

OBSERVATIONS, THOUGHTS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CITY OF WARREN SKATEPARK

Talking points for discussion with
Councilman Jonathan Lafferty

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Terminology

Vert Skateboarding

It involves skateboard riders moving from the horizontal (on the ground) to the vertical (on a ramp or other incline) to perform tricks - thus "vert". It is also referred to as "transition skateboarding"

Transition Skateboarding

Where that wall of the ramp becomes vertical, or rather, transitions from flat into vertical, thus it is called "transition." Most skateparks have very few vertical walls but almost all of them will have "transition" walls, which skaters have shortened to transition

Street Skateboarding

Street skateboarding is a skateboarding discipline which focuses on flat-ground tricks, grinds, slides and aerials within urban environments

Bowl Skateboarding

Circular shaped skateboarding bowls, made to imitate the pool skating.

Area Skate Park Visits

I, along with my skater consultant/friend Matthew, visited some local skate parks with a perspective of what we want, what we don't want, what works well or otherwise, how does the design work, is there a good flow with visibility of other skaters, how is the fabrication, landscaping. We also considered the experience of the skater, the BMX riders, the scooter kids, the spectators, or the parents or supervising adult.

Mathew also had a lengthy conversation with Justin Bohl, a professional skater from Michigan. Justin ushers around professional skaters when they are in town and is very familiar with which parks pro's will skate at and why, and what needs to be in the park.

Justin Bohl provided a lot of insight from the professional perspective, confirmed many of Matt and my findings, and overall provided a lot of valuable input.

Park: Riley Skate Park**Location:** Founders Sports Park in Farmington Hills**Design:** Site Design Group and Grindline**Size:** 29,000 sqf**Classification:** Regional Skatepark

Farmington Hills website: all concrete, designed for skateboarders and in-line skaters. Riley Skate Park attracts around 200 skaters each day, in addition to the thousands of people who will visit the skate park for skateboard competitions and camps.

Camps: Camps are put on by Plus Skateboarding (Plus), Farmington's local skate shop. Registration is through the city's parks and rec department.

Competitions: They hold a local competition, the Fall Classic. Competitions are held by Plus. Competition registration is done through Plus and not the city.

My Observations:

A good mix of everything, transition, bowl, street. For its' age it has some wear but is still in really good shape. Chipping in concrete due to bikes. Community bulletin board.

Pro's

- Lots of street
- Pavilion
- Seating
- Lots of trash cans
- Lots of beginner friendly space
- Concrete approach
- Connected to a skate shop that holds a lot of events and camps

Con's

- fence
- approach to many street obstacles was short or awkward
- huge bowl that nobody uses that was a very costly addition to the park
- not a space for judging hosting skate events
- no restrooms
- no restaurants, fast food, party stores etc in the vicinity
- no lighting





Park: Riverside Skate Park**Location: Riverside Park in Detroit****Design:** Grindline**Size:** 15,000 sqf**Classification:** Regional Skatepark**My Observations:**

Scenic views, well spread out, good mix of transition and street, bowl is a little deep, destination spot-people come from all around to skate there. More there than just the skatepark, it was part of a large riverfront development that includes basketball courts, soccer fields, and a dog park. The next phase will include a sledding hill, boat launch and splash pad. Entire cost for the projects are \$13.2 million. There was power available for people to charge their phones or make ramen on a hot plate.

Pro's

- dark concrete
- metal facing on all obstacles
- spaced out so that a lot of people can skate simultaneously
- good lighting
- no fences
- part of a greater development (dog park and more)
- very large pavilion
- available power for all
- grills
- great lighting

Con's

- no restrooms
- dirty (litter) – maybe not enough trash cans







Park: Donald Red Geary Skatepark**Location:** Geary Park in Ferndale**Design:** Evergreen Skate Parks**Size:** 8,000-11,000 sqf**Classification:** Neighborhood Skatepark**My Observations:**

It is in a vast open park in the middle of the community, lots of life there, lots of families. Transitions park with limited street.

Pro's

- It is in the middle of a nice neighborhood, it's a very active place
- Good flow, lots of challenging aspects to it
- There is seating and pavilions in the park

Con's

- no concrete approach (perimeter of park dirt leading to heavy erosion due to foot traffic)
- no restrooms
- pavilion is far away and seating is limited and inappropriate for the area
- no spectator seating or viewing area for events
- planted trees in the middle of the skate area
- no lighting





Park: Clawson Skate Park**Location: Clawson City Park in Clawson****Design:** Evergreen Skate Parks**Size:** sqf**Classification:** Neighborhood Skate Park

Skateboards and in-line skates only, no BMX, no bicycles, scooters, or motorized vehicles.

