



PUBLIC SKATEPARK DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

HANDBOOK FOR SKATEPARK ADVANCEMENT

BY PETER WHITLEY
SKATERS FOR PUBLIC SKATEPARKS

FOREWORD BY TONY HAWK

2
SECOND EDITION

IASC
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
of SKATEBOARD COMPANIES

www.skatersforpublicskateparks.org



**TONY HAWK
FOUNDATION**

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Handbook for Skatepark Advancement

By Peter Whitley

Skaters for Public Skateparks

Published by



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820 North River Street, Loft 206, Portland, OR 97227.

www.skateskatepark.org

Words: Peter Whitley

Contributing Words: Kent Dahlgren, Chris Gilligan (Skaters for Public Skateparks),
Jim Gray (International Association of Skateboard Companies),
Miki Vuckovich (Tony Hawk Foundation)

Edit: Sharon Harrison, Miki Vuckovich

Layout & Graphics: Peter Whitley

Production Coordination: Laurie Bergthold (International Association of Skateboard Companies)

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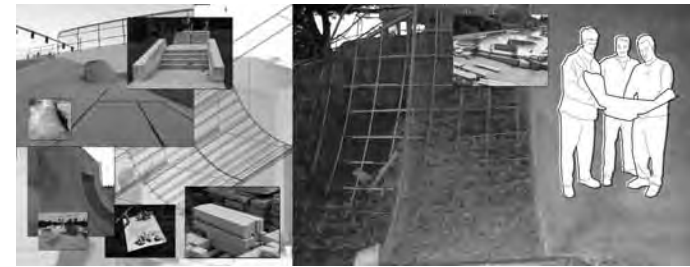
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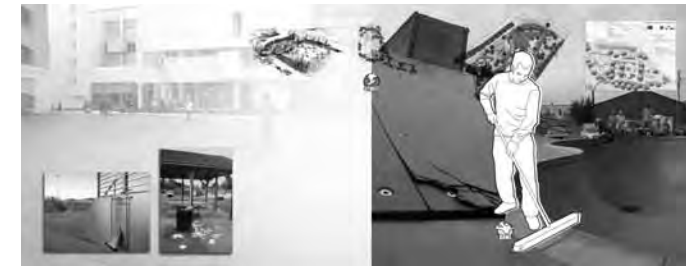
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Why Skateparks?

By Tony Hawk

Why are skateparks important? The answer is obvious to those fortunate enough to have one in their community, while the unenlightened think that they are breeding grounds for trouble: a place where rebellious, outcast kids gather and conspire to commit crimes against traditional activities. This stereotype is not true, of course. And when a skatepark finally gets built in areas where the idea was first met with disapproval, the naysayers quickly realize what a positive impact it has on their communities.

I was lucky enough to live near one of the last remaining skateparks in the 1980s, and I understand the sense of identity these places can provide to kids who don't feel like they "fit in" elsewhere. Del Mar Skate Ranch was my sanctuary in my formative years. You could find me there after school on any given day, and it's where I met many of my lifelong friends. We were considered outcasts, but we shared a common passion. The Skate Ranch made us forget about not "fitting in" because we were right at home in the empty swimming pools that filled the skatepark.

The privilege of having a place to skate was never lost on me, and I always wanted to help provide these facilities to those less fortunate. I've ridden a lot of skateparks in my day, and seeing the explosive growth of public skateparks in recent years has been very exciting—but alarming at the same time. I've watched some cities pour hundreds of thousands of dollars into skatepark projects, only to be misled by inexperienced "low-bid" contractors. In short: a city designs a park to fulfill the demand of local skaters, then hires a company to build it; that company has no experience with skateparks, employs no skaters who understand the nuances of skatepark features, and yet completes the project on-time, under budget, and with self-congratulatory press. The poorly constructed skatepark opens to disappointed skaters—who are then labeled as ungrateful and spoiled. The skaters may have spent several months petitioning, fundraising, and planning for the perfect park, but were forced to settle for something hardly skateable. It's a vicious cycle that I wanted to help stop, so we formed the Tony Hawk Foundation.

Our goal is to empower groups trying to get public skateparks in their areas, and to provide a resource to ensure that the parks are properly built. We focus on low-income communities where skateboarders do not yet have a public skatepark. Our grants are not large enough to finance entire parks, but they often give groups the momentum they need to finish the project.

My main job at the foundation's grant-making meetings is approving and suggesting changes to skatepark designs. But my favorite thing is seeing the parks themselves. I've had the privilege of attending a few grand openings, and the appreciation of the local skaters is overwhelming. It's a blast to see the finished product, especially when they've taken my design comments into consideration. Even more gratifying is the sense of pride that the locals have when they finally get to ride the fruits of their labor.

Most of our grant applicants cite that the hardest part of getting a skatepark going is knowing where to start. You are now holding the key to this process, thanks to the foresight of some dedicated skaters. It's a lot to take in, but well worth the effort in the end.



Tony Hawk lifts a stalefish air during the Grand Opening celebration at Mobash Skatepark in Missoula, Montana in 2006. The community's dedication to building a quality skatepark earned Missoula a grant from the Tony Hawk Foundation. (www.tonyhawkfoundation.org)

Jody Morris

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Why This Book?

By Peter Whitley

The Public Skatepark Development Guide is the collected wisdom and experience from skatepark advocates across the nation. It is intended to help anyone who may be looking to skateparks as a solution to their community's needs.

Readers should be aware that this book will not create a skatepark for your community, nor will it supply answers to all of the challenges one may encounter during the process. This *Guide* does not supply specific design documents, nor does it endorse particular leaders in the skatepark industry. Instead, it is specifically tailored for inexperienced advocates and city officials who want to make informed decisions when addressing their skateboarding community's needs.

Skateboarders are woven into the cultural fabric of every urban community in North America. While young, they are stewards of the creative force that adds diversity to our cities. Skateboarding is an essential option for a huge percentage of today's youth; nearly a quarter of the 61-million youth in the U.S. skated this year, and most of those identify themselves as "skateboarders." Given skateboarding's popularity it's surprising that so many cities have perhaps one skatepark, maybe two, to meet the needs of their thousands of youth. While this need remains, the news is filled with rising obesity rates, struggles with urban sprawl, and juvenile delinquency. Skateboarding is clearly not the sole solution for these community issues, but it's obviously what millions of kids want to be doing. We can support this healthy, positive activity by making sure that there are enough skateparks (or places to skate), and that they're designed and built for sustainability and success.

Skateparks don't happen on their own. They always require an energetic, committed team of advocates with members from the community, the City, and Parks department. The team requires support from the local business community and the larger population of non-skaters. Everyone must come together when it comes to skateparks, and in order for that to happen the advocates must present the skatepark vision accurately and effectively.

The skateboarder stereotype has been around for decades. This "scruffy kid" has a complete disregard for public safety and comfort as he weaves at breakneck speed through crowded sidewalks. He's white, about 16 years old, grinds ledges as an act of defiance, treats authority and rules as a mere nuisance, is obnoxiously loud, and has little respect for the community in which he recreates. This stereotype is reinforced in skateboarding magazines, videos, and in movies where skateboarding appears. Skateboarders are punks, right?

The truth is, of course, that skateboarders are not anything like the stereotype described above. While there are certainly kids who may fit that description, skateboarders are diverse and passionate about their pastime. It requires very little money to get started in skateboarding, but proficiency requires dedication, discipline, and creativity. Yet when many people see skateboarders "in the wild" they may not see these three traits through the stereotype of the punk.

These stereotypes are encountered less frequently these days, but they're still out there. They might come from a neighbor, a business owner, or even a city councilperson. The stereotype is the antithesis of legitimacy and will be the primary obstacle for the person who believes in skateparks.

We hope that you find this *Guide* an essential part of your advocacy effort. If you find topics that aren't addressed, would just like to expand upon an idea, or have a comment or suggestion, please feel free to contact us through www.skatepark.org.




Sticking a nosetrick on his lunch hour at a local skatepark, the author enjoys the fruits of local advocates' labor.



a place that is social

VISION



a place that is intentional

a place that is accessible

a place that is magnificent



Skateboarders are everywhere. They're on TV, in movies, on cereal boxes, and in our neighborhoods. Most people know a skateboarder. If you're a teenager, odds are good that you know several who skate. If you're an adult, there's a good possibility you skated when you were younger—maybe you still do. Skateboarders are rich and poor, men and women, and of all backgrounds and ethnicities.

Right now there are millions of skateboarders in the United States. That may not surprise anyone, but it might be surprising to know that most cities in the United States don't have a skatepark. Most skaters have little choice but to ride in the streets, in parking lots, and other places where they are often viewed as a nuisance, an insurance liability, unrepentant vandals, or irresponsible children. The situation has resulted in skateboarding being restricted in many areas, skaters being confronted and often cited by law-enforcement officials, and the unfortunate marginalization

of many young people in their communities as "official renegades." What can possibly be done to accommodate the millions of skateboarders and help erase the stigmas attached to skateboarding? The solution is to develop places for skaters to go where they are not only allowed to skate, have fun, and be active, but are encouraged to do so. These places are public skateparks.

Few people are truly aware of what skateparks mean to skateboarders. Skateparks are often much more than a place to skate; they become a central place to recreate, meet friends, hang out, or watch others. Skateparks support a diverse range of activities, as skateboarding itself is diverse. Some people skate to relax and others skate to exercise. Some skate for a short amount of time and others may spend hours at the park. Some are experienced and may even compete on a professional level while others may be just beginning and seeking a challenge beyond their driveway. Some skate for themselves while others may skate to be seen. Skateparks are

for the young and old, introverts and extroverts, old-school and new-school, men and women. Skateparks serve our entire community.

In 2008 there are over 13-million skateboarders in the U.S.¹ 93.7% are younger than 24. When one considers that there are about 80-million people in the United States between the ages of 5 and 24,² it suggests that 1 out of every 7 youth in the nation are skateboarders. In communities where health and physical activity is an important social value, the number of skateboarding youth may be much higher. Similarly, in communities that support their skateboarders with sustainable skateparks, the skaters tend to remain active for longer periods of time. Participation statistics demonstrate that this level has been consistent for the past 15 years.³

¹ Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA)
² United States Census Bureau
³ SGMA

It's surprising that the value of skateparks seems to elude so many cities. We know that anyone reading this book probably recognizes the value of skateparks. Whether they skate or merely know someone who does, most skatepark believers have a vision that includes skaters recreating and exercising in a special place. There is no shortage of these visionaries.

In recent years great strides have been made among ad-hoc groups of skatepark and skateboarding advocates. Each group independently petitioned their community leaders to see a skatepark happen. They raised awareness and effectively communicated the need for public skateboarding facilities, and those communities responded and continue to do so; one company alone is claiming to build as many as six community-sponsored skateparks each week in the United States.

How Many Skaters?

This guide contains specific formulas for calculating how many skaters exist in any community. How many skaters are in a community is a question that advocates will want to deliver again and again. In any given community, roughly 4.6% will be casual skateboarders and half of those will be weekly skaters. With only a general population and region, one can get an approximate number of skateboarders easily and quickly.

Smaller towns may have fewer skaters to support. Advocates may feel a little let down that they don't have a large constituency to add massive numbers to their cause, but what they get in return is the ease of working with a smaller bureaucracy. The skatepark advocate in a city with 2-million people will have much more work to do than someone in a town of 12,000.

U.S. Census

The U.S. Census Web site is very easy to use. To find a target area's population, simply go to www.census.gov, enter the city, county, or zip code in the Population Finder, select the State, and click "Go." Within a few seconds, if it's available, the page should return some general population statistics on the city or region you entered.

Statistical Averages Of Skateboarders Per Population

(roughly 4.6% of all American's will ride a skateboard sometime this year)

Total Population	Approx. # of Skaters
5,000,000	230,000
2,000,000	92,000
1,000,000	46,000
700,000	32,200
400,000	18,400
150,000	6,900
80,000	3,680
30,000	1,380
12,000	552
8,000	368

Every advocate has something in common with these success stories: The idea that it can and should be done. This is a vision; it's the advocate's vision, and this guide is designed to help the advocate turn his or her vision into something that can be skated.

Regardless of the skatepark size or design, every skatepark follows a typical development process. This *Guide* will ultimately enable the advocate to make efficient decisions, act with the confidence to avoid mistakes others have made, win the support of the community and its leaders, and earn the gratitude of the skateboarding community.

What Is A Skatepark?

Today's skatepark is as diverse as any urban environment. One may be a deep, undulating form. Another may be geometric and boxy. They are often concrete, but they can also be wood or metal. They may feature premium materials like granite, brick, marble, or even incorporate large boulders. Some are beautifully landscaped and suggest a reflective environment. Others are designed more like sporting arenas with bleachers and lights. Some have shade structures or are even fully covered to allow them to be used in poor weather. Many skateparks are distressed beyond any reasonable safety standards, while others are carefully maintained and expected to withstand a decade or more of heavy use.

It's important to understand that skateboarding does not require a skatepark. A person can ride a skateboard on the sidewalk, in the street, on a driveway or path, in an empty swimming pool or drainage ditch, or in any area that is fairly smooth and wide. Skateboards themselves have been developed for different styles of riding. There are small skateboards that sit low to the ground that enable flipping and jumping. Others are wide and have larger wheels for carving through bowls. There are special boards for slalom racing. Long boards with soft wheels replicate the feel of surfing and are a popular choice for inexpensive urban transportation. There are even "luge"-style boards specially designed to lay down on that can reach speeds in excess of 50 miles per hour. Many of these types of skateboarding don't require skateparks, but they all need a smooth, paved surface. In the broadest sense, a skatepark is simply any place that sanctions skateboarding. Many skateparks were never originally intended for skateboarders, but the smooth concrete and interesting forms attracted the activity, and the City responded by permitting (or not denying) access.

Skateparks, as designated skateboarding facilities, come in all sizes. Many communities are seeing value in the smallest possible amount of terrain for skateboarding, the skate spot (or skate dot), as an economical solution to their lack of skateboarding terrain. Many communities look to the neighborhood skatepark to attract the area skaters. A few cities have even built magnificent destination skateparks that can safely accommodate dozens of simultaneous users. Each type of skatepark has its unique strengths and weaknesses and it is up to the skatepark advocate to help explore which sizes and styles are right for the community.

A quick survey of today's skateparks will reveal a diverse offering. Most skateparks larger than 8,000 square feet will offer a variety of terrain. In other words, except for the very smallest of skateparks (or skate spots), skateparks will generally have different flavors for an assortment of skate abilities and preferences.

Skate Spot: While there are different kinds of extraordinarily small skateparks, the skate spot generally represents one or two structural attractions. These are often street-style obstacles such as a ledge or embankment. Skate spots seek to mimic the character and singular qualities of a structure found "in the wild."

Flow Course: While the descriptive term isn't widespread, there is a style of design that relies heavily on the undulating forms found in transition, but unlike swimming-pool replicas, never reach the dramatic depths or angles found in true "vert." These areas are sometimes called "beginner areas," though a skater of any experience level can find ways to challenge themselves with the smaller forms.

Bowls, Vert, and Transition: These are the swimming-pool replicas that many people assume when skateparks are mentioned. There are many different kinds of bowls, and seasoned skateboarders often claim that every bowl has its own unique characteristics. While bowls were once the most popular type of terrain, today's skateboarder will generally prefer the geometric architectural forms found on the streets and in other public areas.

Any portion of a transition (or curved) skating surface may reach a vertical angle. This is vert. It is common for portions of modern transition-style skateparks to have a small amount of skateable surface be overhanging, or beyond vertical, so that the only thing keeping the skater attached is centrifugal force and pure bravery.

Transition is a broad term that refers to any significantly curved portion of a skatepark. Transition is the design antithesis of street. Some parks might be predominantly transition, or "tranny," while others might just have a few transition elements and be otherwise street. It is not uncommon to hear skaters declare their allegiance to one type of terrain at the exclusion of the other. In some regions the street-tranny "debate" continues to this day, even though a majority of skateboarders prefer a diverse choice of terrains.

Street Plaza: These spaces tend to feature exclusive street-style attractions. Because they mimic the type of architecture common to many urban public spaces, plazas are attractive to skaters and the broader community. To both the nonskater and the novice skater, street plazas



Skate spots are created by building a small number of structures that appeal to skateboarders.

Research Sources

The *Public Skatepark Development Guide* staff stays up-to-date on current market research and has used various studies from notable market research firms like Board-Trac and the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association to derive a state-by-state average of skateboarding activity. The numbers presented in this *Guide* incorporate all types of skateboarders—even those who only skate intermittently—and offer a great baseline from which to start more penetrating skatepark analyses.



Flow courses are generally shallow, "flowing" runs designed to minimize pushing by enabling the skater to pump through the terrain.



One discipline of skateboarding that skateparks can support is bowl riding. This is sometimes referred to as “transition” or “tranny,” or even as “vert.”



Today's most popular style of skateboarding requires structures that mimic forms commonly found in public urban architecture. A majority of today's skateboarders refer to themselves as “street skaters” and prefer geometric, angular forms over the curved, flowing bowl-like replicas.

don't appear exclusive or quite as daring as the deep precipices found in transition-style parks. Street plazas generally don't feature any kind of transitional elements. How these skateparks are used is largely a result of the site selection, how active the skateboarding community was in the design process, and the facility's specific amenities. While most parks' administrators needn't become experts in “spotting the lack of flow in the frontside line,” it certainly will help if everyone involved in the planning process has a cursory understanding of skatepark design as well as the capital-project process.

Part 1: The Skatepark Advocacy Process

Public skateparks almost always follow a particular process. Though the details may change—some communities will struggle to find a site while others have a site but will struggle with funds—momentum builds as the advocate works through these and other challenges in roughly the same order that countless other skatepark advocates have before.

One Person

Every skatepark in America, probably even the world, started with a person who recognized the need and decided to do something about it. Conversely, skateparks don't happen without someone like this. The advocate is the most important element in the process—not money, not land, not the support of the neighborhood. All of those things come later. In the beginning, it's just one person.

Anyone just starting out will want to take a moment, relax, and think about how much time and energy they are willing to devote to seeing this happen. If the potential advocate is expecting a baby, going off to college in the fall, joining the armed services, or just tends to have very busy days filled with work, family, and friends, a skatepark advocacy project may not be a good fit. It will take lots of time and patience, sometimes more than three years to complete (that is, if no support or awareness among the community or its leadership exists at the outset). Imagine three years from now—does skateboarding and the skatepark idea seem like something that will still be important?

Several People

Most skatepark advocates work as teams ... a group may have as few as three people or sometimes they are quite large. Most people begin their skatepark project by assembling the people they're comfortable working with and taking stock of people's ability to commit to the project. Those who start the skatepark project are almost never the same people to finish it. Things happen, people move, lose interest, or get frustrated. New people show up with fresh ideas and new directions, and throughout all of this bridges are built and the efforts begin to yield results

The advocacy group starts by seeking liaisons within their city and parks department. Contact information is going to be key to communicating and coordinating ideas. Reading city Web sites with interest will become a favorite pastime, while finding e-mail addresses and composing newsletters will become the reasons for not being able to go skating. During these early stages the people in the group who are not committed to the project will reveal themselves and probably become uninvolved. For many groups, this is the first challenge they will face.

Many People

Before long the group will attract the attention of key people in the city and parks department, who will gradually become educated about the need for a new skatepark. The advocacy group will essentially be creating new skatepark advocates “within” the city and parks department; by inviting them into the group and participating in the decisions, they become partners with everyone else invested in a successful outcome. Sometimes it's difficult to get to this place. There is no shortage of advocates who feel that the most direct and efficient approach to being heard is with letters to the newspaper, petitions, and public demonstrations. But most seasoned skatepark advocates find that a collaborative tone with the city and parks department will provide a better entry point to the process; once a confrontational strategy is set, it may be difficult to build mutual trust later.

The Whole Community

The city and parks department may be hesitant to offer their support until they see proof that the community-at-large supports the idea. Very few people want their names associated with a controversial project, especially elected officials. When the group's focus turns to the public for support, they will confront an interesting (and often entertaining) array of stereotypes and preconceptions about skateboarding, skateboarders, and skateparks. Some advocates enjoy this part of the process very much; for others it can be terrifying. Public outreach involves giving presentations to groups of people, lots of writing, going to meetings, and—most importantly—listening.

As the community becomes aware of the skatepark project, the advocacy group will begin identifying potential sites for the new facility. The average person will have little interest in a skatepark as long as it isn't across the street from their house (like many people, we would like nothing more than to have a skatepark across the street from our house, but that's

another matter). The advocates will identify the best sites using established criteria developed by advocates in other cities. As the site or sites are questioned, the advocacy group will be able to explain why a particular site is just right (or wrong). Most groups need to do this over and over wherever people are curious about the future skatepark.

Early Process

When the community seems to be accepting the desired site, the city and parks department will increase their support. Things may start getting a little out of the group's control as more technical interests become involved. A city attorney

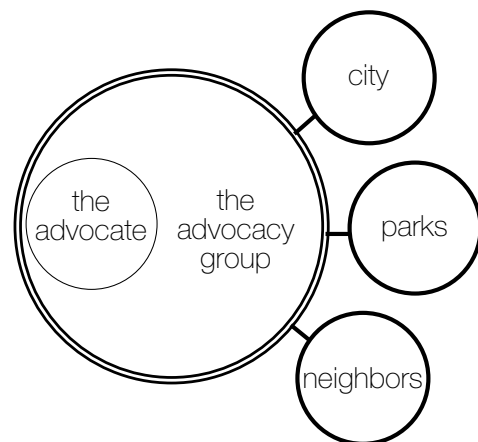
“Every skatepark in America started with a person who recognized the need and decided to do something about it.”

may question if a skatepark can be built at that site. Perhaps the site was donated to the city with a clause that it must maintain a passive setting. Maybe the park is privately owned and the Parks Department has little jurisdiction over its usage. These are the types of challenges the skatepark project will likely face at this stage. Involved advocates will often need to take a few steps back and, for many of them, this can feel like failure. Though it can be frustrating, anyone who has made it to this stage has demonstrated incredible commitment.

At this point the advocates may encounter a chicken-and-egg scenario. The skatepark needs an approved site, but city leaders will often require some amount of fundraising as “proof” of the skaters' commitment before approving a site. They may also require that the donations come from many sources, especially foundation or government grants. One cannot approve the site without a financial commitment, yet securing the financial commitment often requires a site. This conundrum can be avoided by talking with the city and parks department about the most favorable scenario, and discussing the challenges a skatepark might face in each instance. Acquiring land and planning uses is the city and parks department's specialty; advocates may rely on their expertise to determine the best way to proceed.

Mid Process

After the site is verbally approved by city or parks department officials, it will need to undergo a series of technical approvals and planning procedures performed by the parks department. Often a master plan is developed which may need to be



Your first challenge will be to gather a passionate, committed advocacy group. Then you will build bridges with many different groups.

Tips For First-Time Advocates

Here are a few basic tips that may save time and heartache later.

Write everything down.

Take a notepad (the same notepad) to every meeting and presentation. It can be very damaging to your effort to forget meetings or show up late for presentations.

Remember names and titles.

Collect business cards. While you may not need to get in touch with a particular business owner this month, you can't know what tomorrow will bring.

Don't dismiss anyone.

The little kid who talks your ear off about all the tricks he knows might be the son or daughter of a City Council member. Demonstrate the kind of patience and attention that you will want to receive when it's your turn to speak.

Don't ever lose your temper, period.

People are going to say some really stupid things about skaters. Thicken that skin and be prepared for some unfounded, often personal attacks.

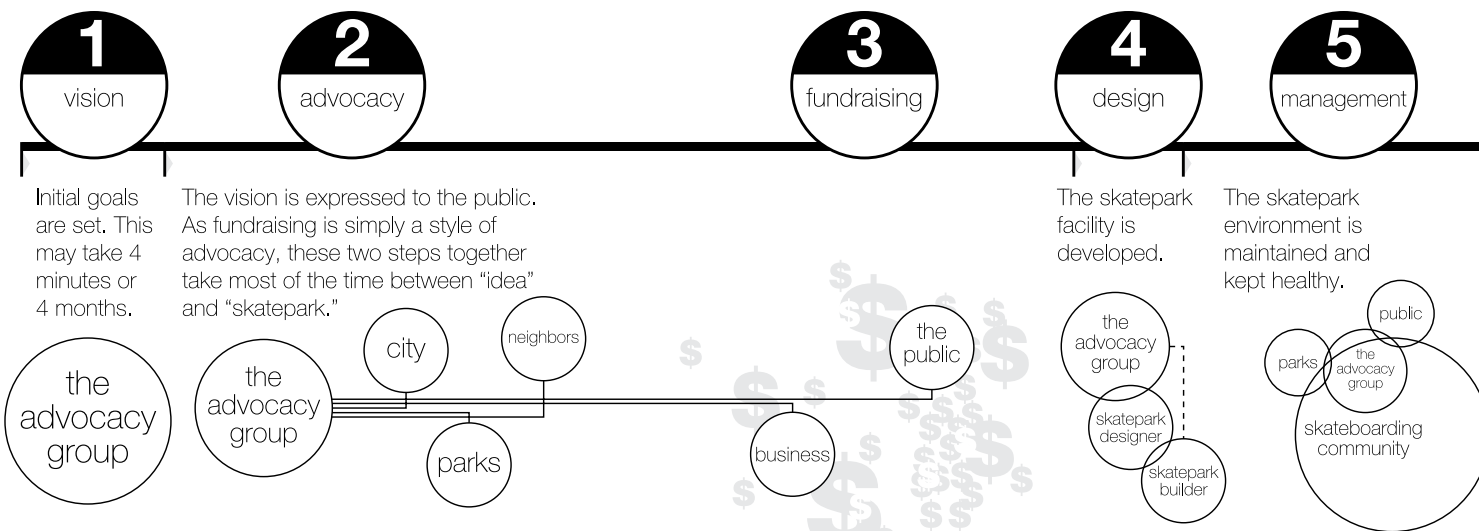
Hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

Few things in skatepark advocacy ever go exactly as planned. This might apply to a site your group has its eyes on for a new facility, the amount of support you are hoping to receive from a local civic club, or even the reception you expect to get from your local fellow skateboarders.

Stay positive.

Look people in the eye and know that the new skatepark is a noble cause. Skatepark advocates do what few others can. You will be in good company.

It helps to visualize the whole skatepark creation process. The advocacy group's role is diminished as the skatepark becomes a reality.



approved by the parks board and surrounding community. In the master-plan process, the skatepark may somehow fall off of the map. Advocates will need to be there every step of the way to make sure this doesn't happen; the skatepark isn't a sure thing until there are people skating in it. When a master plan is approved (and includes a skatepark), fundraising starts.

Few communities are willing to dedicate enough money to fully fund a quality skatepark. Some communities rely heavily on local skaters to show their commitment by helping to fundraise. Others display more initiative and work with the skaters to identify grants and sponsors that can help fund the park. Usually this fundraising period is relatively brief and occurs simultaneously with other elements of the project. In other words, advocates might be raising money for a design while the city is drafting a grant application for a state grant and others are presenting the plan and asking for support from the neighboring community, and so on. This is sort of the grand finale of the effort. At this point most advocates will be seasoned experts on nearly all aspects of skatepark planning, and hopefully will be contributing to the next edition of this guide.

Late Process

By now the advocacy group has been promoting the skatepark project for anywhere from six months to two years, maybe longer, and probably has a short list of designers they believe will deliver the kind of design the community needs. The group will work with the city and parks department to outline the project in technical terms to ensure the new park meets expectations. This process applies the community's skateboarding needs to the established, bureaucratic public-works review process. Some find it exhilarating, others don't. Regardless, everyone will need to remain involved and attentive to the subtle changes that occur through this process, as they can sometimes produce undesirable results.

As the process of hiring a designer gets underway, the whole project moves out of the advocate's hands and into the realm of the city's or parks department's bureaucracy. If everyone has been diligent, organized, and supportive along the way, then there should be little to do except attend design review meetings,

draft policy, and keep people focused and the momentum going. The new skatepark is right around the corner!

That is the process in a nutshell. At this point most readers of this *Guide* know more about how skateparks are created than the average skater. Skatepark advocacy is incredibly challenging, but for most advocates it's also deeply rewarding. The *Guide* will supply all of the information, tools, and tips needed for a successful outcome.

Part 2: The Skatepark Adoption Model (Identifying The Community's Skateboarding Needs)

One of the first questions anyone considering a skatepark for their community must ask is, "How much skatepark does my community need?" In the past, communities have formed their skatepark solutions based on such irregular factors as the strength of the advocate's voice, the size of their pocketbooks, the availability of space, and so on. Although these are all realistic considerations, none of them suggest whether the skatepark actually meets the needs of the community. It is only when the skatepark proves too popular—throng of teenagers and their friends hanging out all day and into the evening—that the broader community then pronounces the skatepark an unmitigated disaster. It's not the fault of the city planners or the advocate, it's the result of poor planning and not fully understanding the need. The skatepark becomes a victim of its own success—too popular, too active, too intense.

The Skatepark Adoption Model (S.A.M.) takes the guesswork out of planning the skatepark. It's a simple formula that successful advocates across the nation have been using for years. For the first time it's presented in simple, easy-to-understand terms that anyone can use as the starting point to an advocacy effort.

The S.A.M. is composed of two parts. The first step collects information about the community, known as the "target area." This basic information is used to interpret local skateboarding needs. The first step concludes by producing a value (in square footage) for the target area's broadest skatepark needs. The second step demonstrates ways to shape that footage into a skatepark system that will best service the community.

Getting Into Government

How the skatepark is approved will largely be determined by the entities that own the land, will plan and manage its creation, and will maintain it once it's completed. These may be completely different groups. It can quickly become very confusing. Some towns are small enough that they don't have large bureaucratic parks departments, which makes advocacy much easier. Larger cities, especially those with outlying metropolitan areas and suburbs, are often so vast in scope that it takes a different person to approve each minor step in the process.

The first step is to identify the departments and/or individuals who will be most important to the effort by getting on the city's Web site or asking around. Many cities have community workshops and meetings for discussing civic projects. Advocates should consider attending one of these meetings just to see it in action; in a few months it will be the skatepark project being discussed and it won't hurt to get an idea of what to expect.

Most cities have a city council. This body is usually composed of representatives from each area of town, and they will require much of the skatepark advocacy group's attention.

A map of the city will be useful and help the group understand what areas are under which Council member's jurisdiction. Before too long, the group of skate advocates will know each of these people. City Council advises the mayor on major issues and is often required to approve major projects. City Council officials are elected and do not generally like to make unpopular decisions (especially if the project discussed is in their district). City Council members can be young or old. Some may even have kids that skate, or maybe even be skaters themselves (it's been known to happen).

continued on page 17

Step One: The Science Of S.A.M.

The process of calculating a S.A.M. recommendation begins by defining the target area in tangible terms. The following information about the target area is required for this step:

- Youth population of target area** (to establish how many skaters will be serviced)
- Target area's state** (to establish the average number of skaters per thousand)
- Number and approximate size** (of existing public skateparks, if any)

The S.A.M. formula will use these characteristics to accurately assess how many skaters are in the target area, what their terrain needs are, and how well their needs are currently being met.

Before any actual advocacy begins, skatepark advocates face a difficult decision: "What is the target area?" Advocates who live in remote or rural areas may want to include the entire town or county. Those who live in a suburb or bedroom community may want to choose a political, geographical, or intrinsic border such as a freeway or river. Some ambitious advocates will want to create a skatepark system for a large metropolitan area—that's fine, too. Whatever the scale, the process remains the same.

The first thing the advocate will need is the area's youth population. The best place to start, especially for larger towns, is the U.S. Census Web site (see "Census" sidebar). There probably isn't a town left in the U.S. that doesn't have its own Web site containing reasonably up-to-date population statistics.

There are 300-million people in the United States. Approximately 80-million Americans are between 5 and 24 years old. Studies show that nearly all skateboarders are between 5 to 24 years old and that 13-million people ride a skateboard each year. Taken together, these statistics suggest that 16% of people between 5 and 24 have or will ride skateboards this year.

One can merely find the youth population of a target area and multiply it by 16% to calculate approximately how many people there are skateboarders (multiply the youth population by .16 to find out how many skaters there are).

If the target area lacks clear political boundaries, such as a neighborhood or "everything between Elm Street and the river," determining the total population may be difficult. Sometimes your City Clerk or City Council representative's office will have population figures for districts or neighborhoods. Similarly, it may be easy to find a total population, but not one broken out by age categories (or those categories are too different to be useful). If that's the case, a rough estimate should be fine. About 29% of the national population is between 5 and 24 years old. Multiplying an area's total population by 29% (total population X .29) will yield the youth population, which can then be multiplied by .16 (or 16%) to achieve a rough number of local skateboarders.

Population Exercise In Review

Total U.S. Population (2000 Census): **281,421,906**

U.S. Population between 5–24 years old:

80,261,468 (28.5% of the U.S.)

Skateboarders in the U.S. (2000 American

Sports Data): **12,997,000**

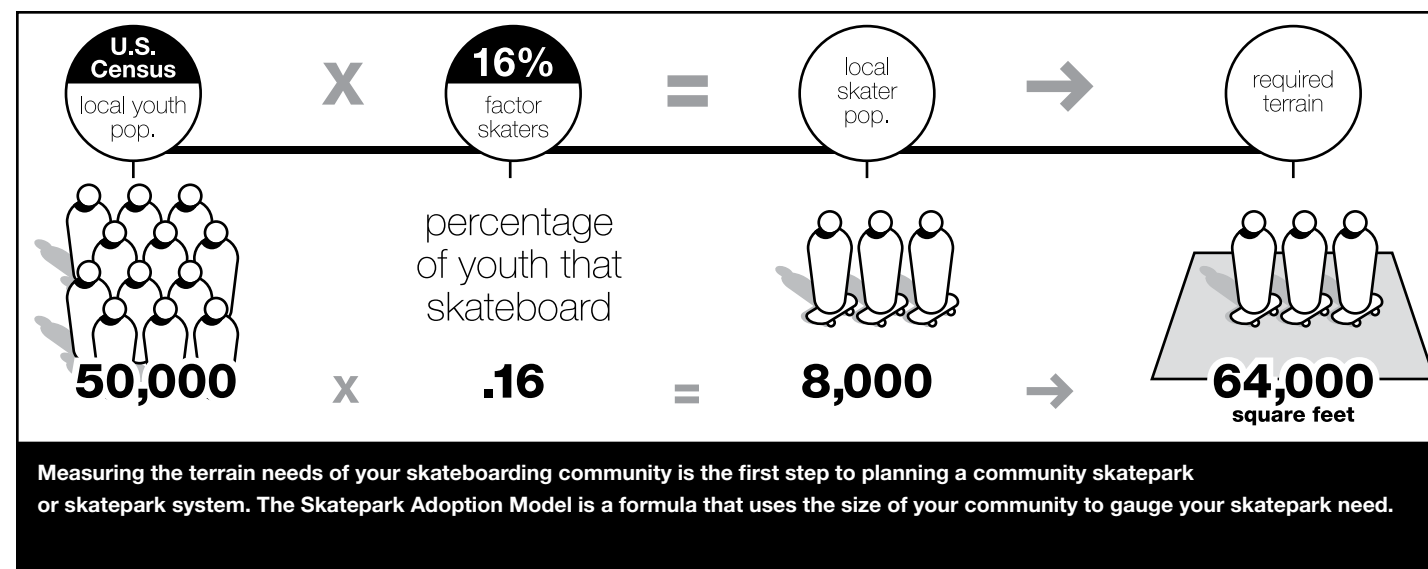
Skateboarders to total U.S. Population: **4.6%**

Skateboarders to U.S. Population between 5–24 years old: **16%**

This final number is the closest approximation of the skateboarding population possible without doing a specific study.

The total number of skaters in the target area can be used to determine how much terrain those skaters need. For skateboarding to remain a safe, rewarding activity for a community's youth, the terrain should be designated as a skateboarding area and provide enough space as to not displace potential users or drive them to places where skateboarding is not appropriate. When asked what they might do differently, most park planners who were involved in creating a skatepark in their community will say that they didn't make the skatepark large enough. Allocating a proper amount of space for the skatepark is not a matter of luxury, but of safety. Overcrowded skateparks are dangerous and ultimately displace skaters back to the streets.

To find out how much terrain your community's skatepark should provide, find the total number of skaters in your target area on the following list. Next to each category is an appropriate description of the amount and type of terrain they will need.



The list relies upon the simple calculation that 1 skateboarder requires a minimum of 1,500 square feet, but that 9 other skaters can use that terrain simultaneously (skateboarders typically take turns while recreating). Essentially, a municipality should provide approximately 1.5 square feet per "weekly" skateboarder in their community. The list also accounts for the reasonable assumption that a community will never have 100% of their skateboarding populace out at the same time (the "weekly" skateboarder is approximately one-quarter of the larger skateboarding population).

Less than 499 skateboarders: 8,000 square feet of total terrain. This should be a single facility with a variety of terrain styles.

500–1,199 skateboarders: 16,000 square feet of total terrain. This solution should contain at least one full-size (10,000+ sq. ft.) skatepark.

1,200–2,000 skateboarders: 24,000 square feet of total terrain. This should be refined into a skatepark system featuring at least one neighborhood skatepark and several skate spots.

2,000–2,999 skateboarders: 32,000 square feet of total terrain. This should be refined into a skatepark system featuring a regional skatepark, one or more neighborhood skateparks, and several skate spots.

3,000–4,999 skateboarders: 48,000 square feet of total terrain. This should be refined into a skatepark system featuring a regional skatepark, several neighborhood skateparks, and several skate spots.

5,000–7,999 skateboarders: 64,000 square feet of total terrain. This should be refined into a skatepark system featuring a regional skatepark, several neighborhood skateparks, and several skate spots.

8,000–14,999 skateboarders: 96,000 square feet of total terrain. This should be refined into a skatepark system featuring one or more regional skateparks, several neighborhood skateparks, and several skate spots. We strongly suggest that at this scale a comprehensive plan is developed.

Getting Into Government, continued from page 15

The advocacy group should put a lot of effort toward building a relationship with the Parks and Recreation Department (or P&RD). The advocates will work closely with a person from whichever committee or department is responsible for creating and supporting recreation facilities in the area. It is likely that several good relationships will develop between the advocates and individuals within the P&RD, including the chief planner, the maintenance supervisor, and the public relations liaison. The more you can learn about these people now, the easier it will be to establish a positive relationship later. Do the homework, get on their Web sites, and get to know your representatives!

What Does "Support" Mean?

The word "support" gets thrown around a lot in public advocacy. It's an easy word to use but doesn't always mean the same thing to people. Many people will say "we really support what you're doing." That's a compliment, not a pledge. Real support means representing skateboarders' interests via that individual or group. Having the Lion's Club, for example, stand up at a City Council meeting and say "the Lion's Club supports putting a skatepark on the corner of First and Main" is true support. Over time the advocacy group will become very good at identifying ways that a person offering "complimentary" support can be converted into a "real" supporter.

Skatepark Typology

This skatepark typology outlines different types of skateparks in the same language that park planners use to define ordinary city parks. Each of these types of “skateparks” can work alone or together in a region to establish a skatepark system.

Skate Dot:

Small site-specific skateable art, single or minimal architecture designed for skateboarding. Site amenities include trash receptacles. Skate Dots are typically single structures set in larger public areas.

Skate Spot:

Approximately 3,000 to 4,999 square feet with some site amenities such as water and seating. Skate spots feature a small arrangement of skate obstacles plus seating, water, and other amenities. Skate Spots are usually set within larger public areas.

Small Neighborhood Skatepark:

5,000 to 9,999 square feet with site amenities to possibly include a restroom, bench seating, and parking. Neighborhood skateparks feature a diversity of terrain and are tailored to a range of experience levels.

Large Neighborhood Skatepark:

10,000 to 24,999 square feet. Site amenities include those of a Neighborhood Skatepark plus lights, spectator seating, and 16 parking spaces.

Sector Skatepark:

Over 25,000 square feet, including allocation of space for bicycles and climbing. Site amenities include those of a Large Neighborhood Skatepark plus concessions and 30 parking spaces.

County/Regional Skatepark:

40,000 square feet and larger, including amenities appropriate for professional events. Site amenities include those of a Sector Skatepark and 50+ parking spaces.

15,000–23,999 skateboarders: 120,000 square feet of total terrain. This should be refined into a skatepark system featuring several regional skateparks, several neighborhood skateparks, and several skate spots.

A target area is defined in two ways:

1. The specific number of skaters in the community
2. The specific amount of terrain they need

The square footage of any existing skateparks within the target area may be subtracted from the total amount of required terrain. This last number is the total amount of skatepark footage that should be advocated for (presuming that the existing parks meet a reasonable standard for quality).

Step Two: The Art of S.A.M.

Knowing the total square footage is a great starting point for any skatepark advocacy effort. Anyone can now deliver on-message responses to “easy” questions and begin crafting arguments based on fact instead of speculation and anecdotal testimony.

If the total needed space is larger than 12,000 square feet, it can be divided into more than one skatepark. Many advocates simply divide it as they see fit. Experienced advocates and skatepark planners recommend a diverse variety of terrain types and sizes to best meet the needs of the diverse skateboarding community.

Skateparks, like most traditional parks, can be categorized into different classes. (Skatepark typology is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four.) The largest is the **regional skatepark**. It attracts skaters from a broad area, even touring skaters, due to its size and diverse terrain types. Regional skateparks generally offer terrain that can't be found in any other place in the region. This is usually due to the volume of space; designers can include every type of attraction if given enough size to work with. With expansive regional skateparks, however, designers are not compelled to omit bolder concepts to conserve space for traditional elements. The size that regional skateparks offer designers often results in bold new structures that become signature elements of each park.

The **neighborhood skatepark** is the standard by which all other skateparks are held. Neighborhood skateparks are the dominant scale that most communities instinctively go to due to their size and value. These parks are between 5,001 and 25,000 square feet and usually include all of the traditional elements that skaters expect. Neighborhood skateparks are intended to service a specific community, usually within a certain radius of the facility, and generally favor “a little bit of everything” over doing one thing really well.

Skate spots, a new scale of skatepark, are quickly emerging as a solution to skateboarding needs when land is at a premium. The skate spot is not a traditional skatepark, but rather an area where skateboarding is permitted. A small number of structures are included that attract skaters, but usually the space is not designated for that activity exclusively. There are several kinds of skate spots.

Anyone applying the S.A.M. formula probably knows much more about the skateboarders in a community and what their needs are than anyone else. As advocates work with the S.A.M. results, they will collect additional information from other local agencies and adjust the numbers. Consider some of these examples:

If the target area has more retirees than the national average, the needs may be less than the S.A.M. results. If the target area includes a college or university or is largely active and recreational (ski resort towns, for example), the needs may be greater than the S.A.M. results. A target area's proximity to famous skateparks may also increase the need due to skateboarding tourism, and a high youth-crime rate may suggest a greater need for recreational opportunities targeting youth.

Step Three: The Son (Or Daughter) Of S.A.M.

Astute S.A.M. veterans may observe that the current formula does not adequately reflect population density. This is an omission of necessity for the time being. S.A.M. developers simply lack reliable research on how density impacts skatepark design, though there is certainly no shortage of opinions on the matter. When this factor can be quantified it will certainly become part of the formula in future versions.

