

Responses to a Questionnaire
(from the *Save Red Bank Central Park* Citizens' Group)
by the 2022 Candidates for the Red Bank, TN, Commission
September 2022

Hayes Wilkinson (for At Large)



1. Compared with other priorities for the City, how important do you think parks and recreation lands, and related amenities are to the Red Bank community, economy, and culture? Why?

I think parks and green spaces are crucial to a thriving city and community. Access to parks and the outdoors are a big reason why my family and I chose to settle in the greater Chattanooga area. This region in particular has become renowned for being a hub in the Southeast for all kinds of outdoor recreation, including hiking, rock climbing, and cycling. In a recent study conducted by UTC, mountain bike tourism alone in Hamilton County was found to have an impact of roughly 6.9 million dollars annually on our economy. With our central location, Red Bank is ideally situated to become an outdoor recreation hub of Hamilton County.

Parks and green spaces provide gathering places for us neighbors to both recreate and build community. Parks also raise adjacent property values, and the reason for this goes beyond the obvious benefits of having a more beautiful city. Parks attract both locals and visitors alike, which in turn attract businesses, creating the foundation of a thriving place where people want to live.

2. What do you think the City of Red Bank should do with the publicly owned 12-acre former middle school property at 3715 Dayton Boulevard? Please explain in detail.

The short and obvious answer is that the 11.97 acres at 3715 Dayton should be protected as public land and a city park. It's incredible that right in the heart of Red Bank we have nearly 12 acres of undeveloped and publicly-owned land ready to be transformed into a beautiful park. This is the kind of opportunity none of us will ever see again in our lifetimes.

The broader answer is that the specifics of creating a new park on this scale need to be explored thoroughly before a decision is made. I'm personally very fond of the idea of a permeable surface walking trail around the perimeter of the property and an amphitheater for community concerts, gatherings, farmers markets, festivals, and more. I've got a toddler at home, so a splash pad would be a ton of fun for him! Of course this will not be my park, it will be our park. If done correctly, the planning process will be entirely community-focused and community-driven.



[Wilkinson, continued]

3. What is your opinion about the merits of the City’s current “10-minute Walk to a Park Initiative” compared with other Red Bank parks and recreation needs?

I’m 100% in support of the 10-minute walk to park initiative. Three-quarters of Red Bank residents do not have access to a park space within a 10-minute walk of their home. I’m especially concerned about park access for residents on the northern end of Red Bank, as there are no public parks north of Kids Corner Playground on Unaka St.

In addition to creating a central park and town center at the former middle school property, an efficient and effective way to expand accessibility to park spaces throughout the city could be to create “micro-parks” or “pocket parks”. Micro-parks are typically less than an acre and can be created at a very low cost to the city. These tiny parks can feature any combination of neighborhood amenities like picnic areas, gazebos, benches, shade trees, or small playgrounds. Shaw Park in the Highland Park neighborhood in Chattanooga is a prime example. It’s roughly 0.25 acres and features benches, some nice tree cover, and a playground that’s easily accessible from the surrounding neighborhood.

4. How do you propose to resolve Red Bank’s out-of-compliance status with the National Park Service regarding the 2011 land swap agreement?

This is a very complex situation, but the root issue is that the City of Red Bank owes the NPS at least \$1.45 million dollars in land value as well as an active recreation component (i.e. basketball courts, soccer fields, a skate park, etc). The reality is that the City of Red Bank does not own any land (outside of this property) or have the capacity to acquire any other land that would come close to that \$1.45M appraisal value. So, the easiest and most effective way to fulfill our agreement with NPS is by using the publicly owned Former Red Bank Middle School Property at 3715 Dayton Blvd to create Red Bank’s own Central Park.

5. Do you think resolution of Red Bank’s out-of-compliance status with the National Park Service matters? Why or why not?

Yes. It’s fairly simple. Red Bank has a history of running on a “lean” but balanced budget. What this means is that the city is more dependent on grants from the state and federal government to fund various projects like road improvements, and infrastructure like sidewalks, parks, and recreational amenities.

The catch is that since Red Bank is out of compliance, it puts us at the bottom of the applicant pool for many types of grants from state and federal agencies, like the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and the National Park Service (NPS) in particular. If Red Bankians truly value low taxes, we should be motivated to be as competitive as we can in our grant applications. The implications are clear. Red Bank must square up with the National Parks Service if we want our city to continue to grow and thrive.