My Observations:

There are two perches that are major bottle necks. Maintenance is an issue, fencing broken. Transitions with very little street park.

Pro's

- Bleachers
- Nice park
- Ample parking

Con's

- fenced in which really limits the amount of street skating that can be done in their small section of street skate
- no concrete approach (perimeter of park dirt leading to heavy erosion due to foot traffic)
- no restrooms
- no lighting



Park: Sterling Heights Skate Park

Location: Sterling Heights

Design: Evergreen Skate Parks

Size: sqf

Skateboards and in-line skates only, no BMX, no bicycles, scooters, or motorized vehicles.

My Observations:

Lots of city buildings nearby, places to go to the bathroom. All transition, no street.

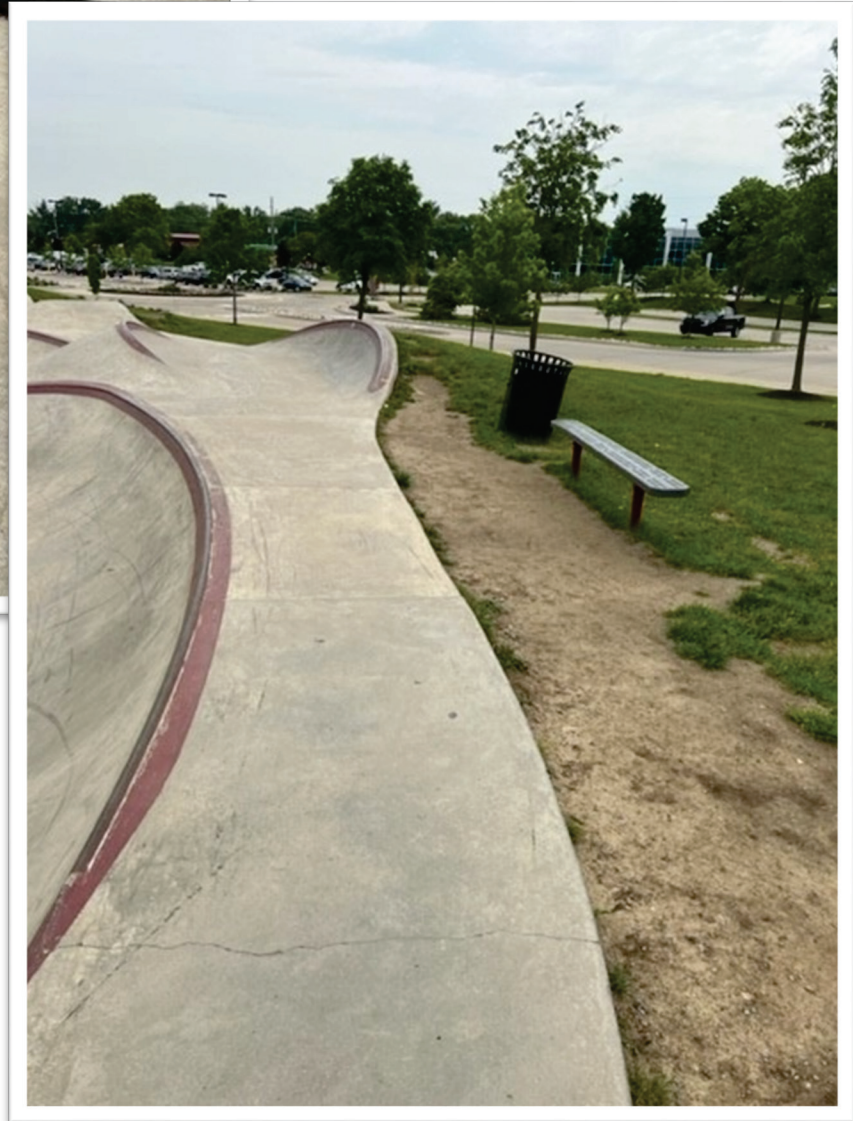
Pro's

- good size
- multiple places for skaters to perch
- concrete approach
- it's active, nice because that is all there is in the area
- a lot of parking
- no fence

Con's

- erosion around skatepark due to lack of landscaping or design
- because the park doesn't appeal to older skaters there is no culture in the area which makes it dangerous, no one to teach or pass on park etiquette
- lots of blind spots in the park
- no lighting









Overall Assessment

During the skatepark visits we observed chipping and breaking up of the cement in the skating areas. We believed that damage to be caused by bikes, specifically pegs on bikes. While it is an added cost, metal facing on the obstacles would prevent the destruction of the cement and preserve this huge investment. While we believed this to be the cause, we did consult with pro skaters who confirmed this finding.