An online version of the Skatepark Adoption Model is available at skatepark.org. Anyone can use it by simply typing in the size of a community and choosing the region. The local skateboarding population will be produced that may help you identify your local skatepark needs.

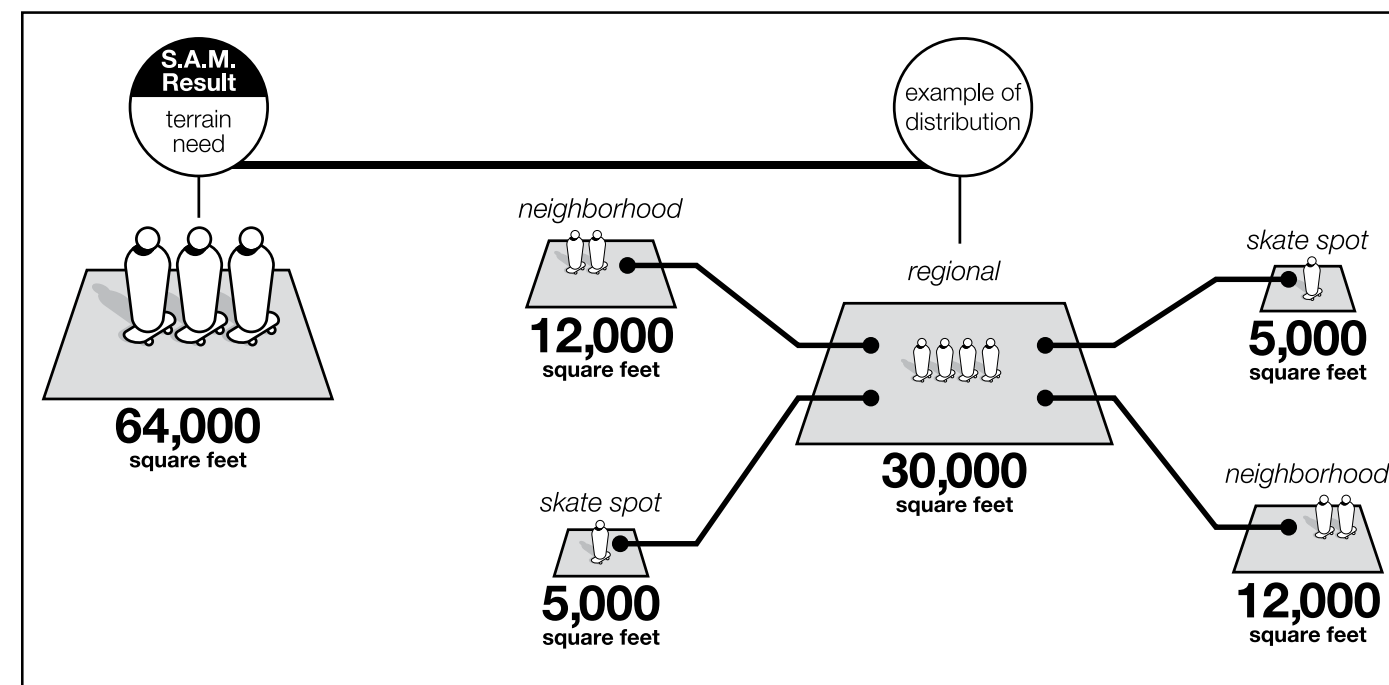
Part 3: Crafting The Informed Vision

The vision for a new skatepark should now have enough good data to begin building a case. Advocates within the target area know how many people the new facility or facilities will be servicing. Next, the advocates will need to determine exactly what kind of solution they will want to suggest. As the local skatepark expert, the advocate will be expected to deliver with some degree of confidence a plan that will meet the community's needs.

Define The Need

Informed by results of the market-research formula, the advocate will have the two primary components of the advocacy effort:

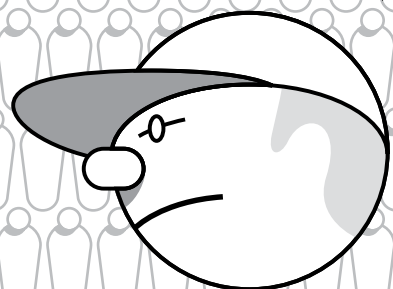
1. There are **X** number of skaters in this community who need places to recreate.
2. **X** number of skaters will require **Y** square feet of accessible terrain.



The Skatepark Adoption Model recommendation is meant to deliver enough accessible terrain for the entire targeted area. The gross plot size (S.A.M. result) should be distributed among a variety of types of skateparks.

total local population

“every neighborhood deserves recreational opportunities?”



local youth population

“where are people skating now?”

local terrain distribution concepts

local skater population

local skater terrain needs

“skateparks and public safety”

Even a simple understanding of your local skatepark needs will be enough to start delivering compelling messages. Over time the skatepark vision will develop greater clarity and specific details.

There are, of course, many more details that will need to be addressed, but those two things are definitely the most crucial elements of your argument in favor of a skatepark or skatepark system. When the advocate can successfully convey these two facts, everything else is a matter of working toward a solution. Without establishing these two facts, any advocacy effort will be doomed from the start or become mired in conflicting opinions.

Craft A Solution

The two crucial components described above—the number of local skaters and the amount of terrain they need—are the backbone for every other skatepark consideration.

While crafting a vision of the skatepark or network of skateparks, bold concepts may emerge. Consider some of the topics that the advocate may be asked to describe:

1. The optimal locations for skateparks
2. The best ways to manage unwanted activity at skateparks
3. The best ways to convey how loud a skatepark might be
4. What a “small” skatepark looks like
5. Why landscaping is important

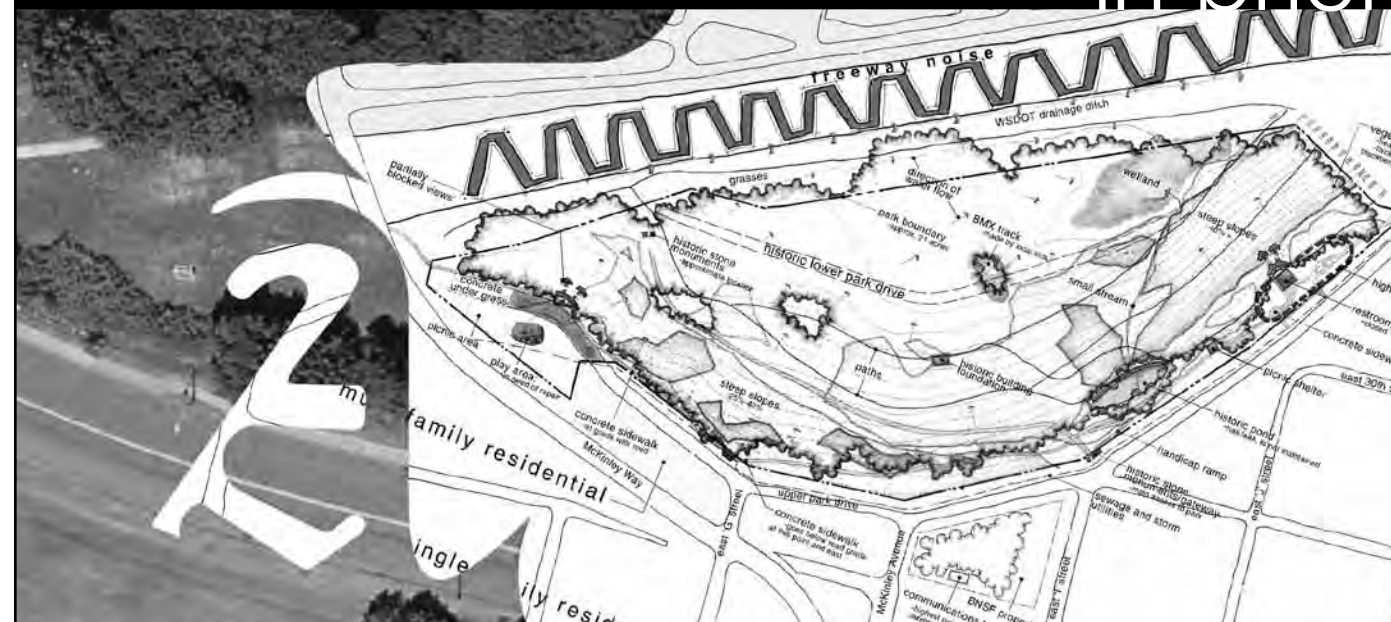
These are just some of the skatepark issues the advocate will need to develop clear and concise responses to for people who know nothing about skateboarding. The more clearly the advocate’s vision is conveyed in the meetings, the more confident and reassured the audience will feel.

Final Word

No formula can outline the perfect solution for every community. The best people to assess a community’s needs are members of that community. The S.A.M. results are merely a starting point for a thorough study on local skatepark needs and the system that will be designed for it.

Master Plan Process

in brief



Ordinary community parks are created following a typical process. It’s important that skatepark advocates understand this process in order to save time, avoid mistakes, or become impatient during particular stages.

Unfortunately they’re not making any more land. In and around metropolitan areas this is especially true. While land is becoming more valuable everywhere, so are people becoming more sensitive to “quality of life.” This is putting increasing pressure on Parks Departments everywhere, as every square foot of public lands is accounted for. Somebody, somewhere, has the deed to a property, plus there are myriad zoning and environmental regulations. Sometimes land is available that just isn’t suitable for a park. So park assets become as valuable to a Parks Department as the home is to a homeowner. The Parks Department is both

planner and steward for their own interests as well as those of the surrounding community. This is the culture in which the skatepark advocate must be active.

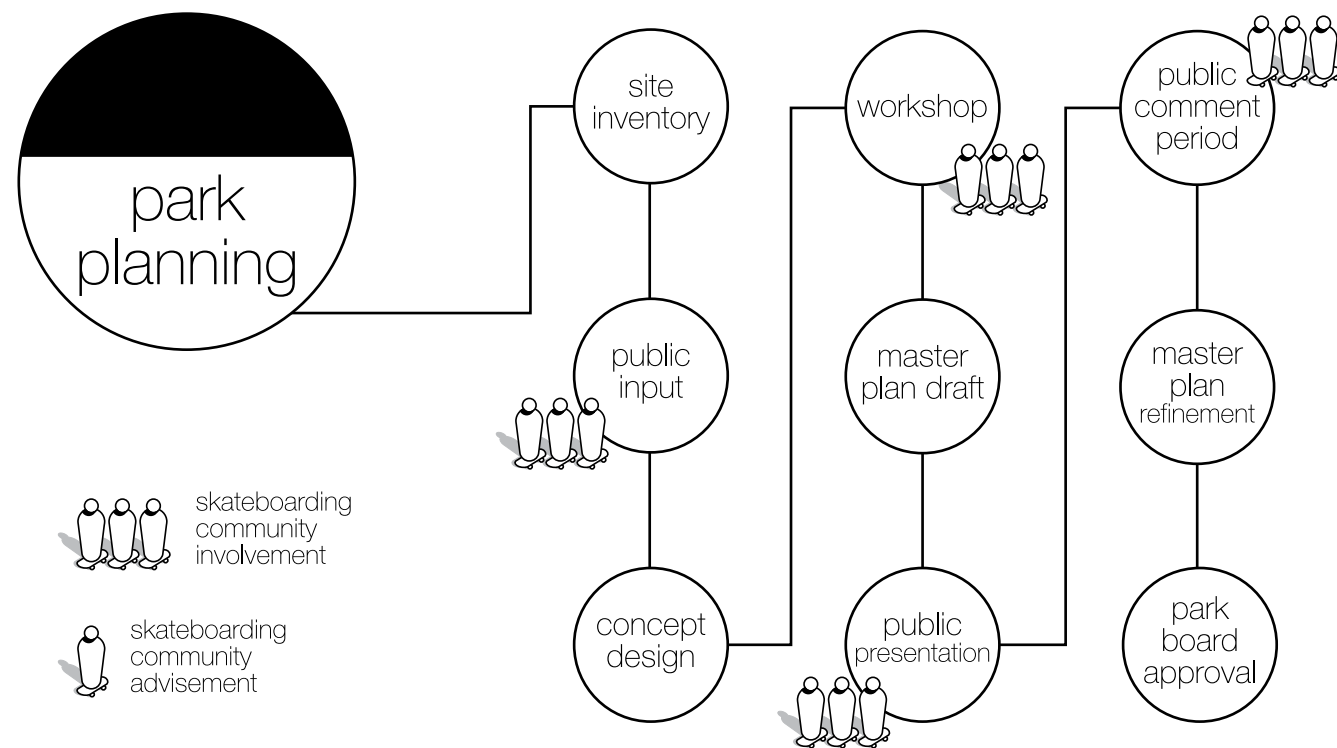
Acquiring new land is often the first step to creating a new park. There are many ways this can happen. The plot might be donated, bought with capital funds, or purchased through a partnership of varying complexity (with all the requirements that may come with partnerships).

Any plot of land, whether it’s owned by the city or not, undergoes a feasibility study. These surveys are generally performed by landscape architects and are intended to outline what restrictions, constraints, and opportunities may exist for the specific area. The study will cover a broad range of perspectives from political (zoning and ordinances), fiscal (available

infrastructure and community need), to environmental (wetlands and topography). This type of study will not usually offer specific recreational recommendations or seek public input, but will probably indicate whether the space is suitable for recreational development. Feasibility studies are like plot “inventories” that describe the designated area in technical terms.

When a plot is considered for a possible community park, often before it is purchased, a thorough assessment of its applicable uses is studied by those agencies tasked with environmental concerns. One group might look at the plot’s adjacency to watersheds or any wetlands, while others might be guardians for old growth forests and native habitat. Once the possible (or impossible) uses are identified from a legal standpoint, park

Regardless of size or type, most parks are developed using the same standard process.



planners can start considering the land for development.

The development process is initiated with the master plan for that space. Master plans first consider the topographical survey to establish the plot's boundaries and access points, and combine that with the earlier environmental survey described above. These create the design parameters for the creative work.

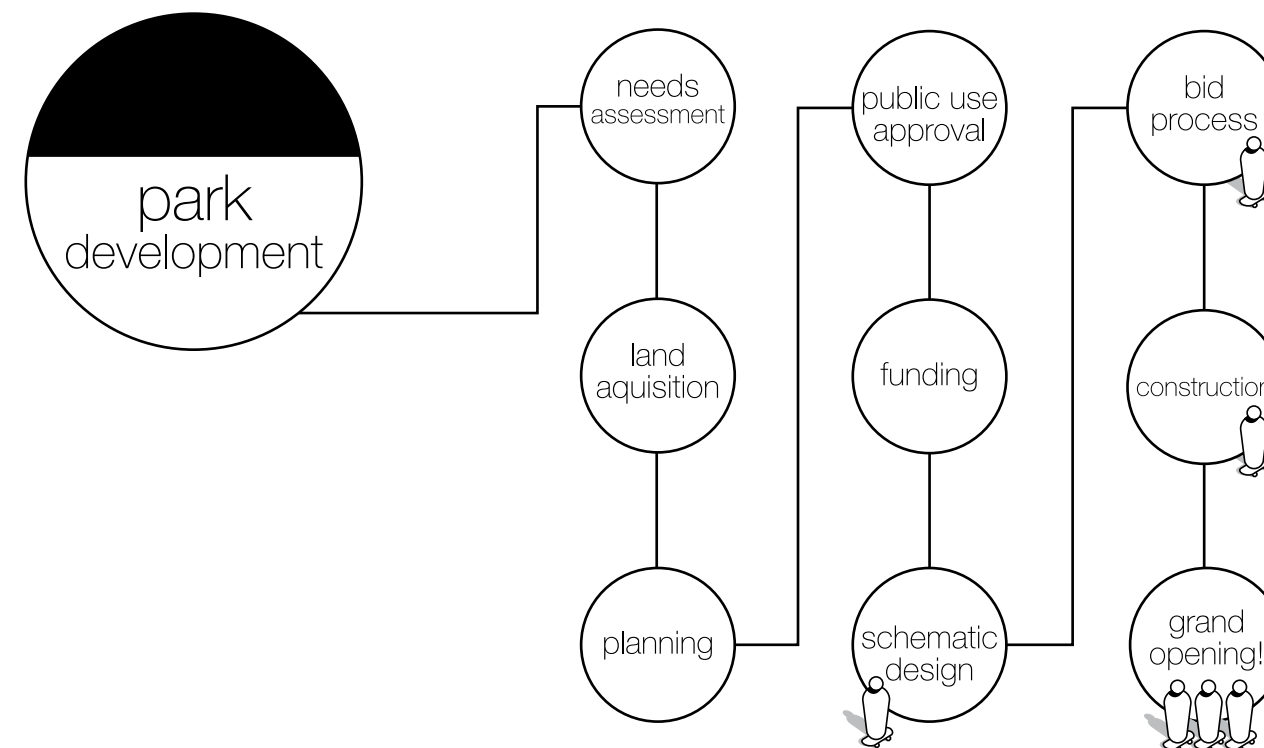
At this point the neighboring community is often consulted to gauge their desires. The architect or park planners will ask about the community's interests in particular activities, values, and self-identity. Usually this will occur at a public meeting held at a municipal building, school, fire station, library, or other public space. Occasionally this "info gathering" effort will stretch over

several meetings at different times to net as many people from the community as possible. As a skatepark advocate, this is the single most important meeting to show up to. Bring all friends, parents, kids, and neighbors who support the creation of a skatepark.

Park planners and the architects they hire for these projects are extremely sensitive to community feedback. Parks are funded largely by tax dollars and, like everybody, parks officials seek to be responsible with this trust and avoid controversy. Public outreach is often mandated by their charters, and the creation of a new park is a great, positive way to exhibit this kind of "your tax dollars at work" message. It's a lot of work for the parks department, but it's fun for the community.

The planners and/or architects will return with a concept drawing showing an overhead view of the park, as requested by the public, usually within a month or two of the initial meeting. Frequently the planner will present two or three different versions, each tailored to a different park character. One might be designed more for active use and contain ball fields, a swimming pool, climbing rock, skatepark, and bike paths. Another might be designed to attract passive or reflective uses and have things like water features, seating, grand lawns, a sculpture garden, and community center. The third could have an emphasis on the natural environment and feature trails, interpretive signage, vista views, an estuary, and an educational center.

This is often where the community turns from the Parks Department and toward



each other to discuss the different uses. Naturally, *all* of these concepts can't be included in the park, so some tough decisions need to be made. Eventually the details get sorted out and the community decides on one of the versions with a list of changes. Again, nothing is final at this point; the goal is to establish a vision for the park space.

The final proposal will be presented about a month or so later. It should incorporate all of the community changes and those technical requirements that the structure of the space might mandate, such as natural drainage, vehicle access, topographical landmarks or wetlands, and so on. The drawing should look like a park ready to be built and is essentially the park's master plan.

After the final concept proposal is approved by the community—generally at a meeting held for that sole purpose—the planners will establish a strategy for creating the things in that plan. The improvements, especially in cash-poor communities, will sometimes be arranged into phases. It is difficult to gather 12-million dollars, for example, for an immense capital improvement, but it may not be quite as challenging to round up 2-million dollars for a baseball diamond, grading, and nature trails. When the park development strategy is drafted it is sometimes submitted to the public for approval. This is another valuable meeting for the skatepark advocate, because while the skatepark may be on that earlier master plan—there's no guarantee that it will ever be built ... especially if it's not slated for creation in the next phase of development.

(Many features on master plans never become reality, as public opinion changes more quickly than parks are refurbished.)

When the Phase-One elements are identified and approved, fundraising begins; the Parks Department is probably vigilantly seeking funding opportunities year-round, regardless of what is currently under development. If a skatepark has made it this far, the Parks Department may look to the group for a fundraising contribution or commitment, which often ranges anywhere between \$5,000 to \$100,000. Once fundraising begins, the skatepark is almost certain to be completed.

ADVOCACY

The word “advocacy” sounds like a fancy political term, but advocacy is what one is doing whenever that person is promoting the new skatepark.

Whether they are expressing a plan to skaters, telling neighbors how the project is coming along, or presenting a concept to the Parks and Recreation Board, they are advocating.

Advocating for skateboarding and skateparks is more a lifestyle than an activity. If a person is serious about the future skatepark, he or she will come to live and breathe skatepark advocacy. This chapter will help a person become the best skatepark advocate possible.

The process of creating a community skatepark starts with a vision and ends with people skateboarding in the new facility. Advocacy is one of the essential components of that process, but it also has its own kind of rhythm. When a person is just starting out by talking to their friends about “trying” to get a

new skatepark built, they are in the infant stages of advocacy. As the advocacy phase matures, the people they need and want to talk to about the skatepark concept will change, as will the message. At first they may be coworkers or fellow skaters whom the advocate recruits to assist in the effort. Later, they will be more influential community leaders who can lend resource support (such as land owners like the Parks and Recreation Department) or civic support (such as the Police Department or School District Superintendent), or who hold the keys to reaching a wider audience (such as a local television reporter or newspaper editor).

The skatepark process itself is sequential. In the beginning the advocate focuses on the problem and explores different conceptual solutions, and later approaches the community and its leaders to share that vision, raise money, influence design, and so on. Advocacy is interesting in that it permeates all of the different stages of skatepark development. Throughout the process, most advocates find that the skatepark message

changes, matures, and becomes more effective in the same way that a story gets better the more often it’s told.

Some may remember the popular television commercial that had a person telling two friends about a product, who each then told two friends, who told two more friends, and so on until the television screen was filled with people talking about the product. That’s the chain reaction effective advocates will be starting, except in this case the product is a local skatepark. The first step is getting the network going, quickly followed by making sure they’re communicating positively about the idea of a new skatepark.

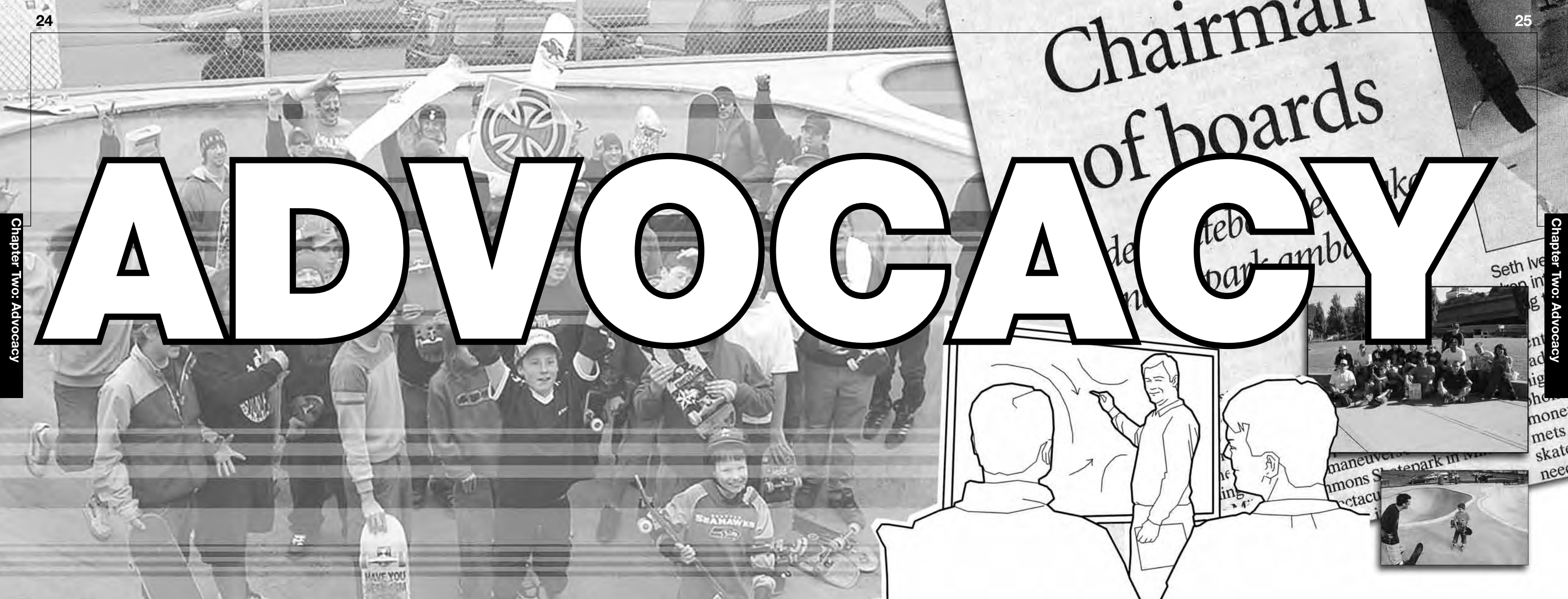
Building Constituency

Building a strong support network is one of the most challenging aspects of starting a skatepark effort. Fishing for potential advocates and enthusiastic supporters becomes, for most skatepark advocates, something they do all day, every day. Advocates see a potential ally in every person they meet,

even those who seem very unlikely to be sympathetic to skateboarders’ needs. Any positive encounter can lead to one of three outcomes: the person becomes a fellow advocate for the skatepark cause and helps the effort directly by sharing and spreading the message; the person supports the cause by donating services, goods, or money; or the person introduces the advocate or the project to someone who then becomes a fellow advocate or supporter. Any of these outcomes is a victory that hopefully will be repeated again and again.

Recruiting Advocates

The first step of any advocacy program is focusing on those people who will become fellow advocates. By building a strong and diverse constituency, the advocate builds a group of “core supporters” who help craft the essential messages that will be delivered to the broader community at every available opportunity. A large advocacy group is valuable because it is seen as a proof of support. The larger this advocacy group is, the more powerful it sounds when





The face of the advocacy effort can take many different forms. It's up to you to determine which will work best for your community. Things generally go easier when the project has broad civic support.

and styles. These skateparks will happen, so it's unnecessary to talk about "if" the skatepark will be built. This is a good habit to begin right now. When the skatepark or skateparks are presented as inevitable new facilities, it encourages the listener to accept the idea rather than consider whether or not it's worthwhile. If a person feels resistant to the entire proposal, let them be the ones to raise any negative views. A positive tone of voice and affirmative language will help endear the skatepark concept to listeners. Enthusiastically supporting the idea of a skatepark is a fundamental task of the busy skatepark advocate. As an advocate, you will need your vision to appeal to every new person who comes to a meeting undecided (and presumably) uninformed about the skatepark.

The delivery of a presentation is almost as important as the language. While the written and spoken words should always be positive and constructive, the person delivering the message should look like an individual capable of implementing that vision. Creating a positive first impression is essential, and one should consider what kind of response is desired. Presenting oneself as a spokesperson for skateboarders who feels very strongly about their welfare and safety is a very effective strategy. This describes a person who is contrary to what many people expect skateboarders to be, and if the language is powerful, people from all walks of life will come to understand what an important facility the skatepark will become.

The language of inevitability combined with an appearance that doesn't distract or work against the positive message will have a powerful, positive impact on how the audience responds to the skatepark concept. At some point along this process the skatepark will actually become inevitable. People everywhere will quit talking about "why" and start saying "where" or "how big" or "what kind of design?"

Shaping The Message

There are two facets to effective advocacy. The most important thing is the message. The other most important thing is the delivery. Every audience or individual will be responding to both facets of a presentation or encounter. The more precise the advocate's message is, the less time he or she needs to communicate it. The advocate is not just presenting a solution to a problem, they are also representing a misunderstood segment of the community.

1. The Skateboarders Are Organized

Creating a new skatepark takes a lot of time. Throughout the process there will be countless meetings and presentations, each one no doubt attended by people with diverse interests and varying degrees of commitment to the skatepark. While

any presentation or concept should always be expressed with enthusiasm, keeping the message brief and to the point is equally important to maintain the listeners' interest. Finally, by delivering the most important information in less time than was actually scheduled is a sign of respect to both the audience and to the skatepark concept.

Developing and refining the message to make the greatest impact takes time and practice. While it may be tempting for passionate advocates to impress upon an audience their vast knowledge of skateparks, most of what they are tempted to express at the meeting will have little bearing on the topic they're most interested in. Experienced advocates are careful to not ramble on about the nuances of skatepark design or other technical aspects of skateboarding. The meeting or presentation has a purpose, and it usually is not to educate everyone in the room about every aspect of skateparks. Seasoned advocates show restraint, treat their audience's time with the respect it deserves, and don't stray from the topic of the meeting.

2. The Skateboarders Are Practical

Most groups that a skatepark advocate will encounter throughout the first year of a skatepark effort will seem to enjoy the topic and skatepark concepts for two reasons:

1. They understand that there is a need for sanctioned skateboarding areas.
2. They are impressed by the advocates' civic involvement and want to encourage that leadership.

As corny as that second reason may sound, many advocates learn to leverage this sympathy into real enthusiasm for the skatepark. Skateboarders are often categorized as being on the fringe of society—the once "scrappy skate-punk" is now getting involved with politics. People will empathize with the struggle and want to help, provided the concept and actions taken to achieve those goals are depicted as positive and inevitable.

In contrast, if the skatepark is depicted as the only solution to a series of negative events (kids getting hit by cars, police writing them tickets, skaters causing damage to ledges downtown, and so on), it will be associated with a whole slew of negative impulses. While most listeners may understand on an intellectual level why the skatepark is a positive step, what they're left with emotionally is a collection of bad feelings that are associated with the skatepark's users. When contrasting bad events to a good skatepark, care must be taken not to dramatize the negative too much or people will become resistant to any association. Nobody wants people to get hit by cars, get tickets from police, or cause property damage in their neighborhood.

3. The Skateboarders Are Unified

It is often helpful to appear at public meetings as a group. City Council meetings, for example, generally happen every month and there's a good chance that the conference room has never had a group of skateboarders walk into it. Even if each member of the group does not speak, the group will lend a

30 Reasons For Skateparks

1. Skateboarders need safe places to recreate.
2. Skateparks, if designed and constructed correctly, are fiscally conservative and require very little maintenance.
3. Compared to other sports, skateboarding is underserved in the area.
4. Skateboarding has millions of participants nationally and it's still growing while more traditional sports are in decline. There are currently abundant facilities for these other sports.
5. Skateboarding is a multi-million dollar industry.
6. Skateboarders represent a vital part of an urban community.
7. A skatepark can attract skateboarding tourists if designed to do so.
8. With national health issues looming for today's youth, it's time to offer a greater number of healthy, athletic choices.
9. The cost to participate is accessible to every economic class.
10. Thousands of other communities have come to understand the value of skateparks.
11. Skating in a park is much safer than skating in the streets.
12. The community already has hundreds, and maybe thousands of skateboarders.
13. In the future there are going to be many legitimate places to skate in the city. The time to embark on that positive future is now.
14. A skatepark is a place where skateboarders and other people who might not cross paths in the street can come together.
15. Skateparks can displace other less desirable activities in an area.
16. The skatepark can be an attraction for family vacations.
17. Skateboarding is "cool," and a skatepark will enhance the community's reputation.
18. Good skateparks often have volunteer teams to help maintain the facility.
19. Skateparks can draw skateboarders away from less appropriate areas.
20. Young and old people use skateparks.
21. Skateparks support vibrant, healthy communities, just like many other athletic facilities.
22. Skateboarding is mainstream.
23. Skateboarding is a popular spectator sport.
24. Skateparks are flexible in design and can work in many different size plots.
25. The skatepark can be a place to go after school.
26. Neighborhood skateparks allow younger skaters to recreate safely close to home.
27. Skateboarding is happening with or without a skatepark.
28. There are experts who can help the community plan out their next skatepark.
29. The best time to start the new skatepark is today.
30. If a city doesn't have a skatepark, it is a skatepark.

certain presence to the meeting that can have a positive impact on the body of elected officials and the other attendees.

Similarly, operating information booths at public events and any face-to-face advocacy should also be done by a small group whenever possible. While one person might be talking, the others can be reaching out to other members of the public. Seeing skateboarders operating as a group depicts a coordinated and unified mission that may surprise many people.

4. The Skateboarders Are Easy To Work With

At each encounter with a group or individual be prepared to suggest ways that they can help right now. Once they've conveyed their interest, the advocate must demonstrate that lending support to the skatepark effort is easy. If the group wants the potential volunteer to write a letter of support to City

Council, prepare a short list of reasons and/or facts that they can use when crafting their message (e.g., the number of skaters in the area, why skateparks are so important, why they're economically sound, and so on). If they are potential donors, have everything prepared beforehand to demonstrate that their money will be in good hands (i.e., pre-printed donation envelopes or a donation information sheet with the address and tax ID information of your nonprofit group, suggested levels of donations, sponsorship opportunities, and so on). If they don't want to donate money or write a letter but they do want to show their support somehow, you might have a sign-up sheet prepared that can serve as a newsletter list or even membership roster. This list should have name, address, e-mail, and phone. With a little forethought one can make support easy to give.

The Opposition

Many advocates anticipate resistance to the skatepark concept. Given the amount of negative stereotypes that surround skateboarders, it should come as no surprise that many people will rely upon these preconceptions when reacting to the skatepark project.

The advocates are usually seen as the skatepark experts. They know more about skateboarding than anyone else and have spent countless hours practicing responses to the most common negative stereotypes for skateparks and skateboarding. All of this preparation can often lead the advocate into a defensive posture that invites a confrontation or challenge to the ideas surrounding the skatepark. The defensive advocate anticipates powerful forces acting against their vision. The good news is that there are thousands of skateparks in the United States, and each one of them was created using essentially the same tools and concepts that are presented in this guide. The bad news is that there are people who don't like the idea of skateparks, and the advocate will eventually hear from them. Skatepark concepts always fail

There are people who don't like the idea of skateparks.

The advocate will eventually hear from them.

Listening

The most powerful and effective way to build strong connections with people is to listen. Throughout a skatepark advocacy effort, there will be no shortage of disagreeable opinions voiced about skateboarding and skateparks. Advocates will come to realize that most encounters with the community or public administration are golden opportunities to build trust and express confidence in the cause.

The skatepark group obviously believes in skateparks. They know that the new facility is vital to the community's health. They know that skateparks are safe, not noisy, and don't have to be covered with graffiti. The advocate probably has a quick answer for every concern that they are likely to hear. Sometimes, however, it is in their best interest to just listen patiently. Many people are more afraid of not being heard than they are of noise or graffiti. An attentive skatepark advocate willing to listen will often be more effective than one who has a quick script prepared for every possible concern.

when the skatepark advocates give up. Regardless of the degree of resistance, whether it's a unified denial by the Parks Department or a vocal individual from the community, the skatepark advocate must always carefully monitor tone and manage their own responses, both for the sake of the skatepark effort and for their own longevity in advocating for it. Frustration is the single largest cause of volunteer burnout, and the number-one killer of skatepark projects.

“Like Skateparks, But ... ”

Many opponents will sugarcoat their comments to avoid looking like “the bad guy.” Skatepark advocates often operate as youth advocates which, to most people, represents a very positive and powerful force. In comparison, the skatepark detractor knows that their resistance to such a positive force will only make them look bad. Most advocates have heard, “We completely agree that our youth need a safe place to recreate but ...” Though they seem to be proposing a win-win solution, they are revealing that they maintain negative stereotypes about skateboarders. Responding to such stereotypes with a calm demeanor and with credible information that contradicts the detractor's opinion is the best way to manage them. Reasonable listeners, whether officials or members of the public, will naturally support the most believable information.

Those who oppose the skatepark concept on a purely emotional basis will eventually lose because of the fundamental truths about the skatepark advocate's message:

- Skateboarding is a healthy and popular athletic activity
- Skateboarders are our neighbors
- The best place for skateboarders is at a skatepark

Skateboarding is a mainstream activity practiced by millions of young people across the country who represent every ethnicity and span the economic spectrum. To suggest that skateboarders are a bad element is to suggest that youth in general are bad. It doesn't get much more simple than that. Through the enlightened message you present, and hearing the information over and over, skatepark opponents will come to understand that they're on the wrong side of the argument.

“Don't Like Skateparks”

Although opposition can come in many forms, the most common detractors are those who are afraid of the people they believe the skatepark is designed to attract. This is an emotional reaction and difficult to change through reasonable discussion. When these opponents get frustrated they commonly attempt to refute anything that the skatepark advocate proposes until the skatepark is sited miles away from anything. The stock arguments made by these opponents usually rely upon anecdotal evidence, unrelated issues, or just their unsubstantiated opinions about skateboarders and skateboarding. Most opponents will take reasonable concerns and inflate them into seemingly titanic issues: noise, crowds, increased traffic, parking problems, illicit activity, and so on. They will not usually ask how much noise a skatepark generates, for example, but tell the audience that skateparks are noisy. All of these common concerns have been raised countless times and addressed over and over, and

The Language of City Administration

Whether they're in planning, maintenance, or public relations, City and Parks officials face innumerable day-to-day tasks. Like the skatepark advocate, their time is valuable and should be used efficiently and respectfully. There are many things advocates can do to make these encounters as productive as possible.

Learn The Language

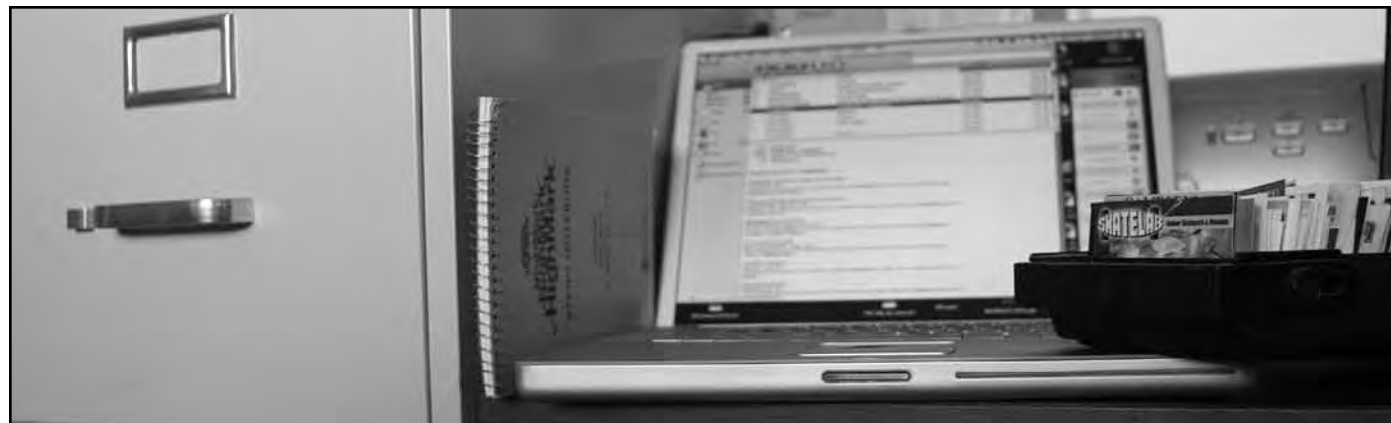
Ideas and concepts should be phrased in ways that allow the audience, whether it's one person or 100, to easily grasp the meaning. Resourceful advocates might check out any number of magazines or Web sites to get a feel for the concepts and language the audience may be receptive to (try your own city's Web site, for example). However, be sincere and conduct business as plainly as possible. Don't overdo it or attempt to impress anyone with flowery language. Consider what it would be like to have a bureaucrat trying to speak “skater.” Some good sources of urban planning and park design language are magazines like *Dwell*, *Metropolis*, *American Society of Landscape Architects*, and *National Recreation and Park Association*.

Know Your Purpose

Throughout the skatepark process an advocate will attend many different meetings, each with its own rhythm and objectives. In most of these meetings it won't be relevant to talk about skatepark design theory, for example. Advocates will want to deliver the information to the meeting attendees that they will be interested in. Stay on topic.

Walk Out With A Plan

Before the end of any meeting, quickly outline what will occur before the next meeting and when that next meeting will be. Remember, sitting down with a person or group is the absolute best way to keep them invested in the new skatepark, so plan the next meeting with a group. Tell them when the group will be back and what will have been accomplished by that time. They'll come to expect success or commitment from the skatepark group and will become increasingly supportive.



Most skateparks require several years of advocacy. During that time the advocate will develop a collection of literature from various letters, presentations, brochures, and so on. Enthusiastic advocates will also collect literature from other groups to borrow ideas for language and presentation. Regardless of how much one collects and sorts, it's important to keep things organized so that important facts and figures can always be found easily.

very few skateparks have been built without convincing decision makers that these questions have been answered to their satisfaction (if not to opponents').

“Hate Everything About Skateboarders”

Advocacy can always be confrontational. However, most of the nation's best skateparks are the result of subtle, refined advocacy. Advocates should focus on working diplomatically with the city and seeking solutions to the “mutual problem.” The energy saved by working collaboratively can be used later for those confrontations that can't be avoided.

From time to time a skatepark opponent will seek to undermine the advocate's credibility by using emotional rhetoric designed to antagonize and “break” the advocate's composure. These usually come in the form of some preposterous claim about skateboarders being responsible for acts of intentional destruction or abuse. This is a dastardly approach and, especially when the skatepark advocate is inexperienced or unaccustomed to confrontational encounters, incredibly abusive. If this situation arises in a public setting, the best approach is to let the antagonist reveal their prejudice on their own. There is no need for the advocate to help illuminate the stereotypes; the antagonist damages his or her own credibility simply by being so insulting to the skateboarding youth. The more preposterous the claim, the less attention it deserves.

It is human nature to be attracted to positive, optimistic ideas. A positive message is especially powerful when responding to negative concerns. Over the course of the skatepark effort, the proponents will present the skatepark idea, or project status, over and over to different people and groups. The audiences will become excited for the new skatepark when

it is described enthusiastically, and they will want to be a part of its success. This is easily achieved by keeping the messages positive.

Advocate's Wisdom

The skatepark process can be full of surprises. The good news is sometimes embedded in a host of compromises, and other times great successes may contain unseen downsides. For example, if the effort to advocate for a community skatepark is successful, the effort can easily become very complex and challenging for the advocacy group to fully grasp. Choices may be presented for the group's “endorsement” that may not be in the skateboarding community's best interest. It's valuable to understand where it is prudent to compromise and where one should stand one's ground.

Throughout the course of the effort, trusted relationships will emerge and the new skatepark will have garnered support from a diverse cross-section of the community. From time to time there may be tough decisions presented by someone the group trusts a great deal or rifts within the group itself about the direction or ultimate goal of the project.

These are the toughest situations for any group to face. For example, when the City of Seattle, Washington wanted to renovate a city park containing a beloved bowl, skatepark advocates were spurred to action to save the facility. The city promised to rebuild the bowl nearby. The area advocates were split; some trusted the city to build a better bowl nearby while others felt that the current bowl was perfectly fine where it was. In the end, those who opted to compromise and work with the city are now designing a skatepark system that includes more than a dozen parks. Compromise, in this case,

demonstrated a willingness on behalf of the skateboarding community to work with the city to identify the best solution.

The vision established for the public and skateboarding community will be the measure for any potential compromise. If one decision leads to “faster” or “cheaper” or “easier,” it's probably not building toward the original vision. With clear vision, compromise is easy to navigate.

