

BATTERSON PARK OPPORTUNITY

**BATTERSON PARK
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 18, 2024**

**RIVERFRONT
RECAPTURE**


What's the latest?

- Weekly meetings between City of Hartford, Construction Solutions Group, BSC, and Riverfront Recapture continue. (Riverfront is being compensated for its time.)
- Meetings have been held with Town of Farmington and City of New Britain officials.
- Design team preparing preliminary designs to be submitted to Town of Farmington Planning & Zoning and Inlands Wetlands Commission in early October.
- Latest design includes significant feedback from Riverfront including preferred location of infrastructure and amenities.

What's ahead in September?

- Riverfront Recapture Batterson Park Subcommittee makes a recommendation on whether or not to pursue park management opportunity.
- If a decision is made to continue to pursue a management contract, Executive Committee will take up issue at its meeting on September 26th.
- Design team finalizes design for new Batterson Park.
- Riverfront finalizes vehicle and equipment list required for park maintenance

What's ahead in October?

- City of Hartford submits design package to Town of Farmington for review by Planning & Zoning and Inlands Wetlands Commission.
- City of Hartford submits applications to State DEEP for flood management, NDDDB, stormwater, etc.
- If Executive Committee recommends pursuing a park management contract, issue is brought to full Riverfront Board on October 24th.
- Public meetings in Hartford, Farmington and New Britain to receive input on new design.

What's ahead in November and December?

- If we proceed, City, State DEEP and Riverfront Recapture begin to negotiate a MOU for the management of Batterson Park.
- If we proceed, Riverfront staff would finalize an operating budget for the revitalized park. That budget will include an administrative fee and park management fee for Riverfront.
- Municipal and state approval processes continue.
- Construction documents are finalized and the project prepares to go out to public bid.

What's ahead in 2025?

- If we proceed and are able to hammer out a deal, City, State DEEP and Riverfront Recapture sign a MOU for the management of Batterson Park.
- The City receives permit approvals from municipal and State regulatory agencies.
- The City works on elements of the project that can be done sooner than later.
- Bids are received early in the year and the project is awarded.
- State DEEP makes Passport to Parks funds available as of July 1, 2025.
- Construction commences and with a goal of opening Batterson Park late summer/early fall 2025.

“I believe that this is a great opportunity for Riverfront Recapture. I am asking the Batterson Park Subcommittee to recommend to the Executive Committee and full Riverfront Board that we **continue to pursue a Batterson Park management contract and engage in negotiations related to the development of a draft MOU.**

There will be a number of opportunities for the organization to step away if we are not satisfied with the direction of this project or the progress of negotiations and details in a draft MOU.

The full Board will ultimately have to provide authorization for me to sign a MOU with the City of Hartford and State DEEP for the management of Batterson Park sometime in 2025.”

Michael Zaleski, President & CEO
Riverfront Recapture, Inc.

Here's why:

- Generate new annual revenue for the Riverfront budget

Riverfront, like many non-profit organizations, is in need of new revenue sources. We have pursued other social enterprise initiatives with the goal of increasing earned revenue. This has the potential to be a lucrative management contract.

- The organization is good at waterfront park management

We have been responsible for maintenance of our existing Riverfront parks since 2017 and have proven to be capable park managers. Batterson Park is a very good opportunity.

- It will be a brand new park

One of the big challenges of maintaining our existing parks is the wear and tear of 20+ years of park use. Batterson Park will be new and we are currently making recommendations to park designers that will make park maintenance more efficient, cost effective and safe. These enhancements include a state of the art maintenance building and the latest technology for building doors and park gates.

Here's why, cont.:

- Swimming and the loop trail have been eliminated from the short term discussion

The two hot button issues have been shelved and we don't believe either issue will come back any time soon. Riverfront has no experience with swimming or lifeguards and would not be interested in pursuing this contract if swimming was anticipated. The loop trail is not included in draft design and no part of the project touches New Britain or any New Britain property owner.

- Strengthened partnership with the City of Hartford

The City of Hartford, our long-time management partner, has struggled to get this park reopened. It does not have the capacity to take on this responsibility and is in need of a reliable partner. We have already made significant contributions to the park project by providing our experience and expertise.

