



Calgary Skateparks

A report studying skatepark development in Calgary and the youth perspective

Report written and compiled by Youth Central's Mayor's Youth Council





The Mayor's Youth Council Research Committee looked into the youth perspective on prospective skateparks in Calgary. Through the use of an original survey, the Research Committee was able to gauge valuable insight on this subject:

The interest that the City of Calgary has shown towards skateparks (through the popularity of Mobile Skateparks and the work of Community and Neighborhood Services, as examples) is a clear indicator of the popularity of skateboarding amongst young Calgarians. As such, the Research Committee of the Mayor's Youth Council chose to analyse the development of solutions to the need for more resources for Calgary's skateboarding community with a focus on the youth perspective. This was done primarily through the use of a survey, as can be found in this report.

Page 3: Case studies, focused on skateparks around the world, are researched.

Page 12: An introduction to the Survey

Page 13: An analysis of respondents' age, gender and locational source is provided. This is included to illustrate the population responding to the survey questions.

Page 15: Respondents' experiences in existing skating locations are analyzed here.

Page 17: An analysis of the reasons given by survey respondents for the City of Calgary to build more skateparks is provided.

Page 19: An analysis of what respondents would want to see in future skateparks.

Through the Study of Case Examples, the Research Committee was Able to Understand the Complexities Involved with the Existence of Skateparks

Calgary has approximately 30,000 people that participate to some extent, at various levels of skateboarding. Currently, the city is looking at creating more accessible spaces for these skateboarders, so that they do not feel that they are neglected in the city. Alongside the goal of trying to eliminate a sense of neglect in



the large skateboarding community in Calgary, skateboarding has also been regarded by the City as “encouraging unstructured recreation opportunities for youth and adults. Skateboarding is a legitimate extension of the recreational spectrum and contributes to Recreation’s vision of an active, creative and vibrant city.” But the implementation of council’s plan to create more skateparks for this large population in Calgary cannot occur without looking into the feasibility of this idea. This

section aims to provide examples of previous skateparks, failures and successes, and gather information from Calgarians about what they think of the idea of building more skateparks in the city. This will aid in coming to a conclusion about the feasibility of this idea and hopefully ease the City’s burden in looking into this idea more closely in the near future.

There are some options available for the City when it comes to the general location and appearance of the new skateparks. The City can



Indoor Skateparks (Cont'd)

choose to build several small skateparks around the city, or fewer larger ones that are located in areas where skateboarders do not have much accessibility to the already present skateparks. Another very important factor to take into consideration is whether the newly built park(s) should be indoor or outdoor. This next section will evaluate different case studies of skateparks, around the world, both indoor and outdoor to see which one would work best for Calgary.



Salisbury - United Kingdom

General Overview

A local businessman is planning to build an indoor skatepark for the local skateboarders. The facility will be in a “transit accessible” location so that all kids can have easy access to the skatepark from any part of the city. The owner is planning on charging a \$5 entry fee, which will provide users with a day pass to the park. Alongside the entry fee, to be able to use the facilities, kids under the age of 18 will need to sign a parental consent form to be able to skate in the area. The approximated cost of the park is said to be \$50000. Helmets must also be worn at all times, or else the right to use the facilities will be taken away. If users do not have a helmet, or other safety equipment, they can be borrowed upon entry into the park. This plan was pushed back because of the city’s decision to build a skateboard park (the initial phase is said to cost around \$262000, provided in the form of a grant from the city). The location of this skatepark is going to be central, and close to other attractions in the city, so that parents can drop off older and younger children to play in the park and enjoy other attractions such as the zoo. The location is also said to be very central, and accessible, so that users can go to the park even when they do not have a vehicle for transportation.

