

FINAL DRAFT

**Request for Proposal
for Planning and Design Services for
Veteran's Park in Stamford, CT**

**Stamford Downtown Special Services District's
Veteran's Park Ad-Hoc Committee**

In partnership with:

The City of Stamford
First County Bank
Reckson—SL Green
Seaboard Properties
Stamford Town Center
Veterans Groups

REDESIGN OF VETERAN'S PARK

I. INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, there have been many incremental efforts to improve Veteran's Park including strategies to activate it as a public space, the beautification of it with landscaping and the inauguration of new memorials. These improvements have been implemented successfully on their own, but they have not leveraged one another to significantly reposition this central public space to meet the broad and changing needs of our downtown community. Now is a critical time to partner the interests of multiple public and private stakeholders to make major comprehensive progress in Veteran's Park and transform it into the focal central plaza that it was designed to be. Leading this effort to redesign Veteran's Park is an ad-hoc committee of the Stamford Downtown Special Services District and various stakeholders in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

In addition to enhancing the design of the park, there is great potential to transform the way in which the buildings and uses surrounding the park are integrated into the park and flow into the downtown. The focus of this redesign project will be on the pedestrian or human-scaled improvements. Reckson-SL Green has made significant reinvestment in Landmark Square, attracting new tenants and is equally interested in connecting its complex to the street life that has developed in downtown since the project's original development. The various interests and activities in the park have the potential to combine into a great urban space, but a deliberate process and design are necessary to achieve that outcome. Investments in the park will be focused on improving connectivity, creating an active public gathering space, increasing pedestrian amenities and integrating the surrounding uses and developments into the fabric of the park.

II. HISTORY OF VETERAN'S PARK

Before the park was renamed Veteran's Park, it was known as Central Park. At that time, the footprint of the park was smaller and it was located along Old Main Street, a vibrant commercial core in the heart of Stamford Downtown. Adjacent to Central Park was Atlantic Square, where in the early 1900s trolley lines converged. Public perception about downtown public space changed drastically in the time after WWII. Starting in the 1950's, vacant store fronts and blight in this area led to urban renewal policies that used eminent domain takings as the primary tool. Much of downtown was razed over the next few decades, making way for a new form of development thought to revitalize the urban core. This new form had large building footprints, eliminated streets to make larger blocks and the buildings were not designed to activate public space. Rather,

this new urban form was meant to move commuters in and out of Stamford Downtown and back to their home away from the central business district.

One Landmark Square was built in 1972, and throughout the 1980's the Stamford Town Center (STC), a regional shopping center, and many other large office buildings were constructed. The discontinuation of Old Main Street was the next significant land use change, which resulted in the park that we know today. The new park increased the area of parkland at the expense of the street, and as such one form of public space was converted to another. This ad-hoc committee addresses the negative implications of the current form of Vet's Park, its layout, the design of its memorials and the impact of it all on the vibrancy of this public space.

Figure 1. Stamford Urban Renewal Map, 1967, <http://www.stamfordhistory.org/urc-map3.htm>



III. A VISION FOR VETERAN'S PARK

Since the creation of the 2002 Master Plan for the City of Stamford, the downtown area has seen significant growth in residential development, increased employment and the establishment of Mill River Park. In addition, the number of young, well-educated, employed individuals living and working in Stamford Downtown has grown and continues to grow. The economic growth in Stamford Downtown appeals to those wishing to live and work in a thriving urban center. Great public spaces, like downtown parks and plazas, are essential for the health and prosperity of urban centers.

The 2014 Master Plan aims to build upon this growth and capture the regional demand for a vibrant and walkable city with high-quality public spaces and a circulation network that serves all transit modes. The new Master Plan for the city also outlines a vision for linked open spaces, and notes the potential for east-west connections between Mill River Park, Columbus Park and Veteran's Park. In order to reach this goal, the Master Plan calls for public and private initiatives to identify priority open spaces and connections to protect and acquire open space. The Veteran's Park Redesign Project seeks to address the growing demand for walkable, vibrant and well-connected public spaces in the downtown.

Veteran's Park is a large, centrally located and significant cultural space in the community. We envision that the park will serve as a public meeting place, an entryway to the mall and offices, a venue for events and a primary link for east-west connection through the downtown. In addition, we envision that the park continue to serve as an integral hub for bus travel. The park will serve to boost the vitality of adjacent businesses, and provide a safe and clean open space that promotes healthy civic life. It will also celebrate and honor Veterans who served our country, and thus the park will continue to have an important cultural role. Currently the park is lacking connectivity and integration to adjacent uses, and this has a negative impact on the park's vibrancy. There is great potential for Veteran's Park to be an active public meeting place that integrates seamlessly with its surroundings.

