

Landscape Architect Makes Recommendations For Initial Riverside Park Improvements

Changes to East New London park would include changes to roads to improve pedestrian access

By [Dirk Langeveld](#) | [Email the author](#) | 5:00 am



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A University of Connecticut landscape architect said Wednesday that changes to [Riverside Park](#)'s road system would be a good first step in the revitalization of the park.

Peter Miniutti, who is part of UConn's Community Research & Design Collaborative and has been working to collect input on residents' hopes and ideas for the park's future, said the suggestions presented on Wednesday were the first recommendations presented by the group after their studies. The proposals include:

- Transitioning the main entrance off Adelaide Street into a narrower pedestrian walkway, with the auto entrance to be established farther down the street
- Eliminate some roads in the park to increase the amount of usable green space
- Prune trees to improve visibility
- Renovate existing bathrooms

Miniutti said the proposal would keep about half of the park on the Adelaide Street side in a more natural environment, while the other half would have several activity areas linked by pedestrian walkways. These would include the existing basketball court and picnic area as well as sites that formerly held playgrounds and a pavilion, all along a route leading from the [Winthrop School](#).

"When you're at the school you see the river, and that's the destination you go down to," said Miniutti.

Miniutti recommended that access to the Thames River shore should be part of the park's long-term plans. The shore is currently isolated from the park due to the railroad line and the deteriorating state of

a pedestrian bridge to the river.

Madeline Schad, a graduate student working with Miniutti, said the collaborative is also considering how to redirect stormwater runoff from the Winthrop School into Riverside Park through the use of artistic or rustic systems that can be incorporated into the landscape. She said this idea is still under review, with the challenge being that there is a 17-foot incline between a catch basin and the park.

Some residents also asked Miniutti for his opinion on whether [play equipment on Cedar Grove Ave. should be relocated to Riverside Park](#). Advocates of the park have been split on whether this would be a positive addition to the park or a redundant one.

Miniutti said residents have spoken in favor of adventure playgrounds in the natural areas of the park and that he would not recommend a playscape there. He said the equipment could be a feasible addition on another site in the park.

“From my perspective the idea of that plastic playscape being tucked somewhere in here...I don’t have an issue with that,” said Miniutti.

However, Miniutti also said he would have to consider whether relocating the playscape would be the best use of funds in restoring the park. The initial estimate for the relocation and pouring of a safety surface was \$56,636.

“\$60,000 can give us a lot of adventure playground,” said Miniutti.

Resident Wayne Vendetto said he thought both kinds of playground would be able to fit in the park under Miniutti’s suggestions.

“It would be terrible to trash it. It’s a perfectly good playground,” said Vendetto.

[New London Landmarks](#) is continuing to host spring workshops and activities regarding Riverside Park and Hodges Square neighborhood revitalization. The next workshop will take place at 6:30 p.m. on April 9 at the Winthrop School.

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