’s Interior, with diverse ecological areas and trails, will make the park even greater and an eco-tourism destination.

False: "New revenue-producing activity should generate as much income as possible for park operations without intruding on existing park uses - raising revenue without compromising their mission or their availability to the general public."

Fact:

- **These plans will do severe harm to LSP and inevitably will be “an intrusion and compromise the park’s use and mission. The negative impact of such facilities and leasing out waterfront lawns to an event company, would go far beyond the immediate acreage** that gets developed, totally altering the nature of the park. Commercializing and privatizing the free park behind Lady Liberty with these plans is not compatible with the purpose, meaning and spirit of the park, envisioned and funded to be a free urban waterfront park behind the world’s greatest symbol of democracy
- **It will be impossible for these plans to not "intrude" on park users' access to and peaceful enjoyment of the park** due to the severe negative impact of inevitable weekend traffic jams and taking of free parking spaces, and the noise from regular weekend admission fee concerts disturbing the peace - from weekend large scale events booked on waterfront lawns by private company and in commercial amphitheater for 6000 people, or from an amusement park.
- **The DEP report says“millions more” visitors would come annually** by their proposals – and that will cause traffic jams and open space will be turned into parking lots.

False: It would be fine to restore the Terminal Sheds, costing up to \$100 million and lease it all out for a hotel (train museum would be fine but DEP wants a hotel as revenue-generator).

Fact: Hotels are on Central Park’s perimeter, but none inside it. There are several hotels in Jersey City which should get the ratable from hotels, and Liberty Science Center will have a hotel on land it is getting from Jersey City. Also, a hotel would prevent free uses of all or part of the Sheds in the future (and possibly there will be technology to make asbestos removal cheaper or the Shed concrete roof with asbestos can be encapsulated).

Perhaps a train museum with some public space for festivals/fairs would be fine.

False: It is fine to lease out the **state and national historic landmark CRRNJ Terminal to a hotel under the Sheds or for a conference and catering space.**

Fact: Over \$150 million was spent to restore the historic landmark 1889 Terminal reopened fulltime in 1993) and \$10 million was just spent on a major “Sandy” renovation.

No part of this great public building should be given on a silver platter to a company with a lease. The Concourse should continue to be used for a variety of festivals and a rainsite for various events, and the beautiful “Waiting Room” is used for public exhibits and information counter and the Blue Comet Auditorium is used for public programs. The Terminal, LSP’s historic “cornerstone” is a national treasure, where commuters and sixty percent of Ellis Island immigrants passed through, and it is part of the Historic Trilogy with Lady Liberty and Ellis Island.

It would be fine to have after hours events in the Concourse or Waiting Room but to protect this public historic landmark Terminal's use, the DEP can just hire qualified additional staff (to add to the one current special events staffperson) -instead of a private company booking after hours events. The only idea that may be fine would be a small Terminal restaurant/cafe (as Terminal had a restaurant in its commuter era) in the room next to the “Waiting Room” where the National Park Service did security for ferries.