

SKATEPARK DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

THE PROCESS OF HOW PUBLIC SKATEPARKS GET BUILT AND
HOW TO HELP MAKE IT HAPPEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY



STEP 1. DEFINE YOUR VISION

Every successful project begins with a clear vision. You can refine the specifics as the project develops, but establishing the general style and size of skatepark you want is the first step in raising community support and showing municipal officials that you are approaching the project seriously and realistically. You can also start to consider potential locations, but you'll likely want to coordinate with your local municipality before spending too much time on this.

Check out our [library of sample designs here](#) to familiarize yourself with various skatepark styles and size categories.

STYLE



SIZE



STEP 2. EDUCATE YOUR MUNICIPALITY



You've got your vision, but without municipal support, it will be difficult to advance your goals past Step 1. Every municipality is different, but typically the Parks and Recreation Department is your best starting point. Find their contact information online, then introduce yourself and your vision via phone call or email. Or better yet, visit their office in-person and ask the front desk to detail the process for advocating for a new recreational facility.

Once you've got the right contact and insight into the steps your specific municipality takes to approve a new project, it's time to educate them about the benefits of public skateparks and preemptively address negative stereotypes.

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THE BENEFITS OF PUBLIC SKATEPARKS

■ SKATEPARKS REDUCE ILLICIT BEHAVIOR

The myth surrounding skateparks is that they are a breeding ground for crime and other illicit activities. To the contrary, countless studies conclude that providing designated spaces for positive physical and social activities is the best way to curb unlawful behavior among youth. When youth having nothing to do or nowhere to go — *that* is when they get into trouble.

- Research out of the University of North Carolina found that skateboarding is among the activities that might help keep children out of trouble. “I think skateboarding kids are a focused group of kids,” said Diana Harris, a parent. Compared to their couch potato peers, active adolescents — including skateboarders — were less likely to engage in risky behavior like smoking and drinking. “I think that is a group we see as being a little more on the risky side, but instead of being on the risky side, they were actually protected from those behaviors,” said Dr. Penny Gordon-Larsen, a researcher. (Source: NBC Philadelphia “Keeping Active Best Way To Keep Kids Out Of Trouble”)
- The skatepark currently has given hundreds of kids in the neighborhood an alternative to drugs, gangs and the many negatives they face each day. From 2003 to 2008, crime has dropped in the immediate area around the park, which has historically been a very high crime area of the city. Since 2003, drug related incidents have dropped 60.9%, violent crime has dropped 29.3% and overall incidents have dropped 22.8%. Further, calls for service have dropped 23.0%. (Source: Ed Kamlan, Public Affairs Specialist City Manager’s Office - City of Long Beach)
- Young skaters roll into smooth concrete bowls and ramps that both parents and health officials see as a constructive and positive way to keep children away from drugs, gangs and crime. “One of the psychosocial benefits is to feel safe again, reclaiming public spaces helps people feel like a community again, the busier the place, the more appealing for the youth and the safest people feel,” said Monica Chavira, M.A., Mental Health Consultant for the Pan American Health Organization. Sports, like skateboarding, is providing the children of Juárez an alternative to the violence surrounding them, Chavira said. “Skateboarding as an urban playing activity is beneficial for kids because it works as a positive escape route where the community and all the skate park users begin to take ownership of their park and take care of it themselves,” she said. (Source: Fox News Latino “Ciudad Juarez Skatepark Lets Kids be Kids Amid Drug Violence”)

■ SKATEPARKS REDUCE DAMAGE TO PRIVATE PROPERTY

There’s an old saying in our industry, that still rings true. “If your town doesn’t have a skatepark, it is one.” Without designated skateparks, skateboarders will make use of any and all terrain in their community. This often includes the private property of home owners and local businesses, as well as public spaces such as downtown plazas. Metal skateboard axles and BMX pegs can destroy paint and chip concrete, causing thousands of dollars in damage every year. Public skateparks are a win-win because skateboarders have a safe place to pursue their passion, while law enforcement, business owners and community members no longer have to spend time, money and energy shoosking skateboarders away from their property.

- PC Steve Wilson, of the Driffield Neighborhood Policing Team, said: “From my experience, I am aware that the skate park is regularly used by numerous young people from Driffield and the surrounding areas, offering a valuable diversion from anti-social behavior. Since the skate park opened there has been a noticeable drop in calls to youths causing annoyance and related matters. I would fully support this facility being made into an all-weather, all year-round resource.” (Source: Driffield Neighborhood Policing Team “Skate Park helps cut crime”)
- Tyler Wolf, 17, now spends time hanging out on the benches outside the Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op on Grandin Road — a habit of many teens that has created anxiety among neighborhood business owners and residents this summer. He said an adequate skate park would lure him away from the benches. But Wolf called the state of Roanoke’s park “depressing,” especially since the removal of the half-pipe and several other ramps. More support has been voiced for finding activities that draw their interest. In Bedford County, a skate park had promising effects, according to Michael Stokes, the County’s Director of Parks and Recreation. Prior to the opening of Falling Creek Park in 2011, Stokes said, area police and merchants dealt with several problem areas that were attracting teen skaters. “They’re just looking for a place to skate,” Stokes said. “And they’re young and they’re going to test some people. You drive through town now and you don’t see that anymore. The issues were just skating in places where there might be pedestrians or traffic and we’re not seeing that anymore,” Stokes said. (Source: The Roanoke Times “Roanoke teen loitering blamed on skate park’s woes”)

