

## Residents comment on new park's design

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By John Bozzo

For Hometown News

ORMOND BEACH - Residents offered sharp disagreements Tuesday about how much parking to build into the city's new oceanfront park.

Some of the nearly 40 people attending a forum at The Casements on how the park should look wanted as little parking as possible.

Others wanted more.

A preliminary design rendering showed parking for 220 vehicles planned for the 4-acre Andy Romano Beachfront Park, 839 S. Atlantic Ave.

"Is it really necessary to dominate the park with parking," said Charlie Ferguson, who lives near the proposed park.

Mr. Ferguson said he never has a problem parking at the Milsap and Harvard beach approaches near the new park.

"As presented now, you're dominating the park with a parking lot," he told consultants from the

Zev Cohen design firm. "I'd rather see a park with trees and grass."

But Pat McMullan, in her 70's and disabled, lobbied for "wall-to-wall" parking.

"I need parking where I can see the ocean," she said. "We need more and more and more parking."

Dimitri Bourtzakis, 44, worried a lack of parking would affect his restaurant, Dimitri's, across the street from the park.

"If there's not going to be parking, is everyone going to park in my restaurant so my customers don't have parking?" Mr. Bourtzakis said. "Where are all these people going to park? They've got to park somewhere."

Mr. Bourtzakis also objected to putting a concession stand in the park.

"Why have concessions when there's restaurant row across the street?" he said.

Charlie Wilkes, 57, favors an environmental focus to developing the oceanfront park.

"We're looking for a natural park," he said. "No asphalt. Native plants. Make it look like a sand dune. That's what it used to be."

Norman Lane, 56, also favors the environmental approach, but said "zero asphalt" might not be achievable.

"We're probably going to have to have some asphalt," he said. "I'd like to see a substantial dune rehabilitation west of the seawall."

Mr. Lane supports a "reasonable amount of parking," but not wall-to-wall vehicles.

"We want to save space for other amenities," he said. "I don't want intense parking because there will be too many people connected to the beach in a small area."

Laura Jones said she wants the park to be designed around children.

"We had four kids and they grew up at the beach," said the 83-year-old resident.

Jan Reece said the park needs restrooms and picnic tables.

"I'd like to see a place to park by the ocean so people can watch the ocean during the storm," she said.

Ms. Reece doesn't want amenities such as splash fountains. The park should provide access to the beach, not be a play area itself, she said.

Another forum was scheduled Wednesday at the Senior Center, past deadline for the Hometown News.

Residents provided written ideas for the park and placed dots on proposed designs to indicate their suggestions.

Written comments will be accepted until May 20. Suggestions will be presented to an advisory

board and the City Commission.

A meeting will be held on July 12 to decide on a design for the park.

Voters last year approved paying for the park. City bonds will be issued to pay \$1.5 million of the \$5 million price tag. Volusia County put up the \$3.5 million balance in an ECHO grant, which funds environmental, cultural, historic and outdoors projects with a voter-approved tax.

One of the participants in the forum was Sharon Romano, wife of Andy Romano, the city's first lifeguard and beach concessionaire for whom the park is named.

"I love the idea of having benches right next to the ocean and I'd love to see them covered," she said.

A small children's play area would be okay with Romano, but she wonders if a play area is needed since the park "is next to the beach."

"Parking, that's the big thing," Ms. Romano said. "That's what the residents of Volusia County voted for."

There is one thing Ms. Romano loves about the park without reservation.

"I love the name," she said.