A few notes can be taken from this example, concerning the location, the cost and the rules and procedures of an indoor park. It is clear that having the parks somewhere centrally located is a good idea, so that access is simple for people that wish to use it, even if they are kids and teens. It is also important that the parks be

Indoor Skateparks (Cont'd)

fairly close to public transportation to facilitate transport to the location. Another possibility is for the park to be located somewhere near an already present attraction, so that safety can be provided by the near presence of the two, and that area can be transformed into a welcoming location for youth. Aside from location, there is also the matter of costs. Does the City wish to make the park free, like Shaw Millennium park today, or do they wish to charge an entrance fee, which could possibly aid with maintenance of the location?

This decision would depend on the budget that the City is willing to allocate for this cause. Another important conclusion that can be made from this example is the signing of waivers before granting permission to use the facility, so that any injuries that occur in the park do not cause problems



for the City. If the City does not wish to place someone in charge of monitoring the facility for things such as vandalism and helmet use, it is also important the signs be put up about the use of helmets and vandalism to send a clear message to the people who wish to use the park.

Orange - California

General Overview

An indoor skatepark was built in “The Outlets at Orange” mall with an area of approximately 20000 square feet. It is a mostly wooden street course consisting of stairs, rails and ledges and areas for both beginners and advanced skateboarders. A small section of the park is outdoor but can be closed off using garage doors for when it is colder outside. There are arcades, rental facilities and concession stands as well, so that users may have easy access to necessary equipment.

Indoor Skateparks (Cont'd)

It is stated in several sources that the facility is packed with kids and that the park has become a popular hangout for local teens who use the facility very well. Even though this shows a high demand for the park, it has also caused complaints from older members of the community. On websites such as 'Yelp,' the ratings for "The Orange" mall have dropped substantially because of the presence of this park. People complain about the noise, the mischievous behavior and also the general lack of safety in the area around the park, which they blame on the increased number of teens that occupy that specific area.



This example brings up the concern with the image of skaters and skateboard parks in the community. As can be seen in this example, the community did not tolerate the presence of these skateboarders in such a public location and probably preferred that they be in a location where they will not cause any disruptions to everyday life. The City can, if it wishes, place someone in charge of monitoring this new location to avoid such problems. Cameras could also be placed on location to



make sure that kids who do use the facility are aware that they will be punished if they do wish to break any rules and cause any disruptions.

Toronto

Shred Central

One of the largest and

most popular skateparks in North America, Shred Central, is located in central Toronto and is easily accessible. It is a BMX/Roller Blade Free area, thus meaning that the

Indoor Skateparks (Cont'd)

the space is only open to skateboarders (the aim of this is to increase safety for the skateboarders in the park). The park also features graffiti from local artists and kids that wish to showcase their talents. Entry into the park is free but a waiver form must be signed by the parents of all children under the age of 18 that wish to use the



facility and pads are not mandatory.

Shred Central was in business for 13 years before closing down in early 2011. The owner of the facility decided to use the facility to build condos, the reason for this decision is not specified.

This example brings up two very interesting ideas. The first one is the question of whether or not this newly built skatepark should be solely made for

skateboarders or if it should be open for rollerbladers and BMX bikers as well. This is a question that concerns safety, important research needs to be conducted to evaluate how safe it would be to have all three of these types of recreation in one confined space. Because of the differences in speed and maneuvers of these different recreational vehicles, safety becomes an issue when they are all placed in a single area (the chance of collision and thus injury increases). This is something that the City will need to look into and a decision that should be made after the creation of a skatepark has been confirmed. The second interesting conclusion that can be drawn from this example is



whether or not graffiti should be permitted in this region. If the city allows local graffiti artists to display their graffiti on the walls of the skatepark, the skatepark can become a more welcoming place for teens that maybe aren't even interested in skateboarding, but would rather showcase their graffiti/artwork.