When consulting with pro skater Justin Bohl, he brought up a really great point about the cement. He said that on sunny days, even when wearing a hat skaters will get sunburned from the sun reflecting off the cement. He highly recommended putting a tint into the cement so as to avoid this.

Justin Bohl also offered input on what he looks for when finding local spots for pro's to skate at. He said they will not skate at Evergreen parks, everything is too tight and they do primarily transition skating and lack objects like a street park would.

Bikes are big and can present a big danger mixed in with scooters, skateboarders, and roller skaters. Serious consideration should be given to bike safety in areas outside of the pump track. No bikes allowed? or limit the number of bikes based on the number of other athletes using the space? and there should be designated times for bikes so that they can use the facilities without all the hazards of other athletes.

Consideration should be given to additional space for roller skaters. A walking trail for walkers or roller skaters would be great, but what about adding a roller rink right in with the skate park. Roller skaters will use the skate park but would also love a roller rink or track. Monica is a former roller derby player, and was on the board of Detroit Derby Girls and helped it to grow to competing at the Masonic Temple and Cobo Arena. We are very familiar with the world of roller skating and roller derby, and that it is a rapidly growing pastime, especially for women in their teens through their 50's. During the pandemic new roller skate brands were created because there was such a shortage of skates available. Aside from roller derby and junior derby, you can see the popularity in other areas. Bedrock Financial Group is bringing back the Monroe Street Midway in Detroit again this summer. The midway is covered in murals and art, has a roller rink, basketball courts, and a large amount of open roller space. This is becoming again a hugely popular pastime and would be great to add a slab of cement onto the skatepark and have a roller rink included as part of the whole attraction. Photos of the Monroe Street Midway are included in appendix B.

As shown in photos in appendix B, a temporary perimeter could be built around the skate rink. Or no perimeter could be put in place. However, if we were to put in a more permanent perimeter, that would allow for the possibility of flooding the rink during the winter for ice skating. No city commitment expected, this could be a great set up for a DIY ice rink.

In talking to Roller Skate Detroit at the recent Ferndale skate competition, they indicated that they work with Ferndale to offer roller skating classes. They are able to do this because Ferndale has a curling rink that is used as a roller rink in the summer and then they freeze it over to make the ice rink for curling in the winter.

Included in the sample design plans, but worthy of mentioning to not be overlooked at any point. The beginner area is crucial to have. It's nice because it gives a space for everyone, inclusion is good. But the critical reason for this is safety. Experienced skaters very often incur serious injuries when skating with brand new skaters. Because they are more in control the experienced skater has the responsibility to avoid a collision, especially with a younger child. Quite often the new skater is unharmed YAY while the experienced skater incurs injury. By providing a beginner space it helps circumvent these situations and allows everyone to skate with an increased comfort level.



To increase comfort levels if people are there when there is not a lot of activity, and to deter degenerate shenanigans, an emergency phone like at college campuses would be a great addition. This actually would be a great thing to look into for all our parks.




Excerpts from PublicSkateparkGuide.org

[full article at end of document, Appendix A]

Regional Skatepark

The regional skatepark is primarily defined by its large size and capacity to handle crowds. They often draw visitors from all over the nation and, although they may seldom be the sole purpose of a vacation, they are typically visited by travelling skaters as “must see” attractions.

Most skateboarders can list the skateparks they would most like to visit. They are almost all larger than 20,000 square feet and qualify as “regional skateparks” purely on size alone, though the largest ones are around 40,000 square feet.

	Skate Spot	3,000—5,000 sf Serves 12,000 residents 5 patron capacity
	Neighborhood Skatepark	8,000—11,000 sf Serves 25,000 residents 65 patron capacity
	Regional Skatepark	20,000+ sf Serves 75,000 residents 100+ patron capacity

Most regional skateparks have qualities that allow them to draw from a wide area. They provide services beyond simply a place to skate. Regional skateparks will almost always have spectator seating, (or ample space for temporary seating), concessions, parking, and lights for evening use. Some regional skateparks are the “classroom” for skateboarding classes and workshops. They’ll often be the venue for pro team tours, and show up in video parts.