THE BENEFITS OF PUBLIC SKATEPARKS

■ SKATEPARKS PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR WHEEL SPORTS

Knowing that skateboarding and wheel sports are mainstream and that they are going to happen whether skateparks exist or not, it's clear the best way to keep youth safe is to provide them access to safe, designated spaces to pursue their passions. In contrast to the urban environment where skateboarders have to contend with surface irregularities, motor vehicles and pedestrians, the intentional layout of a skatepark is significantly safer and less likely to cause injuries.

- Six months after plans to build a public skateboard park behind the Taunton police station were scrapped, some are speculating whether having such a facility could have saved the life of a Taunton skateboarder who was recently struck and killed by a car on Bay Street. "He definitely would have used (the skatepark)," said the boy's mother, Melissa Thomas. "I think he probably would've been there instead of out on the street." "Personally, I think the decision to not allow the skate park denied skaters in Taunton a chance to recreate safely," she said. Thomas echoed the sentiment. "They need a safe place where parents know where to find them," Thomas said. (Source: Taunton Gazette "Taunton's lack of public skate park brought to forefront in wake of teen's death")

■ SKATEBOARDING & WHEEL SPORTS PROVIDE PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

Arguably the most important reason for participating in skateboarding and other wheel sports is the fact that they keep you healthy and physically fit. Finding an activity that gets people off the couch and keeps them in shape is vital for the youth of this nation, especially in this time of a national obesity crisis.

- Skateboard tricks and the lifestyles of the kids who practice them could be a key to fitness into adulthood. A recent study by Johns Hopkins University researchers said regularly skateboarding, rollerblading and biking increase children's chances of fighting the flab as they grow. The odds were better than for those who played baseball and other organized, and often seasonal, sports. The study, published in January's Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, was one more among the many seeking solutions to the nation's growing obesity epidemic. And skaters and their parents say it could help the unindoctrinated appreciate the benefits of some ramps and an outlaw spirit. The senior Hulson is a lifelong athlete and said he likes skateboarding because he believes it is a good cardiovascular workout, builds muscle strength and confidence, and comes with a community that provides encouragement. They found that among after-school activities, the likelihood of being an overweight adult was reduced 48 percent for those who skated or biked more than four times a week. For those who played soccer or other organized sports three or four times a week, the odds of being overweight later were reduced 20 percent. (Source: Baltimore Sun "Ramped-up exercise: Hopkins study finds that kids who skateboard or roller-blade stay fit longer than those who play organized sports")
- One of the most successful weapons against diabetes is a total blast: The Pawhuska Skate Park. It is impossible to make an absolutely correlation between Tucker's improving health and the skate park, but here's a stunning fact: In the past one and a half years, Tucker's blood sugar average readings have steadily declined. In that same 18 months, he has been skating at the park, getting exercise for 10 hours or more hours a week – a proven method of keeping blood sugar in check. His parents say that the skate park has made a huge difference in Tucker's physical activity. In pre-skate park days, Mark says that Tucker's life was mostly sedentary except for basketball season, largely occupied by school and playing video games. He still plays basketball, but now he's in full-exercise mode all year round. (Source: The Bigheart Times "Sk8ing for diabetes, fun")
- "It's a cardio workout, and the faster I go, the more I'm gasping for breath," he said. "And it only becomes harder when I'm carrying a heavy backpack." While skateboarding might look like fun, it also registers as an excellent workout. Michele Olson, a professor of exercise science at the Montgomery, Ala., campus of Auburn University, said that boarding engages many small and large muscles. "Your glutes, hamstring and quads work with all that pushing off the ground; your abs and back help you balance; and you use the small muscles in your calves, the stabilizing muscles in your hips and the ones in the arches of your feet, which is great because these weaken and flatten out as you get older," she said. (Source: The New York Times "Skateboards for Work and Working Out")

THE BENEFITS OF PUBLIC SKATEPARKS

■ SKATEBOARDING & WHEEL SPORTS PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

In addition to skateboarding's significant physical health benefits, the numerous mental health benefits are equally as important. At its most basic level, skateboarding is a great way to relieve stress and unwind with a community of people who share your passion – particularly valuable in light of today's rates of depression and teen suicide. Through the hundreds of hours it takes to learn a new trick, skateboarding also teaches determination, self-discipline and resiliency – all skills that can be applied to other facets of your life.

And at a more scientific level, skateboarding is uniquely important because it combines extreme physical exertion with precise muscle coordination and balance. The complexity of performing tricks on a skateboard is shown to improve brain function at a fundamental level and stimulate new cell growth in the brain.

