

## Town Has New Plans For Hampton Bays Park

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[By Michael Wright](#) Southampton Town will apply for state grant money to fund the development of newly unveiled plans for Good Ground Park, a mixed-use expanse of recreational, cultural and business space along the north side of downtown Hampton Bays.

The vision presented to the Town Board last week by town officials and leaders of the development effort shows a park that connects to the back of Main Street businesses, emphasizes public access between Main Street and commercial properties on the northern edge of the park, and is anchored by a public amphitheater to host concerts and

performances. The goal will be for the 36-acre park to provide a cultural anchor for the hamlet and attract visitors to its business district.

Kevin McDonald, a Hampton Bays resident and preservation project manager for The Nature Conservancy, said the town will rekindle its efforts to tap into millions in state economic redevelopment grants to fund an official design of the park using the rough sketches he and town officials had drafted after meetings with community groups and business owners.

Designing the park is expected to cost as much as \$250,000, and the actual work to develop it would likely run into the millions.

Mr. McDonald and Deputy Town Supervisor Frank Zappone told board members that while discussing options for park features with community members, they heard overwhelming support for the amphitheater and the connection to the downtown business district with walking paths and new storefronts and businesses at the rear of Main Street.

Mr. Zappone said that many residents made it clear that the development of an amphitheater in the park should be the highest priority in the designs. Many residents and business owners compared their vision for the park to what now exists at the center of downtown Greenport, where a public amphitheater anchors that village's waterfront green and hosts concerts and theater performances that draw large numbers of visitors.

Mr. McDonald also discussed offseason options that have been envisioned for the Hampton Bays park, including a sledding hill, sleigh rides and ice skating.

"This was a park, now it's a downtown revitalization project centered on a park and the connection of a park to Main Street," Mr. McDonald said. "When I presented it that way [to the community], overwhelmingly they responded to it positively. We would like to have restaurants and cafes that face on the park, so the park and businesses are well integrated. It reinforces the strength of Main Street, and the park becomes a public gathering place."

The park would be developed on land the town purchased in 2003 for \$3.5 million and earmarked at the time for development as a public park and urban renewal effort with scattered commercial development areas along its fringes.

Mr. McDonald said he thinks that the new plan for the park will qualify for state "transformational" grants because of the sweeping change it could bring to downtown Hampton Bays, both physically and economically.

The Town Board on Tuesday agreed to submit a preliminary notice of the town's intent to apply for a \$125,000 grant from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to help with the design costs for the park. The town will then have to work to finalize its designs for the park, and figure out how to pay for it.

"One of the adult-like moments will be coming up with a funding plan, because we need to figure out how to pay for it," Mr. McDonald said. "Most downtowns would

love to have the problem of how to design a park that will anchor their business district.”



*Brenda McMorrow & John de Kadt*  
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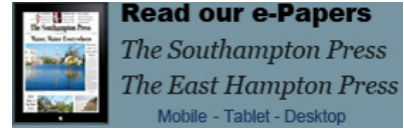
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