

Public Comments from the Friends of Liberty State Park 10/13/24

Please see page 7 for a few ideas for Station 1

North Side of LSP - Station 2

The Friends of Liberty State Park Oppose mainly **two wrong proposals**, though most ideas respect the majority of 5000 “revitalization” comments and the decades of the public’s broad overwhelming public consensus for a **public, green, free, urban open space park** for unstructured recreation, nature enjoyment and a sensible amount of structured active recreation though it’s Jersey City’s responsibility to renovate and create structured active recreation.

1. We Strongly **OPPOSE** the **ill-conceived, unfair, undemocratic, unrealistic and unnecessary ELIMINATION** of the **Only Free parking lot on Zapp Drive. The longtime 120 space “2 hour lot”** by the Terminal is needed and deserved by urban residents and other visitors for many purposes.
2. We strongly **OPPOSE** the size of “North Cove” large three beaches area next to the unswimmable river, and which reduce adjacent flexible lawns to be used for performances and for a multitude of unstructured ways. There should be **NO beach or a little one** which could include an area for the Nature Center staff to do seining programs.

Reasons against anything but a small beach. Many say variations of it’s “ridiculous”:

- people cannot swim in the Hudson River. There will be major safety issues.
- beaches take away from LSP’s irreplaceable priceless precious flexible lawn space to be used in a multitude of unstructured ways and decreasing performance lawn!
- People lie on grass in LSP to get sun rays and don’t need a beach.
- Animals will go to the bathroom in the beaches and will need daily maintenance
- people crave shade of LSP trees! and metal/plastic umbrellas are not trees – and there would need to be a “reservation system” to avoid hoggers of umbrellas.

The Terminal Free “2 hour lot” provides public access to free parking in this waterfront area for many reasons including enjoying unstructured use of the adjacent lawn, Terminal events and programs, the dramatic water’s edge views up to the Washington Bridge, visiting Empty Sky Memorial, and using the lot’s free handicapped spaces.(Infrequently, the lot is used for special events “back of the house” as recently with the Tunnel To Towers evening concert).

This proposed end of free parking along Zapp Drive disrespectfully replaces the Free parking lot with a **smaller lot Only for Tourist Buses** which should continue to pay and park in the ferry lot - with their usually idling motors. Free public use of this lot in northeast LSP is necessary.

The plan didn’t consider the lot’s value to non-tourists, didn’t give any reasons or highlight the radical change. Whatever reasons you have, alternatives can and must be found!

The main traffic problem on the north side is when ferries return during weekend late afternoons. Users of the free lot shouldn’t lose access to this importantly located lot because of ferry traffic.

What is timing of completing “gateway parking”? How many spaces will be there. Ferry lot spaces shouldn’t be reduced until Light Rail lot is available and/or gateway parking!

Related mass transit and parking thoughts:

In the future, this free lot will still be needed - in addition to a comprehensive electric shuttle bus system, the proposed tram next to Zapp Drive, and bus routes stopping at the Light Rail station.

Additionally, as the Terminal gets re-used and north side amenities and the spectacular habitats and trails are completed, **parking will be needed around LSP's edges including the light rail lot on weekends, even multi-deck parking at at light rail and proposed in "gateway area".**

Ideally, LSP will be able to direct most of the ferry tourists to the parking at the edges of the park sooner rather than later. The DEP should hire staff to give out tickets in the 2-hour lot which gets used by "ferry cheaters" who ignore signage and don't want to pay \$7 in the ferry lot.

TRAM on southern side of Zapp Drive

We strongly opposed a trolley through the sacred Grove of Remembrance a decade ago and in the last year but this tram proposal may be helpful as it is on the northern edge of the Grove of Remembrance and it seems mostly for bringing people from outer edge parking lots or the existing ferry lot to get to connections to the interior paths and whereas the shuttle bus would have two stops on the marina side of Zapp Drive.

We have questions about the Tram stops and route and safety.