Advocate's Empathy

Consider for a moment what the city councilman or councilwoman wants to hear. These people are elected officials and want to be associated with projects that are good for the community. They certainly don't want to be associated with a controversial project that causes friction. If the skatepark concept is presented in tones that suggest confrontation as an inseparable part of the process, cautious politicians will avoid offering their support. There are many ways to present the skatepark concept, and understanding what the City Council wants out of the proposal should influence how you present the idea. Here are two arguments for the new skatepark:

1. “We keep getting tickets and our boards confiscated. We need a skatepark or else skaters will just keep skating wherever and causing problems.”
2. “Skateboarders currently have nowhere they can legally ride. There is strong community support for a new skatepark, so let's build one together. Everyone is really looking forward to it!”

This statement announces that skateboarders are getting in trouble. It does not present skaters as responsible, courteous, law-abiding individuals, but rather as people driven to break the law. What elected official would want to enthusiastically represent a group of people who threaten to break laws if their demands aren't met? Not many.

This statement presents the skatepark as an answer to a current problem, and an inevitable and successful facility that is going to be built with or without City Hall. What elected official would not want to be involved with such a vibrant, grassroots effort? Not many.

The idea behind both arguments is the same, but the presentations are quite different.

Different audiences will have different notions and preconceptions about skateboarders and skateparks. The neighborhood around a proposed site will be sensitive to crowds of young adults, graffiti, litter, aesthetics, noise, and parking problems. Police will be concerned with visibility, security, after-hours activity, and so on. Parents (the PTA, for example) will be concerned with security and safety. The parks department will be concerned with available sites, cost, and community support. Tailoring the message for each audience will demonstrate that the skatepark group understands and is sensitive to each group's needs.

The Language Of Skatepark Advocates

As most skatepark advocates are skateboarders, there is usually one thing that they'd rather be doing—skating. Most city officials in contact with the public are accustomed to citizens inexperienced in public policy or the processes for making capital improvements. Here are some ways that city officials can reach skaters.

Be Patient

The local skatepark advocacy group may be driven by the enthusiasm of a few young adults with little professional experience. They will make mistakes. Expectations and priorities may need to be adjusted. The local group will need help.

Share Your Concerns

Skateboarding is about “going for it.” It's filled with risks that scale with the difficulty of the trick. Skatepark advocates may not have a clear sense of which challenges to the process are significant and which are trivial or procedural. If the city administrator can illuminate where their group can be most effective, the skatepark group will quickly gain valuable experience, confidence, and independence.

Be A Believer

Skateparks have been controversial for as long as they've been built on public property. Skaters are usually not surprised when their needs go unheard, and they won't be surprised when the interests of other influential groups are casually prioritized ahead of the skatepark plans. Skaters, being without clear political leverage, need staunch allies in City Hall.

Simple Civics

It's helpful to at least have a cursory understanding of city-governmental structure. Though every community is different, there's usually a similar "chain of command" that starts with the citizens.

County Structure



When a town becomes incorporated it establishes itself as self-sufficient for particular responsibilities. Many towns are unincorporated and rely upon nearby communities for their basic services. If the skatepark is to be sited in an unincorporated area, the advocacy group will likely be dealing with the county government. Everything will be the same as with a city situation except that the contact personnel are county parks department

employees and officials. Counties often have their own parks and recreation departments, just like cities. Advocates will want to establish contacts with the County Parks group at some point. Like cities, counties are usually managed by an elected body, or county councilmen or councilwomen. If an ideal site is identified in an unincorporated area, the advocate should find out which county councilperson's district it's in.

City Structure



It is City Council's job to listen to the citizens. They are the representatives in city government. City Council members will often form small work groups, committees, advisory boards, and commissions to focus on special projects. City Councils are almost always staffed by elected officials from each of the neighborhoods (or districts) in the city. When one finds a potential skatepark site, it will be useful to know which district it's in and who the city councilperson is for that area.

perpetual departments tasked with maintaining and/or improving aspects of daily life. These departments may include the library system, parks and recreation, economic development, public works, police and fire, revenue and finance, municipal court, and so forth. Some of these departments will have useful input on the skatepark project. The parks and recreation department will probably be responsible for most of the best potential skatepark sites, and they will also be the most receptive to this type of facility. In some cases the city will own land suitable for a skatepark or skate spot. If the vision for the community involves a whole skatepark system, many inquiries about different potential sites throughout the process will need to be made.

The City Council will usually report directly to the Mayor or City Manager (some cities have only a Manager, some only a Mayor, and some have both). Every town with more than a few people has existing,

Parks Structure



Parks departments operate in different ways, depending on the town or city. Most parks are run as a department of city government, but in some places the parks department is independent and operated outside of City Hall. Either way, they will almost always have an elected body, or Parks Board, with one person representing each district in the city. The Parks Board approves (or rejects) all significant operations of the parks department. The parks department answers to the Parks Board—your elected representatives. If you want a skatepark in your neighborhood, an excellent place to start is with your neighborhood's Parks Board member.

Hostile Environments

Skateboard advocates in communities where skateboarding is prohibited are in a predicament. There is a very real need to legitimize and gain support for one of the nation's most popular recreational activities, but that effort is complicated in communities that have been, for one reason or another, reluctant to acknowledge that skateboarding should be encouraged. A skateboarding ban is a perceived solution to street skating, just as providing a skatepark is.

Business managers may be exhausted by what they perceive to be a constant onslaught of vandals damaging their property. The skaters often remove deterrents, like anti-skate devices that impede the use of skateable objects, and the resulting confrontations between the skateboarders and business managers only make the situation worse. It is no doubt frustrating to witness one's brand new building or expensive marble planters being grinded on by local youth, or fickle customers turning away from one's business because a group of skateboarding teenagers is attracted to a nearby ledge.

Many skateboarding advocates end up taking the brunt of this frustration. Most of the "victims" in this scenario rarely, if ever, get the chance to have a meaningful dialogue with a skateboarder. To make matters worse for the skateboard advocate, the business community will generally have a long-standing relationship with the police department. The police department will be quick to act on emerging problems

identified by the business community, so the advocate might consider a separate dialogue with the local police community liaisons for the area. The advocate may become a lightning rod for years of frustration over uncontrolled skateboarding downtown.

Without advocate representation, skateboarding is often defined as a "criminal activity" (namely, vandalism) and results in tickets, confiscations, and, most shamefully, in children and young adults running from police officers. It's absolutely critical that the advocate show up at every available meeting where a ban may be discussed.

In cities that have instituted skateboarding bans, none have yielded the desired results. Criminalization turns kids seeking recreation into young adults with criminal records. Without viable options, skateboarding bans are absolutely unacceptable, yet many cities and towns pursue them unaware of the alternatives. The advocate must present practical solutions for these communities that currently rely on law enforcement to manage their area's recreational limitations.

When addressing business leaders and property managers, there are a few facets of skateboarding that will interest them:

1. **Skateboarding is incredibly popular.** Dubbed "sidewalk surfing," it began on the streets over



Most skatepark advocates lack political experience and are often very young compared to the groups they'll be working with in City Hall. Some people will dismiss the skatepark group's mission as "childish" or "trivial." There's nothing childish about where young people end up recreating when they don't have a place to go.



Replicating the most popular skate spots around town is a great conversation starter with business owners who are tired of skateboarders on their property.



Many cities are recognizing skateboarding as a viable form of urban transportation. While this is a great step in the legitimization of skateboarding in general, it provides little relief for recreational skateboarders.

50 years ago and is not going away. Most towns have a diverse community of skateboarders, some of whom may be attracted to the controversial spots, and many who are not. The activity has changed and developed a great deal over the past five decades, but street skating is nothing new and skateboarders have been jumping down stairs since before the Reagan administration.

- Policy is only one small component of the complex solution.** There must also be architectural prevention, patient enforcement, and appropriate places nearby to draw it away. Policy (and policy enforcement) cannot do it alone. The community, and law-enforcement officials in particular, must adopt a more conciliatory attitude toward skateboarding and skateboarders.
- The criminalization of an activity that is fundamentally benign is the wrong message to send youth.** Instead, consider supporting their interests through the creation of skateparks and skate spots (or skate dots).

Business owners will often balk at the idea that they should be required to support the interests of kids who want to recreate downtown. Some of these approaches and techniques may help influence them to see the potential positive outcome of a community skatepark.

- Communities all over the nation are seeing skateboarders as members of a city's growing diversity that adds flavor to the urban environment.
- Intentional, site-based skateboarding activity can increase after-work and weekend activity in downtown districts. Youthful activity in otherwise underutilized areas can "seed" growth.
- Skateboarding can displace undesirable activity. A facility designed to attract athletic activity will attract athletes and discourage those who would use the space for illicit behavior.

There are a great number of solutions or compromises that may be proposed during the course of these negotiations:

- Skate paths and areas where it is acceptable to skate for recreation. These can be developed as replicas of controversial spots where skateboarding is prohibited.
- Skateboarding for transportation. With today's fuel prices and increased focus on alternative forms of transportation, skateboarding is an attractive option for many downtown workers. It is also a healthy, aerobic exercise.

- Skater-recommended techniques for mitigation. It seems contrary to skaters' interests, but working with the business community to identify effective ways to mitigate street skating at the most controversial spots will demonstrate a willingness to participate in an equitable solution that most business communities won't expect. It will mean a lot to them.
- Offering reparations for damage will also mean a lot to those businesses impacted by a popular ledge, bank, or curb. Volunteers from the skateboarding community removing wax buildup and applying a fresh coat of paint to a popular skate spot certainly won't prevent skateboarding activity (it might even encourage it), but the gesture will be of great value to the business owner.

Liability

One of the most common responses to a new skatepark concerns liability to the City. This reaction is based largely on the preconception that skateboarding is dangerous. It looks dangerous and often requires an amount of bravery, but skateboarding injury statistics suggest that athletes are more likely to be injured playing a number of popular sports than they are skateboarding.

About 144,000 skateboarders visited the emergency room in 2007. For the nation's skateboarders, this amounts to 1.4 visits per 100 participants. This is fewer emergency room visits than participants in football, basketball, or soccer, and only slightly more than baseball.

Not surprisingly, according to the U.S. government's Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the odds of receiving an injury is highest if you're boxing. Participants were more likely to injure themselves snowboarding, surfing, skiing, cheerleading, wrestling, water skiing, mountain biking, ice skating, riding horses, BMX riding, hunting, or playing tackle football, ice hockey, soccer, softball, touch football, basketball, racquetball, baseball, volleyball, or tennis than they were skateboarding.

Skateboarders have a 0.8% chance of receiving an injury each time they skate. Soccer players have a 2.4% chance of being injured each time they play; according to CPSC statistics, basketball was responsible for three times more injuries requiring medical treatment than skateboarding.

It should be clear that assumptions regarding skateboarding liability and injury are based largely on false perceptions about the activity. Most parks administrators and planners understand that skateparks can be covered under the same policies as other park facilities.

Nevertheless, many states have designated skateboarding an official "hazardous recreational activity" (HRA). This is more of a technical designation that does not reflect actual risk assessment. In fact, skateboarders benefit greatly



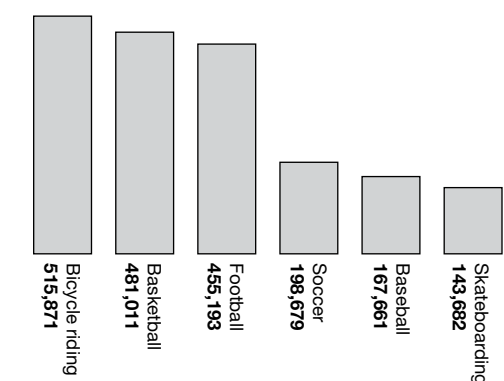
While it seems counterintuitive, working with business owners to help them mitigate damage or skating activity on their property will demonstrate the group's interest in finding a solution that everyone can support.



Leave no evidence of skateboarding at any skate spot. Wax, stickers, markers and other traces accelerate a spot turning sour and bring about anti-skateboarding feelings in your community.

Emergency Room visits 2007

Source: Consumer Product Safety Commission



Issues And Answers

“Skateboarding promotes the wrong kind of lifestyle to our youth.”

It is very unlikely that you'll hear this idea as frankly as it's written here, but you will frequently hear it in more polite or subtle terms. Skateboarding doesn't share baseball's "All American" image, and many people will instinctively resist a skatepark because they either don't understand skateboarding culture or have negative preconceptions about what skateboarders are all about.

The answer:

Skateboarding is a popular recreational choice. Over 13-million American kids are skateboarders, and it continues to get more popular every year. Skateboarding is as diverse as any other athletic hobby. Parents do it, kids do it (where they have a skatepark, parents and their kids skate *together*), and kids of all ethnic and economic backgrounds skate. It would be inaccurate to categorize millions of people as being one certain way. With one in six youth today skating, to say that skateboarders are not worthy of support is to disregard the needs of a huge number of youth.

“Skateboarding presents too much liability.”

It's important to understand the distinction between personal risk and legal risk. Nobody wants to see anyone get hurt—ever. However, many cities perceive skateparks as an “encouragement” to risky behavior. Though this is certainly one way of looking at it, consider the alternative: Without a skatepark you are asking skaters to do the same activity in the streets where they share space with automobiles and pedestrians.

The answer:

Like many other athletic activities, skateboarding has its risks. However, the safest place to engage in this popular activity is at a facility specifically designed for it, and away from traffic and private property. When skateboarding injuries occur, it's usually by someone who has been skating less than a week, and about half of those accidents are attributed to “uneven surfaces.” Compared to other popular sports, skateboarding has far fewer annual injuries per thousand participants: Basketball – 19, Baseball – 12, Soccer – 14, Skateboarding – 14.*

“We weren't properly informed about the skatepark.”

A very common argument against skateparks by neighboring residents is that the Parks Department did not follow due process. These residents feel railroaded into having a skatepark near their homes. Although it's open record that your group has been at every meeting and participated in the planning along the way, most people simply aren't paying attention to your plans until it relates directly to their day-to-day lives. This argument may be very emotional and heated, which can be devastating to a skatepark effort.

The answer:

Present your criteria for selecting the sites and work privately with your Parks Department and other influential local agencies to back you up. You should not be the only ones running interference. Park improvements happen through a common and thoroughly documented process. The process commonly involves a series of meetings or hearings that are publicized in the local newspaper and on city Web sites and bulletins. Be sure it's followed, then work with your supporters to develop a unified voice when dealing with opponents.

“A skatepark is wrong for *this* park.”

Not every site is the best place for a skatepark. The process for identifying the best sites for consideration should always be a technical exercise rather than a matter of personal preference. By the time you are ready to talk about a specific site with conviction you should be able to address this type of comment with the results of your siting study.

The answer:

In looking at potential sites, it's important to establish specific criteria. The advocate needs to demonstrate that the best practices were used in considering different sites and that the opponent's concerns were considered. For example: “We considered a number of locations and this proposed site scored highly on issues such as visibility, pedestrian activity, proximity to the residential neighborhoods, existing park activities, access to public transit, and several other matters. Please feel free to contact us if you'd like the full results of our analysis.”

There will be no shortage of reasons why people will think a new skatepark is a bad idea for the community. Some of the concerns will be negotiable and matters of small consequence that the advocate can address or negotiate with those voicing the opposition. Other negative voices will seek to prevent a skatepark of any size or design to be created anywhere in the area. Following are some of the most common concerns that surface in meetings and some effective responses.

Each individual and group in your community has a reason to support the new skatepark. It's your job to find it and express it.

“The skatepark will be an eyesore.”

Any place where kids congregate to recreate and socialize is going to struggle with garbage. This is a true liability of skateparks and one of the trickier topics to address to an opponent's satisfaction. The best response is to admit it, that skateparks can become messy, but that you and the parks department understand this and plan on doing everything possible to make sure that it doesn't become a problem.

The answer:

It's true that skateparks can sometimes become messy. The average age of skateboarders is 14, and picking up after oneself is not generally a high priority. We understand that extra measures must be taken to ensure that the skatepark is as tidy as possible by installing plenty of trash cans, a water fountain (so that plastic bottles don't need to be brought to the park), and a rigorous volunteer stewardship plan that will have the skaters themselves working with the Parks Department to keep it nice.

“A skatepark will be too loud.”

This is easily the most common negative reaction that you'll hear. The ironic thing about it is that it's simply not true. There is no shortage of perfectly reasonable concerns about skateparks, but noise being one of those is pure fiction. Skateparks aren't any noisier than other light public park activity. Nonetheless, most people who bring up the sound issue will be sincerely convinced that they're on to something. None will have any evidence to support their assertion.

The answer:

Skateparks, especially concrete ones, emit less sound than most other park activities. Several skatepark sound studies have been conducted. The most notable was done by Portland, Oregon's Parks and Recreation Department and found that their 10,000-square-foot skatepark emitted less constant noise than light automobile traffic. Baseball games and playgrounds are typically louder. With tact, nimble advocates may challenge this testimony by requesting contradictory results to existing sound studies.

“People will come from all over.”

The best approach largely depends on the site and what kind of skatepark you're advocating for. If you are trying to gain support for a 20,000-square-foot “regional” skatepark, parking will almost certainly be part of the development plan.

The answer (for a destination skatepark):

Parking will be a component of the design.

If you're advocating for the more common 10,000-square-foot “neighborhood” skatepark, then you will certainly want to help your audience (or a particular opponent) understand that the scale you're talking about is not a concrete monstrosity. A misstep that many inexperienced advocates make is presenting a neighborhood skatepark to the surrounding residents as a world-class “destination” facility that will draw people from all over. While this sounds great to the average skater, it's probably not going to sound great to the average person who lives across the street from the site. You'll want to present the park as a local attraction for the neighborhood.

The answer (for a neighborhood skatepark or smaller):

Parking will be largely unnecessary as this park is intended to only support the surrounding area. Most skateboarders are too young to drive, and most will skate to the park or take the bus.

from this designation, as it makes building public skateparks less of a liability risk for local and state governments.

Participants in activities classified as “hazardous” do so at their own risk while on public property. No total indemnity ever exists for cities allowing public access. There is always the potential for injuries resulting from negligence—if an injury occurs due to negligence or lack of maintenance, the property owners or managers may be liable for any injury regardless of what activity was occurring there. But a “hazardous” designation can calm nervous city risk managers who might otherwise be reluctant to support a public skatepark project. With the “hazardous” designation, skateboarding can be treated like any other type of recreational activity, be it soccer, tennis, baseball, and so forth.

Building The Skatepark Association

Putting together an effective advocacy group is best done through trial and error. With different personalities, aptitudes, and desires coming together for a common goal, there’s bound to be confusion, misunderstandings, and probably the occasional argument. Few skateparks, if any, are the result of one person’s efforts. Working with different types of people is something the advocacy group needs to prepare for, so a great place to practice is with its own members.

Exercise 1: Founders And First Contacts

If everyone in the group is new to advocacy and you haven’t

“Few skateparks, if any, are the result of one person’s efforts.”

yet begun the skatepark effort, here are the steps you’ll likely take—presented in the shortest possible terms. This is not a formula; it’s simply one way to get started.

1. Assemble two or three friends that skate and work hard. People will probably come and go throughout the process. Try to find those people with the commitment, work ethic, and skills that will really help.

2. Prepare a two-minute presentation on why the community needs a skatepark. This doesn’t need to be an authoritative essay on skatepark principles or design. It just needs to be compelling enough to get the audience interested. The end of the presentation should

make it clear that the project is just starting to look for people to help. These meetings should always conclude by expressing the method for supporters to learn more or get involved. A sign-up sheet, handouts with a Web site address, or even business cards can all serve this purpose. This brief presentation will be given to different audiences and will become the fundamental message of your effort.

3. Approach City Council during a public meeting and ask them for their help in navigating the process of public works. There’s no need to be shy about any questions you might—and should—have. These people were elected by the community and are there to help. Be sure to arrive well before the meeting begins in order to sign up to speak. Use the presentation created in the previous step, if necessary. Many groups walk out of these meetings with a City Councilperson’s phone number in their pocket. Sometimes these sympathetic councilmen or women are enthusiastically supportive throughout the life of the project.

4. Approach the Parks Department during a public meeting and ask them for their help creating a plan for a new skatepark. There may be someone on the Parks Board or an employee who is enthusiastic about the idea and is willing to help set up a plan. Again, the same presentation you prepared for the City Council may be slightly modified and used here.

(Note: These groups will be more likely to entertain the idea of assisting the group if the request for help is made in a public setting.)

5. Schedule regular meetings with the City Council and Parks contacts to discuss progress and develop new opportunities. This is the committee that will repeatedly come together to report on developments. For each of these meetings, come prepared with the information promised and conclude with a list of things to do before the next meeting.

The group composed of liaisons from the City, Parks Department, and skaters is essentially the Skatepark Committee. Come up with a cool name, draw up a logo, and have fun with it.

Exercise 2: Creating Objectives

Crafting a strategy for success is usually done by trial and error, and since most advocates have never successfully advocated for a skatepark before, they don’t tend to create solid plans



More skateboarding communities are successfully advocating for do-it-yourself (DIY) skateparks. Washington Street Skatepark in San Diego, California is recognized as one of the nation’s more successful DIY efforts.

because they usually don’t know what to expect. There are six things to consider while formulating the best approach for meeting the goals.

1. Inventory the environment. Talk with the group about any factors in the community that might influence the opportunities for a new skatepark. These things might be positive or negative.

- Are there skateparks in the area now? Are they successful?
- Is skateboarding in the local news for any reason?
- Is the group connected with the local skateboarding community? (Will they be there to support the advocacy efforts when they’re needed?)
- Is the local economy healthy or depressed?
- Are there any substantial development projects on the horizon?

2. Take stock of the group. This is a difficult exercise. Strengths and weaknesses are going to emerge eventually on their own, but if the group can identify them beforehand it may save time later. Consider the following:

- Is the group organized?
- Is the skatepark process fully understood?
- Does the group have the time and dedication to see the project through? (Anticipate a 2- or 3-year process.)
- Is the group comfortable dealing with a diversity of audiences such as politicians, administrators, and business owners?

3. Seek a support network. The group is not going to build the skatepark alone. It’s going to take help from lots of different groups and agencies, some of whom have never worked together. As the skatepark agents, the advocacy group will be those to whom people turn to when they’re curious about the project. Being able to locate skatepark supporters in the community is extremely valuable, but keeping them involved and invested (both figuratively and perhaps literally) will be one of the greatest challenges.

4. Define short- and long-term objectives. Advocates should refresh and update the short-term goals frequently. The long-term objectives should remain more or less static, though the goals may change as new circumstances

Advocating For D.I.Y.

Do It Yourself skateparks are becoming more common as cities, strapped for cash, are willing to entertain the idea of a facility that is both inexpensive (to the city) to create, promotes ownership by its users at its core, and avoids much of the bureaucracy of hiring a niche designer and construction company that may or may not be experienced in the type of terrain that the skaters require.

Most famously, the skatepark under the Burnside Bridge in Portland, Oregon started out as a guerrilla project in 1993. When Burnside began, nobody seemed to care about the land—it was a dormant, derelict piece of property. Portland skaters seized the opportunity to begin building small banks running up the massive back wall. These were not immediately bulldozed, so they built more features and the positive impacts of the skatepark began to manifest. The skateboarding and building activity there drove away the drug dealers and users who occupied the space previously. Pretty soon, the small renegade project filled out to a full-blown 15,000-square-foot skatepark and ultimately received the blessing of the city government. The Burnside story is legendary among skatepark builders and advocates as testament to what can be done with little more than passion for an idea.

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The skate spot at Thea's Park in Tacoma, Washington was developed by simply removing the anti-skating devices and building an inexpensive manual pad. The win-win story was the result of practical negotiations with the City and Parks Department.

are revealed or opportunities present themselves. Long-term objectives are the vision for skateboarding in the community, whether it's a simple ledge or pad on an abandoned tennis court or a ten-skatepark system spanning the city. The short-term goals are going to be much trickier to identify until after there's actual progress.

Short-term objectives might include things like these:

- Keep the Parks Department invested and informed about skateparks.
- Gather support from the local business community.
- Identify and secure approval for an appropriate site.
- Create new supportive contacts in a specific organization (Community Council or Chamber Of Commerce, for example).

5. Create a plan for achieving each objective. For each objective, identify a way to reach it. Some objectives might still be too large or vague to plan for, but by breaking them down into smaller and smaller parts, the opportunities should reveal themselves. Two pieces of wisdom will help the group

turn ideas into actual plans. The first is that if one doesn't know something, ask. A well-placed question is one of the most powerful tools at the advocate's disposal. The second piece of advice is to be patient but relentless. The following examples are the types of smaller objectives that ultimately produce much larger successes:

Establish regular monthly meetings with the Parks planner. This will keep the Parks Department interested and informed about the progress—they'll come to expect regular successes from the group.

Research "skatepark tourism" and attend a Chamber Of Commerce meeting to discuss regional skateparks as local attractions. This will help build support from the local business community.

Contact the local Department Of Land Use regarding availability of specific potential skatepark sites.

6. Dedicate resources for implementing those objectives. This is more simply said by asking, "Who is going to do all this stuff?" Creating a plan for achieving each objective should yield a pretty good list of things to do. Volunteers within the

skatepark group should be willing to share the unpleasant tasks as well as the fun ones. For example, it's easy and fun to design a logo for the group, but who is willing to research the state's liability laws or speak in front of City Council? For those goals that aren't executed as well as expected, the group can figure out what went wrong and look for ways to improve their performance.

The most important people in the skatepark advocacy group will be the ones who are willing to attend meetings or organize projects without much help or reminders. Those meetings that aren't directly about skateboarding or skateparks can often yield powerful support for the skatepark effort, but this can't happen if no one is there to represent the skateboarders' interests. The group needs people, or a person, willing to speak in front of groups or, when faced with yet another little thing that needs to be done, be ready to "just take care of it," whatever "it" is. These motivated individuals are in high demand, so when the group has one, appreciate that person.

With a reasonable grasp of what to expect and how long the process can last, we're confident that any skatepark effort will be successful.

Exercise 3: Starting Today

There are a few aspects of the advocacy effort that will have enormous positive impact on the group's public image later. Not every group will pursue these types of activities, but those that do will accomplish their long-term goals more quickly. These projects will become public evidence that the group sees the value of community and wasn't just created to entertain their own recreational desires.



Early in your skatepark effort it can be valuable to attend different public meetings and become familiar with the way that issues are discussed and decisions made. The more comfortable you are presenting your case in a way that is easy for your audience to deal with, the more likely they will be to take your concepts seriously. Make it easy for them to help you!

Advocating for D.I.Y., continued from page 39

Today, many more avenues exist for skatepark advocates, thanks in no small part to the Burnside pioneers. DIY skate spots and skateparks are popping up all over with official support from the local governments that own the property. Famous DIY public skateparks built by skaters themselves stand on otherwise unusable property in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Philadelphia, among other places. The key to the success of any DIY skatepark is the leadership of skilled and experienced skatepark builders. If you plan to learn how to work with concrete while you build your DIY skatepark, the results will likely reveal that. But DIY done right is a good solution for some areas. It's progressive and in most cases a win-win for the communities that take this direction.

Authorized DIY has a very similar advocacy track as a traditional skatepark, except that initial response from the bureaucracies that preside over the property tend to be much more negative. The real and imagined liabilities are countless and, as a result, most authorized DIY projects start off being illegitimate; a few features are built, they don't yield any controversy, so a few more go in. At some point everyone comes to the table to talk about what's going on "under the bridge." As an advocate, whether you are employed by the city or are a skateboarder (or both), this is where your powers of persuasion will be most tested. The advocate in favor of a DIY skatepark is essentially asking the City to allow unsanctioned construction to continue. You can imagine the number of severe concerns this will raise.

The most persuasive arguments for an existing DIY skatepark will be the cost-savings presented to the tax-payers and the sense of ownership and pride that the users will have in the facility. The biggest challenges will be in the sanctioning of the spot (e.g., liability) and the association if the facility is deemed a failure by community standards.



As underutilized spaces are identified in your community, it helps to visit the site and see first-hand how it measures up to the site selection criteria. Parks currently not receiving maintenance—“brown field” parks—are often attractive sites from an administrative point of view as concrete skateparks present little ongoing maintenance expense.

Volunteer As Park Stewards

Arrange regular park clean-ups, especially if the community currently has a skatepark. Consider some technical repair recommendations if that skatepark is dilapidated (see the Maintenance chapter for more information on skatepark repairs).

Show Up For Other Groups' Functions

Most community groups schedule work parties of some sort. A sure-fire way to gain their support is to come out and help them with one of their work parties or events. If the skatepark group initiates this partnership, it will have an even greater positive impact. This is especially true for those groups that have an interest in possible skatepark sites, such as park stewardship organizations (“Friends of Pioneer Park”). One doesn’t need to show up with 50 skaters, usually three or four (depending on the event) will be fine. There is nothing more exciting to a fellow advocacy group than knowing that other groups are paying attention to their efforts.

Address The Community Need

If street skating is a problem for the local business community, meet with them to discuss ways to minimize property damage and/or the nuisance of street skating. Note: The skateboarding advocate will mostly be listening at these types of meetings. Frustrated business owners don’t often get to discuss their

concerns with a real skateboarder, so be prepared to take some heat with cool, detached professionalism.

Pay Attention To The News

Although the community probably has a daily newspaper, there may be many smaller periodicals devoted to particular community interests. It will be valuable to know about them, who to contact when it’s appropriate, and what their area of interest may be. Don’t forget local Web sites and blogs that might be covering issues that could impact or influence skateboarding or skatepark opportunities. If nothing else, having a grasp of local news and issues is a great way to break the ice with politicians and business leaders.

Learn To Skate Day

Putting together a Learn To Skate Day is a great way to promote the positive aspects of skateboarding. Consider working with the Parks Department to procure the necessary waivers or coverage that this kind of event often requires. Be sure to have helmets handy. Schedule your event for June 21, International Go Skateboarding Day (www.goskateboardingday.org), to give local media an additional reason to cover it. Events that link a small community to a global movement make great local news stories.

Be There!

Meetings, meetings, meetings. Show up and be prepared to speak if asked. Become a regular face. This isn’t going to happen overnight, so the sooner they see that the skateboarding advocates are not going away, the sooner they’ll realize that the issue is serious.



Hosting a Learn To Skate Day is a good way to demonstrate that your group is dedicated to the community’s well-being and not just out to meet its own needs.



Youth of Compton, California worked with their local leaders to help turn their dream of a public skatepark into a reality. The Compton Skatepark opened in December 2008.

FUNDRAISING

In the context of skateparks, the word fundraising implies one thing: If skaters want a safe place to skate they had better be prepared to do much of the work and raise at least some of the money themselves. That's right—before a skatepark can be built, somebody will need to ask the community for money.

Many passionate advocates may be telling themselves right now that there's an inequity here. Did the area youth baseball club have to pay for all those empty baseball fields? When was the last time the local basketball club washed cars for donations (to buy asphalt and hoops, not their plane tickets to the State Finals)? Did all the children have to break piggy banks to pay for those swing sets? Why should skaters have to raise money for a place to recreate when nobody else had to? It probably has something to do with cities not liking skateboarders because they're perceived as bad kids, right?

Wrong. It might be unfair assuming that it was accurate. That is not to say it is "fair" that most large American cities don't have a single small facility for their thousands of skateboarding youth, who must then risk fines and even their own lives just to recreate in the streets. All of those baseball fields, basketball courts, and swing sets were fought for by someone like yourself; someone who felt passionate enough for the need that they stuck it out. All of those facilities cost money, almost all of which had been aggressively fought for by advocates, whether they're residents or city employees.

It's not as though your city has a room filled with gold, ready to be spent. Most of the money for those facilities came from taxes paid by citizens. At the beginning of each fiscal cycle, every penny of it is aggressively carved from the city budget by those entrusted to manage the city (or county). While the cost to site, build, and maintain a skatepark may pale in comparison to the other projects being considered by a

community, that half-million dollars would go a long way toward funding many other projects that someone considers essential—and there are many people out there ready to make a case for why their cause is more important than a skatepark. When it comes to allocating public money, it's dog eat dog.

On the other hand, near the end of the fiscal year, if there is money left over, the City or Parks and Recreation Department often must spend it ("use it or lose it") or else that surplus won't be included in next year's allocation. They can be very agreeable to the skatepark project if they must find a place to use that money quickly. This information might require an inside source who can alert the advocacy group of leftover budget dollars.

Skateparks are on the cusp of becoming an understood and accepted recreational amenity for every community. Until that

happens, skatepark advocates must simply work harder to build a case than those who promote Little League baseball, basketball, or playgrounds. Today's skatepark advocates are pioneering this process, and every success helps the next advocate build a stronger case for their project. As that continues, fundraising will become less strenuous as cities (and the citizens who work and live there) come to accept skateparks as vital components of healthy communities.

A Road Well-Traveled

The realization that skaters will have to raise money sometimes discourages skatepark advocates who may already feel a little frazzled from managing negative public perceptions surrounding their cause. Building support, as mentioned earlier, requires that the advocate's message expresses inevitability and is delivered with tenacity. This commitment to the skatepark project is an aspect of mature, responsible advocacy.

True Cost of Your Donation

The chart below gives the deduction for a single person making a cash donation of \$100 to a nonprofit organization. The final “cost” of your donation depends on your tax bracket, whether you file as a single person or married jointly, and if you use the standard deduction or itemize your deductions.

In technical terms, the tax saving usually equals the deduction times the marginal tax rate—the top rate for the person’s income level.

Tax Bracket	Donation Amount	Benefit	Out of Pocket Cost
10%	\$100	10	\$90
15%	\$100	15	\$85
25%	\$100	25	\$75
28%	\$100	28	\$72
33%	\$100	33	\$67
35%	\$100	35	\$65

To clarify with an example, John wants to support his local public skatepark effort (led by a federally registered 501c3 nonprofit organization). He donates \$2,000 and receives nothing in return. John’s taxable income is \$75,000, and his tax bracket is 25%. His tax savings would be \$500 (the donation amount times his marginal tax rate of 25%). John’s \$2,000 donation to the skatepark fund actually costs him \$1,500.

In another scenario, John donates \$2,000 to his local skatepark group (a federally registered 501c3 nonprofit group). For his donation, the skatepark group gives him a skateboard (valued at \$100). Since John is getting a skateboard for his donation, John must subtract the value of the skateboard from his donation of \$2,000 to get to the correct amount. Therefore his true donation is \$1,900 and his tax savings is \$475 (\$1,900 times John’s marginal tax rate of 25%). In this example, John’s \$2,000 donation to the skatepark fund actually costs him \$1,525.

However, presenting the project as “responsible” indicates that we’re all in this together and that the skatepark is a truly collaborative effort. Funding the skatepark is usually the most difficult and challenging stage in getting it built. Anybody can ask for a gift, but the responsible approach is to accept that all members of the community will need to come together and contribute to this project. Naturally, this includes skateboarders.

Every man-made element of a city’s landscape was paid for in one way or another. Sometimes the structure owes its existence to a single donor and, as is more often the case, the project was built with the support of an elaborate and broad partnership between many entities. From the City or Park Department’s standpoint, a skatepark is no different from any other public recreational facility.

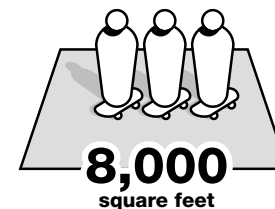
How Much?

Skateparks aren’t free. Every service, study, planning meeting, and report costs money to create. The actual design and construction of the facility are only part of the overall expense, and maintenance can easily surpass the cost of creating the park if it is built with substandard materials or designed for fewer users than it ultimately attracts. The Parks Department—if it currently does not manage a skatepark—is aware of all of these considerations, and will naturally seek to offset as many of these costs as possible.

Unfortunately for the skatepark advocacy group, the Parks Department may perceive the group as enthusiastic volunteers willing to do anything to see the skatepark vision become reality. As a result, many groups are tasked with raising an enormous amount of money for the new skatepark. On the other hand, non-profits everywhere are able to raise millions of dollars for their causes, so why should a skatepark project be any different? The difference is, of course, that most skatepark groups have very little experience in big-money fundraising.

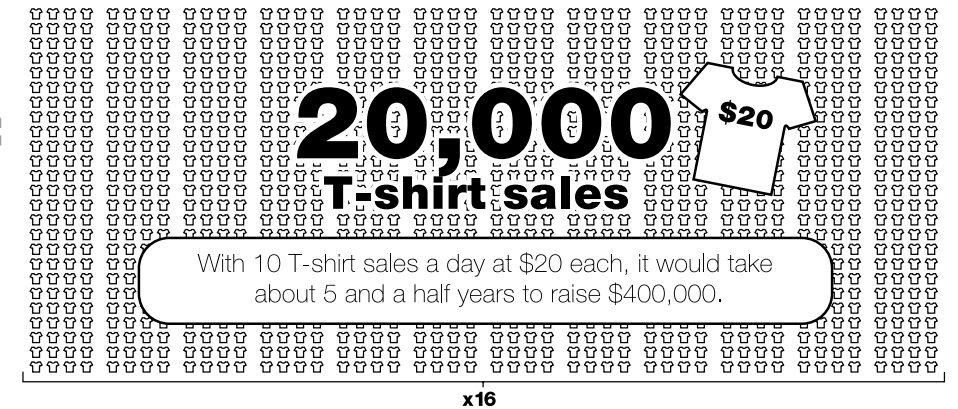
Setting aside for the moment those philosophical arguments about the equity of requiring skateboarders to pay for a skatepark, presume that the group will be asked to pay for half of the new facility. The first step is to estimate how much the skatepark will cost.

Concrete skateparks cost about \$50 per square foot in 2008 to design and build. If the site has a skatepark footprint of 20,000 square feet, it’s fairly safe to presume the skatepark will cost about \$1,000,000 to design and build. This does not include any landscaping, site analysis, or bureaucratic overhead. This is an estimate simply for the concrete park itself. Prices rarely go down, and in certain areas the price may be significantly higher due to local geography or other unique conditions. If the total price seems low, it probably is. Advocates should research similar skateparks in their region to achieve the most realistic estimate possible.



$$8,000 \text{ square feet} \times \$50 \text{ per square foot} = \$400,000$$

\$400,000 =



With 10 T-shirt sales a day at \$20 each, it would take about 5 and a half years to raise \$400,000.

Many of the events that people associate with fundraising are more about raising awareness. Printing and selling T-shirts, for example, can help pay for a skatepark, but the bulk of the skatepark should be funded from sources that are accustomed to projects of this size.

If the skatepark group were required to raise half of the money, they would be looking at a \$500,000 goal. If fundraising T-shirts net \$10 profit per sale, one would only need to produce and sell 50,000 of them. Two people working on this project together would each then need to sell 25,000 shirts. If each of them sell two shirts each per hour, they would sell all their shirts in about 12,500 hours. That’s 8 hours every day for over 4 years. Of course, selling even a fraction of these will help, but a goal like that will require a more aggressive and diversified fundraising effort. No amount of money is impossible, and other groups do it all the time; it’s just a matter of setting attainable goals, then preparing and executing each project to maximize profits. While it’s not necessarily good news, it’s at least comforting to know that nearly every skatepark was built with assistance by a skatepark advocacy group’s fundraising contribution.

Fundraising Strategy

Like almost all of the other stages of skatepark creation, most advocates enter fundraising with a host of preconceptions. Even before any idea about how to handle the money received or how to spend it is entertained, inexperienced advocates may start thinking about raffles and car washes and benefit skate jams. While enthusiasm is a priceless commodity, it helps to first establish a framework in which to organize these different fundraising concepts.

A great place to start your fundraising campaign is with the Parks Department. They are in the business of building parks, and nobody knows as much about how parks are created as they do. It’s completely appropriate to arrange a meeting with a Parks planner to discuss the best ways to raise money for the skatepark. By working together with Parks from the beginning, a rapport is established that should allow all the biggest questions to be answered. Let’s say, for example, the proposed skatepark will cost \$800,000 (this assumes 16,000 square feet at a typical \$50 per square foot price).

1. Of the \$800,000, how much will the Parks Department or city contribute? How much will the skatepark committee be expected to come up with?
2. What happens if the skatepark committee fails to meet its goals?
3. When will fundraising begin and when will it end?
4. Who will manage the money? Are donations tax-deductible? (Is the receiving entity a registered non-profit organization?)

There are other important questions to ask after these first four points are established.

1. Will the organization responsible for managing donations make any money available for future fundraising efforts? Or will every penny put into that fund go directly to the skatepark?

This is commonly known as a “no-money-out” policy that essentially dictates that any donation received is applied

It is appropriate to arrange a meeting with the Parks Department to discuss the best ways to raise money for the skatepark.

Be careful how donation funds are used. In most places, donations received for a specific purpose (i.e. building a public skatepark) must be used for that purpose. If the project is abandoned, the funds must be returned to the donors, or the donors must authorize reallocating their donations for another project.

Essentially, if you tell someone you are collecting donations to build a public skatepark, the funds must be used to build a public skatepark. Using such funds for another unrelated

project, however justified you might feel about it, is not only unethical, it might be illegal.

Thus, funds collected for a skatepark project cannot be used to build a tennis court should the skatepark project be abandoned. Likewise, donations to the tennis court construction

fund should not be used to build a skatepark, unless each donor is contacted and authorizes the transfer of their donation to the skatepark fund.

This is another reason to keep careful records of significant donations. While it may not be possible to get contact information from everyone who puts change in a collection jar, donations collected by your staff or volunteers in person should be recorded, and donation forms should be provided for anyone mailing a check (post a printable Donation form on your Web site). Having donors' contact information is also important for keeping in contact, sending updates, and ultimately for sending them invitations to your skatepark Grand Opening!

To Non-Profit Or Not

The skatepark advocacy group might consider becoming a non-profit organization. This is no small task and requires some familiarity with small-business management. As a non-profit, your organization will be legally responsible to abide by laws that many advocates may not be aware of. For example, donating services to a non-profit organization is generally not tax-deductible, but donating cash or goods is. What's the difference between goods and a service? Sometimes it can become unclear where the line is drawn. An illustrator, for example, executes a concept rendering (service) and delivers that drawing (product). Is the illustration a service or a product? When one forms a non-profit organization, questions like this cannot be avoided.

Another challenge is the accounting, bookkeeping, and legal filings required of all non-profit organizations. Non-profits

are legally obligated to produce records of their finances. The format of these records is consistent with the type of non-profit one belongs to. Failure to file accurately and on-time can result in fines, a denial of the non-profit status, or expensive and time-consuming revisions to the organization. Managing a non-profit is not easy and will require discipline from all of the main advocates within the group. Large-scale failures, like faulty bookkeeping (which may be perceived rightly or wrongly as embezzlement) can even lead to legal action.

If the subtleties and bureaucracy of becoming a non-profit do not dissuade you, it may be a good idea to organize as one. The legitimacy it carries among a community is much greater than being simply an organization with the non-profit activities being managed by another entity (a community foundation or the Parks Department, for example).

How To Become A Non-Profit Organization

This guide cannot adequately cover all of the details of creating a non-profit organization. You will have to refer to a publication or specialist dedicated to that topic. But we can provide an overview. Ultimately, to complete the process the group needs to consult an attorney who specializes in registering non-profit organizations and be comfortable with the responsibilities outlined above. Many attorneys are willing to work pro bono for groups whose ideals they share. It will not only save you money, but spare you plenty of headaches to seek competent pro bono legal help.

The first thing to realize is that a non-profit organization is not just a company, it is an association that is organized and operated as a corporation. Unlike companies that can be owned and managed by an individual, corporations (and non-profits) are managed by a group of people, or a Board of Directors with a minimum of three members (President, Secretary, and Treasurer).

