

The Friends of Liberty State Park www.folsp.org
NJDEP Division of Parks and Forestry Officially Recognized Friends Organization
Summary of Mission, Goals and Accomplishments – 1988 to 2026

The Friends is an all-volunteer, 501(c)3 NJ non-profit organization dedicated to protecting, improving and promoting Liberty State Park as a Central Park-type free and green park behind Lady Liberty – for enjoyment of varied recreation, nature, history, culture and history.

LSP is sacred and priceless Public Land because it is scarce urban open space and urban nature, vital for urban people's quality of life, and mental, emotional and physical public health in this densely populated area, and also sacred because LSP is next to the Statue of Liberty.

LSP is a local, state and national treasure, an inclusive and open park for All to enjoy. LSP wouldn't be the free and green urban park it is today, if LSP founders Morris Pesin and Audrey Zapp, and The Friends since our 1988 founding, hadn't co-led grassroots battles against exclusionary privatization and commercialization plans. For LSP's almost 50 years, the overwhelming majority, the broad public consensus, the clear Voice of the People, many 10's of 1000's of advocates, put democracy into action to protect LSP from commercial assaults.

The Friends co-led the cause of passing the LSP Protection Act, to once and for all end privatization threats. The Act had 111 local, regional, and statewide groups in a Coalition and over 33,000 petition signers and the support of several elected officials, especially the main sponsor Assemblyman (now Senator) Raj Mukherji. However, the influence and money, the lies and smear attacks of those funded by Paul Fireman, billionaire owner of the Liberty National Golf Course who wants to privatize LSP's Caven Point Natural Area where students acquire STEM experiences, for relocating private golf holes, got the Protection Act replaced with a non-protection law that set-up a LSP task force stacked with his front groups and other surrogates. Thankfully the DEP Commissioner LaTourette listened to the public's overwhelming decades of support for a Central Park type park for His "Revitalization" process led to a 2025 new Master Plan and he rejected the billionaire's surrogates' exclusionary Sports and Entertainment Complex plans. The Commissioner then betrayed his anti-privatization pledge and pushed a new 60 year marina lease allowing a massive boat storage warehouse.

Friends of LSP Accomplishments

Encouraging public participation in LSP's land use decisions for a Central Park type park; ; funding over 1070 trees; establishing the shuttle bus route; championing the 1998 large Freedom Way playground and facilitating the 2018 replacements of both LSP playgrounds; the main funder of gardens; getting a \$200K grant toward creating the popular reservable Picnic Pavilions; 30 years of salt marsh cleanups; funding 6 bulletin boards and 6 Terminal hanging information banners; and funding kayaks, binoculars and other Nature Center items.