- **We'd like to know if they'll run on electric batteries with no overhead electric wires.**
- **We'd like to see images of the proposed tram and if it's closed ADA accessible.**
- **Eventually, it might need to be long or have two or three or four tram cars attached.**
- **The much safety buffer space is needed to on either side of the tram.**
- **There would need to be a quiet tram that doesn't disturb the peace of the Grove of Remembrance and LSP with disruptive, bell ringing tourist tram bell ringing.**

- **The indicated stops:** There are nine stops for the tram in the Station 2 Circulation image. The second and third stops makes sense because they connect with trails leading into the interior habitats. The stops for 4, 5,6 and 7 would connect with paths in the Grove of Remembrance and the Woodland Walk. But stops 5 and 6 seem to show a connection going across Zapp Drive to the Marina Lawn and Picnic/Play Groves **BUT people would not be able to safely cross at those stops or at Stop 8 across from the path to the marina walkway/water taxi UNLESS there are traffic lights at each of those stops!**

- **Also regarding SAFETY, seems unsafe to have the tram make a loop inside the ferry lot** with people constantly walking from their vehicles to the Terminal for ferry tickets or to the NPS security tent or to Terminal programs or eventually to re-used Sheds

“Performance Lawn” needs expansion – NO amphitheater, and perimeter trees needed for shade

David of WRT told me (Sam) at the open house that there would be a performance pad and he didn't mention “amphitheater” so I assumed that ARUP and the DEP abandoned that wrong idea. I understood David to mean a concrete stage so it is very frustrating to see in the first image of the first station, the goal of “developing a public outdoor amphitheater”. David spoke for a while with Sam Pott, head of the JC-based Nimbus Dance company about an ideal size of the stage to accommodate different types of performances – small and large music groups, dance, theater, etc. Hopefully a shade structure as some playgrounds have, can be created over the concrete stage.

In the last year, The Friends have strongly opposed a lawn-robbing sloping amphitheater with permanent seating. We can send you our statement again which was in our 3/27/24 email. We instead have supported a band shell which would protect the band from weather. Attendees of performances would bring blankets and lawn chairs as they have for 49 years for the free JC Summerfest concerts. If a producer of an event wants seating, they can put up temporary seats.

David told me at the Open House that the “Performance Lawn would have a **2% grade rise** in that lawn and there's a major question about whether that is a low enough grade for people's cups, drinks, bottles etc. to be able to lie flat without tipping over and whether people's lawn chairs will be stable on the ground or any little table that many set up for picnics. She

The Friends have opposed an amphitheater with permanent seating which would rob flexible open space when there are no performances. We've been supporting a band shell to protect the performers from weather, instead of an amphitheater. The planner told me that there would be a 2% grade rise in that lawn (perhaps as a resiliency factor) and I want to find out whether that is low enough grade for people's cups, drinks, bottles etc. to be able to lie flat without tipping over.

Also, we opposed the large size of the three beaches because the performance lawn – an important “flexible, unstructured lawn for passive recreation and unstructured active recreation, needs to be larger and not have space confiscated by unnecessary ill-conceived beach areas (though as mentioned above, a small beach area with a “seining” area for naturalists could be ok.

PRESERVING AUDREY ZAPP DRIVE – NO COBBLESTONE REMOVAL !

An Open House attendee was told by a planner that the cobblestone road would be replaced! Audrey Zapp Drive must be preserved as a cobblestone road from the Railroad Era. It is one of the very few remaining cobblestone roads in Jersey City and is the longest one, and though no one put it on a historic landmark register, it should've been as its LSP and American history! Not only is it a very special feature, but it is a perfect emotional and mental transitional element for those leaving the hustle bustle of the city and entering a peaceful beautiful park! Plus it is the perfect traffic calming method, as any other traffic slowing method would still lead to speeding.

North Side's "SOUTH MEADOW" "South Field" on LSP map - on S. Side of Terminal Sheds and next to the free two hour parking lot.

On the new map, there are no uses mentioned. Hopefully it will be another priceless flexible urban open space lawn for many unstructured passive and unstructured active recreation uses!

People engaging in re-uses of the Sheds, deserve to look to the south and see the green lawn and for people to use it for free, and it is **priceless as a scenic water's edge green space**. Maybe the lawn can be an occasional performance space but never a parking area for users of the Sheds.

