



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

Side-by-Side Candidate Responses to Each Question

Question 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.

District 1 Candidates

Hollie Berry:

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.

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.

Dari Owens:

I would love to see a beautiful park with native plants, open greenspace, cozy walking areas, amazing restaurants, a tot's splash pad, unique local shops, disc golf etc.



[Owens, continued]

We have an abundance of acreage available at this location, even with the land swap, to truly create an oasis, a destination right in the middle of our town.

District 3 Candidates

Jamie Fairbanks-Harvey:

Our City of Red Bank should provide a centerpiece for recreation & congregation on our center land. It's Citizen-input who decides how to develop the land, not what I think.

Lawrence Miller:

Over a year ago, I began looking closely at the 12-acre site that once housed Red Bank High School and later Red Bank Middle School. After 70 years as a school campus in the heart of our City, the land has been vacant for over a decade. I joined Don McKenzie in an effort to catalog plant and animal life on the site. We discovered a surprising number of life forms there, primarily along the woodland areas on the west and south of the parcel. Undoubtedly the most surprising find was a massive Virginia Pine. Don submitted this tree for consideration as a Champion Tree and a team from UT Knoxville took measurements that are under analysis. It is likely that this will be the Champion Virginia Pine for the United States.

This is an epic tree, and it deserves an epic park.

I support the ideas of using all of this property as a publicly accessible park. I created a conceptual map with some suggested areas for native plant gardens with nature trails, an amphitheater, a pavilion, and a sculpture garden. <https://flic.kr/p/2nJNgCA>

However, the actual purpose of a park is something that can be developed within the community planning process that will be directed by our City Manager with the aid of the City's new staff person responsible for parks and recreation. My concept map is only a suggestion and is by no means definitive. In a recent community forum hosted by Commissioner LeCompte and his citizen committee, I heard several great ideas that could be incorporated into our epic park.

Using all twelve acres as a park will create a much-needed focal point for our community. In a sense, it would be honoring the heritage that was earned as a school campus. I think it would be highly appropriate to honor this legacy of the schools that were at the core of the Red Bank community well before it was an incorporated municipality.

I have made some further points in an opinion I wrote for a local online publication (Why We Need An Epic Park In The Heart Of Red Bank <https://bit.ly/3oZ64ed>.) Research has shown that a park setting is connected to increased economic benefits. These include enhanced property values and an increase in businesses that want to locate near an attraction. An epic park would also attract new homebuyers to Red Bank. In addition to younger families, parks have proved to be attractions favored to capture the retirement migration that the Chattanooga area is experiencing. Look to North Chattanooga where two municipal parks have fueled the economic boom north of the river.



At Large Candidates

Jeff Price:

After meeting the requirements with NPS, we then need to evaluate all options related to the remaining acreage to determine the best overall use for the citizens of Red Bank. This property is extremely valuable and centrally located to our city. The future state cannot solely be determined by majority of commissioners or a particular citizen group.

Once the top options are determined, we then can push for a referendum to allow all citizens to vote on the preferred approach.

Hayes Wilkinson:

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.