There are lots of different kinds of non-profits. A non-profit may be a corporation, a trust, or an unincorporated association. Non-profit organizations are often referred to by their section code. Corporations are known as 501c1, a company formed to hold the assets of a defunct company is a 501c2, charitable organizations such as churches, animal rights organizations, youth sports leagues, and skatepark advocacy groups, are all 501c3. There are over 30 different types of 501c designations, but the term “501c3” is most commonly used to indicate a typical non-profit organization.

Establishing a corporation is very simple and can cost as little as \$50. The paperwork is not complicated, but requires some work to fill out. Each state requires a different set of forms to be filed, so the exact paperwork will depend on where your organization will be headquartered. Your Secretary Of State's Web site should have all of the necessary information and paperwork available for download. Applicants will likely need two additional individuals to serve as trustees in the organization. It's important to note that everyone legally named in the Articles Of Incorporation are legally bound to manage the organization—in other words, if the organization fails to operate ethically or breaks the law in any way, *all* of the named trustees are individually liable.



Even glamorous events can be hosted on a shoe-string budget. One skatepark advocate raised \$25,000 in a single evening with very little cash investment.

Rockstar Skatepark Fundraiser

Bev Heyer isn't a skateboarder and at one point admitted that she didn't even like skateboarders. She's a City Councilwoman in the tiny community of Winston, Oregon, and retired after a successful career in sales and marketing for a large chain of hotels.

As a businesswoman she had formed negative impressions of skaters due to the nuisance and destruction they caused, but when her grandson started skating she didn't let that bias her. Delighted to spend time with him, she drove from one location after another in town as he learned how to skateboard. She was shocked to witness what most skaters accept as a daily occurrence—the aggressive policy and handling of skateboarders by police officers and property managers. As a community leader she endorsed how law enforcement cracked down on skateboarding, but after seeing the treatment first-hand Bev realized Winston needed a skatepark.

Leveraging what she knew about incentives, rewards, and people, Bev organized a grass-roots fundraising event that raised \$25,000 in one night. First, she contacted one of the “stars” from a popular reality TV show. After making her case and using the support from one individual to negotiate with the next, she was ultimately able to secure the appearance of five stars from the show at a

Once the organization is registered as a legal corporation, only then can it apply for non-profit status. This second step requires Form 1023 to be filed with the IRS. The form is very technical and should at very least be reviewed by an attorney before being submitted.

The business-license application will require a written charter. This document describes the purpose of the organization, where its money will go, what will happen to the money if the organization dissolves, and so on. A similar document, the Articles Of Organization, describes how the organization will be operated. This is important if conflicts over the direction of the group's efforts emerge and disagreements escalate to the point of legal action. While this seems unlikely in the context of a skatepark organization, these are essentially the same documents that guide such groups as the United Way, Greenpeace, and other large non-profit organizations.

Every community will have attorneys familiar with or specializing in the creation of non-profits to assist the advocacy group, most likely for a fee. The various applications are highly technical and the fees are not reimbursed if the application is rejected. For an experienced lawyer, crafting the applications for a non-profit is a simple matter. On balance, it is highly recommended that the advocacy group that is seriously considering becoming a non-profit organization retain an attorney.

If you can recruit one to join your effort and donate services, all the better. The American Bar Association publishes a directory

online of attorneys willing to assist non-profit organizations pro bono. Consult www.abanet.org/probono/ for more details. Attorneys donating their time and expertise to the skatepark project should be treated with the appropriate degree of graciousness. The attorney may or may not have time to assist with the creation of the group's Bylaws or the filing of annual income reports such as Form 1023, and so on. The answers to these questions should reveal themselves during negotiations. If the advocacy group is very inexperienced, it is necessary to reveal this right away before a formal relationship begins. Like anyone else, an attorney's time is valuable and they should be made aware what kind of expectations exist before they commit.

Another option, if an attorney is not available, is to request assistance from paralegals and associates. They may have more available time and could very well be more enthusiastic about helping the cause. Their legal contribution reflects well on the firms they work for, the organization still receives experienced legal counsel, and everyone is happy.

More information about the creation of non-profit organizations can be found on the Internal Revenue Service's Web site, www.irs.gov/charities/.

Managing A Non-Profit Organization

After the organization is formed as a non-profit, certain regulations and practices must be maintained. The new organization will have applied for and received a tax identification number, or Federal Employer Identification

Number (EIN). This number is the code by which receipts that are issued to donors are linked to the proper non-profit. The number is unique to the organization and, as far as the IRS is concerned, is essentially the name of the group. All receipts should contain this number as it is required by those who wish to deduct the donation from their taxes, especially for donations greater than \$250.

If the skatepark organization is a non-profit organization and is handling or entrusted with a significant amount of money, they will be required to file a financial document annually. Different states may have different amounts that trigger this requirement. In Minnesota, for example, non-profits must file the Form 990 with the IRS if the organization exceeds \$25,000 a year in financial activity. If the organization exceeds \$350,000 then they must also have an independent firm perform an audit.

Furthermore, non-profit organizations are required to make their financial reports available to the public in some fashion. The written recording, or Minutes, of an annual meeting must also be made public. This is generally a public release of the IRS Form 990, required by all non-profits on an annual basis.

All things considered, becoming a non-profit is no small decision and should be made only after the group is well underway with the skatepark effort.

Not A Non-Profit? Not A Problem.

With all of the headaches to become a non-profit, it's easy to see why many groups decide to allow the funds raised for a skatepark to be managed by someone else. This is sometimes known as a "fiscal sponsor." For groups not wishing to manage the finances of skatepark fundraising there are several options for recruiting a fiscal sponsor. Each option requires research and a thorough negotiation.

Most communities have several social club chapters—Elks, Lions, Eagles, Rotary, and Masons are some of the most commonly known. Most of these organizations have managed skatepark finances all over the country, and the organization's local chapter may be happy to perform this important task.

The Parks Department may also have staff available to handle projects like this. Lots of local sports, recreation, environmental, and community-health organizations might require some financial management assistance. The Parks Department may be the entity that many of these groups turn to. Most Parks departments, as agencies of the City, are themselves nonprofits. It may be an easy matter to have them manage all of the skatepark grassroots funds.

Either option might work well for the skatepark group, but no outside organization should handle donated skatepark money without a clear and written agreement. Many entities may want to be reimbursed for their services through a percentage of the amount of money collected. While this may be a reasonable amount, it might be negotiable. It never hurts to ask. Beware of hidden fees or opportunities for the money to be appropriated for other causes unrelated to the skatepark. For example, if the skatepark site exists in

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Rockstar Skatepark Fundraiser, continued from page 49
reduced rate. Every detail was donated or discounted: charter airlines, limos, and hotel rooms.

Understanding the limitations of hosting a huge event in such a small town, Bev simply arranged to host it in the much larger city of Portland, Oregon (there is little reason to limit one's fundraising events to only the community that will most benefit). Filling an entire hall, charging multiple levels of admission granting people different levels of access to the stars, and holding an auction for donated goods, the event was an enormous success and had major coverage in local TV, radio, and newspaper media.

While first-time benefit events generally raise more awareness than cash, one very important lesson that can be drawn from this successful event: Very few of the incentives had anything to do with skateparks or skateboarding. The fact that it was a skatepark benefit was no secret, but Bev understood that most people simply weren't motivated by that cause. She attracted a much larger audience by locating the event in a more populated area and used incentives that would appeal to a wider range of interests.

Elements Of A Non-Profit Organization

- Articles of Incorporation establishing organization.
- IRS form 1023 designating organization as 501c3 non-profit corporation.
- Board of Directors including at least 3 officers: President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- By-Laws establishing goals and objectives of organization.
- Annual independent audit if earnings reach \$350,000.



The opening of a professionally designed and constructed skatepark will often surprise park planners and community leaders with the amount of national attention the event will receive.

\$50 A Square Foot?!



Skateparks have two significant fees required for construction. The first is the design. Design is much more than the character of the terrain. It includes the construction schematics that define every square inch of the skatepark as well as the specifications that define what and how the specific materials are used.

The second fee is for construction. This cost buys the materials, employs the professionals, and leases whatever equipment might be required.

No rough estimate is going to be accurate to all locations and seasons. In the continental United States, concrete skateparks featuring street elements tend to cost about \$40 per square foot for construction, while skateparks featuring lots of transition tend to be about \$50 a square foot. When it comes to establishing a realistic cost estimate based on the size of the skatepark's intended footprint, advocates should ask communities nearby what they paid for their parks. Determine the actual square footage of those parks, and divide that number by the total cost. This is certainly the most accurate way to establish a reasonable estimate of the cost per square foot.

Design fees generally come in at about a third of the total construction estimate, so a \$600,000 skatepark may cost about \$200,000 to design, bringing the total up to \$800,000. This estimate is impacted by a several factors. If the surrounding park, for example, is being developed simultaneously to the skatepark, design fees may be reduced as expensive environmental impact studies can be spread over the whole site rather than associated specifically to the skatepark. The scope of work can also impact construction fees in the same way. The cost to lease heavy earth-moving equipment may be shared by the skatepark-construction company and the firms responsible for landscaping other areas of the space.

If a general contractor or landscape architect is going to subcontract the skatepark design to one company and subcontract the construction to another, this may impact the overall cost. Similarly, if a design-build skatepark specialist is hired to perform both design *and* construction, this too may have some effect on the overall cost. Having one entity performing "adjacent" stages of the skatepark development reduces the need for technical communication. Conversely, the more detached two entities are in terms of expertise, the greater the amount of technical communication required.

Though creating an initial cost estimate for design and construction is challenging, a reasonable place to start is \$50 per square foot, or \$35 per square foot for construction and \$15 per square foot for design.

"Can't we just design it ourselves?"

Skatepark design is much more than a visual description of the terrain. The final skatepark design specifies every construction detail of the skatepark. In cases where the construction is being bid by companies other than the designer, (that is, any non-design/build arrangement), the construction company will use the design to create an accurate cost proposal for the project. A design

committee should always steer the skatepark design concept—such as the style of terrain and type of structures—but a qualified designer should be creating the actual design documents.

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a larger public park that is undergoing redevelopment, make sure that the money donated to the skatepark is applied to only the skatepark and not the skatepark surroundings. These contributions are called "ear-marked donations"—they are contributions made to nonprofits that promise to use the funds only for the use identified by the donor. It might also be appropriate to negotiate how much area around the skatepark will be funded by grassroots contributions. Perhaps the landscaping and benches might be the result of

few questions, or wanting to know where they might verify the organization's credentials or seek more information.

This approach to fundraising is great in that it raises awareness, puts a human face to the project, and establishes a personalized relationship with the potential donor. The downside, of course, is that it's time-intensive and requires a lot of energy per dollar raised. If each person the advocate speaks with for five minutes gives five dollars, the entire

The number-one reason why people don't contribute to a cause is because they aren't asked.

the skatepark group's fundraising efforts. If this is the case, it would be prudent to clarify what happens if the skatepark group manages to procure donations not directly related to the skatepark; perhaps those in-kind donations can apply to the overarching target in some way.

The most important rule to remember is that if something is not clear, ask that it be explained and get it in writing. And it's always important to have an attorney—one working on your group's behalf—review any agreements or documents your organization's officers sign.

Picking Pockets

Earlier in this guide skatepark advocates gained valuable experience building support for the skatepark as a concept. Now the advocate will leverage that support into financial contributions.

The act of fundraising can take one of many forms. Encouraging people to drop some spare change into a jar at a street fair relies on one kind of appeal, while meeting with a large corporation's public-relations department has a very different tone. Becoming comfortable with both extremes will help any advocate faced with raising money reach his or her financial goal.

Grassroots Fundraising

The number-one reason why people don't contribute to a cause is because they aren't asked. A grassroots fundraising effort is characterized almost exclusively by a relationship between individuals. In other words, person A, the advocate, is asking person B for a donation or to participate in a fundraising program. Person B may respond by immediately dropping a \$5 bill into a jar, ignoring the advocate, asking a

\$500,000 skatepark would be paid for in a "mere" 8,333 hours, or about four years of steady 9 to 5 contact. Even at \$60 an hour it's easy to see that grassroots fundraising is more about raising awareness than actually paying for the park.

Deep-Pocket Fundraising

The polar opposite of soliciting donations from friends and neighbors is seeking smaller numbers of donors that operate with millions of dollars annually. A donation of \$10,000 from a local bank or supermarket chain equates to about four weeks of nonstop door knocking (presuming that door knocking nets about \$60 an hour). While it may take well over a month to negotiate a donation from a big sponsor, ambitious advocates may have lots of solicitations out at the same time.

Asking For Cash

Consider how many skateboarders there are in your community. Now consider that for every skater there probably is a mom, a dad, a grandpa, and a grandma. That means that the community could easily have quadrupled the number of skatepark supporters by including friends and families of skaters. For every 1,000 skateboarders there are possibly 4,000 immediate family members within easy reach of the skatepark message. Let's presume there are 5,000 skateboarders in a typical mid-sized community. This would produce about 25,000 people directly related to a skateboarder.

Many people start their day with a \$3 latte. Assuming they did this every weekday, they are spending almost \$750 a year on coffee. If only half of these friends and families of skateboarders, 12,500 individuals, are interested in donating towards skateparks what they spend per annum in coffee there would be \$9,375,000 in the skatepark account within the year. The good news is that the money is out there. The bad news is that it's being spent on coffee.

With few exceptions, everybody with money has had to work for it. At the end of a hard-earned pay period they cash their check and pay bills. Money is sent for utilities, various payments for home and auto, and the city, state, and federal governments skim some for taxes. Whatever is left pays for food, clothes, and so on. For most Americans it isn't easy making ends meet.

Those regular coffee drinkers pay \$3 and immediately receive a reward for their payment. Though the act of donating \$3 a day toward a skatepark costs the same as buying coffee, the problem for advocates is that people don't receive an immediate reward for their skatepark donation and are thus less motivated to contribute. With the coffee one can enjoy the rewards of the expense within a few minutes. This is one reason why it requires much more creativity to get a coffee drinker to forego their favorite drink and donate that \$3 to your skatepark.

The most fundamental key to soliciting donations is producing rewards for those patrons. These incentives may be different for everyone. While one person may respond well to a carefully crafted appeal, another one may completely shut down. Soliciting donations is almost identical to soliciting general support for the skatepark; everyone has a good reason to donate funds, but it's the advocate's job to find it.

Incentives

Finding creative ways to get donations for a skatepark requires learning a little about what motivates the potential donor, whether they are a corporation, organization, or individual. Imagine if somebody approached you and offered to sell you something you didn't want for \$100. That person would have been far more effective if they knew a little about what you liked and or needed. Even if the product being offered was clearly worth more than the asking price, you had very little incentive to buy it because it had little value to you.

Every person who faces a potential financial transaction, especially when they're employed to do so, compares the value of the reward to the expense. If the reward's value exceeds the cost, it's a sale. If the cost exceeds the reward's value, it's not a sale. Everyone instinctively performs this calculation dozens of times a day. The value of jaywalking is crossing the street earlier while the cost is putting one's life in possible jeopardy. By carefully looking both ways, the pedestrian reduces the cost until scales tip in favor of the benefit.

While campaigning for funds, the advocate's task will be to illuminate the benefits and minimize the costs. Thankfully, even at their broadest level skateparks present many fantastic

benefits for very little cost, so creating compelling reasons for potential patrons to donate is not too difficult.

Grassroots Incentives

Successfully negotiating even a \$5 contribution is an exercise in cost versus reward. Here are a few different incentives one might use to solicit donations. While this list is by no means complete, it merely outlines some concepts that are known to work.

Tax Deduction

This incentive applies to any financial donation. The non-profit organization must supply a receipt for any contribution upon request, but a receipt is generally required for any cash or in-kind donation greater than \$250 in value for it to be itemized as tax-deductible. This incentive is effective for anyone who files taxes and is concerned about their income bracket. Many companies and organizations have programs to manage their charitable donations and maintain quotas. These types of groups will be prime candidates for this incentive. The patron's reward is that they are not required to pay taxes on money donated to charities.

"The good of the community."

This is the most common and successful incentive available. The skatepark will simply help the community. Skateboarders are an established but underserved population, and the skatepark will help address their needs; skateboarding is a healthy cardiovascular activity that promotes good health; a skatepark is a much safer alternative to skaters' only current option, street skating. Certainly the advocate understands this and their enthusiasm will rub off on those potential donors they encounter. This incentive is appropriate for donations of any level and is implicit within all other incentives. The patron's reward is the well-being they feel by knowing they contributed to the good of the community.

Permanent On-Site Recognition

Named plaques, engraved bricks, and other signage that recognizes patrons are common ways to attract financial support. While the donation will be recouped in no time, the recognition will be visible for decades. Beware: Sometimes the cost of the signage or readable device can dig deeply into the donation—for example, for every \$100 donated, perhaps only \$40 actually goes into the skatepark (the other \$60 covering the cost of creating the signage). In general, on-site recognition is not a widely profitable reward. This incentive is appropriate for larger donations. Depending on the targets, on-site recognition may be reserved for donations of \$200 or more. The patron's reward is, of course, that their name will be "immortalized" as a community supporter.



Most skatepark benefits and events are more valuable for raising community awareness than they are as money-makers. Still, they are a critical component to any fundraising effort. Other donors will see these events as popular projects that they will want to support with a donation.

The most significant example of on-site recognition, of course, is the skatepark name. Naming rights to all sorts of facilities (most famously sports stadiums) are leased or sold to significant donors. Naming rights can be permanent (based on a one-time donation), or periodic (an annual fee, with the potential to change the name as new sponsors are introduced). The Lee And Joe Jamail Skatepark in Houston, Texas is a prominent example of the recognition inherent in naming rights. In this case, the Jamail family donated the majority of the funds raised to build the park, and their legacy is permanently and appropriately etched in the site.

On-site Advertising

The policy for signage around the skatepark may allow for advertising similar to the backfield advertisements found at baseball fields. The signs are generally supplied by the donating entity. In other words, the incentive is not the sign itself but the space and opportunity to advertise there. The opportunity may be perpetual, which would provide an excellent value at almost any cost, or for a specific term such as the first year of operation (afterwards the space may be leased to generate maintenance revenue). Again, most sites appropriate for skateparks will have policies regarding advertising signage. This incentive is appropriate for larger donations, perhaps in excess of \$2,000, depending upon the size and wealth of the community. Individuals may

not respond with this reward, as it is largely a commercial opportunity. The patron's reward is the exposure of their message to the visitors of what will become one of the most popular public facilities in the area.

Your community may have strict policies regarding advertising in public places. Furthermore, negative community reaction may make the challenges of soliciting advertising partners not worth the effort. If this fundraising opportunity is something you're interested in, you'll want to discuss the possibilities with your Parks Department. If on-site advertising is not prohibited it can be a lucrative and perpetual source of revenue.

Premiums

These rewards are any type of gifts offered to people who donate money. For skatepark groups, premiums typically include T-shirts, stickers, and other sundry skate-related gear. Like plaques and on-site fixtures commemorating particular donors, care should be taken that the cost of producing the premium does not greatly diminish the cash donation. It is advised that the "marketing" cost of producing the premiums be generated separately and not drawn from the skatepark fund.

Premiums can also be donated by local businesses. For example, a local carpenter may not have the capital to donate



On-site signage and advertising has been an incentive for drawing baseball-field support for years. While advertising in parks is considered distasteful by most park users, it may be viable in some situations.

money to the skatepark, but he or she may be willing to donate services. If those services aren't required for skatepark construction, they might be used as premiums for a particular size donation or raffle.

Premiums, especially those related directly to skateboarding, are most effective if promoted through skate shops and at the parks themselves. Premiums that reach a wider audience work best, such as movie tickets or gift cards, as these will attract potential donors who want to support the skatepark effort but have no interest in actually using it.

This reward appeals to a person as a value proposition. The donor gets a potential tax deduction, helps the community, AND gets two movie tickets. That's a pretty good value!

Benefits And Special Events

Black-tie galas, musical shows, and other performances are a good way to raise awareness, build excitement, and maybe raise a little cash. Most benefit events don't produce high yields, as the cost of hosting the event impacts the bottom line. If the advocacy organization is practicing a "no-money-out" policy, the event components can be donated separately or money to host the event can be solicited on its own. That way the gross revenue from the event, whether it's the door, a raffle, or whatever, can all go directly into the skatepark.

There is basically no end to types of fundraising events one might host. Regardless of the type of event, whether it's a raffle booth at a street fair or a benefit skate contest, there should be prepared materials available for people to read or take away. When people donate money they appreciate knowing exactly what their contribution is going toward. Be sure to give donors a thank you form containing language such as, "Thank you for your contribution. Every dollar donated goes toward meeting our \$20,000 fundraising goal. For more information please visit our Web site at ..."

Many people will be supportive but unwilling to donate. Their goodwill may still help if everything is made easy for them. If the group is still facing resistance from the City, Parks, or any other powerful entity, people unwilling to donate money can still be asked to write a letter. Having prepared letters that these people might sign, pre-addressed envelopes, or even just a list of names that support the group's goals will still help. (However, don't offer this "easy out" until you're sure they're not able to donate money. While you need moral support, money talks.)

Throughout the advocacy and fundraising process the group will have the opportunity to set up a table, speak, or simply attend different types of gatherings. When preparing for these types of activities it's a good idea to begin collecting some of the things that will come in handy again and again:

folding tables, collapsible canopies, clipboards and sign-up sheets (for newsletters, petitions, etc.).

Any event will require a great deal of resources, any of which can be donated by individuals or organizations. Libraries, small local businesses, and local chapters of social clubs are all familiar with assisting organizations with event management. The key to finding the best use of time and money is to be prepared and thoroughly explore the options. Where one place might rent a movie projector for \$100, there may be another vendor across the street willing to waive all fees for the same projector.

Be sure to carefully track how many volunteers are working at the event and for how long. These volunteer hours may be useful when applying for grants or for demonstrating civic commitment.

Grants

Grants are gifts given by companies, foundations, and other entities to benefit a particular cause. Most foundations and groups that offer grants award them to projects closely aligned with the foundation's values. They identify these values based on carefully crafted grant applications, and how those applications are completed can have a dramatic effect on how seriously the skatepark is considered for an award. For example, a foundation dedicated to reversing rising childhood-obesity rates may be interested in a skatepark project if the application indicates how this skatepark might take the lead in combating obesity. Although it may be obvious to those who skate a few times a week, to someone reviewing the application the connection may not be obvious. When it comes to grant applications, the skatepark should be expressed in ways that align it with the foundation's stated goals. While a cause like obesity should be easy to address with a skatepark solution, many other foundations will be focused on more obscure issues. Locating grants that would consider supporting a skatepark is the most challenging aspect of this type of fundraising. The money is out there and very few skateparks are built without a number of grants awarded to them.

Most foundations want to see a commitment on behalf of the community for the project before they will consider lending their support. If the advocacy group had been diligent about recording their donated hours, this may come in handy as an incidental fact. If community signatures have been collected, this might also be expressed in the grant application provided there is a question asking about community support (which there often is). Many grants will match existing funds up to a particular amount. These matching-fund grants effectively double the money one has collected to date. Grants can be doubled by other grants as well. For example, if the group receives a community grant from some local organization for \$5,000, that money can satisfy another matching grant to raise the total to \$10,000, which can then be doubled again by a larger grant, and so on. It is conceivably possible to fund the entire skatepark without having to sell a single T-shirt. This is unlikely, though, as most grants want to see some feet-on-the-street-style fundraising at work.



The primary mission of the Tony Hawk Foundation is to promote high-quality, public skateparks in low-income areas throughout the United States. While not every area can afford to build big, expensive skateparks, the foundation feels strongly that public skateparks should be designed and constructed by experienced contractors. THF also believes that local officials should treat public skateparks the same way they treat public basketball courts or tennis courts, meaning that anyone may show up and use them anytime, unsupervised. The Tony Hawk Foundation is the only national grant-giving organization focused solely on the development and financing of free, quality public skateparks. The foundation primarily considers skatepark projects that:

1. are designed and built by qualified and experienced skatepark contractors.
2. include local skaters in the design process.
3. are in low-income areas, and/or areas with a high population of "at-risk" youth.
4. can demonstrate a strong grassroots commitment to the project, particularly in the form of fundraising by local skateboarders and other community groups.
5. have a creative mix of street obstacles (rails, funboxes, launch ramps, etc.) and transition/vert terrain (quarterpipes, bowls, snake runs, halfpipes, etc.).
6. don't require skaters or their parents to sign waivers.
7. encourage skaters to look after their own safety and the safety of others without restricting their access to the park or over-regulating their use of it.
8. are open during daylight hours, 365 days a year.
9. don't charge an entrance fee.
10. are in areas that currently have no skateboarding facilities.

Sample Grant App

Grants, whether they're big or small, all require an application before they can be awarded. The grant application below was successful in funding a small manual pad in Tacoma, Washington.

Innovative Grant - 2005
BUDGET

Project Name: Ther's Park Skate Spot
Amount Requested: \$1,800
Primary Contact Person Name: Peter Whitley
Address: 315 N. 14th Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
Phone: 252-229-9138 FAX: _____
E-mail: peter.whitley@metro-parks.com

BUDGET SUMMARY

Itemized Expenditures	Amount Requested	Matching Funds	Total Cost
Concrete platform	\$1,800	\$180	\$1,980
TOTAL COST	\$1,800	\$180	\$1,980

D. TOTAL PROJECT COST:

INNOVATION GRANT FUNDING	\$ 1,800
10% "MATCH"/OTHER FUNDING	\$ 180
TOTAL	\$ 1,980

E. PROJECT SCHEDULE:
April, 2005: Finalize and approve engineering documents.
May, 2005: Identify and approve overseeing vendor, purchase materials, begin construction.
June, 2005: Conclude project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Problems/Statement of Need [describe the problem(s) or the need(s) to be addressed by this proposal]:

Problem 1: Tacoma's skateboarding citizens need recreational facilities. Currently, many skateboarders are recreating in and around private property in the downtown business area, resulting in friction between skaters and property managers.

Problem 2: Tacoma's skateboarding community has two legitimate places to recreate, though they lack particular qualities that would ensure broader community inclusion.

B. Project Description [describe the general goal or primary purpose of the project]:

Description: The design and construction of a permanent, multi-purpose structure in Ther's Park that will attract skateboarders and draw Tacoma skaters away from attractive privately-owned structures downtown into a safe, legitimate space.

3. Explain the public benefit provided by this project.
The multi-use structure has two primary benefits:
1. Encourages skateboarders to recreate in a public space, leading to greater community inclusion between skateboarding youth and broader park visitors.
2. Structure may be used for additional seating or standing for special events.

4. List three key people that will be involved in the project:
Peter Whitley, advocate
Matthew Levens, consultant
Brook McNally, project manager and engineer

Describe in detail how the "match" requirement will be met:
Personal donations, canvassing

List name, address and contact agency/organization you have coordinated with, and attach letters of support and/or concurrence.
City of Tacoma
Metro Parks
Evans, City of Tacoma
Stark, Tacoma MetroParks

In spite of all the possible grants one might apply for, it is still important to "seed" your fundraising effort with money earned through a successful grassroots campaign. It is much easier to convince a potential donor that the skatepark project is wildly popular, an imminent success, and inevitable when there is already \$50,000 in the bank. In this situation the advocacy group is asking the potential donor to participate in and be a part of a success story. When the effort is just beginning and there's little money to show, donors may be more reluctant to "jump on board." This is as true for foundations as it is for individuals.

Once you have demonstrated your commitment through effective grassroots fundraising, the task of seeking grants is remarkably similar to the tedium associated with applying for educational grants and loans. Grant applications are often filled with questions that ask the applicant to express the skatepark project in ways that they should be accustomed to by now. Most grant applications will require the following information about the advocacy group and its goals or project.

Group Organization

The group should be expressed as a hard-working group of volunteers with a long history of service to its community

and broad community support. Describe where the group is active.

Group's Mission/Needs Assessment

Describe the group's goals as beneficial to the community as a whole and to those who are underserved. In the context of skateparks, it's often very easy to describe the need by sharing how many skateboarders are in the area compared to how much free, sanctioned terrain is available. The comparison is usually very dramatic. The group clearly seeks to remedy this deficiency in safe, accessible skateboarding areas for the local youth.

Description Of Programs

Whatever specific programs the group has or continues to manage need to be emphasized. Sometime early in the conceptual stages of the skatepark advocacy group's forming, the need for civic programs was hopefully identified and implemented. Park clean up (or stewardship), learn-to-skate days, and other programs should by now have a longevity that demonstrates a valuable commitment to the skateboarding community. Most foundations and grant-application reviewers will score highly on evidence of long-standing public programs by the advocacy group.

Public Access

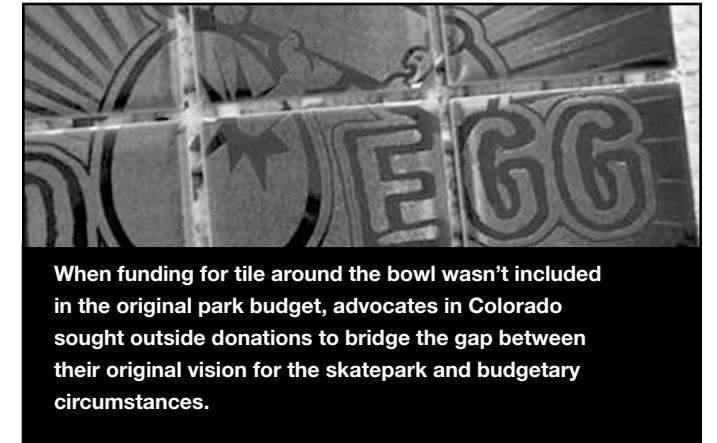
Most foundations want their money to be used for the greatest good possible. It may be valuable to express the skatepark as a solution to many different unmet needs, not just skateboarders', but also other segments of the community. Skateparks, for example, will give the greater community a place to congregate and socialize. Identifying ways that the skatepark may benefit low-income members of the community may be especially powerful.

Scope Of Support

Foundations will want to know how popular the group's vision is. If there is little support for the skatepark, a foundation will naturally be reluctant to support it. On the other hand, if the grant application expresses incredible support for the project in quantifiable terms, the foundation may grade this result favorably.

Budget Overview

Most foundations will want to know how much of the target they are potentially contributing. Expenses, in particular, will interest the foundation as they want to ensure that their contribution is not going to some unexpected or unapproved recipient. For example, if a foundation awards a grant that ultimately goes to maintenance of a park elsewhere due to some fund-management gymnastics, the



When funding for tile around the bowl wasn't included in the original park budget, advocates in Colorado sought outside donations to bridge the gap between their original vision for the skatepark and budgetary circumstances.

foundation would probably frown upon this type of activity. Budgets must be clear and include both the short- and long-term costs of the skatepark.

Evaluation Of Park's Success

Grants generally require regular reporting of how the funds are being used, and how the recipient will measure the success of the project. Grant applications often require that a methodology for measuring success be established, then followed if the grant is awarded.

Summary Of Research

This response probably won't be delivered in a specific question, but it should permeate all of the application answers. Whenever possible, estimates should be supported with whatever evidence can be presented. For the local skateboarding population, cite the research studies from the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) and U.S. Census. For cost estimates, cite local research, such as, "Comparable facilities nearby cost approximately \$50 per square foot." Anything that could possibly be perceived as conjecture will probably be perceived as conjecture. Unsubstantiated claims may undermine the entire grant application.

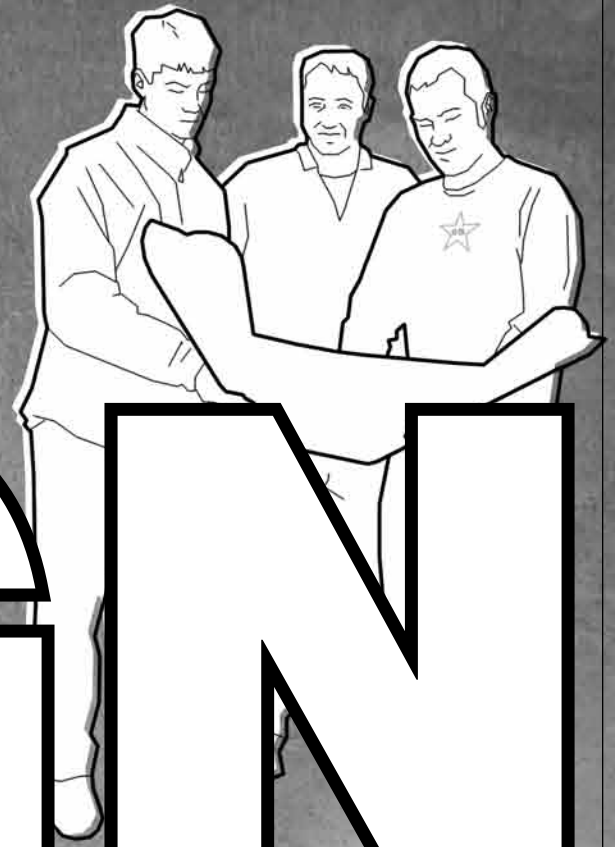
Review, Review, Review

Carefully proofread the application for errors and misleading or confusing passages. It's very helpful to have several other people, especially those with some writing experience, also review the application. Finally, review the application instructions and all related materials to ensure that all of the requirements are met. A grant can easily be denied due to one missing document or incomplete section.

Over the course of the fundraising effort, the advocacy group may apply for many grants for different aspects of the effort. The up-side is that much of the research you perform for one grant application will help you complete others.



DESIGN



This chapter presents a vast area of concern and is easily the most important area of this book.

Skatepark design is a vague term that for most people will conjure ideas about the shapes and curves in a skating area. While that is certainly an aspect of skatepark design, it is by no means close to the design concerns that will face the person with a vested interest in the skatepark. This chapter is presented in two sections. The first, Siting, reveals how to best locate the skatepark in a community. The second, Design, covers the physical principles that make skateparks successful.

SECTION ONE: SITING

The location of a skatepark has as much impact on its health as with any other recreational facility. As with all parks, the design must be sensitive to its location and place within the community. Skateparks are unique in that they attract a young group of users and, as a result, have special needs put upon them that may not exist for many other recreational or athletic facilities.

That is not to say that skateparks must be used exclusively by skaters. For many people they are fun to be in or around whether you're skating or not. The structures are curious to the eye and fun to climb around. Street-style structures provide interesting climbing blocks and ramps while the labyrinthine canyons and slides of the transition areas attract curious adults and active children alike. However, it's important to not think of skateparks as playgrounds. When they are designed well, they comply with a long and complicated list of requirements for safety, access, visibility, quality, aesthetic design, and traffic control.

Many communities feel that skateparks are exclusive facilities only appealing to a small number of local teenagers. This flawed thinking presumes that no sane adult would want to enjoy a skatepark and that younger children should not be interacting with teenagers. It also leads to the erroneous conclusion that the skatepark should be located "somewhere" that the teenagers can do what they want without impacting the well-being of anyone else. That "somewhere" is usually in an industrial area or on the outskirts of town.

It is less common today to see skateboarders exiled to the edge of the community than it was five or six years ago. Sadly, it's still too common to witness wise and well-meaning professional planners establish criteria for placing new skateparks somewhere where it's least likely to offend rather than where it's most likely to succeed.

The nation's best skateparks are designed for success and are situated *within* the neighborhood confidently. They welcome broader community interaction and allow different visitors to interact with the skaters and other park visitors without feeling threatened or as if they are invading someone else's private recreational space. The healthiest skateparks are designed for skaters, and are the skaters' place, but still behave like public space. People may come and go freely. They might watch comfortably from a bench, ledge or rock ... or maybe even a raised dais ... without being "in the way." When skateparks are situated within the community, skateboarders become a part of the community.

Most cities, and even some towns, struggle to contain uncontrolled skateboarding in the downtown area. Modern urban architecture has had enormous influence on today's skateboarding style. Skateparks can help draw unwanted street skating away from downtown areas if that skatepark is also accessible. There is little sense in curbing downtown skateboarding by building a skatepark in the suburbs.

In this chapter you will choose locations and compare them using identical criteria.

Site Criteria

Skateparks can be as diverse in design and purpose as any other kind of park. Some are designed to attract and sustain lots of users and constant use while others are small and tailored to only support a few users at once for limited periods of time. Your best skatepark or skate-spot locations will always have some things in common. The common qualities that make all skateparks work best are the same qualities that urban planners (and theorists) use to describe vibrant public spaces.



1
Visibility

There are four key characteristics of the best skatepark sites:

1. Visibility

Visibility ensures that people are visually aware of the skateboarders. All skateparks enjoy a large degree of spectator activity, but not when they're tucked away in the "least controversial" areas of town. Hiding the skatepark gives the facility to those who wish to engage in hidden activities.

2. Comfort

At a minimum, site amenities should meet basic human needs, such as water and restrooms. Most skateparks provide ample seating and accessible areas to drop a backpack or set a drink. More and more skateparks provide cover and lights.

3. Access

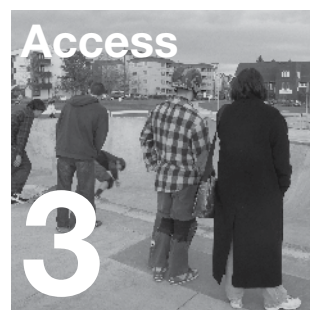
Skaters and non-skaters will both need reasonable access to the skateboarding areas. Designating areas for different types of public users will suggest that the skaters present a dangerous group of park users or that the area itself carries some inherent risk.

4. Activity

More skateboarding areas are seeing the benefit of breaking down the barriers between "public" space and "skateboarding" space. Simple skateboarding structures can even be used by pedestrian park visitors in conjunction with skateboarders. It should be assumed that all park visitors are capable of sharing the space in a polite, responsible way.



2
Comfort



3
Access



4
Activity

Any potential skatepark site will need to be assessed using a consistent set of criteria even though those measures may be somewhat subjective.

Access

If the intended users, skateboarders, cannot get to the skatepark then it is unlikely that they will use it. Distance is certainly a major factor, but proximity to public transit and arterials should also be considered. An accessible site will allow the users to reach and navigate the area freely. Many skateboarders will reach the facility on foot, or skating, which present some special needs. Skateparks next to busy arterials, for example, may appear very accessible in a vehicular sense until you consider dozens of kids skating to the park after school ... suddenly it seems a bit daunting. Access should be comfortable and inviting, not constrained, delicate, or dangerous.

Regional skateparks, or those intended to attract users from a large area, should be placed where traffic patterns won't be disturbed. Although most skatepark visitors will be from the immediate area and rely upon either their boards or public transportation, a significant portion will drive to the facility from nearby areas on a regular basis.

The regional skatepark site should be close enough to those services required by any athlete, such as a store for refreshments or nourishment, public transit, and residential areas where the skaters may live.

Access can be measured foremost through pedestrian activity and traffic data. These statistics may be available through local public agencies or collected independently.

Visibility And Sociability

It's tempting to rely upon social stigmas and stereotypes when considering why skateparks need to be visible. While it may be true that any facility that intends to attract teenagers should be visible, it's not so those teenagers can't get away with bad behavior. Instead, skateparks must be visible because skateboarders are our youth. They should be treated with the same pride and respect that we, as a society, offer our Little League stars and basketball champs. While there are bad kids who skate, there are many more great kids who ride skateboards. Placing a skatepark where the community can see it essentially says that the skatepark and its users are important to the community.

Visibility also helps area visitors to understand the activity. A non-skating visitor probably does not want to round a corner and suddenly be confronted with a skatepark any more than a skateboarder wants to round a corner and encounter someone walking a big dog on a long leash. Visibility helps all of the visitors read the environment and increase their comfort.

The social qualities of a prospective site can be measured by the number of different kinds of uses the site currently supports, the presence of elderly people or young children, and healthy evening activity.

Comfort

Skateboarders are human and have human needs. While exercising, skaters periodically need to rest. Regardless of the climate, water is essential for healthy athletic activity. It's unrealistic to expect that all the park users will bring refreshments to the park with them. A prospective site that has easy access to potable water is good. This will rarely be an issue in urban parks, but in county or state parks, installing water fountains might be a prohibitively expensive component. Not having a water fountain will create more trash at the site and extra trash cans will be required.

The skatepark environment should be attractive and attract other non-skating users to the vicinity. Skate spots near popular walking paths are great for all users as the skaters are invited to recreate with the rest of the community while walkers can see skateboarders perform the tricks they've been practicing.

Comfort is difficult to quantify but may be measured using indicative factors such as reports of criminal activity (and the area's "reputation"), environmental data, and sanitary facilities.

Other Activities

Almost all skatepark aficionados have visited the "lonely skatepark" that is situated off in some remote corner of a park. Nothing else happens near it and people rarely walk by and never stop to watch. This environment is desolate when weather doesn't allow skateboarding. This park does not provide any social interaction to its user except from the peers at the park itself.

Skateparks can and should be a vital component to the larger community gathering space just as skaters are a vital component of our larger community. While skateboarders are eager to celebrate the products of months or years of dedication, other park user groups can demonstrate their own expertise. With enough groups sharing a space, the area itself takes on an identity based on diversity and acceptance—a trait that no urban planner would deny is beneficial.

An area's activity will be in direct relation to the value that the surrounding community places on the site. These values

are evident in the property or rent values, nearby business ownership, and retail activity.

Appraising Prospective Sites

Establishing a reasonable site selection process is the only way to ensure that the prospective site is the most appropriate place for a skatepark. Advocates, many of whom spend years promoting a single facility, become mired in bureaucratic roadblocks when their selection criterion is challenged. It's imperative that the criteria be established early on, properly vetted through bureaucratic channels, and publicized widely to the public. Without any of these steps, the site can easily be challenged under the common claim that due process was not followed.

When skateparks are situated within the community, skateboarders become a part of the community.

Similarly, every action taken to identify both the criteria and the sites themselves should be carefully recorded so that should an audit of that process be required, either as mandated by protocol or to avoid a controversial public debacle, all facts and figures can be easily supported.

Naturally, both the criteria and the site selections themselves should be made as public as possible. (The more outreach one does during this stage, the more defensible the site becomes later if resistance is encountered.)

Scoring each potential site will question specific qualities about the site along the principles outlined above. For most skatepark sites the surveyor will observe the site and consider its traits in the following ways:

1. Does the site allow for separation from vehicular traffic, providing access for emergency situations and routine maintenance?

2. Does the site provide unobstructed visibility by the non-skating public?

3. Will the site attract active use?

4. Can the site be modified to positively mitigate any community concerns such as noise and continual activity?

5. Is the site close to public transportation?

6. Is the site available for construction?

7. Will the site favor redevelopment or additional development?



Subtle flaws in construction can easily result in an unpopular or even dangerous skatepark. The skatepark construction bid should never be offered lightly.

Can A General Contractor Build The Skatepark?

While it is not recommended to rely upon a general contractor to build on the exacting standards of a skatepark design, in some small cases it can provide a substantial cost savings.

Many skatepark designers fully expect to build their own designs. In some cases this is due to their significant contribution to the crafting of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) document, which asks contractors to present their credentials before being allowed to bid on the skatepark construction. When the designer specifies particular requirements of a construction company, they can “steer” that job to those firms they feel will be able to construct the special structures to perfection. That construction company might even be themselves.