The largest regional skateparks are around 40,000 square feet. Regional skateparks, due to their size, present unique challenges. Smaller, neighborhood skateparks support a cadre of regular park visitors that form a micro-community. Regional skateparks don’t do this as well because they are typically managed as showcase parks. The high degree of ownership and involvement by the managing agency can mitigate unwanted behavior at the facility, but it can also dissuade natural stewardship by the regular patrons. Regional skateparks tend to lack the “community spirit” that smaller facilities possess.

Regional skateparks are often the goal of communities looking to create an ambitious, impressive facility. The strength of this solution is that it can spur economic development by attracting visitors from a wider area. (Essentially, the further one travels from home, the more money one is likely to spend on necessities.) The regional skatepark often becomes a premier feature in a Parks Department’s inventory of properties.

Ramblings of a Mad Man

Concessions

Must have concessions, would be nice to have some healthy fresh options. Possibly in lieu of soda, make available sports drinks, juice, water, coffee. Should have some food and a variety of snacks and refreshments. Fresh fruit and veggies, yogurt, power bars etc. should be considered. We should also encourage biodegradable packaging at the concessions as much as reasonably possible.

Concessions should have an ice machine so that ice can be provided to people who have taken a fall or were in a collision.

Ideally at the concessions there would have skateboard and scooter rentals, possibly protective gear rentals or if that is not hygienic protective gear should be available for sale.

We have already had feedback from moms who asked that there be coffee. If we have available coffee, some café style seating for the moms, shaded spots for reading books, parents or caregivers will be more likely to stay and supervise rather than drop their kids off.

It wouldn't take much to get some table and chairs that maybe are different then what one would expect in a park, Monroe Street Midway seating shown for reference. In addition a very stylish, functional, easy to achieve look over the seating area would be sails to provide shade. Possibly add in some festoon lighting and you have a hip spot to the likes of Ferndale, Mudgies in Detroit, and many other trendy establishments.



Restrooms

No Men's restrooms and no Women's restrooms. All should be single unit restrooms with a toilet and changing tables. They could be labeled Unisex (boring), Human, People. Regardless of the name, they should be inclusive for all. Should have ample number of units as it would be expected to have hundreds of visitors a day in the summer months.

National Tours/Competitions

With the size, and how well thought out everything will be in our park, it should be expected that professional skateboarding tours/competitions will frequent the park. With that in mind, much of the stuff discussed below is important to have integrated into the park to make this be a nationally recognized park and town.

Maintenance Shed

There should be a maintenance shed where a power washer, hoses, blowers etc can be stored. These would be used during park operations to clean up food spills, blood, vomit, tears of children, or debris in the skate area.

Year round park use

A small sledding hill could be put in the back of the park to make this more of a 4 season park. The sails could come down from the concessions and warming lamps could be put out. The concessions could sell hot chocolate, hot tea, coffee, soups and breads. The walking trails could be utilized in the winter as well if they were kept cleared.

Classes, Camps, Workshops

Some skate parks offer summer skate camps, classes, and workshops. All regional skate parks, like Warren, should make these offerings a priority. In Farmington Hills skate camps are offered through the parks and rec department and ran by their local skate shop. In other parks they don't offer camps but a local skate shop might set up a camp to be ran at the local skateparks. Regardless of how it happens, it really is something that is needed at our park. We have tested the market for adult skate classes and have had an overwhelmingly positive response. We are not aware of any skate classes for adults so this is a good opportunity to look at not what other cities have done but how we can offer our community the greatest variety of services and show all the other communities what they are missing out on.

Amenities –

What will improve the experience for the various visitors? What is necessary to make us stand out?

- Spectator seating
- Pavilion with power
- Concessions seating for parents/caretakers (café seating and shade sails)
- Sound System for events
- Water Bottle Fill Station(s)

- Mistig Stations (could be incorporated with the water bottle fill stations like they are at the Detroit Zoo)
- Drinking Fountains
- Garbage cans, lots of garbage cans
- Sticker pole/sculpture – give a pole or art and let it be covered with stickers
- Grills
- Free Wi-Fi

Community

Loss of the community feel is one of the biggest risks with such a magnificent development. Here are a few ideas that we think would be a great addition to the area and would really help maintain a sense of community.