- “Skaters at The Pipeline ride back and forth for hours, practicing tricks over and over. In the process, they develop self-discipline, stamina and self-confidence. “It definitely teaches you self-discipline,” said Rob Abbott, 30, skateboarder. “There’s that mentality when you go out there, and you want to accomplish something. You practice it over and over for days and weeks at a time. And once you do it, you feel good about yourself and what you’ve accomplished.” (Source: The Juneau Empire “Riding the Concrete Wave”)
- As any soccer, basketball or football mom knows, having two kids who practice the sport means I’ve spent lots (and lots and lots) of time in skate parks all around the United States and parts of Europe. And what I observe is a sport practiced by dedicated and enthusiastic young people who should be admired, not scorned. Skateboarders are dedicated; they show up to practice, rain, shine, or snow (if they have a place to do it) without a schedule. No coach tells them when to arrive, how long to work, or what the next trick is. And yet they make progress. Even when the next trick involves staring down a 7-stair jump, dropping into a bowl that terrifies their mom, or trying a 360 flip to manual for 12 years before landing it, skaters keep at it. (Source: Huffington Post “Skateboarding Is Still a Crime, But the Sport Is Admirable”)
- Skateboarding allows for individuality as rules are minimal and self-expression is encouraged. This freedom to be creative and express oneself through skateboarding activity can be a means of empowerment. Through the cultural values of inclusion, having fun, self-expression, and progression, participants can build confidence to become leaders. Regardless of gender, discipline, ethnicity, or age, the participants in this study routinely embraced each other, supported each other by showing encouragement and appreciation, and showed no signs of negative emotion toward other participants. This lack of negative emotions infers an inclusionary construct within the skateboarding culture. Another central theme of this study was the energy and drive of the participants. While each participant was competing, facial expressions suggested the presence of passion and determination, fun, excitement, and desire to do their best at that moment. (Source: ESPN Productions, Inc. “An Ethnographic Study of the Skateboarding Culture”)
- Experts would say that skateboarding and other individual sports are more beneficial than harmful to teenagers. They need to be out – hanging out with people, laughing, connecting to something larger than themselves and their worries. Teenage years are an “awkward period in your life. You’re looking for definition and identity and your place in the world,” said Miki Vuckovich, executive director of the Tony Hawk Foundation, a nonprofit group working with city governments to help build public skateparks. “Skateboarding is the answer for a lot of kids. It’s fun. They can do it on their own terms. It doesn’t require a coach or a team. Skating is something you do at your own pace.” He said skating actually is a lifestyle. There is the skating culture -- the lingo, the fashion, the atmosphere -- that teenagers like. Vuckovich said another great thing about skateboarding is that it’s a supportive environment. You don’t have to be a cool kid. You can’t get cut from a team. (Source: Tampa Bay Times “Identity on board: Skateboarding gives kids a chance with individualism.”)
- Go to any skatepark and an astonishing number of young veterans from every political and economic background will tell you about the curative properties of skateboarding. Many claim there is a meditative quality to the sport that promotes relaxation and emotional balance. Some claim skateboarding as a miracle cure for their various ailments. Before looking into the physical and mental benefits of skateboarding, it is necessary to take a moment to realize the more important community benefits of the skatepark itself. By providing veterans with specialized topics for discussion that are unrelated to warfare, such as skating equipment, tricks, and famous skaters, skateparks offer veterans a means of conversational engagement and a milieu of interpersonal connections. Skate culture transcends political differences and focuses on sportsmanship and camaraderie. This can be reassuring to veterans who are wary of politically charged causes or groups. By acquiring new skating abilities a veteran can take pride in peaceable accomplishments while improving his or her self-esteem. Veterans learn how to overcome fear by facing a steep drop on a concrete ledge at a high speed; they learn how to overcome the past by focusing on the task at hand, which is keeping upright. (Source: Skaters for Public Skateparks)

THE BENEFITS OF PUBLIC SKATEPARKS

■ SKATEPARKS CREATE A POSITIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT

Knowing that skateboarding and wheel sports are mainstream and that they are going to happen whether skateparks exist or not, it's clear the best way to keep youth safe is to provide them access to safe, designated spaces to pursue their passions. In contrast to the urban environment where skateboarders have to contend with surface irregularities, motor vehicles and pedestrians, the intentional layout of a skatepark is significantly safer and less likely to cause injuries.