IV. SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of services in this RFP includes cost effective and high impact designs for the park and adjacent public spaces. Redesign improvements should be considered which include walking paths, sloped topography as a way to re-engineer the stairway leading to the mall, lawns for passive recreational use, signage to create a system of wayfinding for connectivity and interactive memorials that activate the park. Another aspect of the design should consider how to better integrate the park with its surrounding uses such as the STC,

Reckson—SL Green Landmark Square office buildings, First County Bank, potential new commercial uses and the bus stop. Designs should also consider programming such as concerts, outdoor movies, exercise classes or other activities for all ages. Finally, please keep in mind that all gardens, paths and memorials can be redesigned or relocated.

The following are concepts developed by the Veteran's Park Ad-Hoc Committee that should be incorporated into any design:

- **Highlight Pedestrian Connectivity and Modernize Wayfinding**

Entrances to Landmark Square buildings 3, 4, and 6, the STC's western anchor as well as its central retail corridor and First County Bank all front on Veterans' Park (see Figure 2). It is not currently clear to pedestrians entering or within the park where these entrances are or where they lead. The Park and its paths could act as a primary pedestrian conduit to these activity centers, bringing many more people to and through the park, but the eventual destinations and the route to them need to be clarified. Pedestrian routes should be designated and designed to accommodate side-by-side users and not limited to minimum standards for typical sidewalks. The STC contains the downtown's largest reservoir of public parking. In order to be more utilized for the full range of downtown activities, the pedestrian connection and signage linking this parking to the core of downtown should be emphasized as well. In addition to the parking garage entrance, the main pedestrian entrance to the STC is the stairway in Veteran's Park. A new design for this stairway should be considered in a new design for the park. Finally, the design should address a new east-west connection between Mill River Park, Columbus Park, Veteran's Park, and East Main Street, as envisioned in the 2014 City of Stamford Master Plan.

- **Honor Stamford's Veterans**

The Veterans' Memorial is and should continue to be a focal point within the Park. While presently monumental in its stature and visibility, the Memorial is not well integrated into the remainder of the public space and is, as a result, not entered or experienced by many park goers. Without dominating the newly designed public space, the Memorial should be redesigned to be more accessible and inviting and more effectively honor the patriots of past, current, and future conflicts. Innovative memorial designs should be considered, such as a living memorial or interpretative signage.

- **Support Transportation Alternatives**

Stamford Downtown has evolved into a truly walkable and transit-oriented center over the last couple decades. Just as Atlantic Square was the focal stop on the city's trolley network in the early 20th Century, Veterans' Park serves as the focal stop on the city's bus network, CT Transit, in the 21st Century. Presently, the CT Transit bus stop consists of two shelters with little amenities or information, resulting in passengers milling about, and all users subject to the challenges of inclement weather. A redesign of Veterans' Park should provide a distinct area for transit riders with new amenities that improve conditions and serve to attract new users. In addition to transit, bikes are becoming an important component of the city's transportation system and the park should include amenities to support bike access to the park, the STC, and Landmark Square.

Figure 2. Entrances to buildings and connectivity throughout Veteran's Park



- 1 STAIRWAY ENTRANCE TO BUILDINGS 3 AND 4
- 2 ENTRANCE TO BUILDING 4
- 3 ENTRANCE TO BUILDING 5 AND TOWN CENTER
- 4 ENTRANCE TO BUILDING 6
- 5 STAIRWAY TO BUILDINGS 4, 5, 6, AND TOWN CENTER
- 6 OLD MAIN PEDESTRIAN PATH AND ENTRANCE TO PARKING GARAGE
- 7 ENTRANCE TO BUILDING 6
- 8 ENTRANCE TO TOWN CENTER TENANT
- 9 ENTRANCE TO FIRST COUNTY BANK

- **Activate the Park**

The Park is almost exclusively lined by inactive spaces and blank walls. Recognizing that the surrounding buildings are all privately owned and that structural change is likely cost intensive and

may not be architecturally feasible, the design should identify opportunities to bring activity (including office, retail, institutional, and/or residential space) to ground level, fronting on the public space. The redesign of the park represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reposition this portion of downtown into a 21st century urban activity center anchoring downtown. Retrofitting a mid-century urban fabric is a challenge, but targeted opportunities should be identified. The design should also contemplate programming recommendations and incorporate physical features to support activities for all ages.

- **Make the Park a Park**

Hardscape and pavers will be essential to support certain functions within the park. The design will limit hardscape to those places within the park for which it is essential and increase the amount of green space in all other areas of the park. The greenspace should be aesthetically pleasing, usable, low maintenance, and interactive with park patrons. Also, within the current “Welcome Garden” in the park there is a CL&P manhole that will be repositioned to ground level in the future, and this should be considered during the redesign process (see Figure 3). Finally, the design should include a utility and drainage plan that outlines low impact development techniques, such as rain gardens and street trees with stormwater infiltration inlets or other green infrastructure.