- Walking trail around park
 - Trails should be extra wide to accommodate two “lanes” for walkers or roller skaters
 - “lanes” should be wide enough for wheelchairs
- Benches along the walking trail for breaks, or for enjoying the view
- Flower beds around walking trails
 - To expand the community emphasis, could work with the high school counselors to get students to help which would satisfy their volunteer requirement to graduate. Monica had the opportunity during a local meeting to engage with the Fitzgerald social worker and she indicated that there is a shortage of volunteer opportunities and this would be a great one for her students.
 - We could also have local businesses, or individuals, sponsor gardens
- Bulletin Boards to highlight community events and gatherings
- Reserve a spot for a nature center. It could be initially information boards near the far side of the walking trail with the hopes to eventually have a walkthrough building that would not need to be staffed. This would be a really special addition to the park considering Red Run is there and the space is a host to a variety of wildlife in the city. Kind of an offset to the impact we are having by putting the new features in at the park. The Nature Center would have information about all the wildlife in the city of Warren (deer, wild turkey, turkey vultures, fox, coyote, groundhogs, skunks, rabbit, opossum, etc.), Red Run Creeks function, About the Clinton River Water Shed and how Red Run plays a role in that, bat habitats.
- Community gathering times/events: Saturday morning yoga and skate session; Sunday night old bones skate, BMX night, quad squad roller skating times, disco skate nights



- A large enclosed bulletin board that would give information on community gatherings, park clean up days, movies in the park
- A paved path from Mound to walk, bike, skate into the park and not have to be in the roadway

And the biggest community component yet, an annual Blessing of the Boards with the first one occurring at the grand opening of the skatepark. This is a common event for motorcycles, surfers, and in many communities they have the blessing of the low riders for their cars. But wait, there is more. Warren will be the first that we could find to have a blessing of the boards but we are looking at community and inclusion beyond just this. We want to have all (really many but all sounds better in a sentence) faiths from our community participate in this event. Also because we are in the backyard of St. Anne's, and they have a new priest, we would/could invite their new priest to lead the way on the ceremony. We would also invite participation from our area Buddhist Temples, a leader from a synagogue, Hindu and Islam leaders etc.

Alternative Power Sources

GM is about to open their new battery lab, just over a mile down the road from the skatepark. Wouldn't it make sense for them to provide some of their alternative power technology to run the skate park! It would be a great way for GM to support the community they are in, it would cost them very little, it would be great PR for GM to show off what they can do, and we could even perhaps allow them to do a car photo shoot at the skate park.



Appendix A

Resources from PublicSkateparkGuide.org

Thanks for dropping in!

This is a free, non-commercial resource for advocates and planners seeking information about public skateparks. If you're working on a public skatepark project — or interested in starting one — you're in the right place.



All public skateparks launch and finish with community engagement. From the first conversation all the way to the grand opening, and beyond, every public skatepark is made by and for the volunteers that are present and ready to get it done. For years after it opens, the park serves the community and is the place where powerful changes happen.

Practically all public skateparks we see today are the result of sustained, volunteer-led advocacy and fundraising campaigns. The Public Skatepark Development Guide is a resource for those volunteers. We know that your community has what it takes to produce a public skatepark, and we expect that after it's built your community will enjoy the benefits of that facility for decades.

The material provided on this site is the collected advice and instruction provided by skatepark advocates from all types of community projects. This site, and its companion book, *Public Skatepark Development Guide*, were made possible with the support of The Skatepark Project (formerly known as the Tony Hawk Foundation).

[Strategic support from The Skatepark Project](#)

Skatepark.org content is provided as a collection of articles detailing various aspects of skatepark function, development, and operations. Here's what you'll find.

BASIC PUBLIC SKATEPARK PROJECT INFORMATION

[Principles](#)

[Process](#)

[Benefits of Skateparks](#)

[Types of Skateparks](#)

[Cost of Skateparks](#)

KIDS DESERVE A PLACE TO GROW

Skateparks build and sustain healthy communities. As a gathering place for dedicated, athletic youth, the skatepark provides the forum for visitors young and old, beginning and skilled, to meet and share experiences. For many skateboarding youth, the skatepark becomes a home-away-from-home.

SENSE OF BELONGING

More than anyone, young people need to feel like they are recognized and appreciated by their communities. In too many places skateboarders get the wrong message from local authorities who limit or outlaw skateboarding and ignore its inherent benefits. Skateparks are the solution. Every skatepark supports hundreds of kids that might otherwise have nowhere to go.

A first-of-its-kind [study of skateboarding culture](#) reveals that skateboarding improves mental health, fosters community, and encourages diversity and resilience.

Results from [this study](#) suggest that people participating in recreational skateboarding in community skateparks achieve the CDC's exercise recommendations for cardiovascular fitness.

