



PARKS, PLACES & PEOPLE

August 13, 2025

Union County Council
Attention: Kevin Campbell, kcampbell@ucnj.org
10 Elizabethtown Plaza
Elizabeth, NJ 07207

Don't Sacrifice Trees: Rethink the Warinanco Park Rink Proposal

The Olmsted Network is writing to express concern over the potential destruction of Justin's Grove—a beloved and historic stand of mature oak trees in Warinanco Park ([Job No. 07170](#))—as part of the proposed indoor ice-skating rink project.

This project appears to require the removal of approximately 60-70 mature oak trees, many over a century old, and the diversion of 1.14 acres of public parkland. These trees are not only a defining feature of the historic landscape but also provide essential environmental services: filtering air pollutants, reducing urban heat, managing stormwater and supporting local wildlife. Such benefits cannot be quickly replaced by replanting.

In addition to the ecological loss, the diversion of public parkland raises serious concerns about the long-term stewardship of protected green space. Across the country, we are losing vital public greenspaces to short-term development decisions—with long-term consequences for community well-being.

As stewards of Frederick Law Olmsted's legacy and its relevance to contemporary parks and public health, the Olmsted Network urges Union County to reconsider this course of action.

While we support expanding recreational opportunities like ice skating rinks, such efforts must not come at the expense of Warinanco Park's historic tree canopy and natural heritage. We believe alternative designs can achieve both goals.

We ask the County to protect Justin's Grove, prevent the diversion of public parkland and commit to a thoughtful, inclusive planning process—ensuring community voices are not only heard but actively shape the outcome.

The Olmsted Network stands ready to collaborate in seeking solutions that preserve Warinanco Park's character for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Breitkopf", written in a cursive style.

Sue Breitkopf
President
Olmsted Network