

# Work begins at Rahway River Park



By: **Peter Fiorilla** - Staff Writer

RAHWAY, NJ — Construction on a controversial, \$5 million sports renovation project began last month at the heart of Rahway River Park, where a spectator arena with 1,200-seat bleachers is on pace to be completed by July, according to the county.

The project, which has been funded almost evenly by Union County and Rahway, has drawn the ire of nearby residents in Rahway, Clark and Cranford, including the more than 5,200 people who have signed an online petition against construction.

That petition, on [www.change.org](http://www.change.org), was set up by the grassroots organization called the Coalition to Save Rahway River Park, and says the county “plans to disrupt the open nature of the Park, violate its historic design,” and “will become an assault to Rahway River Park.”

County plans for the park have also culminated in



Photo By David VanDeventer  
Despite signs like the one above cropping up all over Rahway and the

long, drawn-out public meetings where residents have voiced their objections to renovating the center of the park, including a Department of Environmental Protection hearing at Rahway Public Library on Tuesday, Sept. 15.

surrounding community, Union County has begun work on the announced upgrades at Rahway River Park, which includes a new track, a turf field, bleachers, lighting and more.

Hundreds of people attended the meeting and condemned many of the proposed renovations, including the 1,200-seat bleachers — which, members of the coalition believe, makes the the project a stadium in all but name — installing a turf field, putting in 70-foot tall floodlights and the lack of available parking at Rahway River Park, which has about 400 parking spots.

“It’s like going to the mall at Christmas. Everyone’s going to want to get a spot that’s as close as possible to the stadium. The stadium has a capacity of 1,200 people. If two people come in a car, there will be 600 cars looking for a parking spot in the park. They will fill the park,” speaker Thomas Mulvihill said at the hearing. “If only 600 people come, there will be 300 cars, and they’ll again, between them and the usual visitors, fill the park.”

The county began discussions about upgrading the sports area of the park in 2011. The 41-year-old soccer field and track in the park, once renovated to include a turf field, will be used in the future for Rahway High School football games, and potentially other municipal and school events.

That there’s already a designated sports area in the park, say the Union County Freeholders, is one of the reasons that the upgrades will complement the surrounding communities, rather than hurt them.

The renovation project was a hot topic during the Board of Chosen Freeholder elections in November, in which the Democrat incumbents, who have helped organize the upgrade since its germination in 2011, swept their Republican challengers who took a strong stance against the upgrades.

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