- Hundreds are flocking to the new Fremont Skate Park from throughout northern California. Last Wednesday, Mike Brown and his buddies piled into a car and made an hour-long pilgrimage from Pittsburg to Fremont. Demarcus James did the same from San Francisco. "Smalls," from Walnut Creek. Others, as far as Stockton and Sacramento. They're among the hundreds, if not thousands, who've made their journey to the Fremont Skate Park since its soft opening on May 31, turning our city into an unlikely mecca for the edge action sport. (Source: Newark Patch "New Skate Park a Tri-City Mecca")
- The park is not intended to be an economic-development tool, though it has proven to be a draw for other cities. Stan Robinson, chairman of Recreation District No. 3 in St. Mary Parish, said his district's skate park, built in November, has been a worthwhile venture. "I can't tell you how many times a parent has said to me that it's the best taxpayer money they've spent," he said. Nearby businesses, he said, are seeing their sales increase from visitors to the park. "We are already planning to expand it," he said. (Source: Houma Today "Plans rolling ahead for new skate park")
- We do not have any specific studies on the economic impact of skateparks on communities, but from the feedback we receive from municipal skatepark managers, skateparks do seem to have a positive effect on businesses in the surrounding area. When a skatepark opens, it tends to draw folks from the outlying communities to come bring their kids to the skatepark, do some shopping, maybe have lunch, buy some gas, etc. Skateparks attract patrons to local businesses who might not otherwise be in the area. Skateboarders are tenacious and will go wherever the compelling terrain is. While skateparks with high visibility and ample community interaction are healthier environments, skateparks in challenging locations can often serve to activate an otherwise underutilized space. Their presence displaces less desirable elements that require privacy and can be a steady presence for other visitors that may be reluctant to visit a desolate area. (Source: Tony Hawk Foundation)
- "To emphasize how much impact our skatepark has had since its opening, I would like to note that one of the most frequent questions at our Colorado Welcome Center is now, "How do you get to the skatepark?" The volunteers at the welcome center have requested that signs be placed throughout town to guide out-of-towners to the park. There have been, as I am told, numerous skaters from across America that have come here specifically for the purpose of trying out our new facility. I've heard reports from local enthusiasts that fellow riders from as far away as Maine, Vermont, Florida, Washington, Oregon, Texas, California, and Indiana have been here to skate. For a city with a population of 10,000 we are impressed with the results. Tony Hawk even stopped for a ride with his group a couple of weeks ago. Word travels fast when a world class skatepark is constructed." (Source: Mayor Joseph A. Reorda - Trinidad, Colorado)
- "The immediate response to our park was overwhelming. Both the youth of our town, and visitors alike bombarded our new park each and every day. This was a huge economic boost for our town, and continues to be as this contest has put Carbondale and our skate park on the map. Never underestimate the draw that a skatepark will have on your town. Our town has been very pleased with the economic impact that the new skatepark has brought to Carbondale. With many visitors staying here over the Summer months just to skate our park, with large contests being held here and the free advertisements that skaters pass on to each other about Carbondale, our skatepark has been exceptional for town business." (Source: Carbondale Recreation Coordinator Chris Woods - Carbondale, Colorado)

ADDRESSING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

■ SKATEPARKS ARE DANGEROUS

While there is a daredevil spirit commonly associated with skateboarding and many adrenaline junkies do pursue the activity, skateboarding's mislabeling as "dangerous" comes down to a perception issue. When you look beyond the outdated outlaw stereotype and compare skateboarding to traditional sports, you'll find that the activity is actually quite safe. And with smooth concrete, precise geometry and strategically-designed traffic patterns, a skatepark is clearly the safest place to perform the activity.

- The best research which quantifies risk of skateboarding comes from the Journal of Trauma, Oct. 2002, and is written by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. They determined the number of skateboarding injuries per active skateboarder and compared those numbers to in-line skating and basketball. Skateboarding had an injury rate of 8.9 per 1,000 participants. In-line skating was 3.9/1,000 and basketball produced 21.2 ER-treated injuries per 1,000 players. Statistically, skateboarding is safer than playing basketball. Skateboarding on public streets or adjacent to traffic is more dangerous and can produce serious injuries due to collision with motor vehicles. The potential benefit from the skateboard park is that it will shift riders from the sidewalks and streets to the park, and there will be fewer falls due to surface irregularity." (Source: Dr. Michael Yorgason, Montana Orthopedics and Sports Medicine)

■ SKATEPARKS CREATE LIABILITY

All U.S. states have legislation on the books protecting municipalities from liability when someone is participating in a hazardous recreational activity in a public facility. California's language specifically mentions skateboarding, but most states lump skateboarding in with other recreational activities such as swimming, jogging and basketball. To protect themselves from lawsuits, municipalities simply post signage at the skatepark stating that you are participating in a hazardous recreational activity at your own risk and then regularly maintain the facility as they would with any playground, jogging path, etc. Liability is a common misconception, but ask yourself, if skateparks were such a liability nightmare, how could there be thousands of successful skateparks currently operating across all 50 states?

- Existing statutes in North Carolina and other jurisdictions would provide significant governmental immunity against any liability for skateboarding injuries. Despite jurisdictional variations, these state laws are quite similar in that they generally preclude any governmental liability for injuries arising out of the inherent risks associated with participation in skateboarding. While some states have adopted immunity legislation specific to skateboarding and similarly hazardous recreational activities, other jurisdictions have included skateboarding within the context of more generic immunity laws such as state recreational use statutes. As illustrated by the state laws described herein, in the case of skateboarding, the legislative trend clearly reflects a public policy which favors governmental immunity over liability.

In North Carolina, the expressed legislative purpose of the "Hazardous Recreation Parks Safety and Liability" statute (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 99E-21 to 25) is "to encourage governmental owners or lessees of property to make land available to a governmental entity for skateboarding, inline skating, or freestyle bicycling" without fearing liability. To address such liability concerns, this law provides that no governmental entity or public employee will be liable "for any damage or injury to property or persons that arises out of a person's participation in the [hazardous recreation] activity and that takes place in an area designated for the activity." Further, the law provides that any person who "participates in or assists in hazardous recreational activities assumes the known and unknown inherent risks in these activities, irrespective of age." Moreover, pursuant to the statute, "no public entity that sponsors, allows, or permits skateboarding, inline skating, or freestyle bicycling on its property is required to eliminate, alter, or control the inherent risks in these activities."