- Strengthened partnership with the State DEEP

An enhanced relationship with State DEEP, an entity with which we have had multiple challenging interactions, would not hurt. They reached out to us as they know Riverfront as a reputable non-profit and capable park manager. The 2023 DEEP study recommended a public/private partnership. I believe we are one of a few organizations in Connecticut that is capable of undertaking this contract.

Here's why, cont.:

- The City of Hartford, as the property owner, has committed to shoulder any insurance liability for the park.

Unlike our existing parks, the City has committed to retaining insurance responsibility for Batterson Park. Riverfront will, of course, maintain our own liability insurance but those costs will be included in the annual park maintenance budget.

- Redundancy in Riverfront fleet

State funding will purchase a brand new fleet of trucks and equipment to manage the park. New fleet will include trucks for the Rangers and operations, Bobcat Toolcat, UTV, mowers, and other equipment necessary for this management project. These will all be purchased new and immediately double our capacity. Vehicles and equipment will have the Riverfront logo and be available for use, if needed, in the existing Riverfront parks.

- Redundancy in personnel

Staff assigned to Batterson Park will be trained to work in the Riverfront parks, as well. Batterson personnel can be pulled to assist with flood clean-up and other urgent projects in the existing Riverfront parks.

Here's why, cont.:

- Reputation within the greater Hartford community

Riverfront Recapture was envisioned as a regional organization when it was created in 1981. While the founders probably did not envision the management of a park in Farmington, Batterson Park is a very good opportunity to get positive exposure in a part of suburban Hartford that we may not have as much visibility.

- Reopening Batterson Park is a priority for Speaker Matt Ritter.

Reopening this Hartford park is a top priority for the Speaker. We will need the Speaker's support of a \$10-\$15 million Community Investment Fund grant application for our future park in Hartford / Windsor. Speaker Ritter is a long-time friend of the organization and genuinely appreciates Riverfront's willingness to be part of a solution.

- Passport to Parks is a popular and stable funding source

Park maintenance and operations will be fully funded by the State of Connecticut through the Passport to Park program, a relatively stable funding source. We will request a multi-year commitment. State DEEP believes the program is fully funded through 2030 with the increase approved during the 2024 legislative session.

Revisiting logical concerns:

1. Managing Batterson Park is outside of Riverfront's mission to connect people with the Connecticut River
2. Staff is already beyond capacity with existing parks, RLI and Riverwalk project
3. Jurisdictional challenges of a Hartford park in Farmington and New Britain
4. Batterson Park has been contentious for years and these three municipalities haven't really gotten along

Revisiting logical concerns:

1. Managing Batterson Park is outside of Riverfront's mission to connect people with the Connecticut River

Riverfront Recapture is very good at managing waterfront parks. In order to continue our work managing the four existing Riverfront parks and prepare for the addition of a new park in Hartford / Windsor, we need to find new sources of revenue.

Our mission can evolve. In fact, our auditors have stated that should the organization decide to take on this park management responsibility, the mission will have to change to avoid Unrelated Business Interest Tax (UBIT).

Revisiting logical concerns:

2. Staff is already beyond capacity with existing parks, RLI and Riverwalk project

Operation staff do indeed have their hands full with our existing parks system. And the new park and Riverwalk will require additional effort.

I am confident that we will be able to ramp up our park management and public safety capacity to meet this new challenge.

This new contract will provide more than enough annual funding to bring on the staff necessary to manage the new park. These staff members would be available to assist in the existing parks, when needed.

In addition, a new park management contract will allow for the purchase of all of the equipment necessary to properly manage the new park. This equipment would be available for use in the existing parks system, when needed.

Revisiting logical concerns:

3. Jurisdictional challenges of a Hartford park in Farmington and New Britain

I believe that municipal and state officials are committed to working through all of the jurisdictional challenges in advance of the signing of any MOU that would codify Riverfront's involvement in a management contract.

Riverfront should require that Farmington and New Britain officials commit to providing municipal services where appropriate to allow for smooth operation of the new park.

Recent conversations with Farmington and New Britain officials have led us to believe that both would be willing partners.

Revisiting logical concerns:

4. Batterson Park has been contentious for years and these three municipalities haven't really gotten along

Riverfront Recapture already has the trust and respect of the City of Hartford as a long-time management partner. Riverfront has the opportunity to provide professional park management services and earn the trust and respect of Farmington and New Britain.

