

Dear Mayor and Councilors,

I am writing to you to share my enthusiasm about the redevelopment of the clay tennis courts at Marine Park. The responses the Borough Council received to its Request for Proposals were exciting and thought-provoking. After I reviewed them and spoke with my neighbors, I kept coming back to one question. Why are we only looking at the tennis courts? In this letter, I hope to encourage council to revisit the current plan for Marine Park. I'll do this by showing some of the park's current problems and discussing how private-sector enthusiasm for a small sliver of our park could point to an even bigger interest in redeveloping the entire park.

Problems with the current Marine Park

Marine Park sits on one of New Jersey's most beautiful stretches of river. It should be a lush, green space that builds upon the beauty of the land meeting the water. But it does not.

- Marine Park has more paved and developed surface than it does green space.
- Most of the land less than 200 feet from the Navesink River is covered with asphalt or concrete.
- A lot of the 'green space' actually consists of small strips of grass between hard, impermeable surfaces.
- The current tennis courts are further from the water and smaller than the current parking lot, which is only 50 feet from the water's edge.

I've used Area Measuring Tools in Google Maps to measure the current surface areas. This table shows what I found:

Marine Park	Block 9 Lot 5	Acres	Green
Parking	Main Lot Near River	1.16	N
Parking	Wharf Ave	0.066	N
Parking	Union St	0.162	N
Tennis		0.609	N
Playground		0.144	N
Walkways		0.669	N
Road	Wharf Ave	0.238	N
Green Space	Near courts	0.372	Y
Green Space	Main Green	1.37	Y
Green Space	Along Parking	0.124	Y
Green Space	Next to docks	0.03	Y
Green Space	Near Flag Pole	0.181	Y
Green Space	Next to pier	0.062	Y
Total non-green		3.048	
Total green		2.139	
Total Acres		5.187	

My measurements show that Marine Park contains almost a full acre more of non-green surfaces than green surfaces.

When I further examined the maps of Marine Park, I realized that much of the paved and hard surfaces are actually the spaces closest to the river. This makes no sense to me. I cannot understand why we would want to have 1.16 acres of our town's most environmentally desirable land to be an asphalt parking lot literally 50 feet from the river's edge.

The image below shows the locations of non-green space in White, Orange, Red and Grey.



Figure 1 - Non-Green Surfaces

I do not think we are making the best use of our riverfront park space.

Enthusiasm from non-government sector for sharing in redevelopment

The most significant thing I learned from the RFP responses for the tennis courts is that there is excitement in the non-government sector for improving our riverfront park. We received three

proposals for a small sliver of the park space. Two of them show thinking well beyond the original tennis court layout. All three proposals are presented as being low-cost to the Borough, with most funding coming from the private sector.

Around the country, the model of private/public cooperation for park and green space has become prevalent. Across America, public-private partnerships (PPPs) have thrived. Examples can be found in many places, including New York City. One PPP, the Madison Square Park Conservancy, is credited with the rejuvenation of that historic six-acre park. That rejuvenation included a private business called Shake Shack, a popular permanent stand that serves hamburgers, hot dogs and shakes. This type of PPP with appropriately sized amenities would work well in a rejuvenated Marine Park.

Expand the RFP to all of Marine Park and consider forming a PPP

Marine Park is one of our town's treasures. A riverside park in 2015 deserves a different kind of plan than one envisioned 20 or 30 years ago. Super Storm Sandy taught our town a clear lesson: that the waterfront deserves better than a park that is mostly paved-over non-green space. We have also learned how PPPs can play a role in developing green space for public use at a time when our governments are burdened with liabilities and expenses that limit non-essential spending. We received carefully crafted, energetic and enthusiastic proposals for redeveloping less than 20% of Marine Park. We owe it to our town's future generations to give thoughtful consideration to how we use our riverfront space. For these reasons, I ask Parks & Rec to come up with a new RFP for all of Marine Park and encourage councilors to consider forming a Marine Park Conservancy PPP.

Thank you

Tom Labetti

Attachment:

Red Bank NJ Block 9 Lot 5 – Marine Park

Images and measurements via Google Maps



Figure 2 - Marine Park All Layers – Total 5.32 Acres



Figure 3 - Marine Park Green Space – 2.139 Acres



Figure 4 - Marine Park - Non Green Space – 3.048 Acres



Figure 5 - Marine Park Parking And Paved Walkways- 2.057 Acres



Figure 6 - Marine Park Playground - .144 Acres



Figure 7 - Marine Park Road Wharf Ave - .238 Acres



Figure 8 - Marine Park Tennis - .609 Acres