When that occurs, some skatepark designers fail to create full skatepark construction plans (or schematics) due to their confidence that they will be awarded the construction bid. This saves the designer money that can ultimately be used to enhance the final construction in some way... perhaps by including additional features or implementing exotic materials where none were previously specified.

General contractors will be a reasonable solution for those simple structures that require no awareness of skateboarding. However, even the humblest of structures require plans that define exactly what is to be built, using what materials,

continued on page 66

8. Is the site adjacent to compatible uses and activities?
9. Can the facility be expanded later?
10. Does the site maintain adequate environmental buffers?

Sites being considered for larger skateparks may require additional criteria:

11. Does the site have access to essential amenities, such as a restroom and drinking fountain?
12. Does the site have available parking?
13. Does the site have available infrastructure for lighting?
14. Can the site support a large number of spectators?

The results of these studies should be carefully documented. The results may be recalled as needed during public meetings regarding those sites that scored favorably.

There is no perfect way of finding the right place for your skatepark or skate spot. Sometimes an imperfect site will be pursued due to lots of community support although it fails on certain important qualities. However, advocates who remain steadfast in their principles will ultimately be rewarded with the healthiest skatepark communities.

SECTION 2: SKATEPARK DESIGN Guidelines For The Rest Of Us

Skatepark design is as esoteric and specialized as it sounds. What does the skatepark designer actually design? What don't they design? How do they see skateparks differently than everyone else? How do skatepark advocates and the cities they are partnered with know who is reputable? What can go wrong?

Skatepark design opens up a whole new realm of possibilities. The groups invested in the skatepark begin to leave the comfort of systems and processes and enter the domain of artistic creation. In many ways the community is depending on the skatepark designer to deliver on the promise that skatepark proponents have been promising for years. Now is no time for mistakes.

The local advocacy group by now should be properly formed into a steering committee of some sort with members representing each stakeholder entity: Skaters, City and/or Parks, and ordinary citizens. This steering committee will be instrumental in conveying their vision to the skatepark designer.

Design is, in itself, a bit of a mystery. When a designer sits down with a task he or she knows what tools and materials are available. What they don't know is the problem; that's where the skatepark committee comes in. At a series of meetings the designer delivers a skatepark design, each review cycle producing a result that is closer and closer to meeting all of the requirements set forth by the steering committee. Different designers will bring different skills and experience to the task as well, so choosing the right designer for the type of problem your community has is critical to a successful and sustainable facility.

The first challenge posed to the skatepark designer is that the community needs a skatepark. That's the broadest and simplest of problems. If this were the extent of the problem the community would be pleased to see the designer's product: A 70,000 square foot skatepark with copious terrain of every imaginable shape and scale and lights, an enormous retractable roof, and so forth. For all but the most dedicated and wealthy municipalities, a solution like this is simply out of reach.

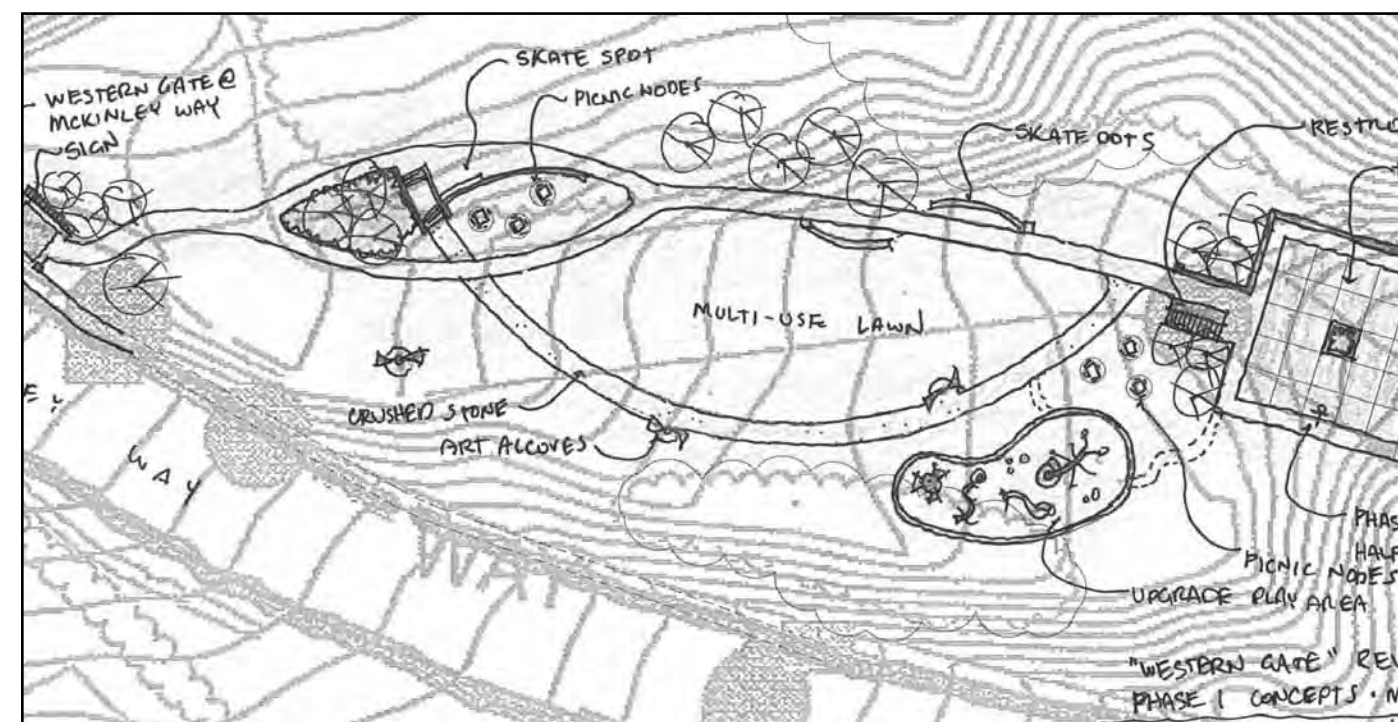
The designer must work toward the solution—a new skatepark—with particular constraints. The constraints are defined by the steering committee and will certainly be influenced by available funds. Money is the most powerful limitation. Land, services, materials and equipment all cost money and *no money means no skatepark*. The steering committee then needs to convey even a smaller degree of need; how should that money be distributed? Is one central skatepark preferred over several smaller ones? Should the skatepark utilize premium materials at the expense of size or number of obstacles? These considerations should be conveyed through whatever documentation might have been drafted by the advocacy group or the steering committee regarding their vision for the skatepark.

One predicament that often occurs at this critical juncture is a general sense of fatigue and impatience. The funds have

been acquired, the site (or sites) has been reserved, and those advocates who started off several years ago gathering signatures at the local skate shop are now seasoned navigators at City Hall. There will be temptations at this stage that exploit ignorance and capitalize on impatience. Salespeople will emerge, long watching the community's progress from the news feeds, ready to offer inexpensive solutions and/or grand promises. These peddlers may be playground salespeople, landscape architects, or even dedicated skatepark designers. Only you know what's right for your community, and many communities make miscalculations at this critical stage and end up with skateparks that do not serve any group within the community. This tragedy is frequent and it's up to those stakeholders to ensure that they're protected from the allure of quick fixes and latchkey solutions by being educated and fully aware of their options.

The Design Process In A Nutshell

The process of designing a skatepark is a tiny reflection of the larger effort. Within the design stage, the skatepark starts as a **vision** held by the advocacy group and shared with the other stakeholders. That vision, through the expertise of the skatepark designer, becomes a **concept** rendering. The concept will include all major elements and their approximate locations. The inclusion of these major elements should be firm by now but the details—size, placement, materials, and style—are not defined. Concepts are discussed and applied to the signature concepts of



Skateparks are often included in larger park developments. The park's master plan guides the improvements over time. The goal of many skatepark advocates is to see a skatepark footprint in a park's master plan.

Can A General Contractor Build The Skatepark?
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and what tolerances or deviations are permissible and what are not. The inclusion of minutia such as expansion seams may seem excessive to a company accustomed to building sidewalks, but a poorly positioned seam in or near a skate structure can immediately become a dangerous nuisance.

When a general contractor is awarded the job of constructing the skatepark, the schematics must be detailed enough to be enforceable. In most cases a contractor will not build to a higher standard than that which is specified. If a particular grade of smoothness is not specified, the general contractor will often produce lumps in the finished concrete. There is very little that anyone can do about this as there was never any contractual obligation to not have lumpy concrete. Every skateboarding community in the nation has a story or two about a skatepark project that became a disaster due to an unenforceable or vague design.

Even if your designer intends to build your park, if the job will go to public bid, be sure the Request For Proposal (RFP), which follows the RFQ and asks qualified contractors to actually bid on the project, describes exactly what you expect of the winning contractor.

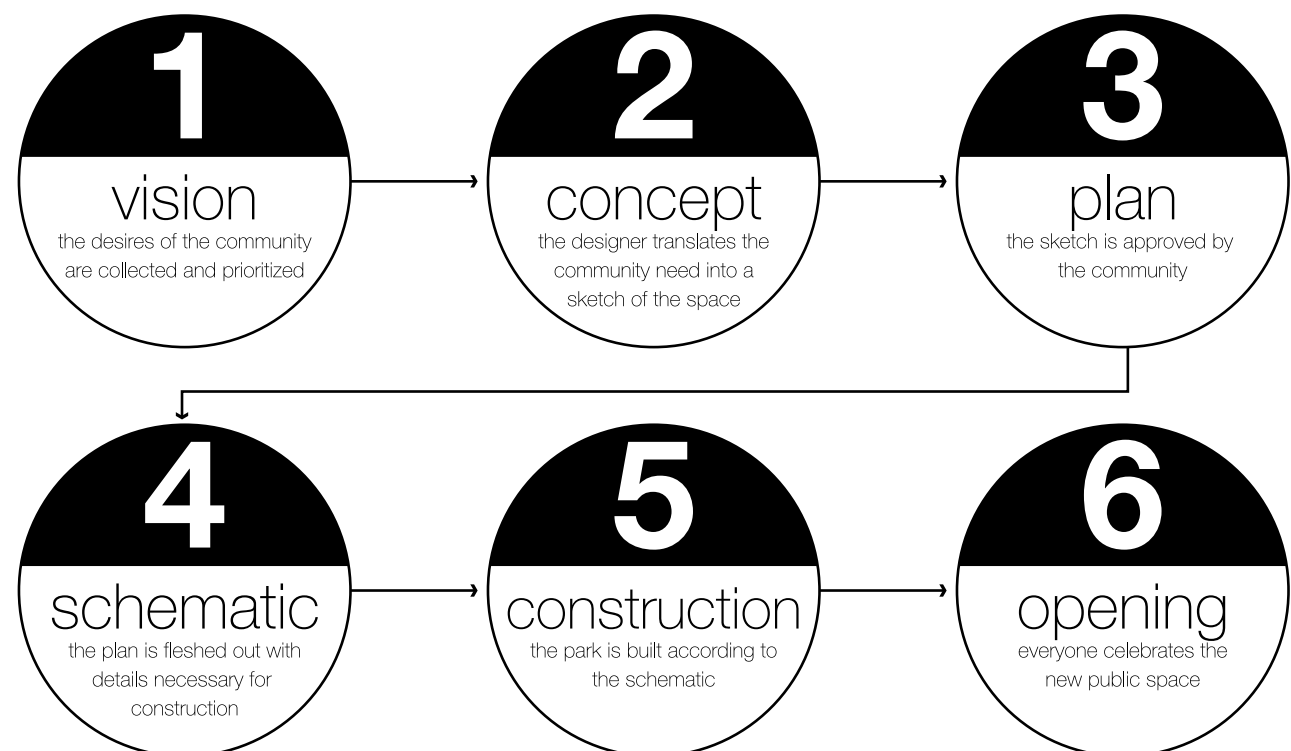
the vision. Eventually the concept becomes a **plan**. Plans will convey greater detail about the space and should include approximate measurements and elevations. Once the plan is fully approved, engineers and architects can get to work assembling the technical information required to actually build the structures according to the plan. At this point a functional budget can be assigned to the various parts of the facility. This final collection of documents is often called the **schematic**. The design may go through several revisions and, once approved by the steering committee, becomes a schematic design. The schematic design is the last stop before **construction**. It contains all of the technical information necessary to build the skatepark.

Who Are Skatepark Designers?

Skatepark designers are everywhere. Urban architects who design outdoor spaces for the public can inadvertently create very compelling structures that skateboarders will flock to. Skateboarders doodling out different types of obstacles on notepaper can strike upon a concept that has never been built. An ordinary ramp modified by an enterprising carpenter turns a ho-hum element into a unique structure that attracts users from all over the region. Design is fun and very democratic, as it requires nothing but imagination.

Some of the worst skateparks in the nation were produced using the above methods. Enthusiastic local skaters consider themselves skatepark designers because of their extensive travels to exotic skateparks around the world. Landscape architects well versed in human behavior and sustainable space treat the skatepark as any other pedestrian space. An engineer employed by a construction company considers skateparks a specialized skill that his or her firm possesses due to the exacting concrete finishing work. Alone, any of these types of groups will certainly have very little hope of creating the best

The skatepark-design process can be simplified into six steps:



skatepark for your community, but together they increase the odds a great deal.

The designer should possess the specialized skills in the above examples. The designer should be fully intimate with principles of skateboarding, the values of skateboarders, the best practices of landscape architecture, and solid construction expertise.

1. Skateboarding and skateboarder requirements

The designer must possess intimate understanding of skateboarding activity, skateboarder desires, and skateboarding culture. This knowledge will manifest in how the space is treated cosmetically and functionally.

The standards required by the skateboard are easy to discern. Small wheels require a very smooth surface to function as desired. The exact specifications for concrete skatepark surfaces are cited in Publication F2480-06 from the American Society For Testing and Materials (ASTM, www.astm.org), which sets construction guidelines for in-ground concrete skateparks. Undulations in the concrete or slight, unexpected deviations in the plane can create tripping hazards. Debris and moisture deter skateboarding like nothing else. Conditions that allow for skateboarding activity are not difficult to imagine.

Skateboarder desires are a bit more elusive. The facility must present compelling lines of travel throughout the area with complimentary obstacles positioned in a pattern that anticipates the user's speed and direction. The distance between or surrounding an obstacle will have tremendous impact on its functionality. While the lines of travel are being explored and defined, the user's safety is also considered so that the facility or specific area may or may not support simultaneous use. Similarly, an understanding of how the design will influence use will direct how many simultaneous users there may be.

In concert with the desires of the average skater are the desires of the exceptional skaters. The bell curve of skateboarding ability starts with the absolute beginner who may simply need a smooth, open area to push around in. At the other end is the very experienced skateboarder who can perform the most difficult tricks and may have the most demanding needs from his or her terrain. A sustainable skateboarding facility must engage skaters at every point on this range. Every experienced and worthwhile skatepark designer understands this implicitly.



Public park design meetings will usually gather responses from a diverse audience.

Finally, comfort with skateboarding culture (as it pertains to skateboarding activity) is valuable in that it will help shape what is too challenging and what is not challenging enough. Being comfortable with and around skaters will allow more meaningful dialog when it comes to site furnishings, for example. For many skaters, the skatepark becomes a home away from home or a "third place"—the go-to spot to meet friends, hang out, and recreate. For many users it's much more than a facility designed for skateboarding activity, but a place that reflects who and what they are as a group.

2. Landscape architecture requirements

A skatepark is narrowly defined as that area which skateboarders actively use. Skaters, however, inhabit the greater space and the surroundings will have a significant impact on how the skatepark and the area around it are used. Landscape architects can easily influence how the skatepark is accessed, secured, monitored, supported, and protected.

Provided that a reputable landscape architect is hired who has experience with public parks, there should be no particular problems in directing traffic and encouraging a diversity of uses in the area.

The landscape architect should be aware of the particular needs of skateboarders in order to ensure the facility's overall success. Shade is an athlete's friend and shade trees near the skatepark will be appreciated during the hot summer months. In the fall, however, those leafy trees will deposit endless

piles of leaves in the area which will blow into the park and accumulate in the bowls and corners, presenting at least a nuisance to the park users and, at worst, debris that can cause “tripping” and potential injury. As vegetative debris is generally a Parks Department responsibility, keeping leaves out of the skatepark could present some liability issues. Manufactured shade structures are preferred when they can be afforded.

Example:

Some overhead vegetation can drop pitch into the skating area and is undesirable for obvious reasons. Similarly, beauty bark, cosmetic gravels, and even trodden dirt paths can all spill into the skating area unless carefully managed and render entire portions of a skatepark unsafe. Rockeries and wide walkways surrounding the park are the best preventative to unwanted debris. Many skateparks use short retaining walls (12-inches or so) around the entire facility to keep debris out and provide ample seating and an additional obstacle to do tricks on.

Example:

Drainage in bowl-style structures is absolutely required for safety reasons. An experienced skatepark designer will provide drainage for the skating area as part of their plan. Drainage beyond the skating area should also be carefully managed so that water does not move into the skatepark as

it will bring debris and often remain as a rivulet of water in an otherwise dry park. Water should always be diverted away from the skatepark.

3. Construction requirements

The third component to the successful skatepark is flawless construction. Athletic facilities exist everywhere that were built according to an exacting specification. Tennis and basketball courts must be a particular flatness. Baseball diamonds must have their bases a specific distance apart. Soccer fields are never “half court.” Other than ASTM Publication F 2480, released in 2007, very few functional specifications exist for the construction of skateparks.

In the absence of reliable information, skateparks exist all over the United States that are dangerous, cannot be ridden, unused, broken beyond repair, or simply absurd interpretations of what skateboarding is all about. There are documented cases of skateparks with brushed finishes on the concrete to “provide grip” when, actually, they provide less traction (and much more abrasion during falls). Amateur skateparks feature irregularities in the curved surfaces, commonly referred to as kinks, which are generally difficult to see but all too obvious when ridden into at high speeds. Lack of actionable construction guidelines has led to a plague of awful skateparks all over the nation. Each one presents a



Landscape architects often unwittingly create wonderful skateparks. However, this does not make them experts in the form or function of these athletic facilities; it merely makes them coincidental accomplices.

What About Ramps?

Pre-designed structures are not fully explored in this chapter. Experienced skatepark advocates and those communities who have previously invested in skatepark kits, ramp plans, or prefabricated structures have not technically “designed” a skatepark. Rather, they are supplying to their skateboarders a selection of obstacles and not necessarily a vibrant gathering place for the whole community to enjoy.

Prefabricated ramps and kits presume that all skateboarding communities are alike and have identical needs. While some custom configurations can be accommodated, the ramps and structures typically do not drastically change from park to park. One has the option of juxtaposing the same elements in different ways, but not changing the elements themselves.

Prefabricated structures—or any structure that relies upon a design template—may be suitable for those communities who lack a site to build their permanent skatepark.

Custom structures in concrete allow for a far greater degree of craftsmanship and skill that will deliver a stronger solution to your skateboarding challenges.

hazard for its users—desperate for a place to ride—or is empty while the area skaters recreate elsewhere or in the streets. A flawed skatepark is a disservice to the whole community.

Rather than trust their designs to a general contractor, many skatepark designers also build the facility. This approach treats the skatepark more as a work of art requiring a specialized skill instead of a public facility. Aside from a few rare cases, most of the world’s most captivating skateparks are the result of the facility being designed and built by the same company.

For these reasons the world’s most respected skatepark designers are skaters with substantial public works backgrounds and construction skills. Skateboarding has been around long enough now that kids who started skating in the 1970s are professionally experienced enough today to deliver world-class facilities at an affordable price. Many skatepark advocates compare successfully designed skateparks to famous golf courses.

Every golf course includes fairways, greens, sand traps, and other universal features, yet each is different in some way, offering challenges that bring a golfer back again and again. Famous golf courses, the ones that experienced golfers love to play on, are designed by pro golfers—designers who understand the use of the facility.

Skatepark design works in much the same way.

Skatepark Design Influences

Many factors come into play when designing a skatepark. Voices from across the community will need to be heard by the steering committee. Some will be loud and taken seriously while others may be humble suggestions that could be considered at leisure.

Many steering committees will struggle to identify who the experts are within their community. People may step forward and claim, for example, that skateparks are loud and must be positioned in accordance with some environmental regulation ... but is this person an expert on skatepark noise? The steering committee will need to spend time internally discussing what information they will seek from whom. Identifying the most reliable source of information will be a significant deterrent to having the skatepark vision compromised by persnickety neighbors or lawsuit-fearing city attorneys.

Some vocal opponents can sidetrack a skatepark project and cost the effort valuable time and money. Unexpected events like these may even delay a skatepark indefinitely. Therefore it is valuable to anticipate the most common reasons that skatepark designs do not live up to their expectations.

Neighborhood Resistance

If one were required to find a neighborhood that wanted a skatepark before it could be built, it often seems they would all be in industrial areas with no residential occupants. In reality, most neighborhoods that have a place for their skateboarding youth to enjoy themselves come to value the energy and activity that the skatepark attracts. Nonetheless, it is common to have neighbors who

have little or no previous contact with skateboarders or skateparks develop very hostile reactions to the proposed facility.

The most effective argument that these skatepark opponents rely upon is the accusation that the Parks Department did not follow due process for selecting a site and/or notifying the public. The neighbors want to know that many, if not all, other available sites were considered, what criteria was used, and how “their” park measured up to the others. Serious advocates will have carefully

Most skatepark designers exhibit a strength in one particular style of skatepark over another.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Design-Build

Traditional park elements are created first by a design firm that creates the plans for the structure then subcontracts an appropriate construction firm to build it. The design is put out for bid, then the winning design firm puts the construction of the project out for bid. This traditional model may be called “design-bid construction.”

Design-build is a bit different. Hiring a design-build firm means contracting a single entity to conduct both the design and construction responsibilities for a particular project.

There are benefits to both methods.

The benefit of design-build is that the designer has the most amount of control over the construction and can ensure that what is sold is delivered. Design-build often favors innovation in that there is no seam between the two facets of creation.

The benefit of traditional design-bid construction is that the process is more aligned with bureaucratic systems and, as a result, cities are sometimes reluctant to work outside of the “tried and true.”

documented the selection process and made those results as public as possible. The fact is that most people do not pay much attention to the parks in their area unless something is about to change. It is important that they understand that change is being considered before a designer is committed to that site.

Local Skateboarding Community

Local skaters will have a big influence on the skatepark design by attending design workshops and developing a personal stake in the facility that will ultimately lead to better stewardship principles. The local skaters may indicate particular preferences for styles of terrain or even specific obstacles.

Experienced skatepark designers know what the standard “building blocks” of a skatepark are and use these in various combinations to create a compelling space. However, the designer may also wish to propose one or two signature elements that exist nowhere else. This might be in the form of a particular juxtaposition of elements or a single unique obstacle.

Local skaters must not be led to believe that they should design the skating area. There is no shortage of skateparks created by ambitious amateurs that remain empty throughout skating season. Instead, like the neighbors, they should have influence and a voice in the process but should not fill a leadership role.

Skatepark Experts

Every day there are more and more resources available that deliver expertise in skatepark design. Many of these Web sites and publications are wonderful sources of information and some maybe less so. When one encounters conflicting information it is difficult to tell what is more reliable. Skatepark critiques and those Web sites that rely upon some rating system for particular facilities or even designers may or may not be unbiased and fair with their criteria. Skatepark review and critique is a popular activity in the online skateboarding community, so identifying the most thorough and precise assessment of particular styles, forms, arrangements, and designers may be difficult to research.

Judicious steering committees are advised to be highly selective in their sources of information. Corroborating those opinions with others can also help build a case for a particular component or aspect of the skatepark design. It is extremely valuable to have the steering committee do extensive research when considering aspects of design. Identifying popular skateparks and contacting their administrators is perhaps the most direct way to identify top designers and builders.

Skatepark Designers

The skatepark designers are the experts you’ve hired to do the job. If you have the right designer for your project, they should be able to explain any portion of the skatepark design in ways that address the needs of your community and its skateboarders.

The best designers collect ideas and requests for particular features from the local skaters—whom the park will serve—and create designs that incorporate those ideas in a sensible layout that takes into consideration the skatepark size, budget, site, flow, and all the other criteria top designers rely on. But even the best skatepark designers are not without their flaws. Most have reputations, earned or not, for exhibiting strengths for one particular style of park over another. (Construction companies also develop reputations along the same lines.)

Care must be taken by the steering committee that the park adheres to the design that was approved. In some cases the community-based designs are modified so drastically as to not meet the public need. This can happen to some degree when skatepark designers that also serve as builders are hired to build the skatepark in accordance to the community design ... a design that they may or may not have been involved with. This unfortunate event is becoming less common as the skatepark design and construction industry grows and matures.

Public Agencies

Various agencies are each entrusted with some aspect of public health. Each of these entities may have particular needs or concerns for how the skatepark is designed.

Emergency responders may be concerned that particular structures are accessible by medical technicians. Deep bowls with no easy access can sometimes be identified as potential and unnecessary hazards to those tasked with delivering first aid to immobile victims.

Police will want clear visibility into the skatepark, especially covered sections, to prevent vagrancy or mischievous activity.

The Parks Department will certainly be pleased with a facility that requires little maintenance, water, or upkeep.



The best skatepark design can go astray without critical oversight by experienced personnel during construction. A skatepark consultant should be involved throughout the process.

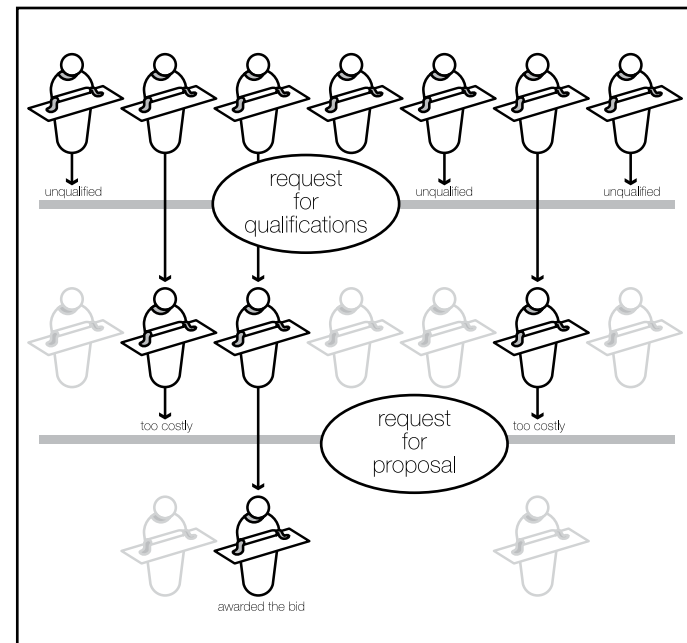
The City Attorney will want to influence design in a way that presents as little legal liability to the City as possible. Most City Attorneys would prefer that no skatepark be built at all. (Between 1996 and the time of this writing there have been less than 10 lawsuits against cities for skateboarding-related injuries incurred within skateparks in the U.S.)⁴

Identifying The Right Designer

The importance of design will have a significant impact on the facility's longevity as a healthy, vibrant place. Finding the designer for delivering on that promise is no easy task. The most powerful process that a steering committee has is the Request For Qualifications, or RFQ. This is a common process for all agencies and companies that rely upon any internal auditing. The RFQ essentially asks many different vendors—in this case designers—to submit a list of their accomplishments and experience designing similar projects to your intended skatepark.

Those that meet the threshold for quality and expertise are retained for consideration. Those that do not meet the standards are considered unqualified for the particular job and are removed from further consideration.

This process allows for a technical assessment of the firms competing for your business and prevents eager—but unqualified—vendors from using your hard-earned time and money to try to turn your vision into a reality. The crafting of and responses to the RFQ is one of the very last stages in the entire skatepark creation process and prevents something



Public projects all follow a precise formula to ensure that tax-payers' dollars are spent responsibly.

from going drastically wrong. The RFQ will narrow down the type of vendors you want to compete for your business and excludes those that have a record of not delivering successful skateparks.

When a vendor's qualifications are submitted back to the agency tasked with managing the RFQ process, usually the Parks Department, they will be compared to the criteria. Those that match or exceed the minimum requirements are allowed to continue and bid for the job while those that don't meet the minimum requirements are removed from the running. The design project goes to bid (by sending out a Request For Proposal, or RFP), and those designers who have been pre-qualified to bid on the project then are briefed on the scope of the proposal (the new skatepark) and each submit a fee for their involvement. Usually the lowest bidder is awarded the job. This company is your skatepark designer.

Deconstructing The RFQ

The qualities you intend to include or exclude from your skatepark project are largely up to you and the steering committee. Some skateparks are little more than a single obstacle in a paved public space and may not even need a "real" skatepark designer, while others may be elaborate skateboarding monuments that must address myriad needs. The complexity of the job will determine the specificity of the Request For Qualifications (RFQ) process.

The agency responsible for collecting the RFQ—probably the Parks Department—will publish a list of RFQs on their Web site or contact the firms directly. Many businesses that do frequent work for the Parks Department will usually have an RFQ on file with Parks.

The RFQ will query the potential contractor on a variety of qualities. To identify the best designer for your project, the RFQ might include the following:

- Design philosophy
- Special expertise of staff
- Unique capabilities on similar projects
- Demonstration of relevant experience
- Experience with public process and community participation
- Minimum number of previous and comparable projects
- Experience with progressive skatepark concepts
- Demonstrated coordination with various groups or associations
- Biography of the proposed design team members including sub-consultants

⁴ Skaters for Public Skateparks Study of Skatepark Litigation, 2006.

The Price is Wrong

Skatepark catalogs often feature predesigned—sometimes even prefabricated—structures that are delivered to the future skatepark site. The price of these skatepark solutions often warms the heart of the fiscal conservative. They see a fraction of the cost of a custom, concrete facility.

What many City and Parks leaders fail to consider is what anyone on the maintenance crew knows too well: the upkeep of a facility can quickly exceed the cost of acquisition. This is especially true for structures built using wood or composite materials. Regardless of where they are built, and often when they utilize the most ignorant of design principles, these parks are nevertheless used by skateboarders desperate for sanctioned areas to recreate. Skateparks are often a Park Department's most utilized facility. As a result, wood and composite skateparks are often "used to death," a victim of their own success.



Certain areas of the skatepark will receive different kinds of traffic. In this area boards often land sideways which has led to spalling and chipping of the surface material. This will likely be an expensive repair. This area should have been designed with more durable materials.



Screws can back out and may not even be visible until weight is applied to the area. Maintenance crews should be trained to look for specific issues before someone gets hurt.



Some less expensive skatepark materials will entice budget-conscious planners, but without careful planning the city will quickly spend much more than planned.



Bikes will introduce a different kind of ordinary wear and tear that maintenance departments will need to be prepared for.

- Role and percentage of work for each member of the design team
- Estimated schedule to complete the project to final design

The potential designer should have most of these items already collected into an RFQ packet, as the process is very similar regardless of the size of the public project. Only the last item may require some specific consideration.

The goal of the review body is to compare those submitted qualifications with the criteria established to identify the proper vendors. For example, if the new skatepark will likely feature lots of street-style terrain, the RFQ should focus on identifying those designers with demonstrated experience designing successful street-style skateparks. Incidentally, the same RFQ process applies to the construction of the skatepark and may be even more important. If the skatepark will likely

Power Of The RFP

Like the RFQ, the Request For Proposal (RFP) has a special role in the skatepark process that communities should be aware of. While the RFQ essentially identifies the qualities and experiences required by those firms bidding on the skatepark project, the RFP basically describes the project that those vendors will be bidding on in terms that reveal enough details about the project that allow for a very specific cost estimate.

The RFP is sent to those vendors who qualified to bid on the project under the RFQ process. It asks those vendors to create a cost estimate for the skatepark construction. In other words, it asks the vendor "how much would you charge to build this skatepark?"

Many RFPs describe the skatepark project in terms that do not adequately define allowable tolerances. When combined

to a landscape architect. The landscape architect then defines the footprint of the skating area, if it's a central skatepark, and subcontracts a skatepark designer for just that portion of the larger park development.

In most states there are laws and ordinances that require particular processes for awarding capital expenditures. These laws may require that the project be awarded to the lowest qualified bidder. When the landscape architect is awarded a project, they may or may not be required to adhere to the same constraints. So, while the landscape architect may need to be the lowest qualified bidder on the park development, they may subcontract the skatepark to any contractor they feel comfortable with.

This situation presents challenges to the skatepark advocate. The fate of the skatepark, in terms of design and construction,

to hold the skaters' attention after the first year. Many skaters will be unable to express their dissatisfaction and the larger community will struggle with the issue of street skating after the skatepark is built. Though the new skatepark will "look" like a success, for many skaters it will feel flawed.

This scenario can be avoided when the landscape architect relies upon an experienced skatepark designer to design the skate area. The designer must deliver enforceable specifications and if the construction goes out to bid, or is going to be awarded to a general contractor with some amount of skatepark experience, the landscape architect must do the following:

1. Understand the specs

The designer will deliver two bundles. The schematic design contains drawings showing all the parts of the skatepark and where each part goes. The specifications are the second

It is imperative that the RFQ be tailored to the vision

for the skatepark

have hanging concrete, the RFQ should focus on identifying those contractors capable of performing this specialized and challenging type of construction.

Advocates who lack a confident understanding of the RFQ and public bidding process should rely upon the steering committee and Parks Department for guidance. Remember: *It is imperative that the RFQ be tailored to the vision for the park and not to who necessarily has the best price tag or comfortable relationship with the city's bureaucracies.*

The RFQ process culminates with the qualified companies being invited to bid on the project. This has its own process and is controlled in many states or counties by specific regulations to manage and document budgets. The qualified companies are contacted with a Request For Proposal, or RFP. The RFP is a simple process that essentially asks those companies to bid on the project. For most projects the contract will be awarded to the lowest bidder. The RFQ narrows those who are permitted to bid upon a project and the RFP asks those who are left to compete with each other for that contract.

with an RFQ that does not remove unqualified vendors from bidding on the project, it is unlikely that the skatepark will be built to an acceptable standard. Imagine: years of advocacy, thousands of dollars, and the collective vision of the area skaters all culminate in a lumpy, dangerous skatepark that nobody really likes. It happens all the time.

The RFP becomes a contract of sorts between the City and the entity building the skatepark. In conjunction with exacting design specifications, the RFP will indicate to the bidding vendor that the skatepark must be built to particular standards and that any detected errors during construction will not be accepted. Those errors, should they occur, are expected to be replaced at the vendor's expense. Citing universal standards, like the ASTM Publication F 2480 guidelines for in-ground concrete skatepark construction, can help avoid misinterpretations of an RFP. The RFP travels with the design specs.

Larger Park Projects

Skateparks are often sited in new parks or those that are being refurbished rather than an existing park or unused space. When this happens, the larger park project is usually awarded

are now out of the public process and in the hands of a landscape architect who may not necessarily be sensitive to the skaters' needs. In the interest of saving money on the project they'd already bid on, they will understandably be attracted to the most inexpensive option available. This is how so many communities have ended up with a few ramps on an unused tennis court rather than the large custom-concrete skatepark they dreamed of and worked so hard for.

Landscape Architects

Landscape architects are often tasked with delivering some quantity of skateboarding terrain due to outcry from the community. Because public skatepark design is still in its infancy, most landscape architects simply don't understand what the skaters' needs are. This problem is compounded by the youth of the average skater whom many parks officials and landscape architects struggle to reach and extract relevant information from. While most skaters can describe what kind of obstacles they prefer to ride, few can actually design a successful skatepark much less express acceptable concrete tolerances. It should be little surprise that so many landscape-architect-led skateparks, which typically are subcontracted to a general contractor, result in mediocre facilities that fail

piece and contain all of the details about how those parts are constructed. Together, the park can be built to the designers' standards.

When the landscape architect does not understand the specifications, they won't "sniff out" errors as easily and many will go undetected until it's much too late to fix them.

2. Observe the critical areas

There is no flawless skatepark. They all have some portion that is not conforming to the specifications or can be considered an error. What makes those skateparks still great is that the errors are not in places that are critical to skaters' needs. When a patch of rough concrete occurs on the back of a vertical extension, it may not matter because the only way to use that portion is with tricks where smoothness is not a concern. (In fact, it may actually be better that it's a bit rough.) On the other side of the wall it could be of grave importance that the surface is smooth and flat as the skater is traveling at great speeds and very high off the ground. Inconsistent smoothness or flatness could present an unseen tripping hazard that would put many users at risk.



Most of the world's most popular skatepark designers are also skateboarders. This only stands to reason; the world's best golf courses were all designed by golfers.

The concerns are too complex and numerous to list completely, but most can be avoided with an awareness of how the skatepark is both “designed” to be used and how it “may” be used.

3. Enforce the standards

Specifications are often treated as guidelines rather than inflexible standards. When errors occur in concrete, the fixes quickly eat up the project's profits. Firms tasked with constructing skateparks will clearly be unhappy about fixing mistakes, especially if they're perceived as inconsequential to the skatepark's overall usability. As mentioned earlier, not every error or deviation from the spec results in an unskateable facility, but many do. It's the responsibility of the construction manager, the designer, and the landscape architects to negotiate what construction errors are unacceptable.

Dedicated skatepark advocates can play a role in this negotiation by identifying areas of particular concern. For example, the sidewalk linking the parking lot to the skating area can have a brush finish, but if the contractor accidentally misreads the spec or the design and brush-finishes a portion of the deck or flat area in a street course, there should be a quick meeting to discuss the acceptability of this oversight. It may or may not impact the function and safety of the park. If this meeting is held without the presence of someone experienced

in skatepark construction or usage, many of these errors will remain.

In street areas, formwork that results in wavy surfaces can present unacceptable challenges. In transition and curved surfaces, subtle inconsistencies (or “kinks”) in the curved surfaces can result in unrideable areas. These are common problems in skateparks built by inexperienced teams.

ACI Specifications

There are a number of qualities that every concrete skatepark should exhibit. The most important specifications are those that prevent the most common problems in skatepark construction: uneven finish work.

Kinks, bumps, washboard flat areas, or rough finish work can all result in a skatepark that is, at best, unattractive to skaters or, at worst, dangerous to ride. Most project specs involving concrete refer to standing specifications for particular aspects of the concrete elements instead of reiterating all of the basic instruction for how that concrete should be used. These “global” specifications are supplied by the American Concrete Institute (ACI) and are known to any construction company that specializes in concrete work. ACI specs contain instruction for different kinds of concrete structures and are referred to by section numbers.

There are many sections of ACI specs but some are of special interest to skatepark construction. The ACI section on concrete finishing, ACI 117, describes different degrees of concrete “roughness and flatness” that any concrete skatepark design specification should refer to. Without these specifications in the design, there is no instruction on how smooth or lumpy the skatepark surface should be.

ASTM Guidelines

The American Society For Testing And Materials (ASTM) has been developing separate sets of guidelines for in-ground concrete skateparks and wood or prefabricated above-ground skate-ramp products. ASTM Publication F 2480, guidelines for in-ground concrete skatepark construction, was published in 2007. Among other things, it cites specific ACI finishes for skatepark surfaces. Wooden and prefab skateparks are generally designed in advance and, as a result, the tolerances are already defined. However, since these skateparks are more of a “product” than a “structure,” a different kind of standard is usually enforced. As of this writing there is no published ASTM standards for prefabricated or built-in-place skateparks though one should be published and available by early 2009.

During Construction

Construction companies rather than design-builders are responsible for many concrete skateparks. It's not uncommon to have a construction company with little skatepark building experience creating forms that they have little sensitivity for. The construction crew may not be sensitive to the kinds of errors that often occur in skateparks. While it is not the advocate's responsibility to ensure that the design specifications are being met, it cannot hurt to have someone familiar with skatepark design and construction visit the site frequently during construction to inspect the work.

Inspections should focus on areas of continuous surface. It should come as no surprise that the areas where a skateboard travels are of utmost importance. Transitional curves should be smooth and consistent, flat areas should be free of waves or undulations. Coping should maintain a consistent reveal throughout the park. Seams should not occur at high-traffic



ASTM standards seek to establish acceptable tolerances in construction and maintenance and might help prevent problems like this from happening in the future.

areas and must be avoided where perpendicular to the direction of anticipated traffic.

All of these details should be outlined in the design specifications. However, if errors are not identified during construction they can be prohibitively expensive to repair later. It's best to catch them as early as possible so that they can be fixed. When a construction company is not staffed by skateboarders, its workers may be unaware of the importance of certain specifications and not realize how critical a particular area is for the success of the park.

Skatepark Typology

A typology is a related group of similar items arranged in a way to illustrate their differences and similarities. In the context of skateparks, typology describes the organization of skateparks by size, usage, capacity, and so on.

The styles and typology of skateparks can be as confusing to experienced skateboarders as park planners. The language itself is esoteric and fraught with lingo. Street sections, tranny, oververt, Pier 7 hubba, taco, China bank, tight pocket, and many other terms describe styles of terrain and the distinguishing structures within them. There is also an emerging typology of sizes: regional skatepark, neighborhood skatepark, skate spot, and skate dot.

There exists for today's skater a spectrum of terrain styles that starts in the public streets and ends in ditches and backyard pools. At one end of the spectrum there are bowls that seek to replicate—and even improve upon—the drained swimming pools from the periods when skateparks were not available. On the other end are those structures and obstacles that mimic popular shapes found in the urban wild: steps, railings, traffic barriers, loading docks, picnic tables, and so on. The two extremes are connected by hybrid designs that fuse the two disciplines into new, unique forms. It is not uncommon to see a classic swimming pool replica with a raised extension (“tombstone”) or a quarterpipe with a parking block attached to the top.

The range of sizes is equally diverse. At one end there are superparks that express 60,000+ square feet of skateboarding paradise. At the other, a single structure placed alongside a sidewalk. In between there are 14,000-square-foot neighborhood parks designed to attract skaters within a three-mile radius, 24,000-square-foot regional skateparks that can easily handle competitive events, skate paths that link obstacles and structures along a linear passage, and the microsite that contains little more than a few devices built up to support 5 or 6 skaters at once.

The broadest delineation in designated skateboarding terrain is whether the space is intended to be used solely by skateboarders (and related users like bikes and inline skates) or designed to attract and accommodate a diverse selection of public uses.

Those skateparks that serve as single-use recreational areas fall into categories broadly defined by their relative sizes.



Barcelona, Spain

Skate Dot And Skate Spot

A single structure designed for one skater at a time usually placed within a greater community space.



Tacoma, Washington

Microsite

These are the smallest of bonafide skateparks. Several structures placed within a centralized area generally smaller than 6,000 square feet. Designed to accommodate two or three simultaneous skaters or up to a dozen skaters total. Microsites do not seek to represent a broad diversity of terrain and tend to favor street-style replicas and shorter structures requiring little speed. Most microsites do not appear to be exclusively skateboarding areas.



Carbondale, Colorado

Small Neighborhood Skatepark

A skateboarding facility between 5–10,000 square feet that is generally centralized and designated as a skateboarding area. Neighborhood skateparks can accommodate up to 30 skateboarders total or about 6 simultaneous users. These types of skateparks often seek to offer a diversity of terrain types. Neighborhood skateparks usually require a full advocacy effort to be created.

