



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

Hollie Berry (for District 1)



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?

Parks are crucial to every dimension of our city; they strengthen our economy by attracting businesses and customers for those businesses while increasing property values, lifting both sales tax and property tax revenue throughout the city without rate increases. They make our community more resilient to future threats, including flooding, heat waves, pandemics, and any number of curveballs the future may throw our way. They improve our residents' physical and mental health by providing them with public access to safe, clean, enjoyable outdoor spaces to exercise, stay active, and socialize. Public spaces serve as a unique antidote to our increasingly anonymous, isolated, and divisive modern existence by providing gathering spaces for neighbors to meet and form genuine connections and community.

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.

Red Bank has been presented with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to showcase our wonderful city to the broader community by creating a beautiful and functional place unique to us. This park could serve our residents well for generations, draw even more customers from outside Red Bank to patronize our thriving restaurants and businesses, and finally make Red Bank the destination we all know it deserves to be.

Years ago, our community would gather proudly on the Red Bank Elementary track and field (now the Food City parking lot) for our annual Jubilee and Christmas Parade. Red Bankians would regularly meet at this central and highly-visible location to exercise and socialize. When we lost our elementary to Chattanooga, that community hub was lost too and has never since been replaced. Meanwhile, everyone from Red Bankian students to retired architects has been dreaming up plans to fill in the gaps left behind by the painful absence of these schools from the heart of our city.



[Berry, continued]

For two years now, I have been talking with residents about their future hopes for the former Red Bank Middle School property at their doors, over coffee, and after Commission meetings. Overwhelmingly, I hear them wish for this 12-acre publicly-owned land to become a park. After countless conversations with neighbors, the most common request I hear is for an amphitheater where we can come together to host community concerts, movies in the park, art festivals, farmer's markets, and more. The second most common request is for a paved walking trail that would give both our aging residents and our many new young families a safe and enjoyable place to walk with ample shade, seating, and water fountains. The Collegedale Commons is the closest example to these descriptions in our local region and could make a good candidate for study. I'm still listening, and I am committed to continue listening until we've built the community hub Red Bank has been dreaming of.

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 am so proud of all five of our unanimous 2022 commission goals, including our 10-minute walk to a park initiative. The 10-minute walk initiative is a national movement headed by The Trust for Public Land and adopted by cities like ours across the nation. To make sure we serve all the needs of our community, I believe we need a robust park network that includes all six types of parks:

- A Regional park (a larger multi-use park like White Oak Park with playgrounds, a pavilion, and a dog park)
- Special-use parks (like the Norma Cagle Softball Fields, Skipper Fairbanks Recreational Complex, Red Bank Wrestling Center, Red Bank Pool, Red Bank Tennis & Pickleball Courts, Kids Corner Playground, Red Bank Community Center Playground)
- Urban ecology parks (open space and natural habitats, like Stringer's Ridge)
- Neighborhood pocket parks (small parks embedded in neighborhoods)
- Linear parks (greenways and blueways)
- A Signature park (a highly-visible destination park truly unique to its place)

As you can see from the list above, Red Bank excels in certain special-use park types like ballfields, and White Oak Park is a regional park to be proud of. At the same time however, we are lacking a signature park (the former Red Bank Middle School Property would be ideal for this!) as well as neighborhood pocket parks and linear parks. Diversifying our park network with these categories of parks we presently lack would be an incredibly efficient way to achieve our 10-minute walk goal. Working toward that initiative would by no means preclude the creation of other types of parks, whether linear parks to travel safely between parks, neighborhoods, or different areas of town or a signature park where we can all come together as a community and hold festivals and concerts. These varied park and community spaces work together to form a safe, enjoyable, and strong city where we can all thrive.



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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?

The simplest and most logical solution is to fulfill the currently assessed \$1.45M land value we owe the National Park Service by dedicating no less than half of the former Red Bank Middle School property, presently valued at \$3M, as a publicly-owned park in perpetuity.

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

One of the things I love about Red Bank is that we stick to our community values, and I believe one of our values is that we keep our word. At one time, our leaders promised to replace the public land lost at the former Morrison Springs Park with equivalent park and recreation space, and I for one am not willing to forget that promise.

So long as we remain out of compliance with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and the National Park Service (NPS), our city is red-flagged on any state or federal grant applications, especially regarding parks and recreation. Accepting this out-of-compliance status knowing this will affect our access to grant funds for future park and infrastructure projects is a disservice to Red Bank today and to our future generations. Everybody makes mistakes, but now is the time for our city to take responsibility for our past and honor our word by fulfilling this agreement with the NPS and creating a park and recreation space that will serve our community for years to come.