Rather, pursuant to the statute, the participant in hazardous recreational activities is held "legally responsible for all damages, injury, or death to himself or herself or other persons or property that result from these activities." While engaged in hazardous recreational activities, irrespective of where such activities occur, the law holds the participant responsible for negligent failure to comply with the ordinance requirement that any person riding a skateboard at an unsupervised facility must wear a helmet, elbow pads, and kneepads. (Source: Parks & Recreation Magazine "Skateboarding Immunity Laws Limit Liability")

ADDRESSING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

■ SKATEPARKS ARE HUBS FOR ILLICIT BEHAVIOR

When concerned community members describe behavior they believe will occur at a proposed skatepark, they are typically referring to smoking, drinking, vandalism and aggressive behavior. In our experience, we've found that these issues can occasionally occur, but:

- They are the exception, not the rule. In every social group there will be the occasional “bad seed” whose upbringing was not rooted in values of courtesy, kindness and respect. This is not unique to skateboarders and issues like this are typically symptoms of being an adolescent, not symptoms of being a skateboarder.
- They are typically caused by non-skateboarders. The vast majority of skatepark users are extremely focused individuals engaged in a physically and mentally-demanding activity. In skateparks that lack visibility or feature prison-style fences that discourage the public at large from entering the facility, these occasional “bad seeds” feel like the skatepark is a place where they can hide from the law-abiding public and engage in illicit behavior.
- There are strategic methods during the planning and design process that can be implemented to minimize these issues.
 - Siting – Skateparks that are highly visible and surrounded by active public areas create the perception that any activities conducted within the skatepark could be seen by law enforcement, parents or community members. The perception that the skatepark is part of “everybody’s space” and that there is nowhere to hide is extremely effective in discouraging poor behavior.
 - Adult leaders – Skateboarding communities with a strong adult presence consistently see fewer problems once the skatepark opens. When there are positive role models in the mix, the majority of younger skaters will follow their lead and treat the facility with respect, or face the risk of becoming a social outcast within the group.
 - Involve users in skatepark development – When skatepark projects actively engage the end users throughout the process, they develop a sense of pride and ownership in the facility. Whether it’s sitting through hours of city council meetings, contributing to the design of features within the park or helping raise funds for construction, when youth become invested in the project they are more likely to respect the facility once it opens. Plus, if they observe someone abusing or misusing the space, they are likely to take a stand. They’ll remind that person how hard the skateboarding community worked to build the park and that disrespecting it could lead to its closure.
- In a recent study by the Journal of Adolescent Research, Dr. Graham L. Bradley explains that “skate parks are positive places, which encourage civic responsibility and social skills. We also watched and observed kids acquiring social skills, learning to cooperate, to take turns, to take some responsibility for their sporting arena. They have pride in it and they look after it. We think young boys at the skatepark are learning the beginnings of some civic participation, some responsibility, and some involvement in their community.”
(Source: Journal of Adolescent Research – “Skate Parks as a Context for Adolescent Development”)
- New research out of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill finds that physically active adolescents are not only improving their health - they also are decreasing the chance that they will get into trouble. Among teens who fare well are skateboarders, particularly regarding their self-esteem and despite a lack of wide public support for this activity. “Anything we can do to get kids to be physically active will help them in terms of their physical health, but this research suggests that engaging in a variety of activities may also have social, emotional and cognitive benefits, including reduced likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors such as drinking, drugs, violence, smoking, sex and delinquency,” Gordon-Larsen added. The risk was similarly low for the skaters/gamers. Skateboarding may get a bad rap, since schools don’t generally sponsor it, many public places ban it and not a lot of adults participate in it. “But we found that adolescents who skateboard actually fared well in terms of self-esteem and were less likely to engage in risky behaviors compared to teens who watch a lot of TV,” Gordon-Larsen said. “It’s also extremely important for communities and schools to provide safe and affordable recreation facilities and opportunities for physical activity,” she added. (Source: MyDNA News “Skateboarding’s cool and healthy”)
- “We didn’t see very much misbehavior, certainly when compared with what you would expect as per the stereotypes or what is to be reasonably expected in any social setting where youth congregate. We didn’t see any physical or verbal bullying or intimidation. We saw no graffiti. We saw hundreds of kids, but fewer than 3% of them were smoking cigarettes. 2% littered at any time we were watching.”
(Source: Journal of Adolescent Research – “Skate Parks as a Context for Adolescent Development”)

ADDRESSING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

■ SKATEPARKS REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT OVERSIGHT

As long as you select a location that is highly visible, the skatepark will require little oversight. Law enforcement adds the skatepark to their daily patrol routine at no additional cost to taxpayers and beyond that, skateboarders are generally great at self-policing and creating an unspoken set of guidelines for riding at the skatepark.