The Liberated Spot

Over the past decade many public parks installed anti-skateboarding devices and displaced the skaters who used the park. Without activity, parks often become secluded places for people to engage in vagrancy or illegal activity. Progressive communities are now understanding the value that skateboarders can bring to their urban parks and doing what they can to attract this type of activity back into the parks. Several major American and Canadian cities have removed their anti-skateboarding devices and embraced the skaters as a vital component to a healthy public space.



Winnipeg, Canada

Regional Skatepark

The largest common skateparks feature a full diverse arrangement of terrain and are often as large as 40,000 square feet. There are several regional skateparks in North America larger than 60,000 square feet. Regional skateparks provide a full service to its users; parking, lights, concessions, seating, shade, and so on. Most regional skateparks are intended to attract competitive events. These skateparks can easily handle dozens of simultaneous users.

Skatepark design is still in its infancy and today's skateboarders are lucky to be witness to some bold new types of “skateparks” that are becoming more popular every day. Skateboarding is increasingly seen as an activity that exists well with other non-skateboarding activity. The second category of “skatepark” might be described as multi-use urban recreational areas. These types of skate areas are differentiated by their various goals of attracting this athletic activity.



Portland, Maine



Stoke-On-Trent, England



Vancouver, Canada



Winnipeg, Canada

Skate Paths

Skate spots, described earlier, are a great way to attract small amounts of activity to areas that can benefit from it. By linking several spots together—either within the space of a quarter-mile or a much farther distance—the dispersed skatepark can create a long string of activity with pedestrian traffic traveling between each of the spots. Some skate paths are dense and span only a few hundred feet with several obstacles arranged along their length while others may create a web-like array across an entire downtown area. This type of solution is very flexible and allows for easy modification to arrest certain undesirable results or to encourage improvement.

Street Plazas

Perhaps one of the most exciting developments in recent years is the skatepark design that does not immediately appear to be a skatepark at all but rather a large, urban public plaza. Upon closer inspection, visitors can see that the elements seem to be designed and placed in curious ways. The arrangement of ordinary benches, ledges, banks, and steps is by careful design to appeal specifically to skateboarders.

Sculpture Gardens

Skateboarding structures are often compared to interactive sculptures and public art due to the characteristic contours and intriguing forms. Skateparks and the communities behind them sometimes leverage this association to its full potential by designating the area a sculpture garden. One obvious advantage is that it potentially provides funding channels that might otherwise be unavailable had the facility been designated for recreational use.

In some contemporary cases skatepark designers have added unique and surprising forms to the skateboarding area that clearly provide some skateboarding potential yet do not replicate or have clear association to more traditional skatepark forms. One might see an enormous steel ribbon that creates undulating forms for skaters to travel across,

or a simple concrete hump positioned at the junction of intersecting paths. These sculptures are admired for their visual appeal and interacted with by skateboarders. For everyone the space exudes creative excitement and will attract visitors from all walks of life.



The grandpappy of DIY skateparks—Burnside in Portland, Oregon

D.I.Y.

Lastly, there is a type of skatepark that has no peer. The sanctioned do-it-yourself site (or DIY) has become a major contender in the maturing world of skateparks.

Cash-poor cities everywhere are challenged by what they know is a lack of skateboarding terrain for their community's youth but little funds to find a solution. Skateboarders, accustomed to finding the most direct solution to any given problem, have simply begun to build their own skateparks in areas that they perceive to be underutilized. While a majority of these ambitious efforts are removed by cautious city managers, a few of these projects cross the desks of those who can see a mutually beneficial solution. While the city essentially receives a "free" capital improvement, albeit with dubious value, the skaters likewise have a skatepark that they are fully invested in. With a few legal gymnastics, more and more cities are sanctioning these efforts and participating in a bold new kind of dialog with its skateboarding community.

All of the multi-use skateboarding areas, and even aspects borrowed from DIY, can be melded and fused into interesting combinations. For example, a community might envision a multi-use pedestrian path with skateable sculptures dotting its edges, or a liberated plaza with additional skate structures created in its confines to attract even more users. Cities everywhere are exploring these innovative approaches.

Finalizing Design

Skatepark design is a fascinating and emerging field of study. The discipline is populated by only a handful of companies, many routinely turning down lucrative projects for lack of skilled staff. Those communities lucky enough to secure the time and abilities of the world's best designers are well on their way to creating what precious few communities currently possess—a vital, sustainable skatepark that meets the needs of the entire community.



Kanis, Arkansas

Community-wide skatepark systems

Most elected officials and park planners who observe and understand the terrain needs of local skateboarders also understand that for most towns larger than 40,000 citizens, one skatepark is not going to be enough.

Exploring skatepark solutions at a community-wide scale requires a careful appreciation of several factors. Terrain types, sizes and scales, population density, district character, public transit and other aspects of urban life all can influence the design of citywide skatepark systems.

A skatepark system is essentially the array of skateboarding terrain available to a whole community or urban area. Skatepark systems can be designed for a downtown core or a whole metropolitan area. The principles and considerations are generally the same regardless of scale.

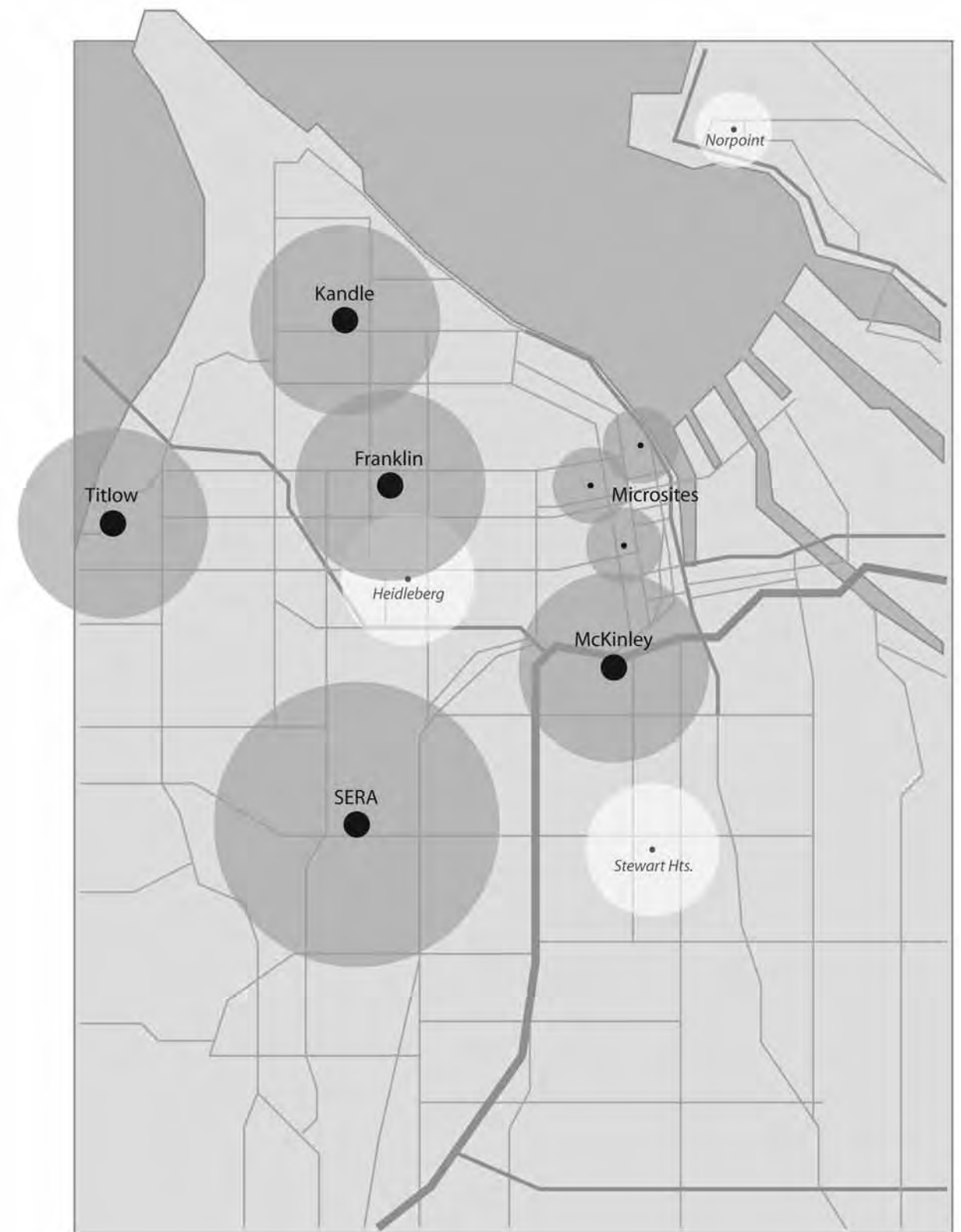
Your needs from a community-wide system can be determined much like your needs for an individual facility. Using the total population from an area you can easily determine the approximate number of skateboarders that require terrain. Subtract whatever sanctioned spaces are currently available and everything left is your unmet need. For most metropolitan areas this number will seem impossibly large.

Let's say, for example, the unmet need for your metropolitan area is 100,000 square feet. While you might consider a single facility this size to be a grand monument to skateboarding, the fact is that it will not meet the needs of the local skaters. Most skateboarders are too young to drive and many may be too young to take public transit from the suburbs into downtown alone, depending on the size of your metropolitan core. These skaters might only get to enjoy this massive facility once or twice a month. The rest of the time they will skate whatever compelling terrain is available in their area.

So let's break that 100,000 square feet up into smaller pieces and distribute it throughout the area. One good way to pattern the arrangement is by considering where the schools are located. For many city dwellers, the first place they consider when they want to enjoy an open space is the field or playground attached to a school. Skatepark distribution can be distributed much the same way.

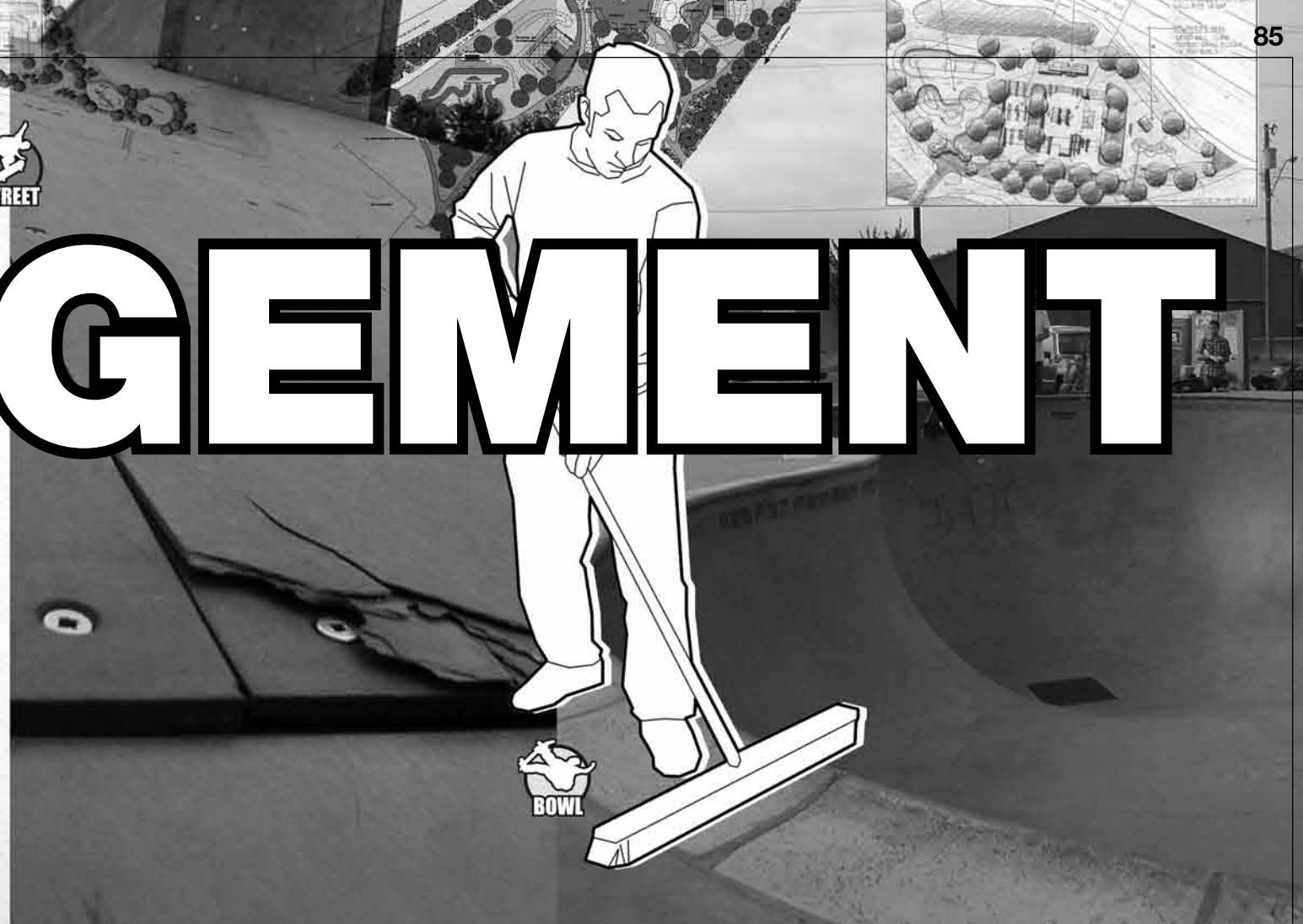
When a rough dispersion of the total terrain is allocated, those smaller portions may then be subdivided into even smaller groups of skateparks or spots, if needed. Larger systems may require a full accoutrement of skate options, from a regional skatepark all the way down to dozens of skate spots. Smaller municipalities may only need one or two neighborhood parks and a small number of supporting spots to fully meet the needs of its skateboarding community.

Unfortunately there is no perfect formula for designing systems on a large scale. For most communities, the system design falls upon the imagination and perseverance of the local advocacy group. As their influence and capabilities grow, so too will their capacity to deliver viable solutions for this larger need.



Advocates in Tacoma, Washington created a simple map to express how the different types and scales of skateparks worked together as a complete system. The largest circle (SERA) is a proposed regional skatepark, the medium-sized circles are neighborhood parks, and the small circles are skate spots. The white circles represent Tacoma's three existing skateparks.

MANAGEMENT



Like the skateparks themselves, every community has a different way of managing their facility. Some skateparks were built under strict guidance from the City Attorney, enforce pads and helmet use, and have hours of operation, security fences, and verbose signage to educate the users on park policy. Other skateparks are unsupervised, unfenced, self-regulated, and on virtual no-maintenance schedules. How does this dynamic spectrum impact the success of the skatepark? Are some practices better than others? In this chapter we will explore the different concerns faced by park management and provide insight into the factors that lead to problems as well as different methods of eliminating or mitigating those problems.

Maintenance and policy are the two issues that can most impact the health of an existing skatepark. It's always best to have a firm grasp on what the maintenance and policy expectations are before the park is designed so that significant concerns can be managed partially by park design. It's often difficult to fix an existing skatepark problem without the means to go back and adjust certain aspects of the park design.

This chapter is presented a bit differently than the others. Instead of approaching the topic as a whole, it's more logical to jump right in and deal with specific concerns. This chapter is divided into three major sections: General Considerations, Metal/Wood Structures, and Concrete. Within each of those sections are issues faced by many skatepark administrators.

Policy And Issues

Every skatepark has problems just like any other public facility. The trick is to anticipate the potential for undesirable results and plan for prevention. The following is a brief list of things that can happen and things that many people expect to happen at skateparks.

Too Many Skateboarders

Skateparks frequently suffer from overuse. This is especially true when there is only one for a community. Before you build the skatepark you will need to be aware of other skateboarding opportunities nearby. If there are other skateparks or skate spots, the new skatepark will receive a lot of traffic for the first year then settle into a typical base of users. Large and artfully designed parks will have

more skateboarding visitors than the community might suggest as visitors to the area will tend to stop and try out your facility.

New skateparks will also attract users who were previously inactive. Beginning skaters will see the skatepark as a great opportunity to try out the sport, while lapsed skaters uninterested in recreating in the streets may view the facility as a way to revisit the activity. With a well-designed and built skatepark, the local skateboarding population can easily balloon to unprecedented levels.

Too many skateboarders in a single facility may produce tension within that group as people jostle to get their turns. Young kids learning basic skills may make more experienced skaters wait—sometimes impatiently—for them to clear the area. Again, the best way to address this problem is to acknowledge and deal with the issue through the terrain design. An experienced skatepark designer will be able to control skateboarding traffic within the facility itself and mitigate the risk of collisions and disparate skill levels.

If the skatepark is finished and attracting too much unexpected traffic, there are few options. If the unexpected use is a result of the skatepark being the only sanctioned skateboarding area in the region, the number of park users probably won't diminish and the best option is to expand upon the facility or identify a second "support spot" in the vicinity. These expansions and/or smaller spots can become places for overflow visitors to skate without fighting the crowds. They can also be very useful to those visitors who wish to skate when events are happening in the skatepark.

Many skateparks attract very young users and their parents in the morning hours before the park becomes dense with users. Some communities, such as West Linn, Oregon, responded to this increasing usage by creating additional, smaller "skate dots" to disperse the activity over a broader area. Solutions like this benefit the main facility by drawing visitors to other destinations as well as offering compelling opportunities closer to home.

Expansions and skate spots don't need to be large, complex "satellites." They might be a simple pyramid, ledge, or concrete riser. These simple structures can provide countless options for skaters.



Serious consideration should be put to whether a fence surrounding the skatepark is really necessary.

Too Many (non-skateboarding) Visitors

Skateboard culture and fashion are cool. Skateboarding's always been just outside of the mainstream enough to be cutting-edge. Skateboarders themselves are daredevils—brave and confident. Together, these traits depict an alluring community for non-skaters to explore. As a result, skateparks can attract a number of kids who are there only to hang out with their friends or be around other kids their age, and not to skate. As more youth inhabit the area, especially with no adults present, the situation can sometimes go awry. Hooligans from the area might see that the skatepark is the place where “anything goes.”

As with the previous concern, the best way to mitigate undesirable visitors from hanging out at the skatepark and causing problems is through prevention via the skatepark design and site. Experienced skateboarders are often older, sometimes even middle-aged adults, and if the skatepark can attract this type of user, you will find that many of your juvenile visitors will be inclined to cause trouble elsewhere. Though older skaters don't ride any particular type of terrain, and there is no perfect formula for attracting this valuable type of user, the best skateparks in the world are beloved by skaters of all ages and experience levels. The designers and builders behind these successful parks are not hard to find.

Locating skateparks in plain view of the greater community produces many discouragements to deviant or unwanted behavior. As most metropolitan areas understand that healthy activities displace unwanted visitors, skateparks can also benefit a great deal from this simple principle. A skatepark will stand a much greater chance of being a healthy and positive environment if it's integrated with the general public instead of relegated to a place where it will be “out of sight, out of mind.”

Too Few Skateboarders

The only skateparks that sit empty all day are the really lousy ones. Empty skateparks are always a sign of poor design or poor construction. The absolute best way to find out why a skatepark isn't being used is to ask your local skateboarders. Most of the time they will indicate that the park is either not challenging or is faulty in some way.

Occasionally an older skatepark will be vacant if a new one opens nearby, but over time the usage will become redistributed across the two neighboring parks.

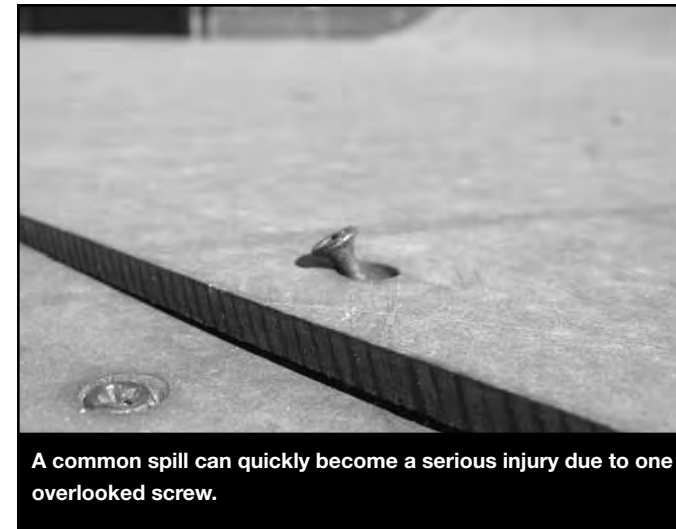
It is very uncommon for non-skaters to displace the skateboarding users. Skaters are notoriously resourceful and perseverant. If the skaters are afraid and feeling displaced from the facility, it is likely due to a larger criminal element that should be a major law enforcement concern.

There are no shortages of skateparks that are placed in the middle of fields, behind tall hedges, surrounded by slated fences, and completely obscured from casual view. Rather than expressing a positive, healthy, exciting place to be, these skateparks tell skaters and the other park visitors that the facility is quarantined and filled with people who require a significant amount of division or buffer. Rather than use this park, most skaters will either return to the streets where there are other people or find other facilities in nearby towns that accurately reflect how they feel about skateboarding. When a skatepark is treated like a detention facility, it will attract users who are accustomed to these environments.

Sometimes a simple issue of landscaping can have a negative impact on the number of users. When a skatepark can only be reached by crossing a moist field, or is surrounded by dirt and gravel, the skating surface can become riddled with debris or soggy footprints. Conscientious skaters may avoid this park



Only maintenance crews and those who didn't want one in the first place enjoy seeing an empty skatepark.



A common spill can quickly become a serious injury due to one overlooked screw.

due to such annoyances. Like tennis or basketball courts, at some point the environmental hassles outweigh the value of using the facility.

If there is a desire to encourage more activity in an otherwise successful park, consider adding amenities that will add to the comfort or usability of the space, such as a water fountain, power outlet, or landscaping.

Illicit Activity

Most skateboarders are teenagers, and for the last decade skateboarding has been an illegal activity in many cities. Skateboarding sometimes reflects an “outlaw” image that then can attract “outlaws” to skateboarding. Although skateboarding has never been more legitimate and mainstream than it is today, these rough edges are still present and are an inseparable part of skateboarding's identity. These stereotypes will continue to dog skateboarders until adequate, safe, and legal alternatives to skating in the street are readily available.

It's no secret that most skateboarders are juveniles. In fact, about 93% of skaters are younger than 24 years old. In those areas where skateboarding is very popular, up to a quarter of the area youth might be skaters. It should come as no surprise that skateboarders will sometimes reflect all of the same social ills that face teenagers from all walks of life. Some skateboarders, like many teenagers, have experimented with drugs. This is inevitable and unfortunate, especially when they choose to do so at the skatepark. As mentioned earlier, a great site and challenging design will displace those who wish to treat places where youth congregate as their personal playgrounds. It should be the goal of every community planning a skatepark to reach a critical mass that promotes healthy activity at the park, which will displace unwanted activity and attract positive uses, and so on.

Disruptive activity can sometimes be prevented or reduced by attracting older or more experienced skaters to the facility. Though this isn't always the case, as older skaters can sometimes be simply aged versions of the younger hooligan, mature, responsible desired users will be attracted to and take pride in a facility that is clean, visible, and manifests the best design and construction principles.

Passive supervision will have an enormous, positive impact on illicit activity. If the skatepark is already done, look for ways of attracting non-skateboarding traffic to the immediate vicinity. Invite other types of uses to the area to draw non-skating park visitors within a comfortable range of the skatepark.

There are many methods of preventing criminal activity through environmental design and most park planners are familiar with this principle. Displacing undesirable activity will make the skatepark and its surroundings more appealing to those who wish to use the park as intended.

Bad Behavior

Some park administrators feel that the new skatepark, “their” new skatepark, has not met its promise in terms of the type of people using it. Rather than nice, middle-class boys and girls recreating enthusiastically, all they see are surly teens smoking and cursing. This situation can sometimes be the result of, or at least partly due to, preconceptions.

Discourteous individuals are often reacting to what they perceive as an initial dismissive or uncivil encounter. Park administrators and homeowners near the skatepark can be perceived by younger skaters as authoritarian figures who should be challenged, especially when their friends are present. Those who work professionally with teens understand this behavior, but unsuspecting park managers or neighbors may be unprepared for the treatment. The offending skaters may feel justified in dishing out the verbal abuse, as the skatepark has undoubtedly become their place. The conflict stems largely from clashing philosophies—the skaters believe that the intruders want to exert their norms upon the behavioral rhythm of the skatepark when they may simply want the radio turned down.

The number of incidents can fan the flames of frustration. As tempers rise and those vested in the skatepark's health become impatient, resentment can build between the skaters and the non-skating individuals.

Policy is the first step in rectifying a particular behavior. One cannot enforce a rule that doesn't exist. It's valuable to have any new policy defined with skater input. Otherwise

the new rule will seem to magically appear one day and be treated with the same disregard as the initial complainer. Seek a solution with the skateboarders so that there is a clear understanding what is permissible and what is not. It will be valuable to define exactly what will happen if a particular number of the infractions continue. When an agreement is reached, modify signs or post flyers in the park indicating what the new policy is and when it will take effect.

Regular and frequent inspections are vital after instituting the new policy. If the infractions occur more than the number of warnings permitted, take action to demonstrate the decisiveness of the agreement. If neither side is willing to abide by the agreement, there is little sense in making one.

As many people know who work closely with youth, negative behavior can often be successfully addressed in non-authoritative ways. A polite exchange with one or more of the skaters, especially those that present any leadership or role-model qualities, can produce results more immediately and lasting than through confrontational approaches.

Helmets And Pads

Even states that do not require helmets or pads while skateboarding sometimes have skateparks that enforce such rules for personal protection. Of those parks that require protection, the vast majority require only that helmets be worn. Although this is generally justified as being for "their own good," the end result is that many of those skaters who either don't own or do not wish to wear protection simply don't use the park.

A skateboarder is many times more likely to be seriously injured while skateboarding outside of a skatepark. The *Journal Of Trauma-Injury Infection & Critical Care* reports, "The more serious [skateboarding] injuries resulting in hospitalization typically involve a crash with a motor vehicle." Those skaters displaced by helmet rules are essentially compounding their risk by returning to the streets. In an ironic twist, those administrators looking out for the welfare of the kids are often unwittingly putting them more at risk by creating an environment that the skater does not wish to visit.

Many experienced skateboarders are committed to personal protection, especially helmets. If the skatepark has not been designed, it may be valuable to include those types of skatepark attractions that draw a helmet-wearing crowd. Deep, challenging bowls and snake runs are high-speed structures that challenge even the most experienced skateboarders. Whether it's acceptable fashion or personal responsibility, this



Helmet policies should be determined before the park is opened and clearly communicated to the park users.

discipline of skating has a higher percentage of participants who will wear helmets and pads. By including these elements in the new skatepark, these types of users will visit the facility and demonstrate helmet usage as respected peers rather than the message coming from some "non-skating administrator."

Helmet and pad policies can increase the Parks Department's liability. While each state has its own policies regarding recreational space, helmet and/or pad policies can create a degree of administrative responsibility on behalf of the managing organization. If helmets and/or pads are to be required, these rules must be strictly enforced or else the policy will simply be ignored (helmet and pad usage is not widely popular among skateboarders for a variety of reasons, ranging from comfort and physical mobility to personal expense).

Bikes And Other User Groups

BMX bicyclists often find the curved forms of skateparks attractive places to hone their skills. Like skateboarders, younger bicyclists often have difficulty finding compelling places to recreate safely. Initially, skateparks seem like a great solution for both user groups.

There are precious few communities that provide enough terrain for their skateboarding citizens. Although there are fewer BMX riders interested in the type of riding that a skatepark allows, adding those users increases the need for available space. Adding user groups increases the spatial requirements. If the skatepark is too small, many users will be displaced onto the streets and the skatepark will hold little value. However, adding voices to the advocacy effort is also valuable and when active members of the BMX and inline skating community can help the skatepark effort, the group becomes even more diverse.

Bikes in skateparks present two significant concerns for its users and the entity responsible for keeping the facility safe.

First, bikes widen the scope of wear to the structures. Bike pegs, pedals, and handlebars easily chip concrete and wood alike. Even without the occasional spill, axle pegs rub along areas around coping that, if not designed and built for it, can be severely damaged.

Second, and much more important, bikes present safety issues for both bikers and skaters. Bikes are much faster than skateboards and their tricks are often much higher and longer. Bikes easily cross expanses and traverse barriers that skateboarders cannot, so unsuspecting skaters are more likely to collide with a bike than with another skater, whose movements are more predictable.

Experienced skateboarders can all testify to personal collisions with bikes at skateparks. For younger, less experienced riders unaccustomed to skatepark etiquette and awareness, bikes present a radical unknown that most are woefully unprepared for. A collision between a fast bike and a small skateboarder presents a greater likelihood of significant injuries than a collision between an adult and young skateboarder. Skateboards, even during aerial stunts, are rarely in positions to impact someone's legs, back, or abdomen. The various parts of a bike (handlebars, pedals, pegs, etc.) pose a danger to anyone who might collide with them. Many skateboarders are comfortable sharing the facility with bikes, but there are many more who prefer not to. If the skaters in your community are wary of sharing the skatepark with bikes, consider staggering usage so bike riders have a designated time when they may use the park.

On-Site Supervision

Often referred to as "pad nannies," on-site supervisors can provide a wide range of important duties to the facility and its users. Skateboarders often will not care for the subtext that supervision is necessary, as it demonstrates that administration considers the skaters irresponsible children. Right or wrong, the presence of a pad nanny indicates to many skaters that administration wants to firmly control the activity within the facility. Whether or not this is the case, the pad nanny can help keep the park tidy, remind people to wear a helmet (if they're required), mediate during periods of conflict, and be on the lookout for injuries or spills that may require medical attention.

The disposition of the pad nanny to young adults is critical for this program to succeed. No skater will observe the nanny's request if they haven't earned some degree of mutual respect.

The on-site supervisor should be prepared for and comfortable with the language and actions of today's teenager.

As with helmets and pads, the presence of supervision can increase the Parks Department's liability while simultaneously dissuading some users from using the facility.

Entrance Fees

Some Parks Departments consider skateparks special attractions for a nominal user group. With over 13-million skaters nationwide there is no shortage in any community of people ready and eager to enjoy a new skatepark. Unlike many other special park facilities, such as pools and ice rinks, skateparks are used every day and often by the same users. Some skaters will use a park for hours at a time; others may just have a quick skate before work or school. Those skaters who will be using the skatepark will be diverse and they will all be dedicated to their pastime. Most skateboarders ride at least once a week. Many ride nearly every day, especially during summer. For this reason it is extremely difficult to assess the value of one person's skatepark experience over another.

Skatepark fees are simply a bad idea. Few skateparks that charge "green fees" do so out of desire to generate revenue. Most are a byproduct of zealous planners and advisors looking for ways to cover maintenance costs. The reality is that the fees serve to do just that, but not as expected. Rather than cover maintenance costs, they dissuade enough of the local skaters from using the facility on a regular basis that maintenance is not as necessary.

Some entrance fees are instituted to subsidize on-site supervision payroll. Again, the anticipated usage may never be met due to the prohibitive expense to the skateboarder. A dollar per visit may seem nominal to most adults, but even \$50



Entrance fees should be reserved for commercial skateparks, not public facilities.

for a 3-month summer pass can be too much for the average 14-year-old. These kids will find other places to skate.

Do not forget that skateboarding in the streets and public places beyond the skatepark is free. From a fiscal standpoint, it may be difficult to create a viable business model with this attractive alternative. While street skating may be illegal, it is an environment that most skateboarders are accustomed to. Decades of failed or irregularly enforced ordinances have done little to discourage skateboarding, and today skateboarding is more popular than ever in spite of the absence of legitimate skateboarding options. Instituting a fee structure will cripple the success of the new skatepark and produce another incentive for skaters to “take it to the streets.”

Fences

Fences are installed around skateparks for a variety of reasons. They are usually intended to separate nearby activities. Skateboarders are no stranger to negative preconceptions, and it is not uncommon that fences are installed to be able to manage access—to close the park to maintain hours of operation or to reprimand the skaters who don't comply with park rules.

Skaters often refer to these types of secure facilities as “skate jails” due to their exercise-yard like appearance. As mentioned earlier, skateparks should appeal to the types of people they are designed to attract rather than depict a divisive environment. The skatepark should be inclusive and open for broad interaction. Surrounding the skatepark with a fence usually sends the wrong message to the skaters and the general public about the activity occurring within its perimeter.

Fences can create a barrier to keep loose boards from leaving the park, but there are other creative ways to accomplish this same purpose. The creative positioning of ledges and low concrete bunkers, for example, would make a chain-link fence unnecessary. Unlike tennis court fences that are designed to stop missed balls, skatepark fences are usually installed for security purposes. Some progressive skatepark designs use short ledges to surround the skating area. This solution traps wayward boards, provides ample seating, and does not obscure visibility or discourage non-skaters from interacting with the skaters.

When installing a fence it is vital that entry points are positioned along desirable pathways. Skateboarders are athletic youth who may casually scale a fence if they see no harm in it. Once the fence is considered a mere inconvenience,

it will become very difficult to secure the park for any reason. When entry points are inconvenient, the fence essentially trains the park visitors to disregard it. To prevent climbing, slats can be installed in chain-link fences, but this reduces visibility into and out of the skatepark and may encourage illicit activities.

Hedges and other landscaping devices can provide the necessary traffic control while keeping the park attractive to all users. Like most general park visitors, skaters would rather recreate in an area with greater liberties and points of egress. Conversely, the most effective barriers for skateboarders are wet areas and deeply textured or rough surfaces. Skateboarding is an individualistic and inventive activity. Recreating in a “pen” is counter to this creative form of exercise.

Closures

Maintenance crews may find the need to close the skatepark for routine or irregular maintenance tasks. The crew should be visible and their task apparent. Signage explaining the reason for and duration of the closure may be necessary so visitors need not press the crew for details. Pylons or some traditional temporary barriers may add an air of legitimacy to the work. For tasks taking longer than an hour or two, some advance notice may prevent skaters from traveling to the park only to be disappointed.

Closures without supervision can be tricky. Fenced skateparks that must remain closed for a day or longer should have a sign posted to inform users of the duration and reason for the closure.

Closures for parks without fences are the most difficult to properly enforce. Skateboarders, long trained to skate until told to leave, have developed very little regard for no-skateboarding signs. Preventative devices can be used such as pea gravel. This effectively deters skateboarders, but can quickly be swept up or kicked aside if too little is used.

Most areas requiring maintenance can be secured by closing only the particular area of concern. Some type of traffic barricades and tape should serve this purpose well. Many traffic barriers will be moved to other areas of the skatepark and used as obstacles to jump over. Ordinary cones, Jersey barriers, sandwich boards, drums, and A-cade signs are favored for this purpose, while the looper tube variety is not as attractive to under-challenged skaters. The skatepark users, if they are aware that the work ultimately benefits the skatepark, should not tamper with the barricades.



In wetter regions a cover will extend the season of the skatepark.

Lights

A skatepark with adequate lighting will allow use of the facility during the evening. During the winter this will help to attract older, working skateboarders who may otherwise not have recreational options. Depending on the intensity of the lights, even skateparks placed within residential zones can be lit until the park closes without any impact to the other park visitors or nearby residents.

Lights should be configured so that they do not abruptly turn off. Rather, they should turn off in stages with a few seconds in between to allow those skaters in the middle of a run to stop skating. It's easy to imagine the feeling of things going pitch black while one is in the middle of a difficult trick.

The lights can be set on a 20-minute timer that is reset with a button so that the facility does not consume power when it's not being used.

Restrooms

Businesses near the skatepark will appreciate on-site restrooms for park visitors. Restrooms, if they are permanent facilities, should adhere to the same design and construction principles as any urban city-park restroom, with a focus on easy cleaning and prevention of vandalism. Portable restrooms can provide adequate sanitation if the park gets fewer than a hundred visitors a day.

Restrooms often attract illicit activity regardless of the location or access. Like any public comfort station, it should be planned for with the most contemporary principles of crime prevention in mind. While skateparks do not attract a greater degree of criminals than any other sports or recreational facility, they are popular and restrooms will be well used.

Noise

Skateparks, especially concrete ones, are surprisingly quiet. The urethane wheels roll quietly on the smooth surfaces while the terrain deflects most of the sharper sounds. Sound studies conducted by the City of Portland, Oregon equated skatepark sounds at 50 feet to the sound generated by a moderate conversation between two adults. Skateboarding looks noisy, but it's not. Regardless, noise continues to be one of the top concerns for residents near proposed skateparks.

Wooden and steel above-ground skateparks tend to be louder than in-ground concrete parks, as the chambers within the structures can act as drums and actually amplify the sound.

Any type of skatepark, large or small, can benefit from basic sound mitigation techniques that may involve landscaping and site furnishings. The skatepark design can also serve to project whatever sound occurs, mostly people cheering their friends on, away from nearby users or residents that may be sensitive to this chatter.

Litter

Waste containers are required by any public facility that hopes to maintain a tidy appearance. Debris in a skatepark is particularly bad for three reasons. First, it emphasizes the preconception that skateboarders are vandals who don't respect anything. Second, in a concrete skatepark even small amounts of litter can look significant against the light gray expanse of geometric forms. Finally, and most important, small bits of trash can introduce grave safety hazards for the unsuspecting skateboarder.

Every skatepark, intended or not, has an area where most of the park users go to rest and watch the action. This will be the place where they leave their backpacks, water bottles, cell phones, and other personal items. This is often not the place



A quick response to graffiti is the best way to prevent it from getting out of control.

less likely to invest any time on their creations ... and they will become smaller and more opportunistic in content and style. These smaller marks are usually drawn in indelible marker and can easily be removed if less than a few days old with solvents made for this purpose. Skatepark builders and ramp suppliers have been dealing with the graffiti issue for years, and each will have recommendations for dealing with it. Be sure to consult with your builder or supplier before attempting to remove graffiti, as they might require that particular solvents be used in order to preserve the skatepark warranty.

For larger murals involving thick coats of spray paint, it is imperative that they be removed immediately before the paint has had time to fully cure. Once cured, the enamel will form a hard shell and become impossible to remove completely, short of sand- or bead-blasting (which are not recommended).

There are many commercial products available producing optimistic claims about their graffiti-removing abilities. Though it is always a good idea to use water-based (citrus), environmentally friendly solvents, these are the least effective at attacking the marker or paint. It's very important when using citrus-based solvents to clean the offense while it's fresh (less than a few days old). Chemical solvents are more effective but are hard on the user and the environment, especially for larger, longer cleanings. A methylene-chloride aerosol will work very well on small, fresh marker or paint. Potassium-hydroxide solvents are not recommended for removing graffiti within the skateboarding area as they can leave a slick, invisible residue, but they might be appropriate for small marks where people sit.

Bead-blasting and sand-blasting will attack the concrete riding surface and are not recommended. Anti-graffiti coatings are too slick and should not be used.

Achieving Compliance And/Or Stewardship

Any skatepark that meets acceptable standards of quality will quickly become one of the Parks Department's most used facilities. Maintenance and clean-up impact will be significant, but will be minimal compared to most other facilities. Concrete skateparks in particular will yield years of incredible use, often being the Parks Department's most used facility, yet be virtually free to maintain with the exception of waste disposal and inspections. Whatever maintenance expense the skatepark requires can be further lessened by encouraging the skaters to help keep the park clean.

where well-meaning park planners had hoped to attract idle skaters. Regular visits by park-maintenance staff should reveal where people are actually resting. It should become apparent after a few months of the park opening. This is where trash cans, shade structures, and seating should be placed if possible.

The waste containers should be as convenient as possible to use, placed naturally at every access point and at each resting station. Open-topped designs, or those with a covered top but without a spring hatch, will get the most use as skaters can easily toss their waste into the can as they skate by. (Trash cans requiring greater interaction will result in more plastic bottles being left around and on the can.)

Wind can carry litter, sand, pollen, and leaves from other areas and blow them into the skatepark where it becomes trapped against the block-like structures or in the bowls. Within the park, a ledge along the windward side of the site can help alleviate this problem, though landscaping can also redirect or trap debris before it can present a safety concern.

Graffiti

There is little that distresses an earnest skatepark advocate more than graffiti. Graffiti is a problem wherever teenagers congregate. Large, colorful murals are not usually the issue for most skateparks, but rather smaller marks collecting in areas where people sit. As much as the skatepark advocate may want to completely exonerate skaters from this type of vandalism, skateparks attract all types of kids—skaters and non-skaters—and graffiti is bound to happen.

Prevention through careful siting and design is the best tactic, but there is little one can do to fully stop all of it. With new marks being removed as soon as they are found, people will be

Activating the skatepark users to exhibit healthy forms of ownership is a challenge for any skatepark manager. When one actively pursues this volunteerism, events may easily backfire or fail to gather any interest. Skateboarding culture has deep roots in anti-institutionalized behavior, so "Park Cleanup Day" and similar events may be perceived as corny.

With an average age in the mid-teens, skateboarders are usually too young for a bonafide job and the skatepark manager can take advantage of this by hiring a skatepark "host" to keep the park clean, report any problem patterns, and be an on-site source of information for other users (locations for the nearest skate shop, convenience store, restroom, etc.). Many metropolitan skateparks are exploring this mutually beneficial agreement.

The skatepark host's duties may also encompass some on-site event planning and instructional programming. The host needn't be on-site for the whole day—two or three hours a day during the peak times will be enough to establish a pattern of official presence without appearing invasive or distracting to the users.

On-site lockers containing a broom and a squeegee may help reduce the amount of trash that collects in the park. The locker should remain locked with keys distributed to a small number of regular park users willing to lend a hand. This will also demonstrate mutual trust and shared responsibility.

Skatepark advocates will see value in becoming stewards to those skateparks that exist in the area to demonstrate commitment to these facilities. Park managers may want to contact their local skatepark advocates, and vice versa, to work out an agreement. Many Parks Departments maintain volunteer programs, and a skatepark group can easily be accommodated using these channels.

Skatepark Maintenance

Too many skateparks suffer from poor or inadequate maintenance. Infrequent or inexperienced inspections often lead to situations that are hazardous to the user and hard to detect by non-skateboarders.

Metal And/Or Wood Structures

Inspections

Modular or prefabricated skateparks are usually made with steel structures and wood or composite riding surfaces. Prefabricated ramps are assembled on a concrete slab with

the obstacles arranged in a series or facing each other for back-and-forth runs.

Inspections should be frequent, and while the park is new the focus should be on loose screws or bolts, cracks, and coping that has become unfastened. General inspections should occur twice a week with a thorough inspection happening twice a month.

Composite Surfaces

Wood polymer is meant to look and ride like Masonite and is favored by many prefabricated-ramp manufacturers. It is more durable and weatherproof than wood or compressed particle board yet toothier and provides more friction than steel. It is produced in standard 4x8-foot sheets and can be fixed to the plywood substrate just like hardboard (e.g., Masonite) so repairs are relatively simple procedures.

While more durable than wood, this material can chip at high-impact areas. Bicycle pegs and axles from bikes and skateboards can quickly produce deep, dangerous potholes. The wear is caused by the high traffic, so any deep divots or tripping hazards will be a safety concern.