Outdoor Skateparks



Los Angeles - California

General Overview

An outdoor skatepark was built very recently with a budget of around \$659000, paid for completely by the state government (although other skateparks in Los Angeles are sponsored by companies such as Nike, or skating foundations like the Tony Hawk, Rob Dyrdek, and Steve Berra associations). There is a helmet sign present on site, but no active monitoring for the use of helmets by skateboarders. An important structural feature of the park is that there is a metal coping around the rims of the structures



(i.e. bowls) which protects the edges of the rim and the skateboards of the people using the structures as well. The skateparks consists of many “street inspired” features- structures that resemble natural structures, along with trees and bushes.

The park facilities are solely for skateboarding, thus biking and roller-skating are prohibited. They are all placed in a single area (the chance of collision and thus injury increases). This is something that

Outdoor Skateparks Cont'd)

should be made after the creation of a skatepark has been confirmed. The second interesting conclusion that can be drawn from this example is whether or not graffiti should be permitted in this region. If the City allows local graffiti artists to display their graffiti on the walls of the skatepark, the skatepark can become a more welcoming place for teens that maybe aren't even interested in skateboarding, but would rather showcase their graffiti/artwork.

Belper Park - United Kingdom

Lighting Dilemma

There was a problem with mischievous behavior in and around the park, especially after dark. The city spent around \$20000 for lighting, which decreased the number of calls reporting behavior to the city.

People commenting on the incident mentioned the fact that if the park was created in a fairly public location, the number of crimes or mischievous behavior would be decreased naturally because of the watchful public eye.

Hawick Park - Scotland

Vandalism

The skatepark, mostly wooden, was almost completely destroyed by vandals, and ended up costing the city approximately \$6000 in repairs. Because this has been a reoccurring offense in the park, city officials are considering taking the park down, to avoid having to pay the fines for vandalism.

From these past two examples, it is safe to conclude that a skatepark in a fairly public area will help the safety of the facility, whether it is indoor or outdoor. This incident proves that costs for repairs of any kind to a skatepark are substantial, thus proper care needs to be provided for these new costly facilities. Facilities should be placed either under supervision or in a location where the public will always be around, so crime and vandalism will be less likely to occur. In some locations, for example Fullerton, California, the municipal government provides supervision of these facilities to assure that these acts do not occur. In Fullerton, the city placed around \$50000 to increase security in its skateboard park, which once had to be closed due to problems such as drug dealing, and vandalism. This money went into the creation of a

Outdoor Skateparks Cont'd)

committee comprised of adult volunteers to protect the park and maintain it on a daily basis and fences around the area to prevent direct entry into the nearby alley, where most of the drug dealing took place.

Huntington Beach - California

General Overview

The outdoor park was sponsored by Vans, who provided all the money necessary for the creation of the park. The park is located close to a transit stop, and bus routes have been modified to help transportation to and from the park as well. Furthermore, there are concession stands and rental shops present close to or on the facility, making it easy for skateboarders to access necessary supplies and equipment.

The city can also look into sponsorships from different companies, like in the example above. Companies such as Vans, West 49, Volcom and skaters have a history of sponsoring skateboard parks and providing funding and equipment, so this is a very possible option for funding for a future skateboard park.

Conclusion

Focusing on Calgary

Calgary does provide some Skateboard facilities to local skateboarders, but general opinion shows that these are not sufficient. Current skateboard facilities include: temporary skateboard parks during the summer (mobile skateparks), Shaw Millennium Park, Westside Recreation Center and McKenzie Towne (both of which have “modest facilities”) and also a church in Dalhousie that opens up its gym to skateboarders during the winter. The primary concern in the city is with regard to indoor skateparks.

One of Calgary’s few models for indoor skateboard parks is the one that is set up in Dalhousie community church during the winters by volunteers, who report that more than 100 skateboarders are in attendance every time the temporary location is open, and space is limited, so skating freely becomes a challenge for the skaters that are present. Another indoor skateboard facility, not in Calgary but close by, is in Sylvan Lake: Incline Industries.