- Skateboarders have a unique community; they teach, coach, learn, practice, and regulate their practice area silently but effectively. If you have ever watched skaters at a skate park, you know that two skaters cannot drop into the bowl at the same time. Avoiding collision in the bowl is crucial to avoid a trip to the hospital. And yet, no queue is formed because everyone wants to start their run from a different place in the park. Somehow, an unspoken arrangement plays out where everyone gets their turn. When newer skaters show up who don't yet know the arrangement, they are gently guided, then chided about how to assess the park and determine whose turn is next. Better skaters coach weaker skaters saying things like, "your weight needs to be forward," "bend your knees more," or just, "try man." No one thinks twice if the more advanced skater is 8 years old and the skater getting the advice is 45. Skaters are independent and self-sufficient; the sport is built on American principles we hold dear. It is practiced by independent trail blazers with unshakable belief in their athleticism and their sport. They gently enforce a set of guidelines for the benefit of the greater whole with the elders firmly but fairly guiding the next generation. (Source: Huffington Post "Skateboarding Is Still a Crime, But the Sport Is Admirable")
- It was a spring cleaning that took a little extra effort but also brought additional meaning, as about 20 Baraboo area skaters celebrated the season opening of the skateboard area at Campbell Park with a clean-up day event. "We know if you don't keep it clean, you don't have a skate park," said Wroth Kearns, a 20-year-old skater from Baraboo. Rick Luther nodded as he tossed the two large bags of debris the effort produced. "In many ways the skaters are expected to police this area themselves," said Luther, the Recreation Coordinator for Baraboo. "We've found that the problems come from the non-skaters," Luther said. "People have tried to trash their skate area, like smashing glass bottles, hoping the blame falls on the skaters. When people see a squad car here they think, 'Oh, it must be the skaters.' But it has nothing to do with them." "So many times there is a bad stereotype with the skaters, but they're no different than the kids playing at the ball diamonds," said Brian Fisher, owner of the Elements skateboard shop in Wisconsin Dells. "The sport has really evolved, and these kids are tremendous athletes." Fisher spearheaded the clean-up event, mirroring it after one he organized at a park in Lake Delton. (Source: Baraboo News Republic "Skaters assume responsibility for keeping park tidy")

■ SKATEPARKS REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT MAINTENANCE

A concrete skatepark designed and built by a professional skatepark design-build firm can withstand decades of daily abuse from skateboards, bikes and scooters without requiring any major repairs. When the skatepark is built to modern standards, including thorough subgrade compaction, steel edge protection at corners to prevent concrete from chipping and a strategic network of control joints to prevent cracking, the most common maintenance requirement will be removing trash and debris.

As countless newspaper articles have shown, users take ownership of their park – especially when they are involved in the design process and have adult leaders in the skateboarding community to look up to. While maintenance costs may amount to a few thousand dollars annually, daily maintenance costs are negligible. In countless municipalities, parks maintenance staff add another 15 minutes onto their daily or weekly routine to pick up trash and blow leaves/debris out of the skatepark.

ADDRESSING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

■ SKATEPARKS ARE LOUD

In our experience, the concern that skateparks are loud boils down to a perception issue. When weary neighbors picture a skatepark, they imagine the constant “clicks” of a skateboarder rolling across expansion joints on a sidewalk or large metal ramps with constant clanking and banging noises. Modern skateparks consist of smooth concrete, free from expansion joints and metal plates. The primary sound generated by a skatepark will be the nearly-undetectable hum of urethane wheels on smooth concrete.

Referencing several sound studies conducted to assess the noise impacts of skateparks, we typically recommend locating skateparks a minimum of 100’ from homes. Beyond 100’, the sounds generated by a skatepark will blend in with ambient noise levels and be virtually indistinguishable.

- Staff commissioned a noise assessment of the park site, which was conducted by Petaluma-based Illingworth and Rodkin, Inc. The report found the project would not generate noise at the noise sensitive residential homes above 50 decibels during operating hours, which staff said is well below the ambient traffic noise generated along Paseo Padre Parkway. (Source: San Jose Mercury News “Fremont skatepark design will return to the city council”)
- Council members in April unanimously reaffirmed their support for the skate park site after a \$6,200 noise study found that it would generate less noise than traffic on Paseo Padre. The city selected the site because it is visible along Paseo Padre, adjacent to restrooms and in a section of the park unaffected by work crews building the BART extension to Warm Springs. (Source: Oakland Tribune “Lawsuit could further delay skate park”)
- This noise study was undertaken to quantify both the existing or background sound levels, the general sound characteristic in the neighborhood and the likely additional sounds that the skatepark might contribute. Dwellings immediately opposite (north side of Western Avenue and west side of Union Hill) the Crowell Lot Playground were included in the sound study, as these are the locations that are nearest the sources of “new” sounds and are also those for which residents have indicated concerns regarding potential disturbance, quality of life, etc. matters. Results of the sound testing appear in the accompanying Exhibit section indicate that at none of the four residential property boundaries were skateboard-related sounds detectable at levels above that of the ambient or baseline levels. Essentially, at times of “normal” traffic on Western Avenue, vehicle sounds are louder than – and mask – skateboard sounds. At times when traffic is lull- or traffic-related sound is less than baseline – the skateboard-generated sound level is still less than the “normal” Western Avenue background sound level. This is not to suggest that skatepark activity will not be detected by the human ear – it will; but it will be below existing sound thresholds and the customary skateboard “noise” - the high-level, short duration incidents – will also be lower than current vehicle “noise” incidents. As substantiated by the sound testing, vehicle audio systems, truck engine brakes, motorcycles, barking dogs and children crying are the most significant generators of high sounds levels. (Source: Sound Impact Study for the Proposed Brattleboro Area Skatepark Prepared by Ramsey, McLaren. LLC)

STEP 3. SITE SELECTION

Once you've connected with your local municipality and convinced them a public skatepark is a smart idea, the next step is finding a suitable location. Until you secure a site, your skatepark dreams can only go so far, so collaborate with your municipality and analyze potential sites using Spohn Ranch's time-tested site selection criteria below.