Topsheets are typically secured with square-head wood screws and penetrate the substrate plywood or supporting beams beneath. When the screws are subject to the vibration of daily use they can work themselves loose, which then allows moisture to penetrate the layers of surface material or even the substrate. This will lead to serious long-term maintenance headaches, as the screws will need to be reset.

In addition to moisture concerns, screws that loosen too much will present tripping hazards to the users or become sharp—unseen points that can easily cut someone when they fall or slide. Because loosening screws are clearly within the domain of regular maintenance, injuries caused by loose screws present an issue for management.

Parks featuring composite surface materials should be inspected twice a week for general upkeep and twice a month with a thorough inspection.

Wood Surfaces

Wood surfaces are rarely seen in public, municipal skateparks because these materials lack the durability for the kind of use these skateparks attract. Private skateparks often use wood because it is relatively inexpensive to replace, so when specific topsheets are showing wear, they can easily be rotated to areas with less traffic. Parks maintenance crews will probably not want to exert this degree of inspection and maintenance.



Composite surfaces can delaminate and trap moisture, which eventually leads to expensive repairs.

others use angle iron, while others may use wood or even plastic. The best maintenance regimen for this component of the structures is the manufacturer's recommendation. Loosening bolts or screws is always of paramount concern due to the critical failures and safety liabilities they can introduce.

Railings and other safety or comfort amenities should also be checked for loosening or significant wear. In all cases, bolts with a 1/2-inch or 3/8-inch hex head or 3mm Allen hex head should be avoided as these are the same sizes as the common parts of a skateboard. Skaters often carry tools of these dimensions and may be tempted to reconfigure those parts of the park that are easily modified.

Rearranging

Most prefabricated-ramp sales brochures claim that reconfiguring the park periodically will provide renewed interest. However, few Parks Departments seriously consider executing this major project. Despite what many brochures claim, rearranging a skatepark is generally not a wise idea. Lifting assembled ramps, even with a forklift or crane, can stress joints and connections. In time, the ramps can become distorted or unstable. Once assembled, skateboarding ramps should not be moved repeatedly.

At the leading edge of each ramp is a steel kickplate that transitions the rider from the concrete slab surface to the curved top-sheet material. The steel may, over time, develop a characteristic shape that works well for the contours of the slab in that particular area. By moving the structure, the kickplate may need to become conditioned to its new location. If a gap is produced it will trip skaters and present a safety concern.

Moving ramps around may also introduce access to parts of the structure that were not anticipated and may present new maintenance concerns. Steel plates and reinforcements are often placed in the prefabricated structures to protect or reinforce high-traffic areas. When the park is rearranged, new traffic lines will appear. Careful inspections should take place after a park is rearranged to ensure that new problems haven't been introduced.

Do-It-Yourself Structures

There is no shortage of DIY success stories. As municipalities have been slow to provide adequate skateboarding terrain, skaters have relied on innovation and anti-institutional philosophies to create their own recreational spots. Though many cities have destroyed the DIY skate structures as they appeared, others have negotiated particular constraints and made concessions to allow the activity to continue.

Wood should be inspected for cracks, splinters, and signs of trapped moisture twice a week.

Steel Surfaces

Steel presents the most durable surface for prefabricated skateboarding ramps. The sheets are generally welded into place onto the steel structure. No substrate is necessary. The steel is usually painted or powder-coated to protect it from moisture and improve the surface's friction.

Steel will not require more than a cursory weekly inspection to identify any major structural failures and only a single meticulous monthly inspection for signs of rust, corrosion, and moisture.

Substrates

Substrates only tend to be used in wood and composite structures. The topsheets are fixed to the substrate that provides support and consistency for the angles and curves of the structures. Substrates are usually 3/8-inch or 1/2-inch treated plywood. The substrates are themselves secured to the underlying framework, which can be steel or wood, with bolts or screws.

Care should be taken where the ends of the substrate is exposed to the elements. Moisture, debris, and mosses can swell or expand these cracks and, over time, present significant maintenance issues.

Standing water will also quickly swell the substrates and loosen the fixtures that keep the ramp sturdy. While the ramp may look dry and provide adequate use, the vibrations through the moist wood will strip wood screws and produce an insecure structure. Users and maintenance personnel will not usually identify the problem until it's too late to prevent.

Structure

Support structure is how many prefabricated skatepark companies differentiate their products. Some use steel tubing,

Notable success stories like Burnside in Portland, Oregon and Washington Street in San Diego, California have set precedents for other advocacy groups to consider this innovative direction. To-date, Burnside is one of the world's most famous skateparks, in part because of its grassroots history.

The more common scenario is when enthusiastic individuals buy a few bags of cement or Quik-crete and modify existing innocuous structures into challenging skateable obstacles. Frequently these little "patches" go unnoticed for months and it is only the increasing skateboarding activity, as word gets around, that alerts others to the structure. Because the structure was not sanctioned, most citizens and public workers presume that the structure must be removed.

Skaters with rudimentary carpentry skills will sometimes import their own structures to the municipal skatepark. Administrators may not understand or appreciate homemade ramps and boxes finding their place in the park. However, it's important to understand that portable DIY structures are a sign that the fixed skatepark does not provide adequate interest or challenge to the regular users. Though the new unsanctioned structures may not comply with fundamental safety regulations, a skatepark that lacks sufficient interest to retain steady use essentially puts skaters back out on the street where they are far more likely to be seriously injured.

DIY structures can sometimes be made using concrete. If those individuals approach the Parks Department prior to construction, it is worth everyone's time to allow the concept full consideration. The project can be mutually beneficial with the skaters becoming invested in the health and function of the skatepark and the Parks Department seeing increased ownership and attraction to the facility. There is a growing trend by skatepark administrators to work closely with their



Water will render any skatepark unusable. Water should be carefully controlled throughout the skating area. On steel ramps, small holes can usually be drilled to prevent rust and drains should be kept clear.

local skateboarders to find ways to improve upon existing, inadequate facilities. This uncharacteristic partnership has many benefits, the emerging partnership between local skateboarders and administration being the most significant.

Edging/Coping

The leading edge of skatepark structures must withstand the majority of heavy use. Most skateboarding tricks occur on a ledge or lip of an obstacle or structure. These edges are sometimes referred to as coping, a term coined from curved pool (or bull nose) edging that continues to be popular in some styles of skateparks.

Coping can be any type of material, but it must be extremely durable. Coping made from 2-3/8-3-inch OD (outside diameter) steel tube or cement (either pre-cast or formed in place) are the most common materials for use on curved or transitional structures. Lightly beveled concrete, angle iron, and granite are commonly found in the geometric, block-like street-style structures. All of these materials withstand the heavy use fairly well, but some materials are less common, tend to provide a new skating experience, and are thus considered premium by their users. Granite and marble are signature materials that most experienced street skaters will note, while pre-cast pool-block coping will often attract pool-skating aficionados. The judicious use of these materials will ensure that the new skatepark will garner positive attention.

Coping inspection and repair is important, due to the heavy use it receives. Steel-tube coping should never receive structural damage if the park was built and is being used as intended, though the points of contact with the ramp structure should be periodically checked as screws may loosen and introduce unwanted movement. Welds, especially in newly built structures, should be carefully inspected for cracks. The sharp, heavy impact of skateboarding can sometimes cause faulty welds to reveal themselves and potentially lead to structural failure.

Pool-block coping is typically 12 to 18 inches long and held in place with gravelly grout. Over time, particular areas of heavy traffic can wear the cement blocks down, particularly at the seams between blocks, as the grout does not provide the same abrasive resistance as the block. This will lead to divots along the coping, sometimes called "knuckling," and should be repaired when the divots are approximately 1/4-inch deep or more. Replacing worn blocks with new ones is the best approach, though grinding out the built-up material and patching the divot may provide a short-term solution until the new blocks can be procured.

Bicycles in skateparks can introduce additional maintenance concerns if not anticipated, as the pattern of wear from heavy bike tricks is different than skateboards. Bikes, especially those with hardened axle pegs, introduce an additional area of wear about 2 inches beyond the coping, and sometimes just under the coping, where the pegs often come into contact with the structure. These areas should be reinforced with steel plates.

Bikes also can chip the riding surface when riders jettison their bike during aerial moves. The riderless bikes can fall to the bottom of the structure where axles, handlebars, and other points deliver sharp impacts. Parks that provide for bicycle use should have the bottom of ramps or bowls carefully inspected for divots caused by this activity.

Concrete

Pitting And Spalling

Small chips in the surface of the concrete can occur at the end of obstacles that attract small aerial maneuvers such as rails, manual pads, and ramps. The skater is exiting the obstacle and the board doesn't move as expected, sometimes landing directly on its side. The axles of the skateboard deliver a sharp impact to the concrete surface and can produce miniscule pits. Over time the pits accumulate and are felt as a slight roughness under the board. Pitting does not present significant safety or maintenance concerns in a concrete context, but small divots in composite or wood surfaces can allow moisture to permeate the layers of the surface material and create problems.

During concrete finishing, trowels and floats are used to draw moisture to the surface of the wet concrete and push the pebbly aggregate downward. When this process is overdone it can weaken the surface strength of the concrete so that the cement becomes brittle and flaky. This will usually



High-impact areas can develop pits and roughness. This isn't usually a problem until the depth reaches 1/4-inch.

present itself shortly after construction is complete and appear as patches of roughness where the concrete seems to have been chipped away. Called spalling, these patches can present safety concerns in high-traffic areas, but only in the most severe cases. However, spalling is the result of poor craftsmanship and is not appropriate for cosmetic and safety reasons. Spalling should be repaired at the contractor's expense by chipping out the section and patching with fresh concrete.

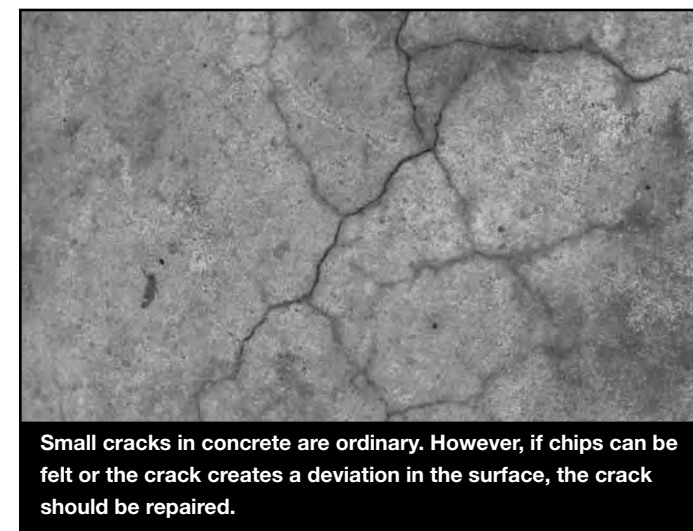
Cracks And Chipping

It is inevitable that cracks will occur in concrete skateparks. The slabs and structures settle over time, cracks appear, moisture penetrates the cracks and widens them. Most cracks present no safety concerns unless they present a variation of height over 1/8th of an inch. Cracks with no height variance should be carefully monitored if they are more than 1/16th of an inch wide.

Cracks on vertical or steep surfaces will sometimes "bleed" rust from the rebar inside. Though this can be a disaster in the cosmetic sense, rust stains do not present diminished riding qualities.

The leading edge of structures that have no protection, like formed concrete, may become chipped over time as the impact from skateboard axles can weaken it. With repeated use and over many months, the edge will reveal exposed aggregate within the cement and slowly become less appealing to the skaters. Patching the edge may provide a very short-term fix to a problem that took months to occur. It is much better to cut away the whole worn area and replace it with a new patch of concrete.

Granite provides much more resistance to this kind of use. Cutting out the worn section and replacing it with granite may provide many more years of use while introducing a new, premium surface to the venerable skatepark.



Small cracks in concrete are ordinary. However, if chips can be felt or the crack creates a deviation in the surface, the crack should be repaired.



Everybody wants a successful skatepark for their community. It's up to each of us to meet this challenge.

Precast Concrete

A trend in modular or prefabricated skateparks is emerging. Some companies are opting for concrete surfaces rather than the wood substrate and wood or composite surfaces. These pre-cast structures are new to the world of skateparks and not much is currently known about their durability or longterm issues. However, when built-in-place concrete is simply not an option, pre-cast is appearing to be an adequate solution for communities looking to build a low-maintenance prefabricated facility.

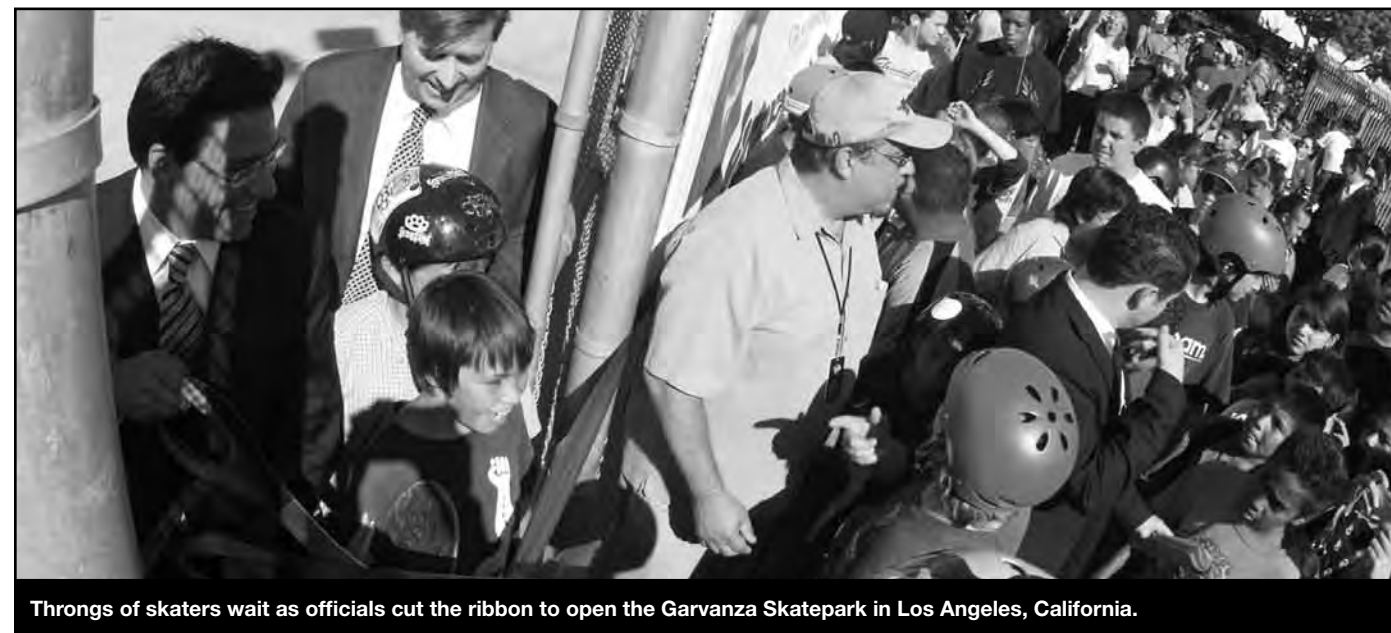
Now What?

Skatepark programming and maintenance can present myriad complex scenarios for many people, even skateboarders. Two general rules apply. First, like with any other public facility, prevention is always preferable to repair. Second, the more that the users are involved in making decisions regarding the facility and have meaningful dialogue with the managing entity, the more the skatepark will be a sustainable facility that the whole community will cherish.

Skateparks are unique facilities, and their planning and construction should be approached carefully, collaboratively, and with care. Created to serve their local communities, they should also be designed to satisfy the particular needs of local users. The unique characteristics of the best skateparks reflect this tradition. Using the steps and techniques outlined in this *Guide*, skatepark advocates and Parks officials should find themselves on the path to creating the most dynamic and likely the most popular public facility in town. And once built, skateparks foster the development of the youth that use them and enhance the communities around them.

The grand opening of a community's first skatepark is the advocate's cue to begin work on the next one.

Well, maybe *after* the first session.



Throng of skaters wait as officials cut the ribbon to open the Garvanza Skatepark in Los Angeles, California.

HANDOUTS & FORMS

The following are information sheets and sample forms you may find helpful in your advocacy effort. Additional material and updated information can be found online at www.publicskateparkguide.org.

10 Skateboarding Myths

This handbill may be photocopied and handed out at general community meetings where the audience may have little awareness about skateboarding. It is encouraged that you use this “as-is” judiciously.

Do not neglect to include the footnotes on the following page (page 100).

Sample Petition

This form may be used though you are encouraged to include your organization’s contact information in the space provided. You may also consider replacing the existing copy with language more specific to your situation.

Popularity And Injury Statistics

Advocates are encouraged to quantify their claims that skateboarding is popular and safe relative to other sports. These statistics should be kept available during public meetings.

Sample Informational Packet

This group of pages may be printed out and stapled or put in binders for smaller meetings with local dignitaries. It attempts to reveal some of the more subtle details of skateparks and will help your audience gain a better understanding of how and why they work. This can be especially useful for elected officials who are reluctant to support what they consider to be a potentially controversial or divisive cause. These pages should be supported with visual aids to maintain your audience’s interest.

Generic Petition

Petition forms can be used to quantify support for the skatepark but can also be used for contact gathering or signing up people for an e-mail newsletter.

Most Popular Extreme Sports in The USA And Injury Statistics

This small diagram shows just how many skateboarders there are in the nation. The first numerical sum is the total number of skateboarders nationally while the last column enumerates how many of those are skating more than 52 times a year. The two other reports include useful safety statistics about skateboarding. This is not good data to present “raw” but quite helpful to have available when specifically asked about these topics.

Contact Sheets

These two forms can help you stay organized as you collect contact names and information.

10 SKATEBOARDING MYTHS

Skateboarders are a vital part of our community. Please take a moment to learn more about ways skateboarding may not be what you think.

1 SKATEBOARDING IS FOR KIDS.
Skateboarding is extremely popular with kids, but not all skateboarders are young. Skateboarding’s greatest heroes, people like Rodney Mullen and Tony Hawk, are well into their 30s. It is one of the few sports where the young and old can share experiences and participate as equals.

2 SKATERS ARE A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF OUR ATHLETIC COMMUNITY.
Skateboarding is one of the fastest growing sports in the U.S.¹ and has surpassed baseball and football as the healthy activity of choice. There are about 13-million skateboarders in the U.S. with a 10% annual increase in participation during the previous 3 years.² Skateboarding is here to stay.

3 SKATEPARKS ARE NOISY.
Skateparks are not loud. A properly constructed concrete skatepark generates about as much sound as a conversation between two people.³ Wooden parks are slightly louder but still much less than ordinary automobile traffic.

4 SKATEPARKS ATTRACT DELINQUENTS.
Any public park can attract unsavory elements, but skateparks often deter disruptive behavior and vagrancy because skaters populate the park. Parks that are remote, secluded or seldom used by the community are the ones that get abused. Without a skatepark in the vicinity, skaters are forced into the streets.

“I have been a police officer in Chatham Township for 14 years, and fully endorse the concept of building a skateboard park. As the police department’s juvenile officer, I have had the opportunity over the years to hear many concerns from our young people about having no place to safely ride their skateboards.”

*Detective Steven Hennelly
Chatham Township Police Department,
Chatham Township, NJ*

5 SKATEPARKS ARE MESSY.
Like any athletic activity, skateboarding will generate refuse. In skateparks that benefit from strong community support such as Burnside (Portland, OR) or Ballard (Seattle, WA), most litter removal is done by the skaters themselves. Professional skateparks allow the skating community to take pride in their facility.

6 SKATEPARKS ARE EXPENSIVE.
A world-class concrete skatepark averages \$40/square foot. Even at full capacity all day, all year, a properly built park won’t show signs of overuse. Compared to the relatively limited use of a tennis court or baseball field, it’s an efficient and popular use of public park funding.

Long-term maintenance expense for a concrete skatepark is minimal. Garbage and general inspection requires only about a half-hour a day and can easily be offset by volunteer programs, concession sales or vending machines.⁴

7 SKATEPARKS ARE PLAYGROUNDS.
Skateparks are sophisticated structures that require particular attention to detail. In order to be safe and efficient, skateparks need to be designed and built by experienced, knowledgeable contractors. Skateboarding is a high-energy, athletic activity and requires surfaces smoother than your average sidewalk, proper alignments, and safe traffic control. An experienced skatepark designer should be able to address these needs directly. Skateboarders themselves can usually offer testimony to the most-respected skatepark designers. Great skateparks are the ones that get used and maintained by skaters.

8 CONCRETE SKATEPARKS ARE MORE EXPENSIVE THAN WOODEN SKATE OBSTACLES.
The immediate cost of a concrete park is generally 20% more than wooden or steel skate obstacles. However, the maintenance and inspection costs⁵ of skateable obstacles (loosening of structures, wear and deterioration, etc.) make concrete the long-term preferred choice of city planners and skateboarders.⁵

9 SKATEPARKS ARE DANGEROUS.
Among the most popular sports, skateboarding is relatively safe. Safety studies show that skateboarding-related injuries fall well below other sports-related injuries.⁶ As with any athletic activity, nobody should skate beyond their ability.

10 THERE ARE ALREADY SKATEPARKS NEARBY.
Many communities continue to ignore the need for a safe, accessible place that skaters of all ages can reach. Though older, mobile skateboarders often travel to their favorite parks, younger skaters are frequently limited to whatever is nearby. Is there a skatepark in your community? If not, your community is the skatepark.

Skateparks are important!

Most Popular Extreme Sports In The USA

(U.S. population; 6 years of age or older)

Sport	# of Participants (participated at least once in 2001)	"Frequent" Participants
1. In-line skating	26,022,000	9,087,000 (25+ days/year) ¹
2. Skateboarding	12,459,000	1,480,000 (52+ days/year)
3. Paintball	7,678,000	1,172,000 (15+ days/year)
4. Artificial Wall Climbing	7,377,000	*
5. Snowboarding	6,797,000	653,000 (15+ days/year)
6. Mountain Biking	6,189,000	1,998,000 (25+ days/year)
7. Trail Running	5,773,000	*
8. BMX Bicycling	3,668,000	1,052,000 (52+ days/year)
9. Wakeboarding	3,097,000	568,000 (15+ days/year)
10. Roller Hockey	2,733,000	*
11. Mountain/Rock Climbing	1,819,000	*
12. Boardsailing/Windsurfing	537,000	*

Source: Sporting Goods Manufacturer's Association

¹ The vast majority of in-line skaters are "fitness" skaters who do not participate in the "extreme" version of the sport.

Skateboarding Injuries

Each year in the U.S., skateboarding injuries cause about 50,000 visits to emergency departments and 1,500 children and adolescents to be hospitalized (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2002). According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately 242,000 injuries were treated in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgery centers and hospital emergency rooms in 2003.

Sprains, fractures, contusions and abrasions are the most frequent injuries. The majority of reported injuries were of the extremities. Among these, wrist and ankle fractures are the most common and followed by head injuries. Most hospitalizations involve head injury.

Sixty percent of skateboard injuries involve children under age 15, and skateboarders who have been skating for less than a week suffer one-third of the injuries.

Source: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

Head Injuries (2004)

Sport	Estimated # of Head Injuries	Estimated # of Hospitalized Head Injuries
Bicycles	151,024	10,769
Baseball	63,234	1,346
Football	51,953	1,324
Skateboards	18,743	764
Scooters, unpowered	15,622	*
Horseback riding	14,218	2,434
Snowboarding	8,540	*
Ice hockey	5,944	*
In-line skating	3,511	*
Lacrosse	1,814	*

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

* No data or sampling too small to measure.

Skatepark Committee Volunteer and Community Contacts

Name/Title

Phone/E-mail

Name/Title

Phone/E-mail

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Skatepark Committee City and Agency Contacts

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Public Skatepark Development Guide: Supplemental 2

LETTERS & PRESENTATIONS

Letter Of Introduction (Outline)

This outline breaks down a Letter of Introduction into its fundamental passages. This structure is useful for an advocacy group's Web site, flyers, or even as a spoken-word presentation.

Letter To City Council

This letter is a good, to-the-point message that can be sent to community leaders who are aware that there is some community interest in a new skatepark. It covers the basics, from where skateboarders are now in the community (“disenfranchised”) and where they can be if the skatepark plans are pursued. In other words, it sets clear expectations from the community leaders who will be representing this important youth population, but avoids confrontational language.

Letters Of Support

These letters can be used to help craft letters of support for your mission. While it's best if supporters craft letters in their own words and using their own observations, sometimes it can help to have something to work from.

10 Street Plaza Tips

This flyer is intended to offer landscape architects the most basic understanding of skateboarding plaza design. Whenever this sheet is used it should be reiterated that this information is not meant to replace the skill and talent that a professional skatepark designer will bring to a project.

10 Transitional Park Tips

This flyer is intended to offer the landscape architect and community leaders some fundamental awareness about skatepark users' needs and how the design of the space meets them. Some of the information is specific to tranny-style terrain. Whenever this sheet is used it should be reiterated that this information is not meant to replace the skill and talent that a professional skatepark designer will bring to a project.

10 Skatepark Tips

While many readers may expect this flyer to offer some esoteric insight into skatepark design, this flyer is actually intended to draw some essential comparisons between the design of skatepark spaces and other types of public gathering places.

Siting Criteria Crib Sheet

This short form is handy for considering potential skatepark sites. While a more rigid method for measuring sites should be conducted, this short version may help with quick appraisals.

Outline For Spoken Public Presentation

This brief outline can be used to help organize your own spoken presentation.

(Who We Are)

We advocate for access to safe recreational facilities for our skateboarding youth.

(About Skateboarding)

Skateboarding is mainstream. It's on television and cereal boxes. There are skate shops in the mall and skateboard-brand clothing is seen every day in every school in the city. Skateboarding has over 13-million participants nationally with several thousand in our town alone.

(Concerning Our Community)

Where do our neighborhood kids go to skate safely?

(Our Recommendation)

We believe that skateboarding areas should be located within neighborhood gathering places and that skateboarders, like any other group of young athletes, should have their healthy choices enthusiastically supported by our community.

(What Next?)

We would like to work with the (City Council) to identify the best place in the area for a skatepark or skate spot that would serve our skateboarding community.

(Contact Us)

For more information or comments, please visit us online:

www.yourwebsite.com

Or contact:

Main Contact Person

Address, Phone, and/or E-mail

Addressee**Date**

Dear **Addressee**,

It has recently come to the attention of our organization that members of your community are working together to promote the idea of a public skatepark in **Your Town**. We applaud them for their interest in developing a facility that will benefit a recognizable sector of your young population, and commend your civic leaders who are working with them to see that their dream of a public skatepark in **Your Town** becomes a reality.

Why are skateparks beneficial to communities? The easy answer is that they provide a place for kids who aren't attracted to traditional team sports to express themselves in an individual and athletic manner. Getting kids, particularly at-risk kids, involved in a personal and esteem-building activity like skateboarding helps them build the confidence to do well in other aspects of their lives.

The 13-million skateboarders in America only have about 2,200 skateparks nationwide. That means the vast majority of them are skating in the streets. Many city officials that we speak with are still concerned about the liability they would assume if they opened a skatepark. But chances are that you already operate public facilities for football, basketball, and soccer—all sports that produce more injuries per participant, according to hospital emergency-room data compiled by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission.

In any case, skating in the controlled environment of a skatepark is much safer than riding in the street, where approximately 90 percent of skaters (or 11.7-million) are practicing their sport of choice at the moment. And when parks are built right—with local skater input and involvement throughout the process—those youngsters develop a sense of ownership and pride.

The very existence of the park is the result of their hard work. They negotiate with civic and local business leaders, with each other on design elements, and with the community to find a suitable location. These previously disenfranchised skaters, who once ran from the police, find themselves working with the police and city and community as a whole. It's a transformational process for these young people.

So we urge you to support the community effort to establish a public skatepark in **Your Town**. We've seen hundreds of such projects go from dream to reality in communities all across the U.S. And it can happen in **Your Town**, too.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sender Name

Title and/or Organization

Address

Phone and/or E-mail

Greetings,

It came to our attention that **The City** is on the cusp of providing new community skateparks. Like you, cities and towns across the nation are providing for this youth population and our hats are off to you for your incredible initiative.

As long-time skateboarders we have seen how a lack of accessible skateparks impacts our youth. Community leaders like you surely appreciate the gravity in which decisions like this are made; we cannot simply avoid the fact that without skateparks, these young people must either recreate in the streets or on private property where they are not welcome. Like me, most of you were teenagers once and certainly understand that we should be encouraging healthy, athletic activity over the alternatives.

Please also consider as you weigh the merits of your skatepark plans that these facilities can operate in many surprising ways. While skateparks and skateboarding areas facilitate that activity, contemporary skatepark designs meet many broader community needs. Skateparks can reflect local aesthetics, history, and norms ... they needn't be imposing slabs of concrete. In Winnipeg, Canada, for example, a plaza featuring public art is admired by the general population for its deliberate design and yet the whole environment is tailored to attract and retain the interests of skaters.

Many cities are looking beyond single skateparks and embarking on city-wide plans to accommodate their skating youth. These skatepark systems augment and support each other so that the community needs are being fully met. This is the scope that true visionaries reach, and it sounds to me that this is precisely where you are at. You're in rare company and we are proud of you.

Please continue to support the skatepark plans in your districts.

Sincerely,

name
address

contact information

10 SKATEPARK TIPS



1. **Include places where people can sit and observe the action.** A skatepark is a place that everyone can enjoy.
2. **Put trash cans where people rest or store their drinks.** Cans should be secured in place so they aren't used as ad-hoc obstacles.
3. **Include areas near the park entrances for people to drop their backpacks, jackets, and water bottles.** Somewhere central to the action and visible from all parts of the park is best.
4. **Provide a water fountain and, if possible, shade.** Be careful using trees for shade as they can sometimes deposit dangerous debris in the skating area. Without a water fountain the park will need more trash cans.
5. **Invite other users.** A playground, comfortable benches or picnic tables, BBQ pits, maintained restrooms, and lights will attract a broader range of skaters and park users. The more activity occurring around the park, the better.
6. **Don't hide your park.** Locate your facility such that it allows passive observation by the community and law enforcement. Poor or remote skatepark sites make it clear to the skaters that they aren't wanted in the community.
7. **Don't landscape using pea gravel, beauty bark, or any other material that can creep into the park.** Take precautions to draw nearby water away from the skating areas.
8. **Don't wrap the facility with a chain link fence if possible.** Instead, consider smaller ornamental fences or short ledges that can be skated and sat on. The fewer barriers between the community and its skatepark, the better.
9. **Don't presume that because it's a skatepark it shouldn't look gorgeous.** Skateparks can reflect local history, incorporate natural materials, and even be distributed across a broad, decentralized area.
10. **Don't assume that the skaters won't take pride and ownership in the new facility.** Give them the opportunity to help shape policy, maintenance, and other ongoing concerns.

10 STREET PLAZA TIPS



1. **Leave extra pushing room between street features.** Too much space between structures is much better than not enough.
2. **Leave room for “freestyle.”** Pushing is okay. Flat is good.
3. **Use different kinds of materials and textures to create a diverse skateboarding experience.** Brick, dyed concrete, small amounts of exposed aggregate, and imprints can all be used to turn huge slabs of gray into visually arresting spaces.
4. **Factor for the precise constraints of skateboarding.** Expansion seams, drainage grates, and wind-swept debris are all hazards for a skateboarder.
5. **Use fillet edges.** A 1/2-inch radius on leading edges intended for grinding will help prevent chip-outs.
6. **Space and position the obstacles and structures in a way that allows the skater to travel through the park as they wish.** It is better to provide plenty to directional liberty rather than attempt to control traffic.
7. **Allow for enough space between structures that skaters won’t be running into each other.** Use plenty of buffer between elements and seek good visibility, especially around larger structures that require more speed.
8. **Include a ledge and a flat rail that are easily approached from either direction.** Consider that every structure in a plaza-style setting should be approachable from at least two opposing sides.
9. **Don’t assume a “street” park means a “beginner” park.** Small structures require the same amount of attention to design and construction as a large structure. While “ordinary” sized structures should be included, if space permits don’t be afraid to include some larger features.
10. **Don’t underestimate the amount of speed a skater may need to approach a particular obstacle or structure.** Different tricks require different speeds. In general, more space allows the park to be used in more ways.

10 TRANSITION PARK TIPS



1. **Include terrain for a wide range of skill levels.** Areas where less experienced people can practice should be disconnected from areas where experienced riders will be.
2. **Emulate the feel of a real swimming pool by featuring pool coping, faux filter box, and other interesting features.** Experienced skatepark designers have a list of fun elements that can be considered.
3. **Consider how the transition area might be used.** Anticipate the facility’s capacity, where those users will be traveling throughout the park, and how quickly.
4. **Include over-vertical (overhanging) terrain, such as a fullpipe, capsule, or cradle.** In the hands of experienced designers and builders, these elements often suggest a world-class park.
5. **Include a variety of transition, corners, hips, and coping types.** Each part of the park—and often different parts of a bowl—can provide countless challenges by varying speed and directions of approach.
6. **Reveal pool (bullnose) or steel coping between 1/4- to 1/2-inch on the rising (vertical) side.** On the horizontal (deck) side the coping should rise no higher than 1/2-inch.
7. **Try to allow at least 10 feet of walking and standing area around the bowls.** These decks are important for safety, comfort, and some types of tricks.
8. **Don’t allow unplanned irregularities in the curved walls.** These kinks and bulges can easily create a dangerous “tripping hazard” and can quickly render whole portions of the skatepark useless.
9. **Don’t broom the finish or use expansion joints in the skating area.** Instead, use a steel trowel finish and cut narrow control joints to control cracking.
10. **Don’t create one big flowing area.** Slower, less experienced skaters can unexpectedly roll into the path of faster skaters.

Siting Criteria Worksheet

Skateparks are traditionally challenging to site correctly. The needs of youth are often at odds with the preconceptions of adults and neighbors. Skateboarders in particular have a larger burden of negative stereotypes to manage.

Skatepark sites should be chosen using the same criteria that one might use for identifying possible sites for any kind of activity. The site candidates should be assessed using the following criteria:

1. Access

- Is the site convenient to public transit?
- Do people know where the site is? Can its location be easily described?
- Is there existing parking for park users or their parents?
- Can you see what's going on in the space from a distance?
- Is the site within walking distance of the target user?

2. Comfort

- Are there public health and comfort amenities already available nearby?
- Is there shade, water, seating, and restrooms nearby?
- Is the site clean and comfortable?
- Is the site within a reasonable distance to a pay phone or market?

3. Activity

- Is the site active with a diversity of uses?
- Are the other activities compatible with the athleticism of skateboarding?
- Is athletic activity at the site desired?

4. Sociability

- Is the site adjacent to other social uses? Will skaters feel inclusive and not partitioned away?
- Does the site allow for passive supervision?

Outline For Spoken Public Presentation

You will want to expand upon each of these ideas in your own words and to fit the allotted time.

Introduction

- Who we represent (local skaters)
- What our mission is (skatepark)
- Why we are here (tell you about our mission)
- What we want from you (support)

Local Skaters

- Skaters are diverse (all walks of life, ethnicities, genders, ages).
- Community and camaraderie are a big part of skateboarding and skateparks.
- There are approximately # skateboarders in our community today.
- We are organized and ready to work with the Parks Department to make this happen.

Skatepark

- Where should our skaters go to recreate?
- Our community needs # square feet to keep skaters out of the streets.
- The best place for a skatepark is [location X, Y, Z], and here's why ...

Conclusion

- Your support is critical.
- Here's what we would like you to do (be specific).
- Please visit us online/take this fact sheet home with you/contact us with questions, etc.
- When might we meet again to follow up? When would you like to hear from us again?

Thank you for your time!

Questions?

VISUAL AIDS

Tripping Hazard

Expansion joints, kickplates on modular ramps, and any other areas in a skatepark containing a sharp deviation in the surface can present a tripping hazard. These hazards are either the result of poor design and/or construction, or due to lack of adequate maintenance, or both. This visual shows what one of these hazards might look like relative to an average sized skateboard wheel.

Visual Glossary

When a skatepark advocate begins to talk about skatepark structures, some people listening may envision sprawling monuments and deep, shady canyons. The illustrations found in the Visual Glossary should help prevent some of the misconceptions about scale. Please note that this information is not meant to replace the work of an experienced professional skatepark designer. It is merely meant to arm the advocate with easy-to-use skatepark illustrations.

Sample Structures

These structures show how some of the different devices found in the Visual Glossary can be combined to make new types of devices.

Measuring Tranny

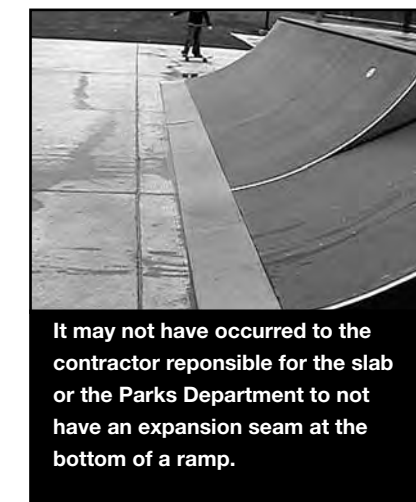
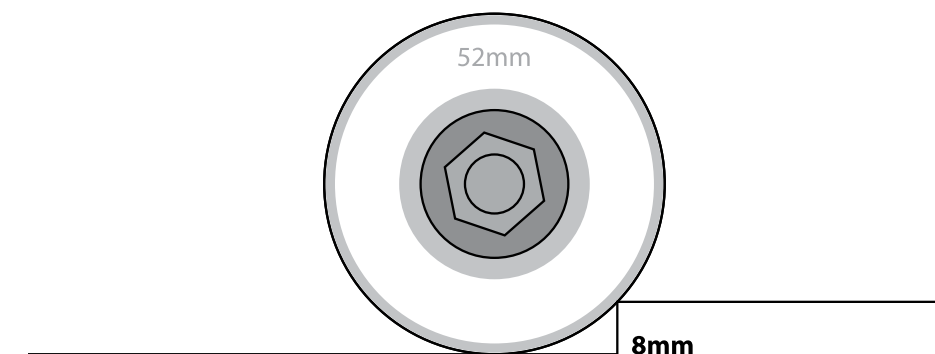
Some people may be confused when advocates start talking about “4-foot quarters with 7-foot tranny” and such. This should help clarify how transition is expressed in casual terms.

Kinks

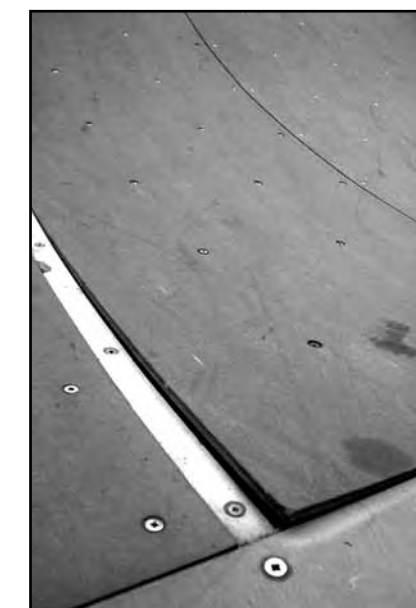
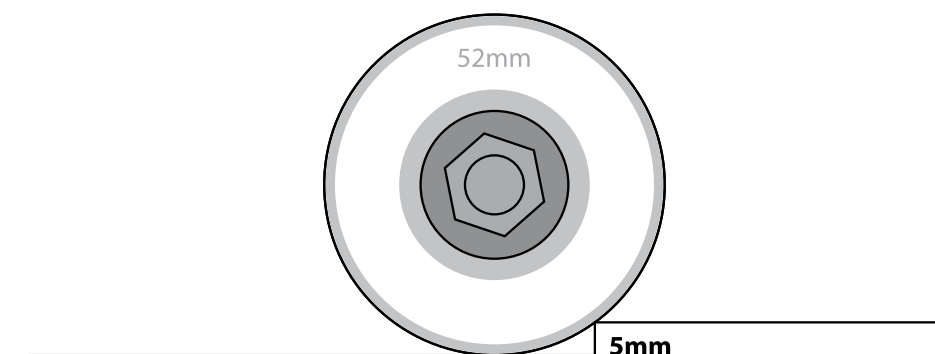
Kinks and bulges in transitional walls can quickly render whole structures useless or even dangerous. This sheet visually describes what exactly a kink is.

Tripping Hazards

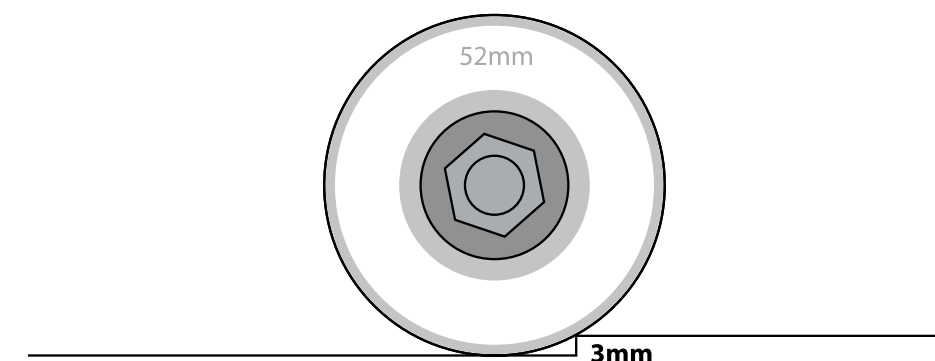
Cracks and deviations can catch a skateboarder's wheel and throw the rider from his or her board. When they occur in precisely the wrong place, irregularities as small as 4 or 5 millimeters can significantly raise the chances of injury in a particular area of a skatepark.



It may not have occurred to the contractor responsible for the slab or the Parks Department to not have an expansion seam at the bottom of a ramp.