Calgary has some history with indoor skateparks including Skatorama (created more than 30 years ago, and at the time, considered to be “Canada’s first indoor concrete skatepark”), Ramporama, Skate Jungle, and all school, all of which faded from view very quickly, Skatorama, for example, only remained in business for 2 years (1977 to 1979).

The Calgary Association of Skateboard Enthusiasts (CASE) recommends the construction of 45 different skateparks around the city to accommodate the needs of different skateboarders around the city. These parks, they say, can range from the size of half of a basketball court to a full tennis court in various areas around the city. They hypothesize that these newly created parks will provide skateboarders around the city with accessible skating facilities, and thus decrease the number of complaints made with regard to skateboarding around the city as a direct consequence. The locations for these various skateparks will be determined by a thorough examination of locations in the city where skateboarding seems to be occurring at the highest frequency. CASE requests that instead of a large sum of money being allocated for this project, that city council look at this as a long-term project. Funding new skateparks as researchers find new sites and money becomes available in the city budget.

A Survey was Utilized to Gain Perspective on the Current and Future States of Calgary's Skateboarding Scene

Skate Park Survey

Gender (please circle one): **M** / **F**

Age: _____

1. Which community do you live in? _____

2. Do you skateboard? **Yes** **No**

a) If **YES**, where do you skateboard? _____

3. Do you know people who skateboard? **Yes** **No**

4. Do you engage in inline skating, scooters BMX or mountain biking? **Yes** **No**

5. Should the City of Calgary be building more skate parks?

Yes **I'm not sure** **I don't care** **No**

a) Explain your answer: _____

6. Where would you want to see future skate parks built?

7. What would you like to see in future skate parks?

8. Tell us what you think about existing skate parks like Millennium Park, Westside Recreation Centre and McKenzie Towne (ex. are they used and maintained well? Do they have a positive influence on their community? If you skate at one of these parks, let us know about your experiences there!):

Analyzing Our Respondents



Gender

Male 77.4%
Female 22.6%

Age

Table 1: Ages of

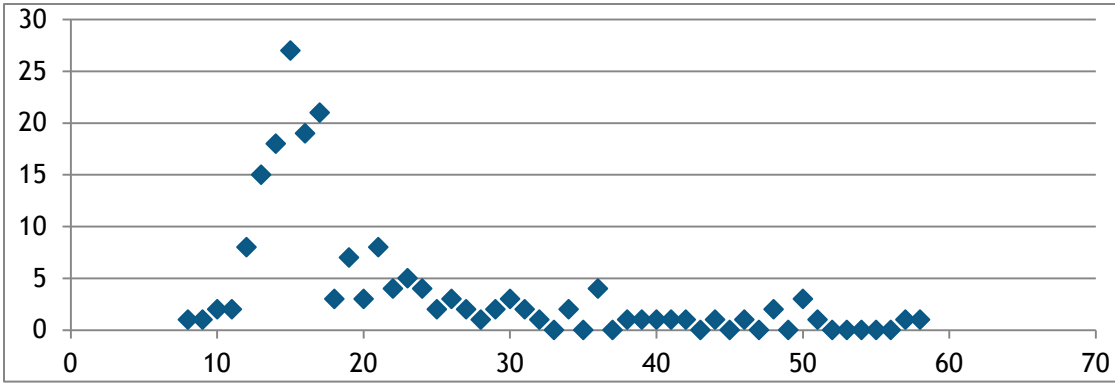
Respondents

	Number of
8	1
9	1
10	2
11	2
12	8
13	15
14	18
15	27
16	19
17	21
18	3
19	7
20	3
21	8
22	4
23	5
24	4