VISIBILITY

- How easy would it be for law enforcement and parents to patrol and check-in on the skatepark?
- Is the site surrounded by other active areas, giving users the sense that eyes could be on them at any given time?

ACCESSIBILITY

- How centralized is the site? Is it on the outskirts of town and difficult for the majority of residents to access?
- What is the proximity to public transportation? Bus, train, bike trails, pathways for walking/skating, etc.

DESIGN CANVAS

- Is there enough space to achieve the desired square footage? Is there potential for future expansion?
- Is the shape of the space conducive to skateboarding traffic patterns or do awkward corners and boundaries create challenges?
- Is the topography conducive to skatepark design? Do natural elevation changes present opportunities or challenges?
- Would the scenery, aesthetics and atmosphere compliment a social gathering space like a skatepark?
- Do sub-surface & drainage conditions present opportunities or challenges?

BARRIERS TO SHOVEL-READY

- Does the agency already own the property? Is it properly zoned? Or would a property acquisition and zoning process be lengthy and challenging?
- Would use of the site require demolition of existing structures? How extensive?
- Does use of the site for a skatepark conflict with future plans for the space?

AMENITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Does the site have existing support amenities nearby or would they have to be created from scratch? Parking, restrooms, drinking fountain, shade, spectator seating, etc.
- Is the site already set up for key utilities like water for a drinking fountain and power for lighting?

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Would use of the site for a skatepark conflict with other activities within the overall space?
- Would a skatepark displace an existing recreational activity?
- Would use of the site for a skatepark damage natural or cultural resources?
- Would the skatepark's proximity to homes cause excess noise beyond ambient levels?

STEP 4. CONCEPT DESIGN + TARGET BUDGET

You've secured a location and the project is picking up steam. Before you proceed with funding though, you'll need to create a preliminary design and corresponding cost estimate. A rough illustration of your vision will help the community visualize and understand how the skatepark fits into the designated space. A cost estimate establishes your target budget. Both components are essential for municipal budgeting, grant applications and private fundraising.

If you can't tell potential supporters what the skatepark is generally going to look like or what it's generally going to cost, chances are your funding campaign will be long and challenging.



HOW DO I GET A DESIGN?

Spohn Ranch can put you on the path to funding with a conceptual design and construction cost estimate via one of two approaches. It will be up to you to determine which option makes the most sense for your specific situation.

OPTION 1 - SAMPLE OVERLAY

We select an existing design from our library that meets the general style and size you're shooting for and overlay it on top of a Google Earth image of your site. We render some nice placeholder images to aid your fundraising efforts, but hold off on creating the final custom design until the funding picture is more clear.

This is the pro bono (no cost) option.

OPTION 2 - CUSTOM DESIGN

If you have a unique site or vision and don't think placeholder images will do the trick, we can create a custom design and corresponding cost estimate from scratch. Typically this approach would also include in-person meetings and community design workshops.

Since this option requires custom design work, we have to charge a fee for our services.

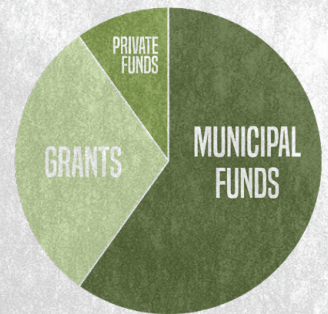
STEP 5. FUNDRAISING



With the key fundraising assets in hand (concept design and cost estimate), you're ready for what is simultaneously the most challenging and rewarding step. If you've done a good job of educating your municipality about the benefits of skateparks, they will likely step up with a big chunk of the funding through capital improvement dollars – allocated for recreation projects and paid for with your tax dollars.

They'll likely want to see you put some sweat equity into the project though, and help make up the remaining balance via grants, private funds and in-kind donations.

TYPICAL FUNDING BREAKDOWN



FUNDING SOURCES

■ GRANTS

The majority of states have grant programs which assist local governments in providing their citizens with recreational opportunities. Our home state of California has funded several skatepark projects with the "Proposition 84" and "Proposition 68" park programs, Colorado is known for its "Great Outdoors Colorado" lottery system and Illinois' OSLAD program awarded +\$25M for park and recreation projects in 2019. Spohn Ranch will help you research specific opportunities in your state and provide the necessary materials for grant applications.

