

The 1978 Master Plan (MP) concepts for Liberty State Park – summary of what was implemented which was the same or close to the MP's concepts; what will be implemented through the DEP's current planning, and what won't happen as conceptualized.

The NJDEP's 1978 LSP Master Plan which had 38 public meetings in 1977, was a visionary conceptual plan for a great urban harbor park, which opened on June 14, 1976 with its initial 35 acres at the southside with the overlook lawn behind Lady Liberty, picnic area and playground.

The Master Plan, spearheaded by Robert Geddes, the Dean of Princeton's School of Architecture School and head of a top landscape architecture firm, was never required by law to be carried out but it put forth wise concepts and philosophy for a Central Park-type park behind Lady Liberty.

It is a great tribute to the Master Plan that most of its key concepts, in whole or in part, became or will become a reality once the interior nature restoration and 61 acres of active recreation are completed. Its key concepts were responsive to public input for the Central Park model before the Plan was finalized, and are consistent with the public input for improvements and against privatization plans in the following decades for a free park for open spaces and natural areas.

The Master Plan's "Summary" of its conceptual elements in the summary Narrative; its Land Use Legend/Map; Zones of Development; and "Users and Activities" sections were divided into **4 areas** called *The Core, The South Embankment, The Uplands and The North Embankment*.

1. **"The Core"** in the Master Plan's concepts for this area between what became Liberty Walk and Freedom Way were "open spaces for informal recreation" and "a large "Greenpark", designed in the naturalist tradition of America's great pastoral landscape parks... to bring a sense of nature to the urban harbor" and featuring woodlands, grasslands, and wildlife wetlands preserves. It also described a Harbor Walk. It included a waterfront natural amphitheater for festivals and concerts and an "inland watercourse/waterway and boat basin for sailing, rowing and canoeing."

The Core today:

What is now called LSP's "Green Park" consists of 88 acres between Freedom Way and Liberty Walk and is composed primarily of open space lawns for a multitude of informal recreation activities, as the Master Plan called for, and also a large playground and adjacent picnic table area. It refers also to walking, running and bicycling as active recreation.

The Harbor Walk was realized in the spectacular 1.5-mile Liberty Walk. The "Core" vision for natural areas is actually going to be created in the interior with approximately 185 acres of diverse habitats and containing features described in the Master Plan (MP). The MP called for restaurants along the Harbor Walk but the Green Park became the 88-acre open space lawns and the restaurants were built by the marina on the northside and a café is planned at the Terminal.

The 1993 interior "environmental resource inventory" study showed that nature was making a dramatic recovery in the interior with vegetation and wildlife. When Governor Whitman rejected the interior 150 acre golf course plan in 1995, she stated that the interior will be location for the MP's vision of a natural setting to serve urban youth and all others. After years of research and public meetings, Natural Resource Damage funds will pay for the remediation and habitats/trails.

Preserving "The original salt marsh habitats" described as "peaceful, educational and spiritual oases" became the Richard Sullivan Natural Area, a tidal salt marsh at LSP's southside and a Nature Center was built as the Master Plan recommended.

"The "large grass natural amphitheater Bowl" concept became the waterfront's Green Park's "Green Ring" lawn and nearby lawns as the main site for LSP's large special events such as festivals and concerts, etc. Also the North Cove field on LSP's north side, behind the ferry lot, became a popular, practical and the logical location for the free Jersey City Summerfest Sunday concerts, for the county's Earth Day, "Lantern" and other festivals and the start and finish areas for charity Runs and Walks. North Cove Field is the logical location for a small amphitheater, bandshell, or temporary "Summerstage" as in Central Park. A DEP consultants' study in the 1980's recommended a public amphitheater for Mostly Free events.

The Core: What didn't happen of its MP concepts:

The "inland watercourse and boat basin" didn't happen but sailing and kayaking occur at LSP's southside from the public boat launch and the jetties. The Master Plan's traffic and roadways circulation plan didn't happen with its concept that "The park will be free of cars during crowded hours and peak seasons, but at other times a pleasantly meandering drive will be available, with small parking convenience areas for small groups of picnickers, fishermen and naturalists."