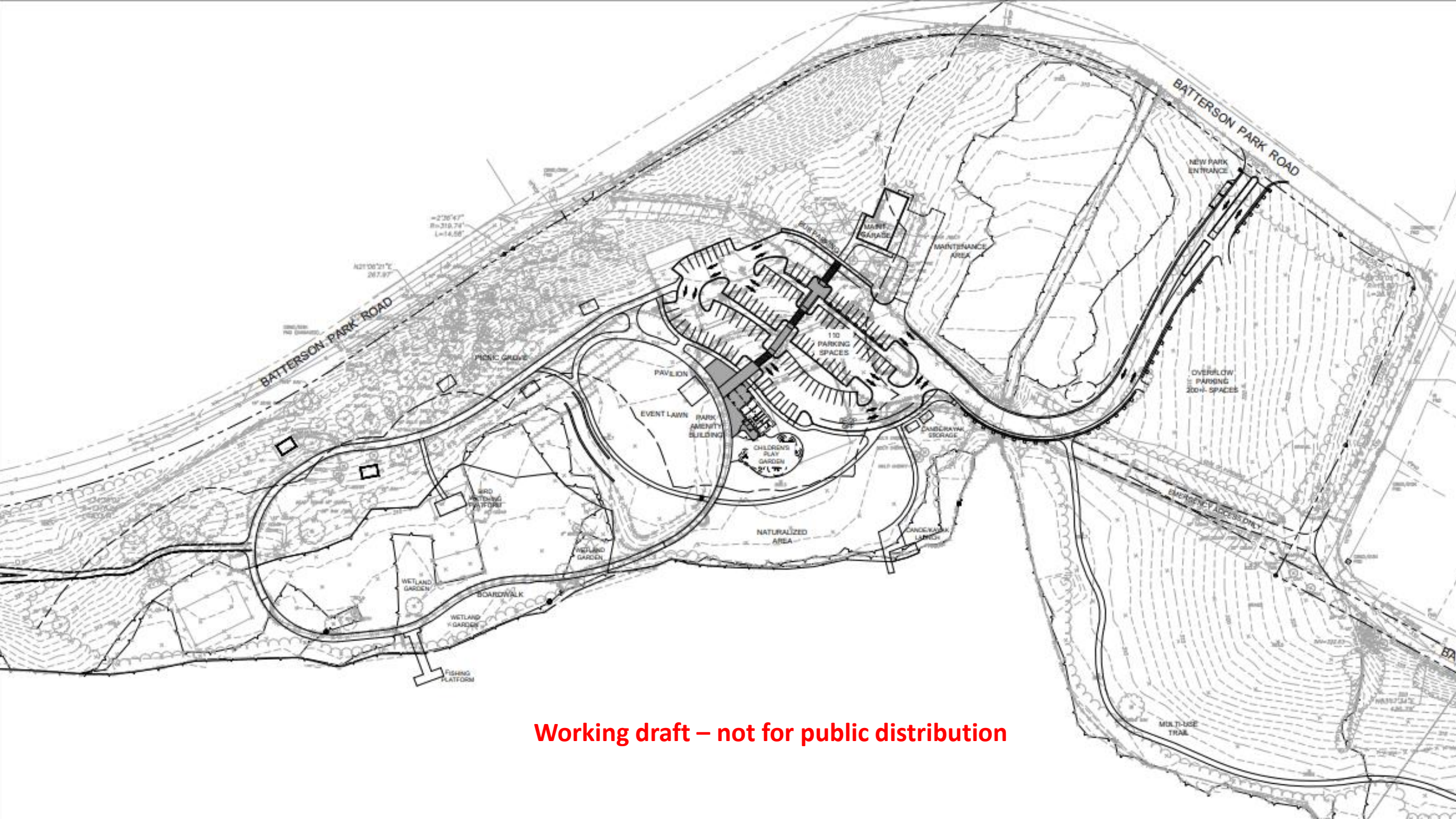
I am pleased to report that our reputation proceeds us. I have had many positive conversations with municipal and state officials from each town. They believe that Riverfront Recapture is uniquely positioned to bring some stability to this project.

Everyone seems to be 'committed to a solution'.