Figure 3. Welcome Garden and CL & P Manhole location in Veteran’s Park



- **Accommodate All Users**

The park should be accessible and inviting to all users. Handicap accessibility is essential to ensure that all are able to enjoy the park. Designing for wheelchairs also means making spaces stroller

friendly for families and young children. The above concepts should achieve greater activity and utilization, but additional measures should focus on safety and security to ensure that throughout the day and evening all residents of the city are comfortable spending time in or passing through this public space.

The following are programming concepts that came out of the visioning session:

- Water feature or splash park
- Seating
- Green lawn (passive/multi-purpose)
- Playground equipment
- Amphitheater or screen for outdoor movie projection
- Marketplace
- Food carts or trucks
- New commercial uses using 30'-40' of Reckson—SL Green land on north side of park

V. QUALIFICATIONS

The Veteran's Park Committee is looking for a planning and design consulting firm that is skilled at working collaboratively with various public and private stakeholders to visualize a plan that integrates various surrounding uses, connectivity throughout the city, and activation within the park. The firm must be capable of reviewing relevant studies and plans, conducting site visits and analysis as needed, preparing a summary report and design concept, attending regular stakeholder meetings, conducting design charrettes, and designing for all modes of transportation. Furthermore, consideration should be given to passive and active uses for memorial parks, pedestrian amenities, the integration of mixed uses, and wayfinding and signage. Various iterations of draft concept renderings will be essential as well as final concept design renderings. Finally, we seek a design team that has expertise in urban park and memorial park design, transportation and complete streets, architecture, and landscape architecture.

VI. PHASING & DELIVERABLES

There will be three phases to this project.

Phase 1: Initial site analysis

Summary report and Initial design concept following an in-depth analysis of relevant studies and existing plans, stakeholder input, design charrettes, and site visits

- Review of the existing plans.
- Commitment to attend 10 meetings with the ad-hoc committee.

Phase 2: Collaborative design work

Detailed draft renderings of the site plan and various design concepts

- Commitment to hold 3 public meetings.
- Development of project website.

Phase 3: Final Phase 1 design concept plan and Phase 2 concept plan for long-term improvements

Final design concepts for Phases 1 and 2 including estimated costs of construction

- A buildable Phase 1 concept plan that includes layout with memorial design and other park elements, low-maintenance landscaping scheme, and hardscape surfaces. The concept plan should integrate bus service, access to STC parking lots, facilitate biking and walking, and create potential linkages to other nearby open spaces. Finally, this plan should include an infrastructure plan (electricity, water, sound, drainage), lighting plan, and a wayfinding plan with sign style development.
- A Phase 2 concept plan for long-term improvements.

VII. BUDGET

The budget for design and planning project is \$100,000+.

VIII. SUBMITTAL PROCEDURES

Interested applicants who wish to be considered for this project shall provide 14 sets of the following information to Sandy Goldstein, President of Stamford Downtown Special Services District. The application packages can be dropped off or mailed to Stamford Downtown Special Services District, C/O Sandy Goldstein, 5 Landmark Square, Suite 110, Stamford, CT 06901 no later than 12:00 pm on Friday, November 14, 2014. A digital version on flash drive shall accompany the submission. The submission shall include:

1. Letter of Introduction
2. Outline of the consulting firm's understanding of the project
3. Detailed itemized fee proposal including a total cost and schedule for completion of tasks
4. Resumes of personnel who will work on project
5. Qualifications for working with public/private stakeholders and conducting design charrettes
6. Demonstration of the firm's ability to create detailed renderings of design concepts
7. The firm's planning and design portfolio
8. At least two references for the firm's work on similar Park Redesign projects and two additional references for Veteran's Memorial design.
9. Certificate of liability insurance

IX. Schedule

It is expected that the process to develop Veteran's Park Redesign project will consider the following schedule. However, changes may be made as needed.