Skateparks can be seen as a playground, a gym, a creative laboratory, a community center and much more.

We believe skatepark users encounter a physical and social environment that improves mental health, fosters community, and encourages diversity and resilience.

Skatepark users consistently engage in

Cooperative athleticism

Creative self expression

Diverse community engagement

Long term habitual exercise habits (without the restrictions of league costs, coaches or practice schedules)

Perseverance through repetition and self-set goal achievement

Emotional regulation

Inclusion

Types of Skateparks

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

Skatepark typologies can be as confusing to experienced skateboarders as they are to the general public. This confusion is compounded by skate lingo and esoteric planning terms. When we talk about skatepark typology, we're saying that skateparks can be considered along the same lines as other community projects, and that there are different ways of considering them. Each type of skatepark has its own strengths and weaknesses, and you cannot determine what is best for your community until you fully understand what your options are.

The three most-common skatepark typologies:

1. Size

Skate spot, Neighborhood skatepark, Regional skatepark, etc.

2. Material




Cast-in-place concrete, precast concrete, steel, prefabricated polymer, prefabricated steel, wood, etc.

3. Design

Transition, street/plaza, flow, etc.

The primary skatepark typology is based on its size. A skatepark's size determines how many structural attractions it can accommodate. A large skatepark can fit more cool stuff and allow more people to comfortably use it at once. A small skatepark does just the opposite; few people can use it at once and it can only provide for one or two structures. Although it may not seem like it, both of these types of skateparks are important and can play an essential role in the skatepark vision.

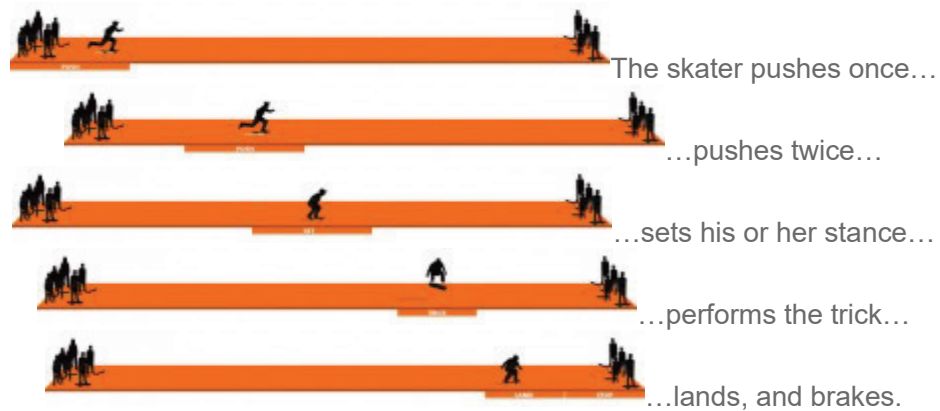
Skatepark Size Typology

	Skate Spot	3,000—5,000 sf Serves 12,000 residents 5 patron capacity
	Neighborhood Skatepark	8,000—11,000 sf Serves 25,000 residents 65 patron capacity
	Regional Skatepark	20,000+ sf Serves 75,000 residents 100+ patron capacity

Material and design considerations will be made later. These typologies fall under the “design” phase of skatepark development. While developing the skatepark vision, your main concern will be how much skatepark your community needs.

The capacity of each type of skatepark is primarily based on size. The design of the terrain can have a major impact on the facility's capacity. For estimating your vision's capacity, you should base your assessment on a basic model that presumes that each feature or “line” within the skatepark supports the maximum number of simultaneous users. An experienced, professional skatepark designer will be comfortable discussing skatepark capacity. The logic behind capacity assessment presumes that skateboarders share the active space. At a certain number of users, new arrivals will see that the space is too crowded and will move elsewhere. If the park is too crowded, they will leave.

Each skateboarder needs a particular amount of space. Imagine a simple trick that doesn't require an obstacle.



The skater traveled 75 linear feet and used 10 feet of width, and the “path” includes 5 feet on either side as a safety buffer. 75 x 20 feet equals 1,500 square feet. The individual doing the trick isn't the only one using that space. There are 9 other skaters “sharing” the space and waiting their turn. Therefore, 10 skaters can share 1,500 square feet. This model scales well for all kinds of terrain and can be corroborated by observation.

For example, if you visit a typical 10,000 square foot skatepark, it will start to look full with about 50 people in it. At 65-70 people, it will be difficult to find a place to skate. A 10,000 square foot skatepark's capacity is 66 people.

Skate Spot



Tenney Creek Skate Spot in Vancouver, WA.