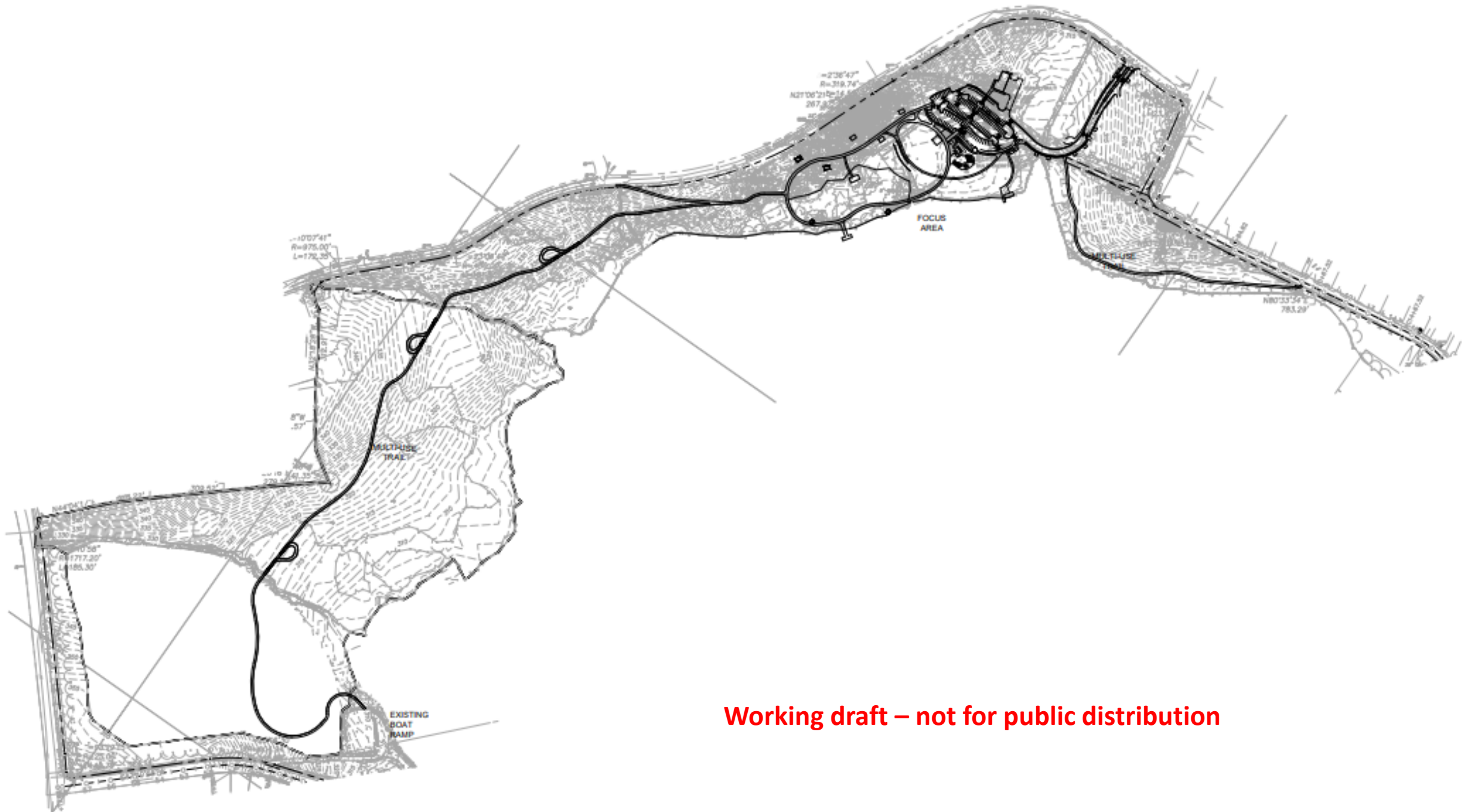
Recommendation:

The Batterson Park subcommittee recommends to the Executive Committee and full Riverfront Recapture Board of Directors that the organization should continue to pursue the Batterson Park management opportunity and engage in negotiations related to the development of a draft memorandum of understanding.

The CEO and staff are empowered to engage City officials and State DEEP staff in negotiating a memorandum of understanding that would designate Riverfront Recapture as the park manager for Batterson Park when it reopens in 2025 or 2026.



Working draft – not for public distribution



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