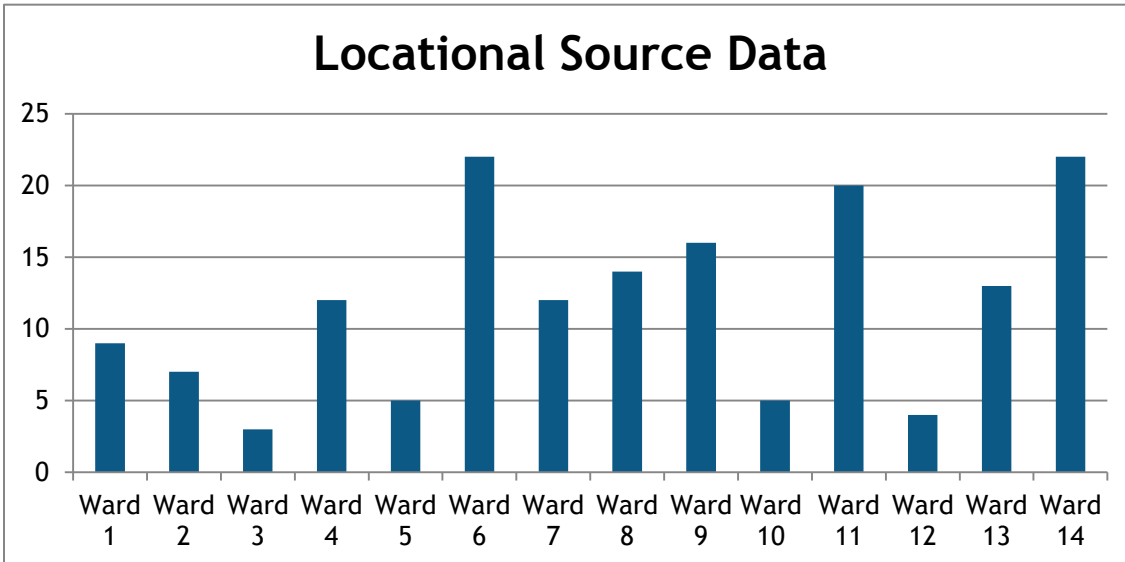
25	2
26	3
27	2
28	1
29	2
30	3
31	2
32	1
33	0
34	2
35	0
36	4
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38	1
39	1
40	1

41	1
42	1
43	0
44	1
45	0
46	1
47	0
48	2
49	0
50	3
51	1
52	0
53	0
54	0
55	0
56	0
57	1

Age vs. Number of Respondents

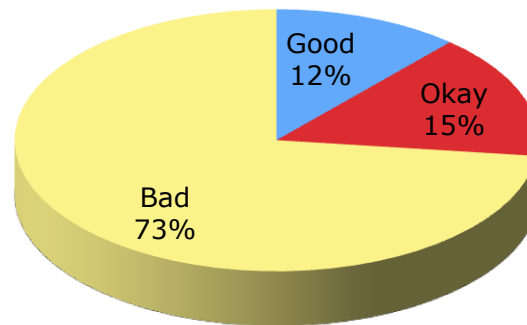


Where Respondents Live



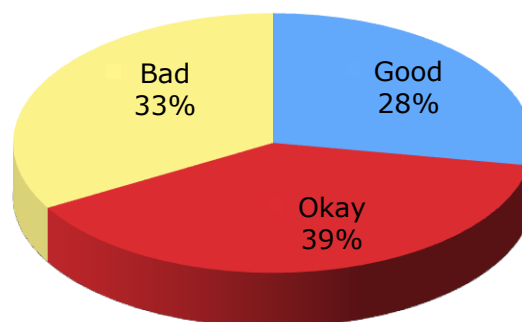
It is Important to Gauge the Youth Perspective on Existing Skateboarding Locations

Accessibility



The response for the accessibility of Calgary's parks was quite negative. This is mainly due to the general lack of parks in local residential communities and the presence of a few, centrally located skateparks, which are not located in the most population-dense areas. Many of the skaters that responded to the survey lived in less centralized locations, therefore necessitating a long commute in order to get to the nearest skatepark, or the one they prefer to use (Shaw Millennium). Increasing the frequency of bus routes, and constructing more parks that are functioning year-round were some of the more common proposed solutions by the respondents of the survey.