Image courtesy SkateOregon.com

Skate spots are the smallest building block in a community-wide system of skateparks. They can be between 1,500 to 5,000 square feet, and can serve as many as 10 simultaneous users (depending on size and design).

Skate spots are the smallest skateboarding facilities. They can be purpose-built, built for other purposes but repurposed and sanctioned for skateboarding, or purpose-built structures that utilize adjacent non-skateboarding structures. These different types of skate spots aren't clearly delineated nor do they have distinct names. They are all collectively known as skate spots or simply "spots."

In its most basic form, the skate spot is a single structure with enough flat space leading to and from it to accommodate one skater at a time. The design of the structure is irrelevant; what makes it a "spot" is that it's small. Most skate spots are about 3,000 square feet and feature a single structural attraction. Typical skate spots feature either a bank, ledge, stair set, rail, or a single transitional form. (In skateboarding terms, transitional forms are curved, like quarterpipes, for example.) Larger skate spots might feature a few of these structures. One thing that almost all skate spots have in common is that they leverage existing public structures in some way, like a sidewalk or existing slab.

Spots can be designed and built specifically for skateboarding; they may combine a structure created specifically for skateboarding with ordinary public sidewalks and paths; or they may even be structures originally designed for another purpose that happen to be popular with skateboarders. All of these can be effective, successful skate spots. You'll find examples of different skate spot designs in the Design chapter.

Skate spots can comfortably afford four skaters concurrently, and six individuals will lead to intolerable delays between turns. Skate spots with two or more points of egress will typically allow for slightly higher capacities as a few more individuals can remain "on deck" for their turn without losing patience. Conversely, skate spots with a single point of access will have a slightly lower capacity. (Again, skate spots can comfortably serve 4—6 individuals at a time, so the design will not significantly increase capacity.)

Skate spots should not be considered a low-cost alternative to a skatepark. However, skate spots can address three important needs in a **large** community.

First, skate spots can be used to meet the needs of a very small sub-community that may not have easy access to one of the larger skateparks in the community. Remote, suburban enclaves are likely candidates for skate spots.

For example, in West Linn, Oregon, planners were working on a skatepark. The site was perfect for a large residential enclave, but was far away from residents across town. To help serve those remote residents, planners built an additional 3,500 square foot skate spot. A second 10,000 square foot neighborhood skatepark would have been prohibitively expensive, but an additional skate spot provided an excellent solution to meet their community's specific needs.

Second, skate spots can draw skateboarders along desired routes and create linkage between two destinations. The skate spot might replicate, for example, a popular but nuisance attraction nearby. By creating a skate spot that is an improved version of the non-sanctioned spot, skaters will be drawn away from that place where skating is inappropriate and toward the sanctioned skate spot where it IS appropriate.

For example, when city planners in Vancouver, British Columbia, created their new skatepark, they saw that it was equidistant between two stops on the light rail system. Skaters going to the skatepark via train would use either

stop, depending on the direction they were approaching from. Both stops had long, sweeping paths and long ledges leading from the elevated train stop. One of the stops was near some recreation fields and the other was adjacent to condos. The ledges at both stops had anti-skateboarding devices installed on the ledges, rendering them unskateable. (These devices are popularly known by the brand-name “Skate-Stoppers.”) Planners preferred that the skaters use the stop near the fields. Their solution was to remove the anti-skateboarding clips from the ledges at the stop nearest the fields. This attracted skateboarders to that stop due to the additional attraction, and away from the stop near the condos where the anti-skateboarding devices were still installed.

Third, skate spots can be used to attract small amounts of human activity to an area to help displace undesired activity. Skateboarders, particularly ones in their later teenage years, are generally willing to skate in places that most people would not consider appropriate for recreation. Because of this, skaters can serve as important agents in urban renewal efforts. (That’s not to suggest that skaters should be expected to recreate in any dangerous or unsavory place there happens to be a skate spot, but rather that they may be more willing to visit those places where non-skaters may not.)

In Tacoma, Washington, city leaders were frustrated with the continued skateboarding activity at a popular unsanctioned skate spot. The city installed “No Skateboarding” signs and Skate-Stoppers along the edge of the most popular ledges. Skateboarding activity at the location stopped, but other undesired activity—worse activity, by popular measure—increased. The site attracted graffiti and broken glass became a common sight. Skateboarders approached the city and made an appeal for sanctioned access to the popular spot. The city agreed, the skate-stoppers were removed, and skateboarding at the spot resumed. Almost immediately, the graffiti abated and broken glass—when it occurred—was quickly cleaned up by visiting skaters. The skateboarding activity displaced those that would use the space for more destructive purposes.