What do the curved yellow lines in the Station 2 image mean? Those curved yellow lines are also in the lawn between the Ferry Lot and Freedom Way.

SHEDS RE-USES

Through the years, The Friends members and general public have supported the sheds area for fairs, festivals, food vendors, markets. Perhaps locating a café under in the Sheds area instead of in the room to the left of the Terminal's Waiting Room (that room is needed for exhibits and extended areas for other Waiting Room events, etc.). Perhaps a gift shop.

We look forward to seeing the plans for remediating the asbestos in the concrete roof, with much of the sheds areas still being covered, though by a lighter weight material, and perhaps some of the roof area will be open to the sky.

Because of the sensible, community uses of fairs, festivals, markets, food vendors etc., there needs to be a **loading and unloading area for those vendors** and it seems that the western side of the Sheds would be the sensible location.

Assorted other North Side points/questions:

1. E. end of the Zapp Dr Woodlands Walk crosses Freedom Way. Is a traffic light planned?
2. There are 7 "play areas" shown on the N. side of the North Cove. What types are being considered? Are they mostly for children, for adults, for both. Any Nature Play there?
3. We've heard from many people that "hammocks area" is unnecessary as people lie in lawns. There'd need to be a reservation system and they'd probably break easily.
4. Why does the bike path along Zapp Drive end at western end of Sheds instead of going a little further to the eastern end of Zapp Drive with more bike parking there.
5. Why are there 4 volleyball courts on a beach near the "umbrella beach". Groups often put up their own volleyball nets in park lawns.
6. Just to the east of the "Performance Lawn", it seems there's too much concrete instead of more lawn and trees, though a water spray area is a fine idea.

SOUTH SIDE (Station 3)

- We urge the DEP and ARUP to listen to what park supporters express for specific choices of active recreation facilities in the 50 acres on the south side of the interior.
- The parking lot on the eastern side of 50 acres is absolutely necessary. That location would also be very helpful for special events in the “Green Ring” and its adjacent lawns on the eastern side of Freedom Way.
- Our main specific advocacy is for **Nature Play areas**. We’re glad to see a “sensory and inclusive play area” and a good-sized area called “Interior Play” but “Nature Based Playground” is in tiny letters. We recommend that you call this area “Nature Based Playground” instead of “Interior Play.” We had sent DEP/ARUP a statement about the benefits of Nature Play last Spring with a link to dozens of national examples “**Nature nodes**” and “**play affordance**” **nature features sound great** (but please don’t use that “inside academic” term “play affordance” as no one knows what that ridiculously named feature means). **We urge you to consult with Nature Learning Play advocates and educators and not just generic nature playground companies for the designs.**
- Why is the South Lawn, formerly called the South Overlook Lawn, with the Flag Plaza on the western side, divided into 3 sections in your image? **This Overlook lawn is the most important sacred lawn in the United States** – with Lady Liberty 2000 feet away! This lawn with its views belongs to everyone to be used in free and unstructured ways! It should only very rarely be used for weekend afternoon or evening events such as to celebrate national events like USA’s 250th birthday and LSP’s 50th birthday in 2026.
- The idea of having a “community swing” on the eastern side of this lawn right behind Lady Liberty is preposterous because people using such a swing in that location will be photo bombing the most dramatic park visitors “photo-op” view toward Lady Liberty. If a community swing is desired, it should be put on the southern side of the lawn. Sure
- **All three jetties need to be renovated from the erosion. The jetties should be for nature exploration, fishing, kayak launching, picnicking, history and nature signage.** The easternmost jetty should not be used for volleyball! These jetties are important natural features and beach volleyball is not appropriate on the easternmost jetty (and anyway players and the wind would most likely push the ball into the water). A very good suggestion from a former LSP superintendent is to put a boat house for kayaks on the westernmost jetty so kayaks don’t have to be driven from the maintenance area to the jetties for launching. We like the nature play idea also by that jetty.
- The image shows lawn space next to the picnic pavilions but as previously expressed, that lawn space comes with the picnic reservations for the two pavilions which people start to make in January and the pavilions are used heavily in all the nice months.
- Regarding **Parking Lot 1**, almost right across the street from the boat launch lot - as much as a flexible lawn and be near the southern entrance, unfortunately Lot 1 is needed for an overflow parking lot (maybe even a multideck lot) for the South Side of LSP, the non-commercial family picnicking side of LSP. The lot is used on many crowded weekends and especially holidays. Also the boat launch parking lot and dock is used for boaters with permits and we feel DEP won’t want kayak launching there, as where would the kayakers park (maybe in the overflow lot and carry their kayaks across Pesin Drive.
- CAVEN POINT ideas of looping boardwalk and viewing platform are terrific. **DEP must have the Natural Areas Council place Caven Point into the Natural Areas System!**

