

Batterson Park subcommittee

August 21, 2024



- Batterson Park Master Plan**
- A. Focus Area
 - 100+/- Parking Spaces
 - B. Boat Launch Area
 - 40+/- Parking Spaces
 - C. Auxillary Parking
 - 5-10 Parking Spaces
 - D. Dam Walkway and Lookout
 - E. Multi-use Trails
 - F. Mountain Biking Trails
 - G. Hiking Trails
 - H. Fishing Deck
 - I. Disk Golf Course





What has happened

What is happening now

What will happen

What might happen

What has happened:

- State DEEP completed a study of Batterson Park in early 2024 which ultimately recommended that the city owned park be managed through a public-private partnership.
- Riverfront participated in numerous meetings with the City of Hartford, State DEEP and Speaker's Office during legislative session.
- The State Legislature passed a bill in May that included language that enables State DEEP to enter into an MOU with the City of Hartford and Riverfront Recapture for the management of Batterson Park.
- The legislation increases the Passport to Parks fund and allows for dollars from this fund to cover the maintenance of a restored Batterson Park.

What has happened, cont.:

- Riverfront staff has crafted a draft operating budget for a revitalized park. Our rough estimate is hovering between \$800,000 - \$900,000. The number includes an administrative fee and park management fee for Riverfront.
- Decision that water quality will not allow for swimming in the pond. And no State dollars will be used to fix the pond anytime soon.
- The consensus is that the encroachment issue on the New Britain side of the pond will not be addressed at the moment.
- The City will retain ownership of the park land. It will not be transferred to the State.
- The State reauthorized the use of approximately \$9,000,000 in state bond funds to be used by the City for restoring and reopening Batterson Park.

What has happened, cont.:

- The City, as the property owner, has agreed to shoulder any insurance liability for the park.
- The City of Hartford reengaged its construction manager (CSG) and its landscape architect (BSC Group) for the project.

What is happening:

- The City working closely with their construction manager, landscape architect and Riverfront to revise the park design. (Riverfront is a paid subconsultant to CSG.)
- Weekly project meetings with the goal of opening a renovated Batterson Park in Summer 2025 / early Fall 2025.
- Review of several concepts for park redesign (all based off of the master plan from 2023)
- Evaluation of where park infrastructure will be located to allow for efficient maintenance, public safety and operations.
- Evaluation of what programs, events and activities can take place in the new park and how proper planning and design of the new park now can make all of those things easier.

What will happen:

- The City will pursue necessary approvals at the State and municipal level (if needed) to move the project forward.
- The City will evaluate elements of the project that can be done sooner than later.
- The City team will create construction documents and put project out to bid in early 2025
- State DEEP will prepare to make Passport to Parks funds available July 1, 2025

What might happen:

- The City will engage a contractor, build the park and open the revitalized community space Summer 2025/early Fall 2025
- This subcommittee makes a recommendation to the Executive Committee and full Riverfront Recapture Board to pursue a park management contract with the City of Hartford for Batterson Park.

Riverfront negotiates a MOU with City and State DEEP and assumes responsibility for management of new park when it opens in 2025.

or

- This subcommittee does not recommend that the organization take on the management of Batterson Park. This would be communicated to the Executive Committee and the organization would notify City of Hartford, State DEEP and Speaker Matt Ritter, among others.

What might happen, cont.:

- If we proceed, Riverfront would participate in the negotiation of a MOU between the City of Hartford and State DEEP for the management of the park.
- If we proceed, Riverfront would work with the City to use a portion of State bond funds to purchase a dump truck, a Bobcat Toolcat, a Ranger truck and other equipment and vehicles needed to operate the new park.
- If we proceed, Riverfront would propose a budget for the operations and maintenance of the park. This budget would include an administrative fee and park management fee. This budget would have to be approved by State DEEP.

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

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).

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.



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.

Logical concerns:

4. This Batterson Park thing 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 precedes 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'.

Why do this?

- New revenue - potentially \$100,000 in net revenue for Riverfront budget
- Waterfront park management is a strength of the organization.
- Enhanced relationship with the City of Hartford, our management partner
- Enhanced relationship with State DEEP, an entity with which we have multiple challenging interactions. They approached us.
- Reopening Batterson Park is a priority for Speaker Matt Ritter. We will need his support in the near future.

Why do this?

- Deeper bench - Maintenance and public safety staff hired to work on Batterson Park contract will offer additional capacity/redundancy for Riverfront parks system, when needed.
- Redundancy - A brand new fleet of trucks and equipment available for use in the existing Riverfront parks system, when needed.
- Park maintenance and operations will be fully funded by the State of Connecticut through the Passport to Park program, a relatively stable funding source
- Reputation - Enhanced visibility for Riverfront in suburban Hartford
- Other reasons?





CAPITAL REGION

Batterson Park, formerly 'a summer destination,' to reopen next summer after a decade of disrepair

By **Natasha Sokoloff**, Staff writer

July 20, 2024

Gift Article