Variety of Existing Park Features

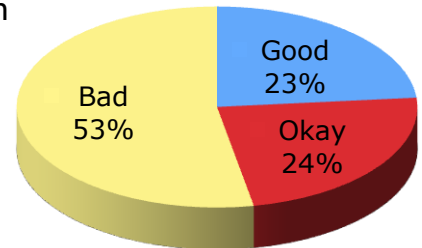


The variety of the attractions of the various skateparks was received neutrally in the survey. This is because of the varied opinions of what makes a park/feature more fun over others, and skaters had a hard time deciding whether or not more variety was necessary. A common theme throughout the results was, in general, having more features increases the safety and quality of the park. Also, keeping the already existing features well maintained reduces the wear and tear and the need to continually replace and construct the features.

Safety/Conditions

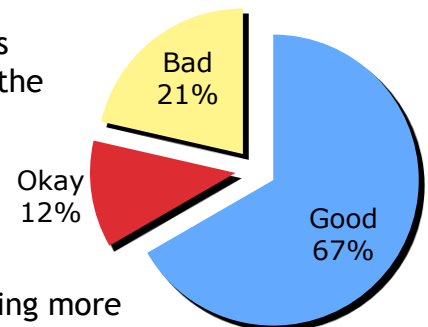
This category came up as a red flag, showing over 50% of riders

surveyed find the conditions and safety (park conditions, feeling of safety for riders, presence of illegal substances, etc.) Conditions of parks okay overall, but there was some negative feedback towards the condition of the parks themselves at the Westside and Shaw Millennium locations. Complaints of cracked concrete and grass throughout the facility were prominent. In regards to a sense of safety, Westside had mostly positive feedback, but Millennium and McKenzie Towne came back with a majority of negative comments. More specifically, a strong presence of illegal substances and the homeless community was found at Shaw Millennium Park. This has served to not only be a problem for riders, but to the parents of



Atmosphere

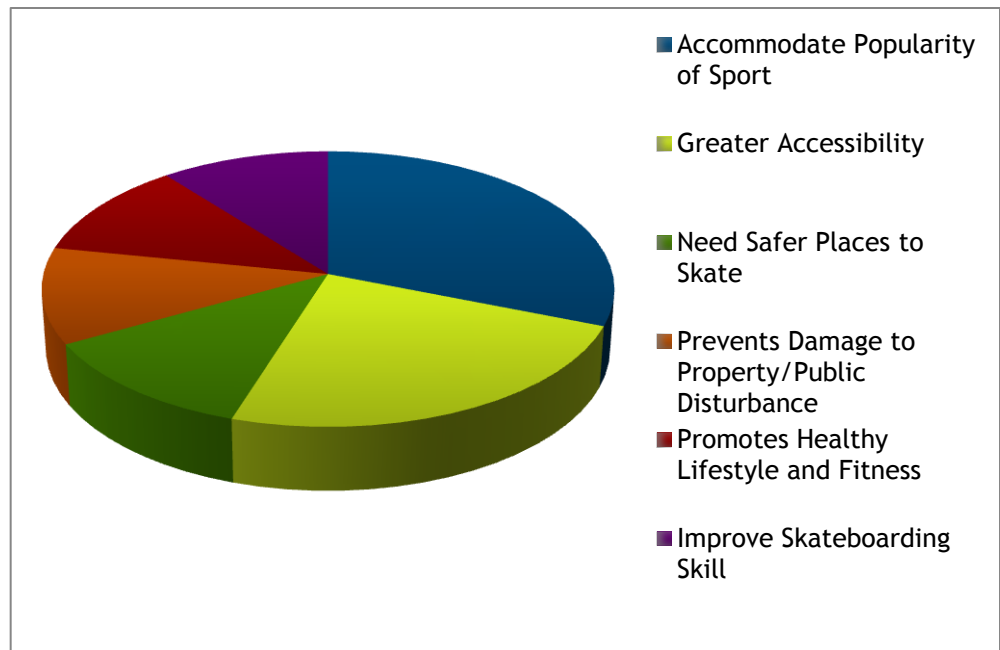
The variety of the attractions of the various skateparks was a fairly neutral category in the survey. This is because of the varied opinions of what makes a park/feature more fun over others, and skaters had a hard time deciding whether or not more variety was necessary. A common theme throughout the results was, in general, having more features increases the safety and quality of the park.