LSP South Side Station 3 “Gathering Nodes”

There’s your question of “Are you supportive of the idea of relocating existing monuments to new locations in LSP” and it shows photos of “Liberation Monument” in South Lawn, of the American soldier carrying a World War Two liberated concentration camp victim and their hearts fused, and the “Sail of Columbus” monument north of Freedom Way’s playground/picnic area.

The Sail of Columbus monument, a gift from Italy with inscribed scenes is described on Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Vela_di_Colombo

Our Board is neutral, though individually we have our views, on the politically controversial public policy idea of removing or moving the Columbus Monument (most people walk or drive by it and don’t know what the sculpture stands for). The Friends’ board is well-aware of the clear evidence in the media and revised history teaching of the murderous, genocidal and enslaving brutality and greed led by Columbus spearheading the European decimation of the Indigenous Caribbean, Central and South American peoples.

This should be decided by a NJ law or a governor’s Executive Order as with Civil War Confederate Generals monuments - about all Columbus monuments on NJ public property. It may take some time because of the large NJ Italian-American population. There already are states and cities, including JC, which have replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous People’s Day.

I also think that there would be very strong opposition to moving Liberation Monument, including from veterans’ groups and Jewish groups and a lot of elected officials including any governor – just like it’s a political non-starter to move the LSP Columbus Monument.

Liberation Monument is one of the most powerful American history monuments in the USA. We oppose its relocation. On wikidpedia, it’s at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_\(Holocaust_memorial\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_(Holocaust_memorial))

There’d be very strong opposition to moving Liberation Monument, including from veterans’ groups, anti-neo Nazi groups, Jewish groups and many elected officials including any governor.

It was on the front cover of a Pentagon brochure for a while because it shows the American military in such a positive light of the soldier liberating the concentration camp victim, and the power of it especially coming from being in the close direct visual and photograph site line with the Statue of Liberty with the American military having saved democracy from Hitler and the Nazis. No other place in LSP would compare to this site for this sculpture by the famous Natan Rapoport.

If there was a rare weekend evening special event in the South Overlook Lawn, for instance on the USA’s 250th birthday, perhaps the audio mixing board staff could set up on the Monument’s plaza. It did work out fine with the Monument being there during the 2001 Radiohead concert.

STATION 1

These ideas were submitted on the form to the question:

Are there existing areas across LSP that you feel need support/attention currently.

Please understand that the capitols are to emphasize the importance of remediation and the tidal saltwater wetlands and freshwater wetlands making solid progress as soon as possible.

THE MOST IMPORTANT NEED IS FOR THE REMEDIATION TO BE COMPLETED AND THE HABITATS CREATION MAKING MAJOR PROGRESS BEFORE GOV MURPHY AND COMMISSIONER LATOURETTE LEAVES OFFICE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! TO PREVENT PAUL FIREMAN AND HIS FRONT GROUPS AND OTHERS HE'S BOUGHT OFF TO HAVE ANY FUTURE CHANCE OF DESTROYING LSP WITH A SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Comprehensive WIFI in the whole park so people don't have to use cellular data especially when they spend a few hours in LSP and also more water fountains everywhere.

Hire more staff and more park police! Shortage of both and with improvements and 1000's more people moving into expensive apartments near the park, there will be even a greater need for a tremendous amount more staff