

# Public Domain

by Steve Krulick, Village of Ellenville Trustee

## Strolling Through the Park, Some Day

*"Urban parks are all about health; not only physical health, not just exercise, but the community's health. It's about economic health, and the stimulus parks provide." — Will Rogers, Trust for Public Land*

**Suggestion:** Improving Ellenville's Resnick Park

**Scope:** Canal & Main Street, Ellenville

**Necessity:** Level 2 / Medium (Working, but inadequate; could use new parts or repairs)

### Parks or Parking?

Recent discussions about the Resnick Park have brought to the fore those two perennial Village concerns: Do we have enough downtown parking for businesses, customers, and tourists? Do we have adequate facilities for residents and visitors to just sit and relax, enjoy the seasons and scenery, and partake in the various amenities parks can provide?

I'll leave the subject of parking for a future column. And, with litigation pending, I'll not dwell on Resnick Park and eminent domain other than noting the Trustees have been rather peripheral to the matter, receiving reports and suggestions from the mayor, manager, village attorney, and code officer, as needed. Indeed, this all began before my entry on the Board, and I await to see what maps, notes, and papers from years ago do to shed light on the dispute.

As best as anyone in the administration can recall absent the written evidence now being sought out, the Village's intent was always to maximize the property from the west wall of the old bank building to the Main Street sidewalk as park rather than parking. So, even though that presumption awaits judicial review, let's consider how the park function can be improved.

In one sense, Resnick Park is not ideally situated, being at the busiest intersection in town. It's hard to ignore the sight, sound, and smell of big rigs and lesser vehicles, particularly on some late afternoon Fridays. What should be an oasis can seem more like an ill wind at times. Holding musical events and such there seems almost ludicrous in this regard; I prefer my Mozart not punctuated by punctured mufflers!

More grass, fragrant flowers, bushes, and small trees (at least one had been taken down, making the place instantly seem less park-like) could help mask the aroma d'exhaust. Some classic black or green wrought iron fencing (standard issue at most urban parks), with row hedging on the inside, would help define the space and can help block the view of vehicles, absorb some of the noise (birds inhabiting the bushes also create more pleasing sounds). A small multi-tiered fountain and/or rushing waterfall/pool with maximum splash effect can also generate some relaxing white noise (I've seen this work very well in

NYC and Frisco), as well as give the eye something pleasant to focus on. How about a nice windchime or two, made of tuned tubes from Hydro?

More benches would be nice, and I can see one with seated statues of the park's namesakes, Louis and Mildred Resnick, now that both have left us; this is always a favorite touch at various parks I've been to. A few small, solid stone-and-concrete tables would allow for checkers, lunch al fresco, or some laptop computer work.

Soon after the Roger Baker mural panels were installed, I suggested that the lenses on the olde-tyme street lamps in the park be turned to maximize their light on the wall at night, and minimize their glare into traffic. This hasn't been done yet, so perhaps it isn't readily feasible. But there's no reason why small spotlights can't be placed to make the panels a more visible nighttime feature.

(You may have noticed that one of the park's four clock faces is not keeping time with the other three, and that the lights are out; we were surprised to learn that each clock has its own mechanism, and someone from the factory has to come and do all the repairs, which we hope will be soon.)

The gazebo could use some fresh paint; I'd recommend a more muted or natural color, less stark than the current white. Some better inside lighting would make it more secure and usable in the evenings. More comfortable benches would help. A few years back I suggested that the gazebo would be a great place to put a floating map of the Village in one side's opening, and a similar-sized calendar in the next opening, so any visitor can get a quick lay of the land and see what local events are scheduled for the month. Go online to [www.factman.us/gazebo](http://www.factman.us/gazebo) to see renderings of how this could work.

To tie it all together, and give it a less grid-like feel, I suggest a meandering, curved brick path that leads from the entrances (perhaps a nice archway, like Wurtsboro's park has; the rest of their park is very nicely laid out, and we should see how they and others have made the most with small settings) to the benches, tables, fountain/pool/waterfall, gazebo, and other features.

As has been successful elsewhere, we can inscribe path bricks with the names of donors who contribute to a park fund, as this will help defray some of the costs for the above additions, and leave proof of a community that sets aside public space whose only commerce is for that of the soul with its environs.

Next: Part II, possibilities for other Village parks.

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