- 2. The South Embankment in the Master Plan's concepts** were the overlook lawn for passive recreation, and it was already created before the Master Plan was completed, for enjoyment of the dramatic vistas of Statue of Liberty, Manhattan and "overlooking the open water of Black Tom Channel and Caven Point (which became part of LSP in 1980). It also featured picnic areas and fishing piers. It placed a large **public** marina here, operated by the state of NJ. It would serve 450 boats, a pier for boats to Lady Liberty and Ellis Island and a boat launching ramp and fishing piers. The MP called the fishing pier, large marina and a boat launching ramp, "active recreation". It also mentioned harbor restaurants pictured on the historic Black Tom Island's jetties for visitors and boaters (with a large private marina and two restaurants instead being built at the park's northside. **The only other businesses besides restaurants mentioned for LSP were "various shops and stands catering to boating and fishing supply needs."**

The South Embankment today:

In addition to the South Overlook Lawn, now called the South Lawn, the original picnic area, a playground replaced in 2018, and the Visitors Center, is the very popular picnic Pavilion Field with two reservable pavilions on the northern side of Morris Pesin Drive; the tree grove picnic field between the boat launch lot (lot 2) and Pesin Drive West lot (lot 3); and the historic jetties explored by children and adults and with picnickers using the westernmost jetty and are now eligible for state and national Register of Historic Places. There's also the popular public boat launch as conceptualized by the MP and for fishing, there a deck by the public boat launch lot and the jetties and people fish all along the harbor's Liberty Walk.

The South Embankment: What didn't happen of its MP concepts:

A large public marina operated by the state was built instead as a large private marina at the northside, the "North Embankment". The restaurants conceptualized for the South Embankment were built next to the private marina and sublease from the marina. The marina has a shop for boating and fishing needs. The DEP is also planning for a café in the nearby CRRNJ Terminal.

3. The Northern Embankment in the Master Plan's concepts

3A. Restored Terminal, Plazas, boat landings in the Master Plan

The north side of LSP was conceptualized as the restored CRRNJ Terminal's Waiting Room, Train Sheds and Ferry Sheds for "many new uses" including a Visitor's information center, and slips for boats to the national monuments in the harbor, to Manhattan, etc. The MP envisioned landscaped plazas and overlooks on both sides of the Terminal which would be the site if festivals and ethnic celebrations.

Terminal Area Today and what didn't happen and what will happen

The Waiting Room was restored and has been used over the years along with the Concourse for various special events, festivals and movie/tv shoots. There is a staffed information desk and the ticket office for the ferries to Lady Liberty and Ellis Island. The train sheds are in need of \$30 million because of the asbestos in the concrete roof and when the funding happens, there must be public meetings to help decide on the ways that space will be used.

The ferry sheds were torn down. Only one slip has been renovated for the ferries and that slip can be used for other ferry destinations when the Statue Cruises ferry starts to use the new barge which is funded for the north side of the Terminal by the NPS security tent. There are still two pre-park slips in need of funding.

The southside of the Terminal has a large lawn which has been used for events and along which people line up for the ferry security tent. There had been a beautiful plaza on the north side of the Terminal which was used for events, but that was replaced by the Empty Sky Memorial to NJ 9/11 victims with two high and long walls inside of a sloping mound.

3B. Land on both sides of Zapp Dr. Concepts, Present & Future
MP concepts included "lawns for unstructured recreation" which were created on both sides of Zapp Dr. Some concepts happened or will happen. and some won't.

On the "left"(N) side of Zapp Drive are lawns (North Field by the Terminal/2 hour parking lot where special events occur; and the lawns west of the two restaurants; picnicking happen on blankets but not in a picnic table area Liberty Landing Marina with 550 slips, its boat yard & its tenants of 2 restaurants were built here instead of at the southside of LSP. The concepts included a "seaquarium" (instead is Liberty Science Center); the concept of a Plaza next to the Terminal was built but the Empty Sky 9/11 Memorial replaced it; overnight "RVs"/ recreational vehicles (Air Streamers had overnight gatherings for years but overnight stays stopped after 9/11;

A park "lodge/conference center "wasn't built as the public opposed privatized hotels inside LSP with the parking lots they'd need, and there are now plenty of hotels in JC which accommodate conferences, and conference meetings happen at the two LSP restaurants. A hotel/conference center will also be built right outside the southeast entrance to LSP.

On the right side (S) of Zapp Drive (separate from the "Uplands" interior), the concepts included active recreation such as "courts and rinks", educational playground, swimming and activities that are "proper to the park's **public** recreational purposes.

The active recreation amenities didn't happen after the "grassed lawns" were created due to the NJDEP's policy of not establishing active recreation in state parks (except for their '02-'04 openness to a multi-use field at the park's southeast corner where parking lot 1 is).

What was eventually created instead was an upgraded landscaped 16-acre lawn with two garden areas and paths adjacent to Zapp Drive in between Philip St. and Freedom Way in what was called "Millennium Park" from a year 2000 Prudential grant. Then in 2003, the 10-acre Grove of Remembrance of over 740 trees planted for NJ 9/11 victims was created just to the east of the 6 remaining acres of "Millennium Park" lawn and gardens, where passive and informal recreation occurs.

In the NJDEP's current active recreation plans, are 50 acres of active recreation in the interior (called the "Uplands" in the MP and also approximately 11 acres of active recreation in three sites outside of the interior, consisting of 2, 4.50 and 4.25 acres.