Neighborhood Skatepark



Neighborhood Skateparks in Kelso, WA.

Image courtesy of Rotary Club of Kelso.

Neighborhood skateparks are between 6,000 to 12,000 square feet and can adequately serve a population up to 25,000 residents. They are generally a mix of terrain styles and provide some comfort amenities. A neighborhood skatepark of average size and quality design can serve as many as 60 simultaneous users.

For any community besides an ultra low population rural community, 6,000 sq. ft. is the minimum size for any community’s first (or only) skatepark. The neighborhood skatepark is the basis for all other skateparks. It is the most common, easiest to develop, and what most people envision when they hear the word “skatepark.” Neighborhood skateparks are the backbone of your community-wide skatepark system. They serve as local attractions for the area youth and will almost immediately become a community landmark for kids in the vicinity.

Neighborhood skateparks are only alike in their size; the style and appearance of those parks can be very different. Some neighborhood skateparks are created with a few ramps on a decommissioned tennis court, while others are integrated into the natural landscape. Some reflect local history, and others don’t look like skateparks at all due to their interesting materials and organic contours. The point is that neighborhood skateparks offer great design flexibility and can be modified to help shape public perception.

Because neighborhood skateparks are what most non-skaters envision whenever “skateparks” come up in conversation, it’s important to be very specific while you describe the neighborhood skateparks. Skate spots and regional skateparks have distinguishing characteristics based on their size. In other words, the skate spot is typically so small that its defining characteristic is that it is integrated into the surrounding environment. Regional skateparks, at the other end of the spectrum, are so large that they offer a little bit of everything. The neighborhood skatepark is the flexible middle-ground between these extremes.

Every neighborhood skatepark should contain a defining characteristic—usually a structural element—that helps visitors identify that facility as a unique place. These “signature elements” are powerful devices that allow skaters and non-skaters to describe the skatepark in a way that goes beyond skate lingo. Skaters will often talk about a skatepark in terms of the specific design characteristics and use terms that are esoteric and foreign to a non-skating public. However, signature elements can provide a point of access for skaters and non-skaters. We’ll go into signature elements more in the design chapter.

NOTE: 10,000 square feet may sound like a large area. However, it’s about the same size as a baseball field’s infield area.

Regional Skatepark



Lake Cunningham Regional Skatepark, San Jose, CA.

Image courtesy: California Skateparks

The regional skatepark is primarily defined by its large size and capacity to handle crowds. They often draw visitors from all over the nation and, although they may seldom be the sole purpose of a vacation, they are typically visited by travelling skaters as “must see” attractions.

Most skateboarders can list the skateparks they would most like to visit. They are almost all larger than 20,000 square feet and qualify as “regional skateparks” purely on size alone, though the largest ones are around 40,000 square feet.

Most regional skateparks have qualities that allow them to draw from a wide area. They provide services beyond simply a place to skate. Regional skateparks will almost always have spectator seating, (or ample space for temporary seating), concessions, parking, and lights for evening use. Some regional skateparks are the “classroom” for skateboarding and BMX classes and workshops hosted by the Parks Department. They’ll often be the venue for pro team tours, and show up in video parts.

The largest regional skateparks are around 40,000 square feet. The largest skatepark in the world, in China, is more than 120,000 square feet. Regional skateparks, due to their size, present unique challenges. Smaller, neighborhood skateparks support a cadre of regular park visitors that form a micro-community. Regional skateparks don’t do this as well because they are typically managed as showcase parks. The high degree of ownership and involvement by the managing agency can mitigate unwanted behavior at the facility, but it can also dissuade natural stewardship by the regular patrons. Regional skateparks tend to lack the “community spirit” that smaller facilities possess.

Regional skateparks are often the goal of communities looking to create an ambitious, impressive facility. The strength of this solution is that it can spur economic development by attracting visitors from a wider area. (Essentially, the further one travels from home, the more money one is likely to spend on necessities.) The regional skatepark often becomes a premier feature in a Parks Department’s inventory of properties.

There should be a regional park for every five skateparks in a service area. The service area of the regional skatepark is significantly larger than that of a neighborhood skatepark. The regional skatepark draws from a very wide range so its precise location in the community is not as critical to its success. Regional skateparks should be easily accessible from nearby interstates and highways.

Appendix B

Monroe Street Midway Reference Pictures