■ PRIVATE FUNDS

Private donations typically don't make up a large chunk of the skatepark funding pie, but what they lack in dollar amounts, they more than make up for by raising community awareness and creating a sense of ownership that benefits the skatepark for its entire lifespan. Whether it's a local corporation or a wealthy community member, Spohn Ranch will help you recognize these important donors at the skatepark's entrance or via a unique skateable sculpture.

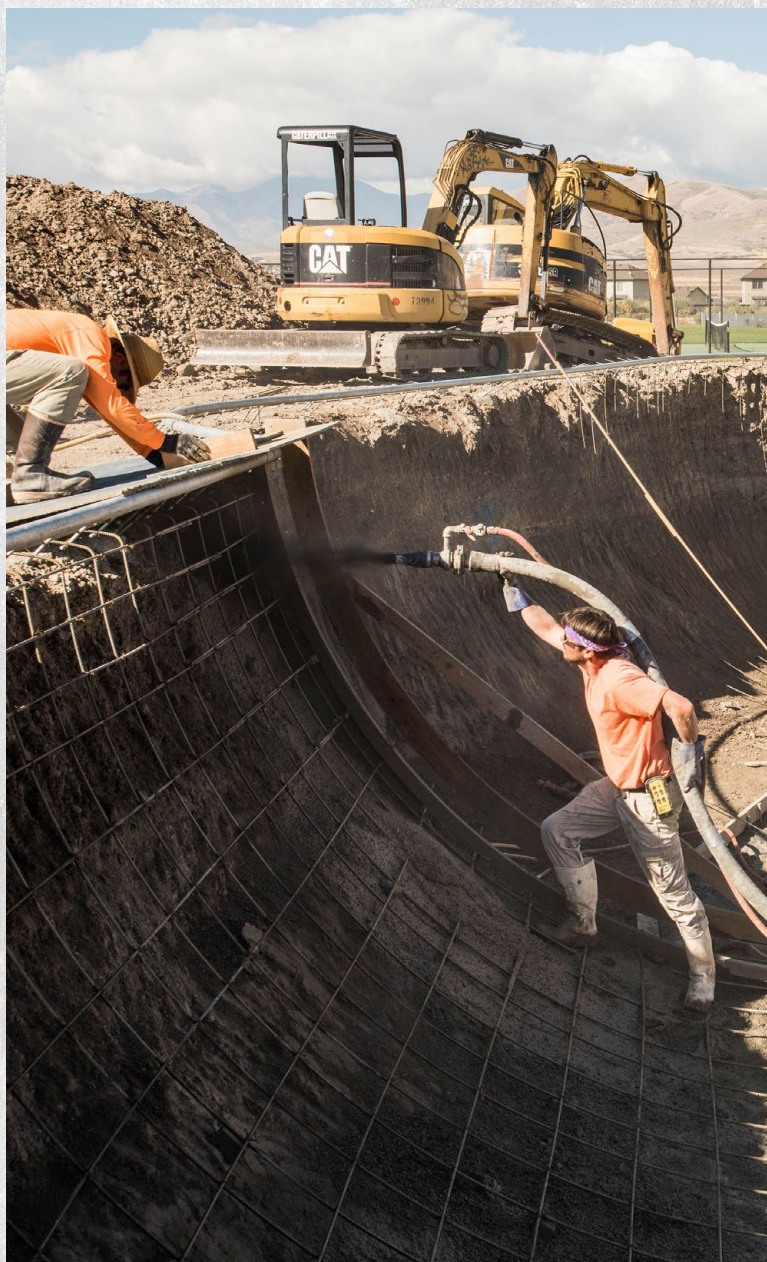
■ IN-KIND DONATIONS

As part of our cost estimating process, Spohn Ranch will guide you through a process of identifying opportunities for in-kind material/service donations from the community or non-specialty work that can be executed by municipal resources. Tapping into community or municipal resources can stretch the budget and result in more features and square footage.

STEP 6. DESIGN + CONSTRUCTION

You've reached your funding goal! Now you're in the home stretch and need to select a professional skatepark design-build firm, such as Spohn Ranch, to formally execute the project. Since the design you created in Step 4 was just a rough concept, you'll want to re-visit it and create the final design. Once the design is finalized, Spohn Ranch's team of engineers and architects will then prepare the final construction blueprints that will guide our build crew in the field.

Upon breaking ground, Spohn Ranch's professional craftsmen, including iron workers, grading wizards and ACI-certified shotcrete nozzlemen, will bring the skatepark design to life. A 5,000 square foot skatepark typically takes 6 weeks to complete, while construction of a 10,000 square foot skatepark can take up to 3-4 months from start to finish.



SPOHN RANCH
HAS SPENT 3 DECADES
MASTERING A BROAD RANGE OF
TECHNIQUES SPECIFIC TO
CREATING THE HIGHEST-QUALITY
SKATEPARK TERRAIN POSSIBLE

STEP 7. GO SKATE!

YOUR HARD WORK HAS PAID OFF AND THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO DO EXCEPT ENJOY THE SKATEPARK. IF YOU RESPECT THE FACILITY AND HELP KEEP IT CLEAN, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOUR MUNICIPALITY WILL CONSIDER ADDITIONAL SKATEPARKS IN OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS.