Those 4 sites will include the kind of active recreation in the North Embankment concepts such as "**courts and rinks**", playground, and possibly water spray/spray pad area or swimming, etc. as those amenities are in the DEP's 3652 survey responses in 2021.

The 4.25-acre site is along Johnston Ave. before Zapp Drive begins, and is **very close** to the North Embankment area. A multiuse field is not in the MP but would work in the 4.25 site.

The Morris Canal Historic Site The Master Plan also addresses the peninsula, LSP's "Morris Canal Park", and located in the Paulus Hook neighborhood and is across the Morris Canal Big Basin where Liberty Landing Marina is. The MP calls for green landscape and walkways for informal recreation by downtown neighborhoods and that was created.

4. The Uplands - interior - MP Concepts & current Plans for LSP's "core" of natural habitats/trails, & active recreation

The "interior" conceptualized "open space uses" such as community playfields and community gardens. Picnic areas and parking lots were also included.

For the longer term, the MP suggested mixed uses such as community playfields, educational playground and "plans that respond to both the neighbor's interests and the regional and national citizens' interests." The evolution of the LSP "Core" of nature from Greenpark to interior which will now include 50 acres of structured active recreation amenities.

What the Master Plan envisioned as **the "core of Liberty State Park"** – "a large Greenpark designed in the naturalist tradition of America's great pastoral landscape parks... to bring a sense of nature to the urban harbor" and featuring woodlands, grasslands, and wildlife wetlands preserves" **will be located in the interior** instead of the MP's concept of between Liberty Walk and Freedom Way where 88 acres of open space lawns for informal recreation was created.

The community playfields or other structured recreation amenities didn't happen in the park due to the NJDEP's policy of not establishing structured active recreation in state parks (except for their '02-'04 openness to a multi-use field at the park's southeast corner where parking lot 1 is).

But in the DEP's current plans, there will be 50 acres of structured active recreation in the interior and approximately 11 acres of structured active recreation, with amenities based on the DEP's 2021 surveys, in three sites outside of the interior, on 2, 4.50 and 4.25 acres.

The decision on locating the Master Plan's vision of **LSP's "core"** - designed in the naturalist tradition" "to bring a sense of nature to the urban harbor" **into the interior** instead of the area east of Freedom Way, was made by Governor Christie Whitman in 1995.

Her press release stated: This central area of the park would offer significant educational opportunities to observe natural succession over time as well as the long-term benefits of a significant, mature wooded uplands. A living ecosystem would be a natural oasis in one of the most densely populated areas of the state."

The 1993 interior "environmental resource inventory" study showed that nature was making a dramatic recovery in the interior with vegetation and wildlife. When Governor Whitman rejected the interior golf course plan in 1995 after years of overwhelmingly opposition, she stated that the interior will be the site for the MP's vision of a natural area.

After over 20 years of research, studies, planning and public meetings, Natural Resource Damages awards will fund the interior remediation, habitats and trails. DEP will reach 60% of the detailed design in summer 2022 and DEP decided in 6/21 on 50 acres of active recreation.

An amphitheater was one of several possible uses but a natural amphitheater was also suggested in the MP for the "greenpark" area between Freedom Way and Liberty Walk. Below is the statement about the Green Park's Green Ring large lawns site, and also an amphitheater's logical location in North Cove Field, as recommended by the former LSP Sup't.

from page 2 of this document: "The "large grass natural amphitheater Bowl" concept became the waterfront's **Green Park's "Green Ring" lawn and nearby lawns** as the main site for LSP's large special events such as festivals and concerts, etc. Also the **North Cove field** on LSP's north side, behind the ferry lot, became a popular, practical and the logical location for the free Jersey City Summerfest Sunday concerts, for the county's Earth Day, "Lantern" and other festivals and the start and finish areas for charity Runs and Walks. North Cove Field is the logical location for a small amphitheater, bandshell, or temporary "Summerstage" as in Central Park. A DEP consultants' study in the 1980's recommended a public amphitheater for Mostly Free events.

Besides the continuing use of those two sites, an amphitheater was not in the DEP's 2021 survey options for interior active recreation because an amphitheater is not an active recreation amenity.

A "day camp" was suggested for the interior, but Camp Liberty, which started near the current Nature Center two years before LSP opened, was given a lease in the day camp area of the former cabana club and thrives today as a praised camp as part of the Educational Arts Team.

Uplands -interior - MP concepts that didn't happen

Agricultural Farming Technology Center (a non-starter), ethnic center (Ellis Island has a museum) Park Lodge not here or in North Embankment (hotels in JC not on public land). Community gardens are not in interior plans of habitats & recreation. LSP has 14 flower gardens.