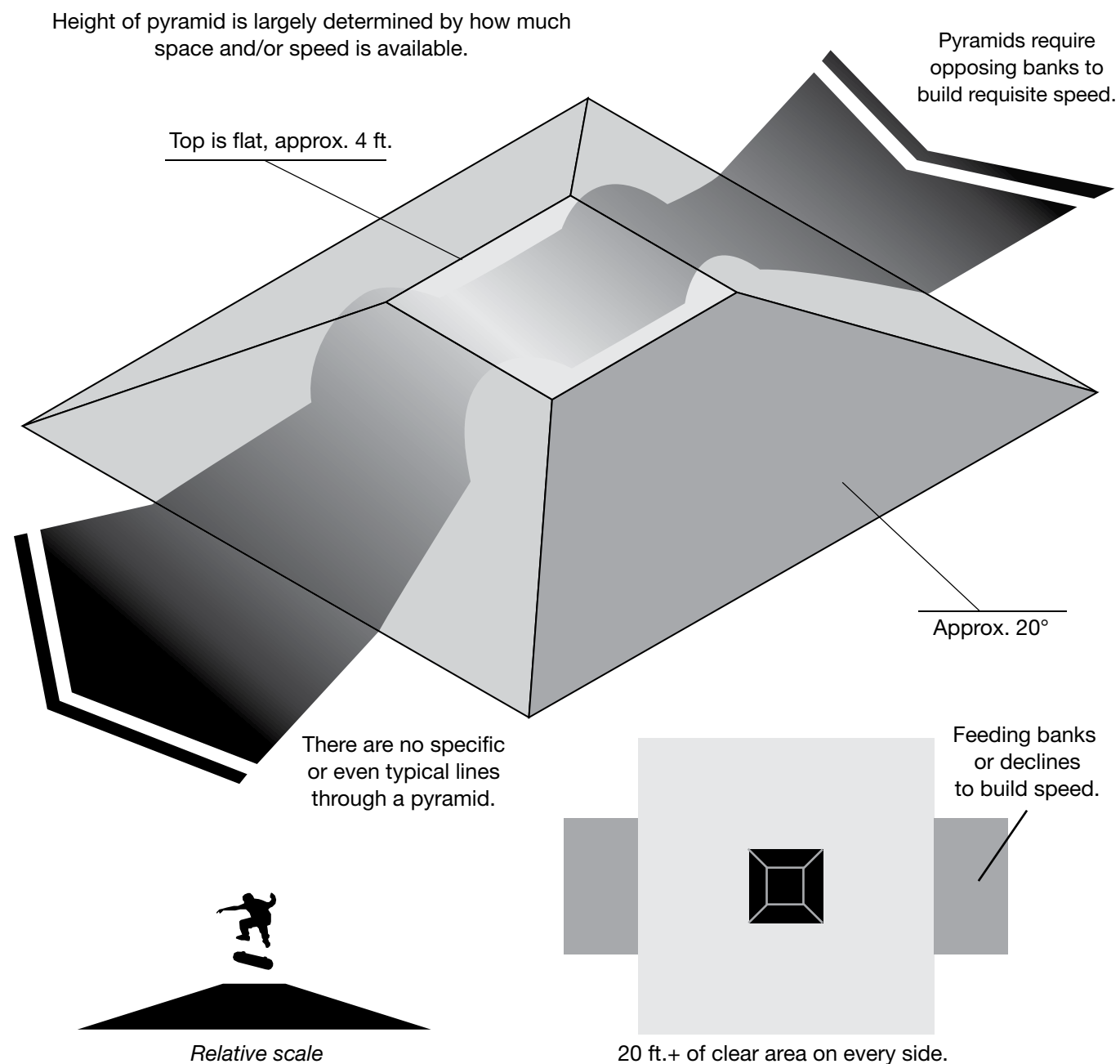


Topsheets of ramps can lift when they aren't adequately secured to the substrate. Like the example above, this situation is especially dangerous because it occurs in an area requiring high speed.



PYRAMID

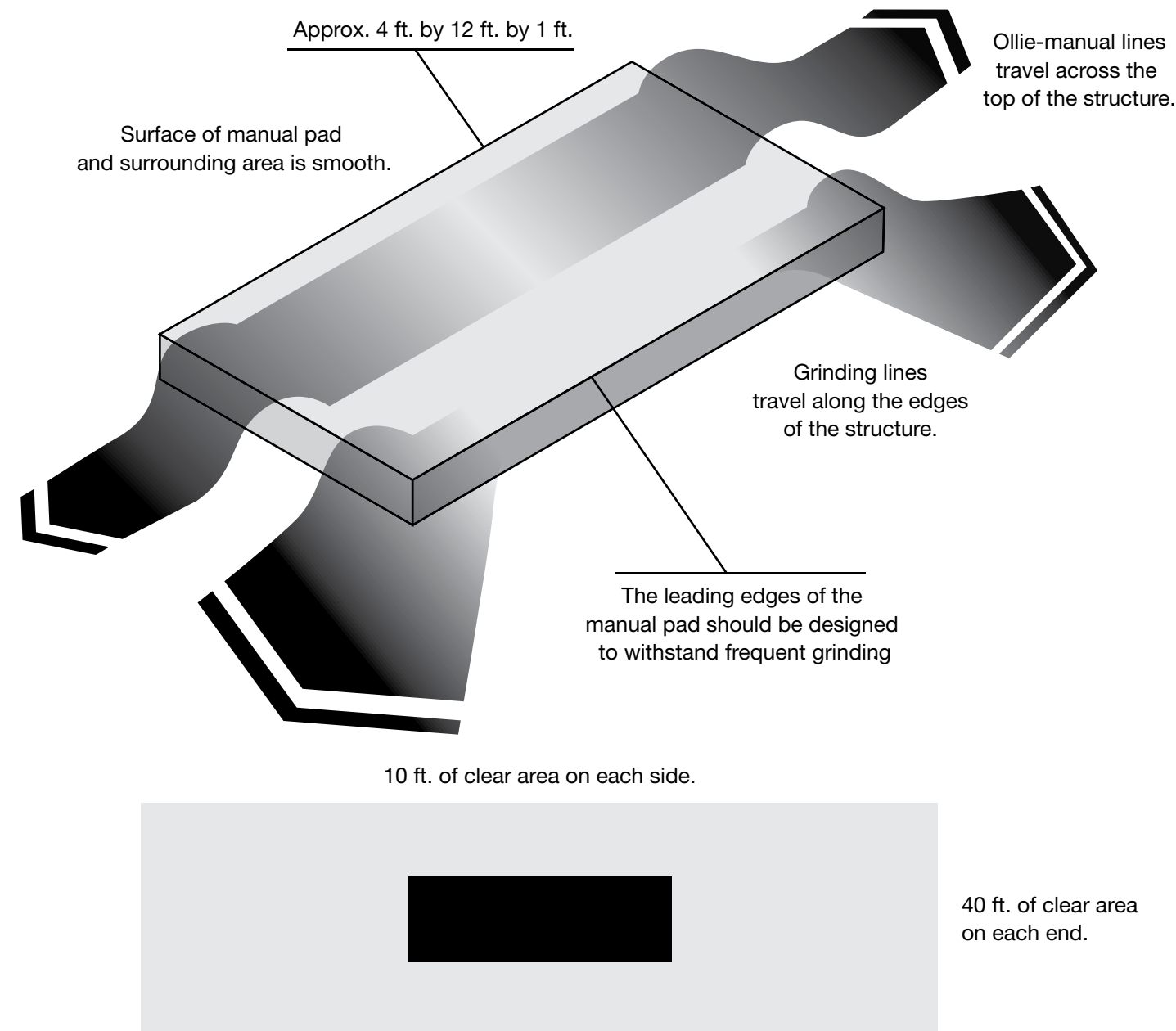
Pyramids are popular structures due largely to their innate versatility. They may be approached and exited from nearly any direction. Pyramids require a great deal of clear space to be most effective and are best used in conjunction with some opposing quarterpipes or flat banks to facilitate the requisite speed.



*This diagram is intended solely for educational purposes.
Only qualified designers and builders should attempt to integrate this element into a skatepark.*

MANUAL PAD

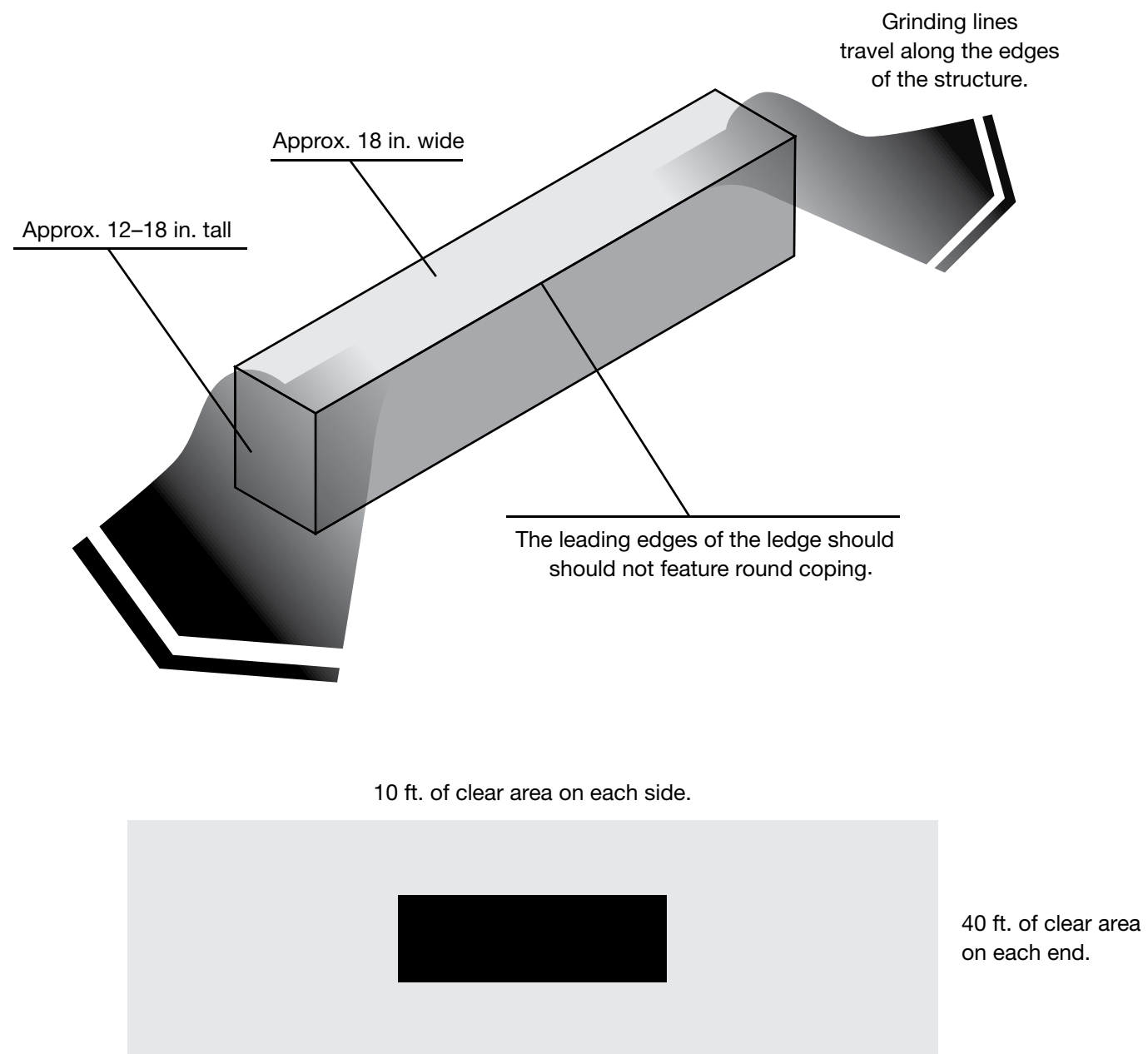
Manual pads are found in almost every modern skatepark. They come in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, and configurations. Sometimes they extend over declines, stairs, or have rails associated with them in some way. Manual pads are incredibly popular due largely to their simple versatility.



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LEDGE

Ledges may serve various functions and are generally found more in urban architecture than in skateparks. They are versatile and not difficult to design as atypical sizes and shapes tend to be nearly as attractive to skateboarders as “classic” ledge forms. Ledges are usually straight, flat and long but are sometimes curved and/or ascending/descending.

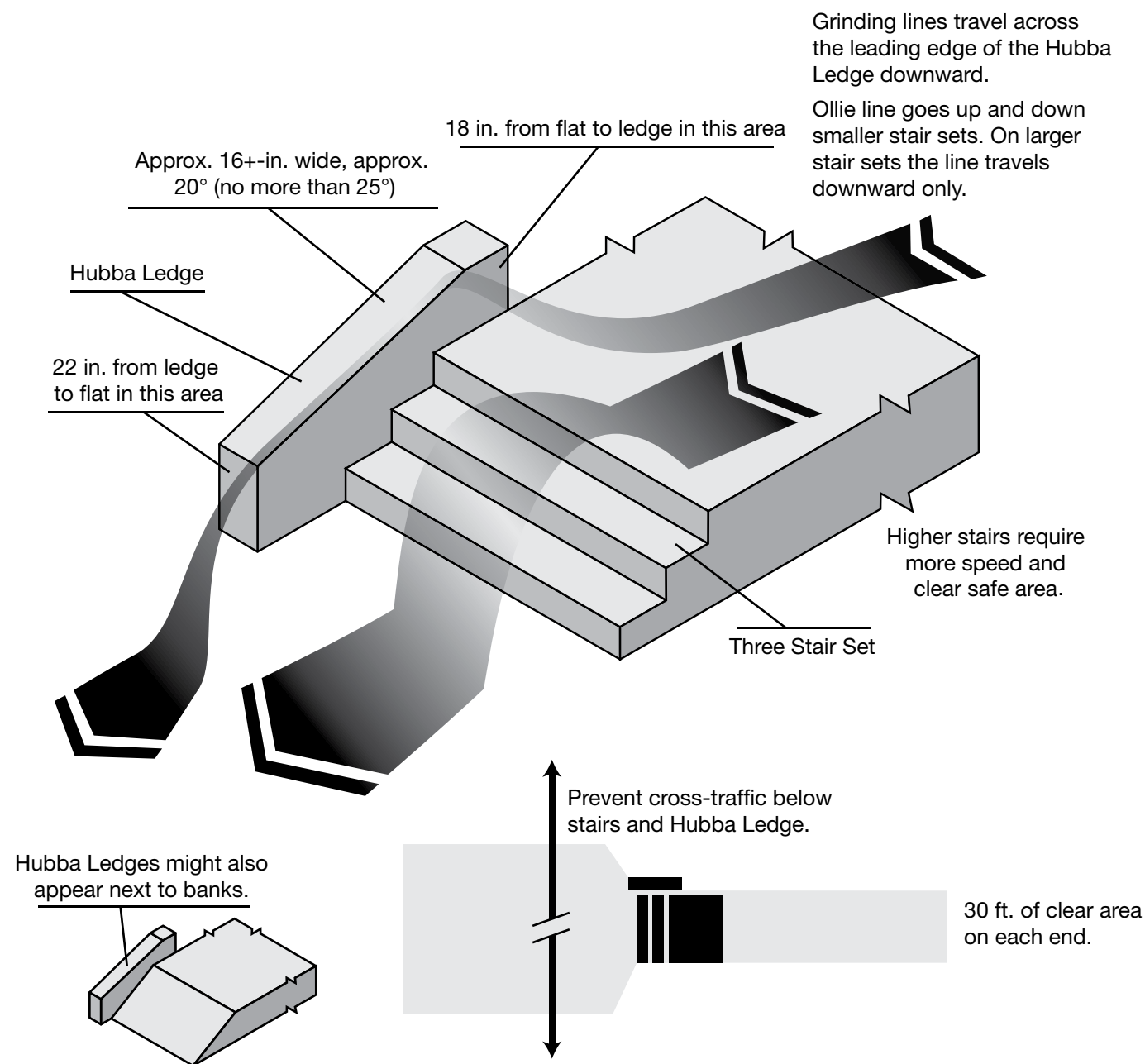


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HUBBA and STAIR SET

Hubba Ledges and stair sets are popular street obstacles that mimic heavy concrete bannisters found at entrances to many public buildings. The descending slope makes an attractive element for grinding and sliding. Hubba ledges are nearly always unidirectional (skaters descend), while the stairs component may sometimes be ollied up.

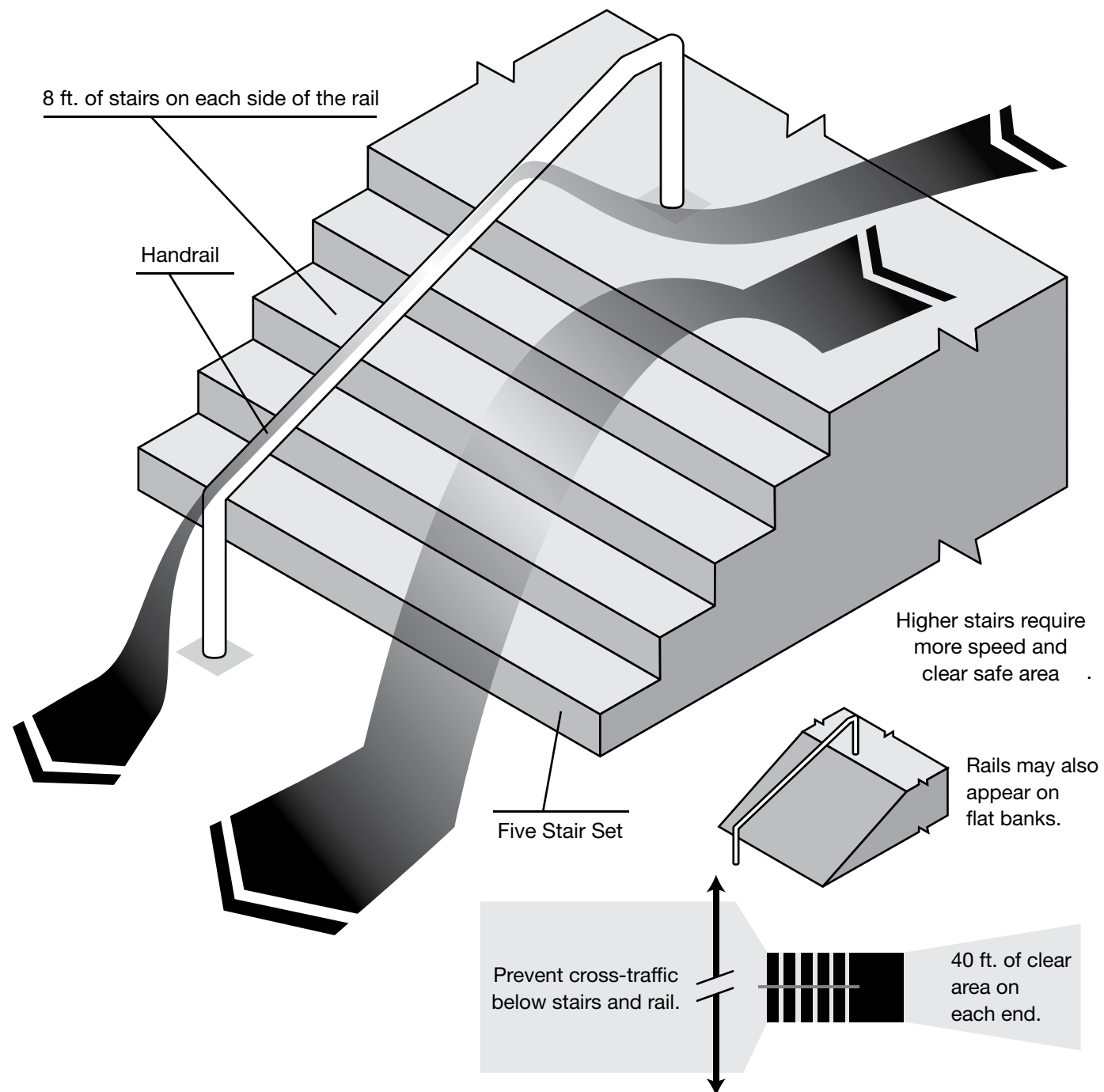


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HANDRAIL and STAIR SET

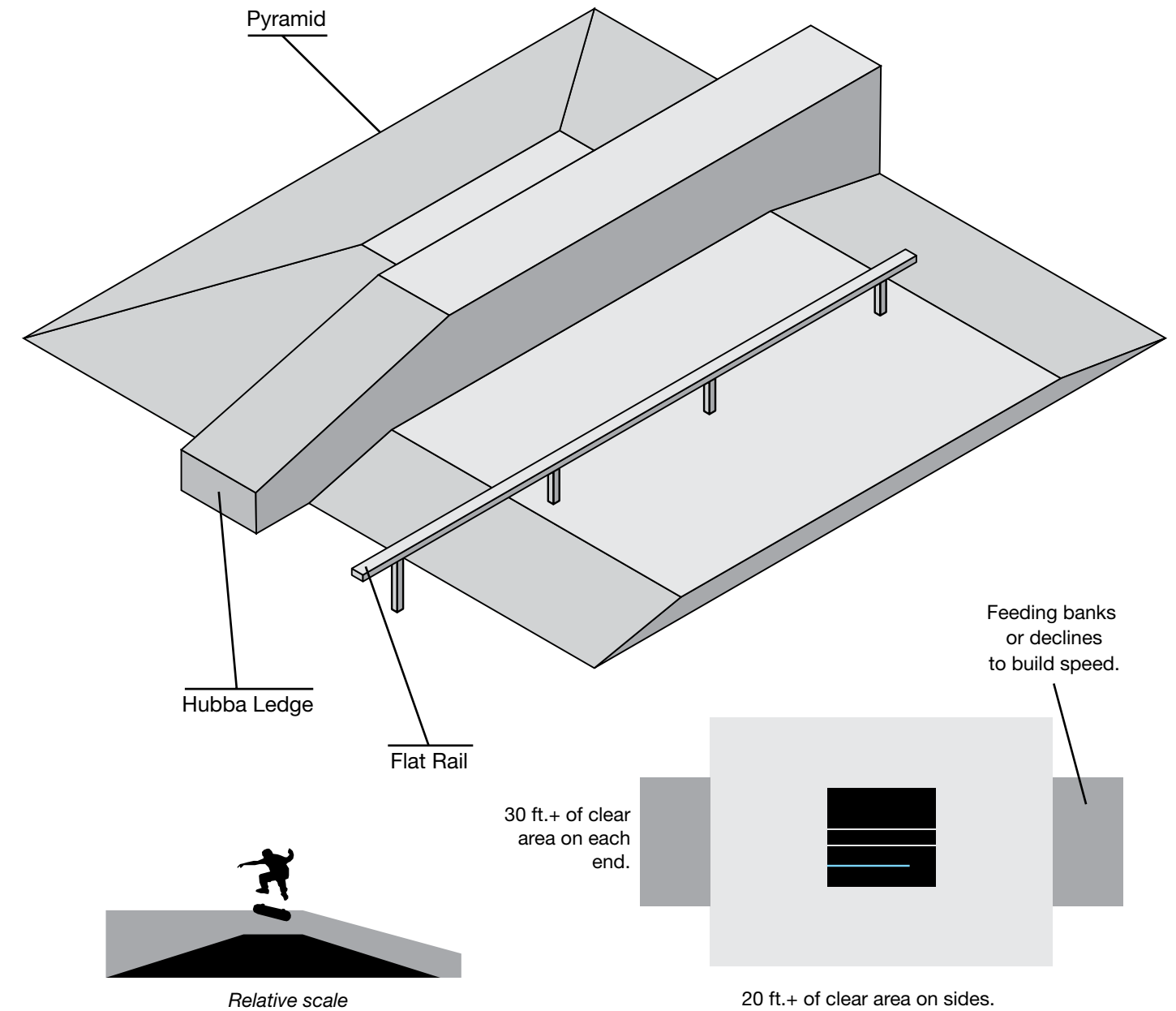
Handrails and stairs are more advanced versions of the flat rail. A high level of concentration and commitment are required to perform tricks on obstacles of this scale so the area surrounding these more advanced structures should have larger clear areas than usual.



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FUNBOX

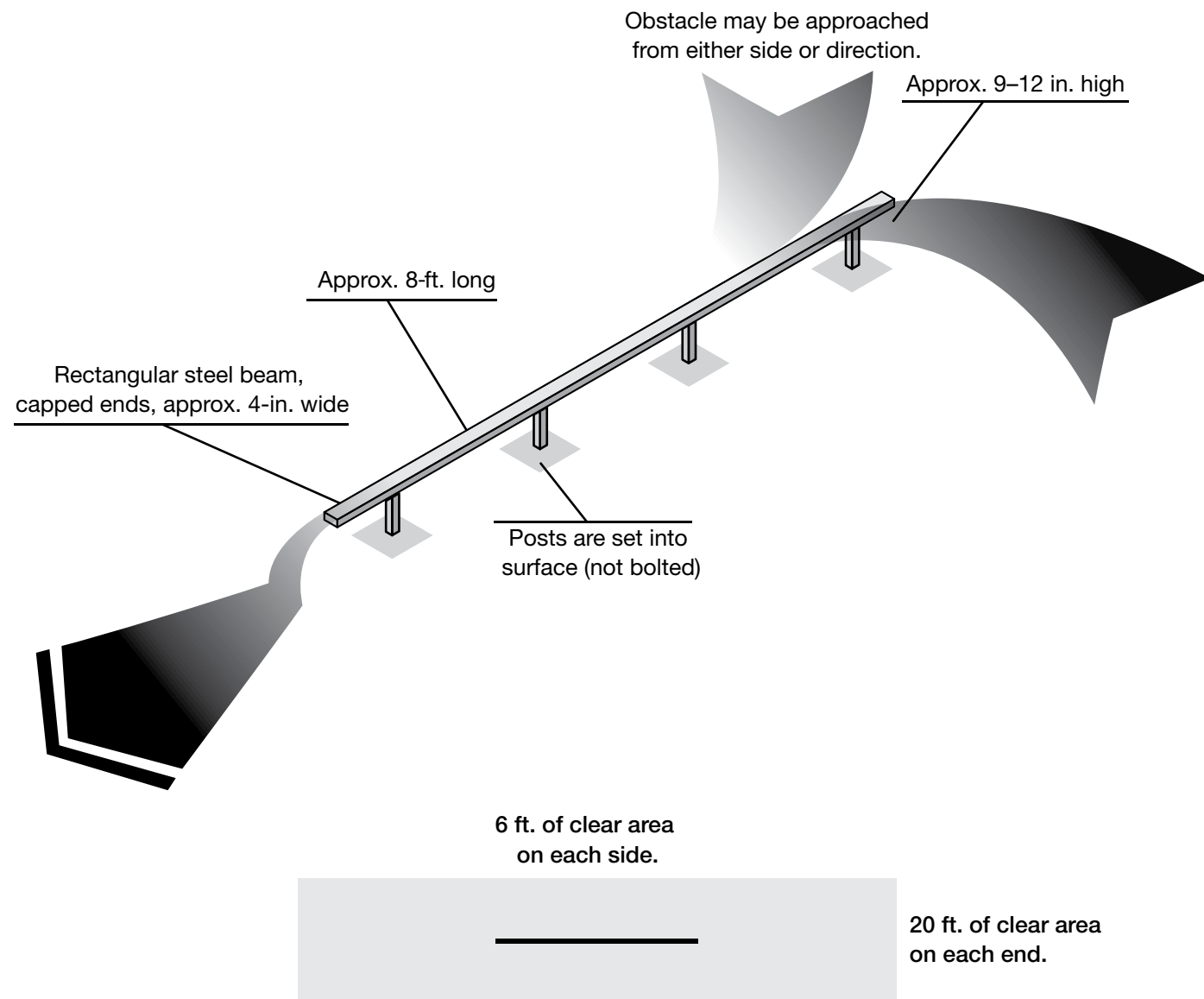
A funbox is a combination of a pyramid, Hubba Ledge, ledge, rail, and/or other features into a single complicated structure. The dimensions of the funbox components are not generally different from their individual counterparts. Note that due to the complexity of the structure, travel and usage lines are not indicated.



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FLAT RAIL

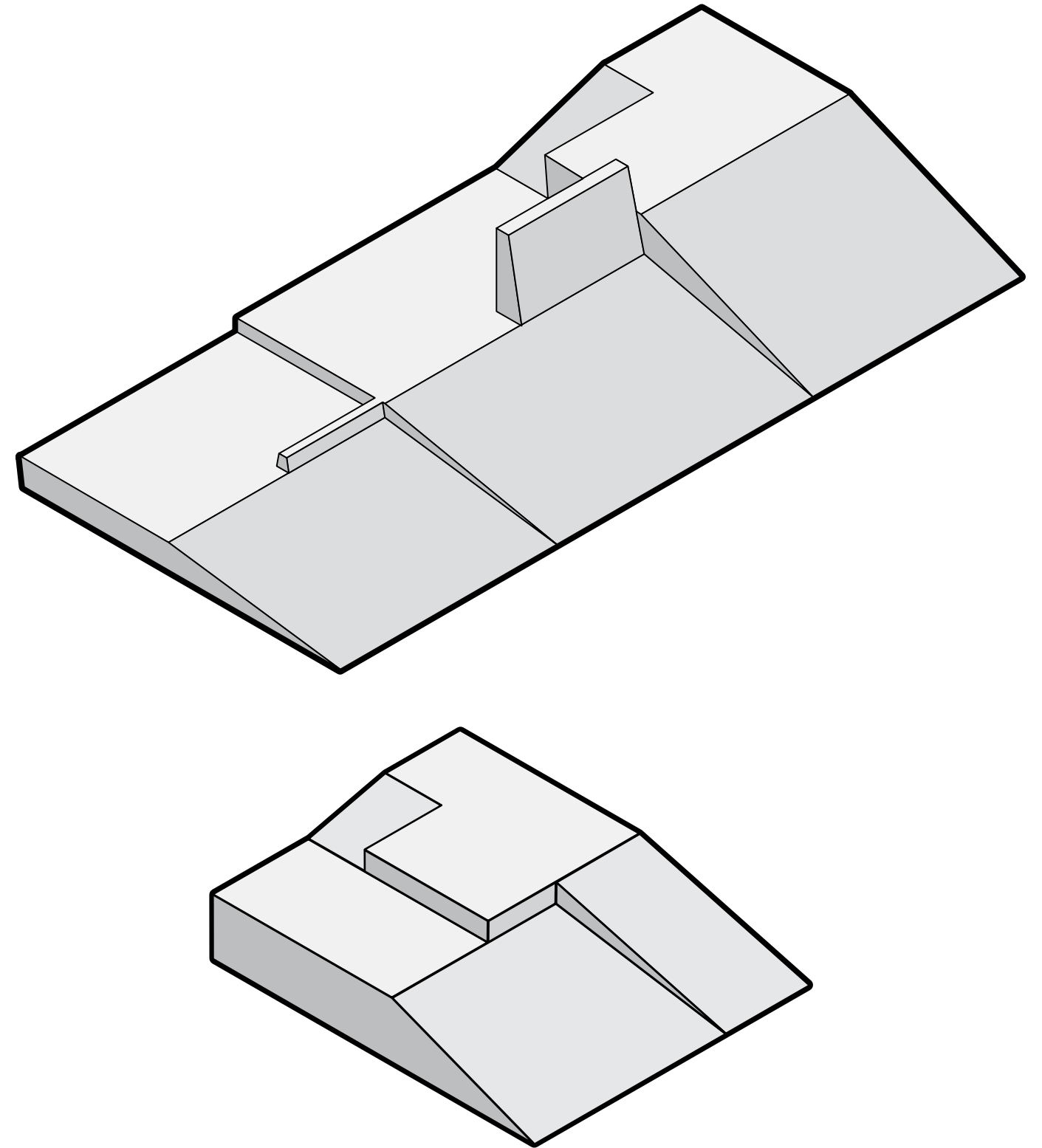
Flat rails are low steel beams set into a flat concrete surface. They are a fundamental skill-building obstacle. Flat rails are used for sliding and grinding. The degree of difficulty is captured by the length of the slide and the height of the rail. Flat rails are included in most skateparks and do not frequently occur in natural urban architecture. In their most basic form, these rails should be fairly standardized and not overly creative. Advanced rails are common but should not replace the most basic form (shown below).



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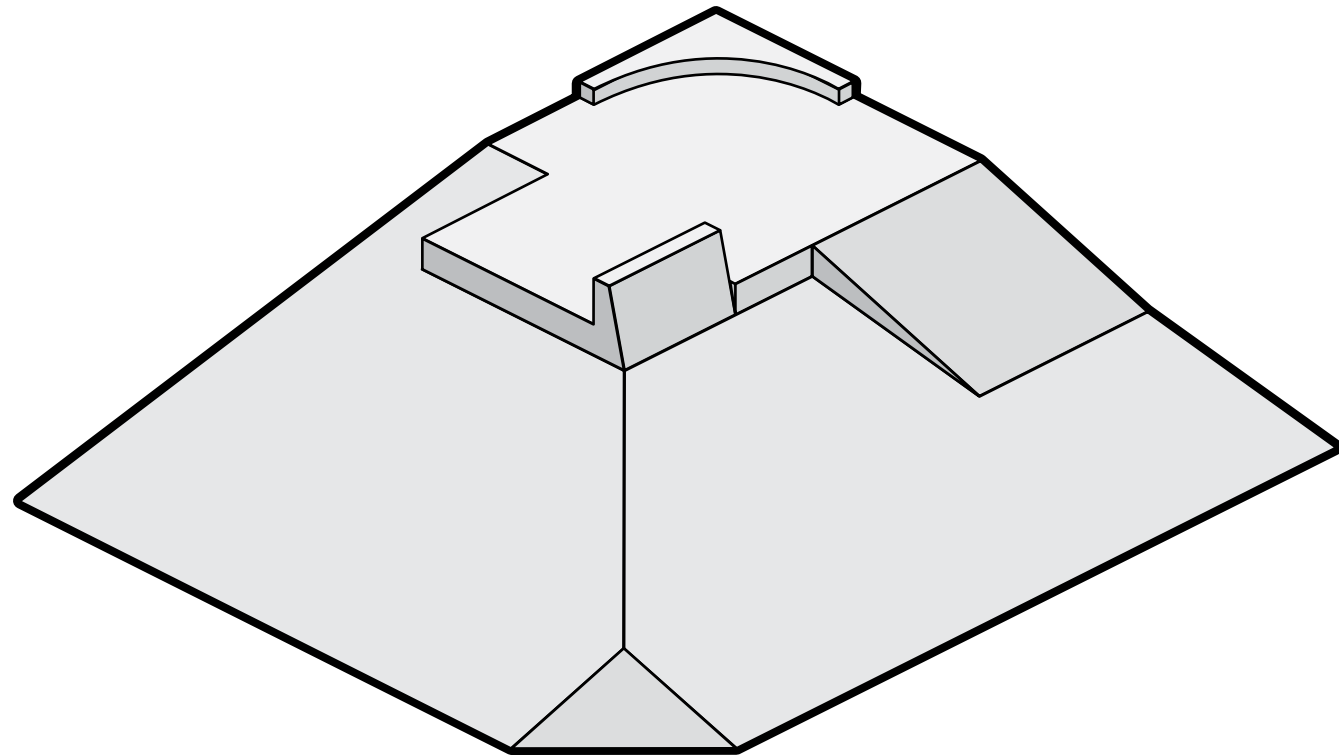
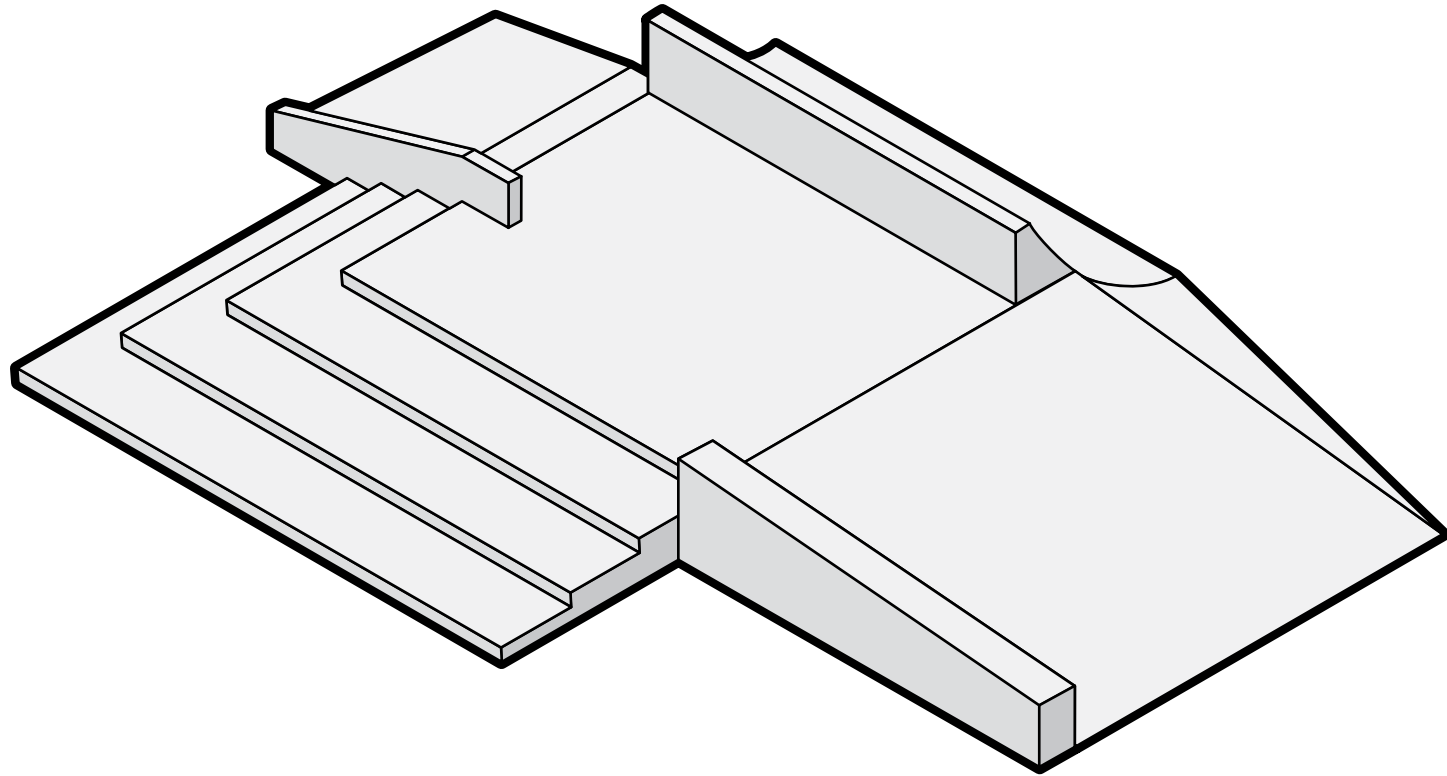
SAMPLE STRUCTURES

In the hands of a professional and experienced designer, a skatepark can take on intentional characteristics that reflect the greater park setting, local history, or a sense of celebration. Even small obstacles can intrigue skateboarders and become “signature” pieces to the park. Below are some examples of how simple pyramid-like structures can be outfitted to provide different kinds of uses.



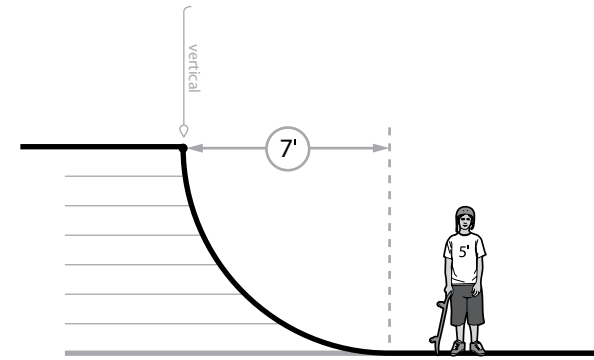
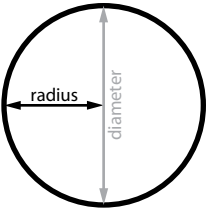
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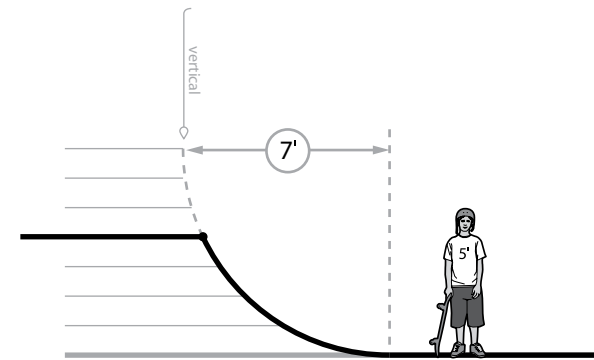


MEASURING TRANNY

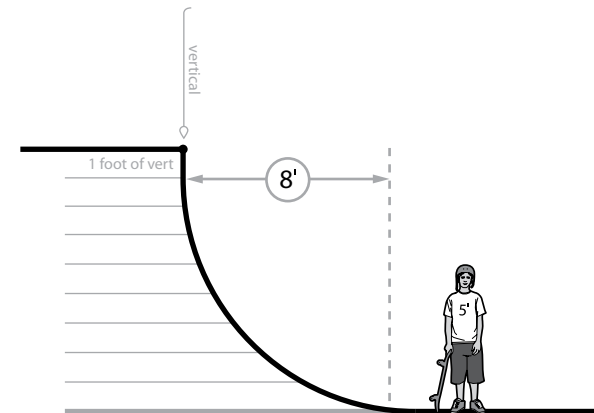
Transition is commonly expressed in terms of radius. Though many skateboarders will refer to all transition areas as vertical (vert), true vert occurs only when a curving incline reaches a perpendicular attitude.



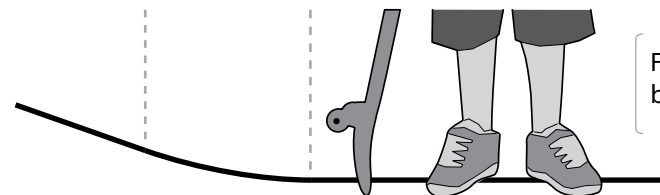
This 7-foot quarterpipe goes all the way to vert. The radius of the curve is 7-feet. Therefore, a 7-foot quarterpipe with 7-foot transition will just reach vert.



This transition features the same 7-foot radius but is only 4-feet tall. This quarterpipe would be described as a 4-foot quarterpipe with 7-foot transition.



The larger the radius, the more gradual the transition between flat to vertical. Taller structures such as deep bowls and vert ramps often require larger transition, though these considerations are the designer's expertise. Different areas of a park usually have different transitions.



Flat banks often have a small amount of transition built into the base.

About The People Behind This *Guide*



International Association Of Skateboard Companies (IASC)

The mission of the International Association of Skateboard Companies is to represent the global skateboarding community as a united force by listening, understanding and acting on the needs of skateboarders and the skateboard industry.

A non-profit organization formed in 1995, IASC aims to increase global participation in skateboarding, reach out to skateboarding youth through educational programs, and be the most reliable resource on the skateboarding industry. IASC's goals are to promote skateboarding, increase participation, save its members money, and educate.

IASC's priority is to involve more youth in skateboarding. To encourage more kids to get on and stay on skateboards IASC established the international holiday, Go Skateboarding Day (June 21), organizes Learn To Skate days and Career days, and also raises funds to help send economically disadvantaged skaters to skateboard camps.

For more information on IASC, its members, and programs, visit www.skateboardiasc.org.



Skaters for Public Skateparks (SPS)

We hope you've enjoyed reading the *Public Skatepark Development Guide* as much as we've enjoyed putting it together.

The wisdom collected in this book comes from dozens of skatepark advocates. Some of them are tackling large, city-wide skatepark systems and others are looking at a single modest neighborhood skatepark. All of the contributors to this book, from writing to layout (and everything in between) were donated by volunteers. That's what it's all about.

We would love to hear from you about your observations in skatepark advocacy, your comments about this book, or if you just want to say hi. Feel free to visit us at www.skatepark.org.

Keep skateboarding real and our communities healthy.



Tony Hawk Foundation

The Tony Hawk Foundation seeks to foster lasting improvements in society, with an emphasis on supporting and empowering youth. Through special events, grants, and technical assistance, the foundation supports recreational programs with a focus on the creation of public skateboard parks in low-income communities. The foundation favors programs that clearly demonstrate that funds received will produce tangible, ongoing, positive results.

For more information, please visit the Tony Hawk Foundation online at www.tonyhawkfoundation.org.