Space

Space is one of the more important categories because it's not only an issue of comfort and the quality of the skating experience; it is also an issue of the safety of the skater. In particular, Shaw Millennium Park has a rather bad reputation regarding the space available as it is the most centrally-located park, as well as the most popular and most expansive skatepark in Calgary. This problem will continue to grow, along with our growing population, and must be addressed before it is entirely out of hand. The only foreseeable solution to this is to either expand existing parks, or construct new ones in order to divert the flow of skaters away from the three major parks, which can get busy fairly easily.

Reasons for the City of Calgary to Build More Skateparks



Analyzing Responses that Favored the City of Calgary Building More Skateparks is Crucial to Understand the Validity and Justifications for the Investment, Labor and Effort Said Task Requires.

In reviewing said data, there are six main categories that responses fit into:

- Approximately 27.5% of respondents favoring the construction of more skateparks cited its necessity to further accommodate popularity of the sport. Many responses arose the issue of the existent skateboarding facilities, year-round, being unable to meet the demand of the sport. A strong sentiment was present suggesting that facilities in Calgary were overwhelming especially in comparison to those of Edmonton and Vancouver.
- Approximately 21.2% of respondents favoring the construction of skateparks cited its necessity to provide greater accessibility to facilities. These responses generally focused in on the length of commute necessary for skaters to reach facilities like Shaw Millennium and Westside Recreation Centre.
- Approximately 10.6% of respondents favoring the construction of skateparks cited it as a way to allow for a safer skating environment. Responses presented the idea of skateparks providing a safer skating environment than on curbs, streets and amateur ramps. Respondents expressed a concern about the safety (in terms of drugs and crime) at Shaw Millennium, and hoped new skateparks would remedy this issue. The subject of overcrowding was strongly present, proving to be a genuine hazard and concern for the safety of skaters.
- Approximately 10.0% of respondents favoring the construction of skateparks cited its positive influence on healthy living and fitness amongst users. Respondents saw it as a way for youth and adults alike to keep active and fit. As well, the support of skateboarding would keep

Calgarians away from negative activities (crime often cited). Many responses supported the notion that skateparks would contribute to a healthy social life; allowing for a place for youth to not only socialize with friends, but to be more exposed to Calgary's diverse skateboarding community.

- Approximately 10.0% of respondents favoring the construction of skateparks cited its ability to reduce instances of damage to property and public disturbance. Responses focusing on public disturbance brought up encounters with Calgary Police Services or neighbors while skating outside of approved facilities.
- Approximately 9.4% of respondents favoring the construction of skateparks cited its ability to improve their skateboarding skill. Being able to skate more (with greater accessibility) on a greater variety of obstacles with less traffic proved to be a very attractive reason for respondents to support the building of more skateparks.

'I can't skateboard at the Millenium park downtown because it's too busy. Even the Airdrie and cochrane parks are always full and kids are getting hurt from collisions from over-crowding.'

Notable responses have been included to provide samples of perspectives present:

'The closest skatepark to me is a half hour drive. Most kids don't have a way to get to a skatepark because they are so few and far between. When kids skateboard in public places they are labled as a nuisance and told to leave. They are only driven to skate in these places because of the lack of parks around the city.'

'I love skateboarding, we get into trouble for skateboarding on the sidewalks and other areas my friends and I have no where else to go. Millennium is far to go and my mom does not like me going down there. It is a great form of exercise, I feel good and can burn steam. It fosters a sense of community and a place my friends and I can go to be with each other and play games [or] skate.'

