

## **Dismembering Liberty Park**

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# Dismembering Liberty Park

Liberty State Park along the New Jersey side of New York Harbor offers 700 green acres and waterfront walks with spectacular views of the Statue of Liberty and the Lower Manhattan skyline. It is, in other words, a priceless asset for the densely populated New York-New Jersey region.

New Jersey state and city officials created the park over a period of 20 years from tracts of weeds, garbage and rotting piers. They have been using state and Federal money to carry out a sensitive master plan completed in 1977, including \$43 million from New Jersey's "Green Acres" bonds.

But now the outgoing Byrne Administration wants to turn over almost half the park to commercial developers. It has advertised for proposals to

build in up to 300 acres, crudely expanding the master plan's provision for 40 commercial acres.

This maneuver would take advantage of a loophole that permits other use of the park property as long as the state reimburses the Green Acres Fund for the value of the land. Since Liberty Park now includes some of the best waterfront acreage in the region, the state treasury could make this reimbursement and still profit handsomely from the deal.

But much of the current value of the land results from its acquisition and preparation as a state park. That was done at public expense, in the belief that it would be used for public benefit. The effort to take back much of it for commercial development is a gross betrayal of public trust.

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