Tuesday, October, 21, 2014	Pre-submittal Meeting for all interested firms
Friday, November 14, 2014	Deadline for Application Submission
Monday, December 1—Friday December 12, 2014	Respondents Interviewed
Monday, December 15—Friday, December 19, 2014	Consultant Selection and Budget Determination
March, 2015	Initial Site Visits, Planning Charrettes, and Concept Summary and Deliverables Report
April-July, 2015	Stakeholder meetings to provide feedback on design concept and deliverables
August, 2015	Final design concepts Phase 1 and 2 complete
September, 2015	Advertise for Construction Issued

X. PROJECT AREA

The project area includes Veteran's Park, all adjacent public space including streets and sidewalks, all buildings that border the park including First County Bank, the STC, and Reckson—SL Green Landmark Square office buildings, all buildings that face the park from across Atlantic Street, the ramp to the Mall garage, and the CT Transit bus stop (see Figure 4). The Main Street Corridor should also be considered in regards to improving connectivity through major public spaces in the downtown such as Mill River Park, Columbus Park, Old Town Hall Park, Veteran's Park, and the Old Main Pedestrian Pathway (see Figure 5)

Figure 4. Vet's Park Redesign Project Area

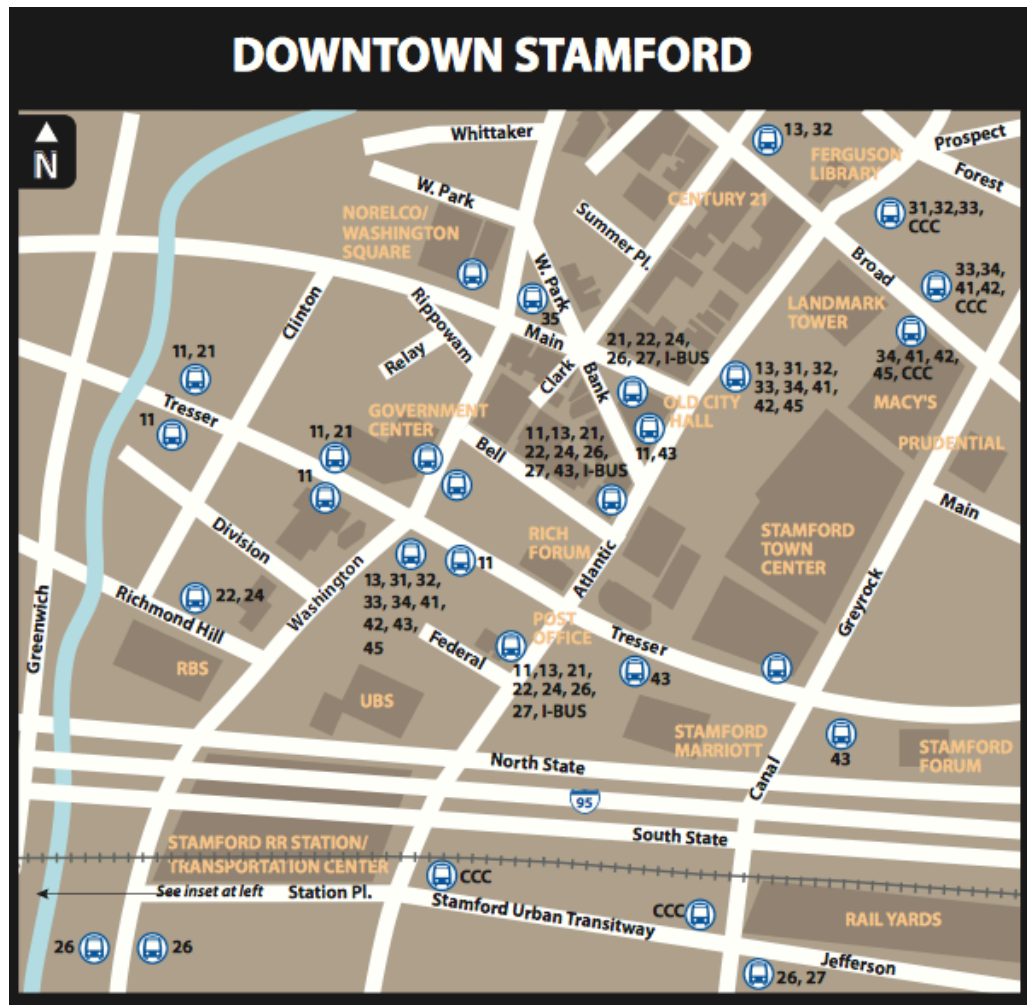


Figure 5. Potential East-West Connectivity through downtown parks, 2014, www.maps.google.com



Figure 6. Detailed Map of Downtown Bus Routes by Stop, 2014. Eight buses stop at Veteran's Park.

[http://www.cttransit.com/uploads_RTDivisionSystem/Stam_SystemMap_online_2014\(1\).pdf](http://www.cttransit.com/uploads_RTDivisionSystem/Stam_SystemMap_online_2014(1).pdf)



XI. AVAILABLE PLANS AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

2014 City of Stamford Master Plan draft: available to the public <http://stamfordmasterplan.org>

2010 Towards a Livable Neighborhood Study, created by RPA for DSSD and URC: provided by DSSD

Topography documents and files for Veteran's Park provided by Redniss & Mead

Urban Memorial Park Research: provided by DSSD