'[[There] needs to be a safe haven where kids can go and progress their sport. There needs to be more then one sketchy park downtown, which no right minded parent would ever leave their child alone there for an afternoon. The number of skaters is high, the demand for a safe place that caters to a variety of styles of skating is in dire need. There are no indoor parks, thus giving us nowhere to skate in the winter, unless we go outside and shovel the park ourselves, which has happened almost every snowfall last season.'

'We feel deprived, we've had millennium for so long with little alternative, when you go to other cities in Alberta or B.C. many much smaller than Calgary I might add, the support for such projects seems so much more than here. I'm grateful for what we have, but with no upgrades or alternatives it becomes stale. I have so many ideas and would love to create something that all ages could appreciate simple for fun no matter what level of riding.'



What Respondents would like to see in the Future

Design

Lighting

3.2% of respondents requested adequate lighting in future parks. The Mayor's Youth Council strongly supports this request as lighting is both a safety measure and one that increases the accessibility of the park.

Indoor vs. Outdoor

4.8 % of respondents cited a lack of indoor parks as a grievance.

"There are no indoor parks, thus giving us nowhere to skate in the winter, unless we go outside and shovel the park ourselves, which has happened almost every snowfall last season."(Respondent 81)

"First, an indoor skatepark, while more expensive, is a necessity in our climate. Considering all the government money supplied to hockey arenas, soccer domes, and other indoor sporting facilities, the city should feel obliged to supply skateboarders with at least one indoor alternative." (Respondent 178)

Surrounding Space

4.8% of respondents named surrounding space as an aspect of future parks they would like to see attended to. Respondents either recommended "green space" and or "benches." Such space also allows for family activities apart from skateboarding (respondent 62).

In terms of art, 1.1% of respondents would like to see decorative art in park space while, an equal percentage of respondents specified a dislike of graffiti as a form of art in skateparks.

Variety

5.4 % of respondents wished to see future parks cater to all –ages and in turn, skill levels. This is determined by the challenge of future parks courses. Obviously, a variety of obstacles are required if the City is to cater to all skill levels. Surveyors would like to see a variety of obstacles in future parks. This can be seen in the 5.9% of surveyors who would like to see variety in future parks and many others who indirectly implied the same by specifying many sizes and types of obstacles in their responses. Surveyor 178 explained the need for variety when he or she wrote “Bowls, mini-ramps, and quarter pipes should be constructed in a variety of sizes so that skaters can progress quickly and more importantly, safely.”

Location

Numerous respondents wished to see future parks built near c-trains. This mention of accessibility of future parks is critical and should not be overlooked. In addition, 1.6 % of surveyors want food and water nearby. The Mayor’s Youth Council recommends future skateparks are built so that they are close to such amenities.

Plaza Style

14.0% of respondents would like to see future parks built in a plaza or street style. Basically, they want future parks to mimic be integrated into cityscape. Note, that plaza style parks fulfill skaters’ desires to skate ‘street’ without the dangers of actually doing so.

Facilities

2.2% of surveyors want to see on site bathroom facilities. One surveyor suggested that bike stands be installed nearby.

Building Inspiration

6.5% of surveyors expressed appreciation for nearby skateparks. They cited parks in Edmonton, Vancouver, Airdrie, and Winnipeg. For example, Edmonton’s Collingwood park was noted for its plaza style and surrounding green space, Winnipeg’s parks also for their aesthetic , and both, Airdrie’s and Vancouver’s parks for their plaza style. The Mayor’s Youth Council encourages the city to incorporate the highlights of aforementioned parks in future Calgary parks.

Skater Involvement

3.2 % of surveyors expressed interest in the building process of future parks. 4.3 % recommended Newline for their design expertise. More abundantly, surveyors specified that “Skateparks should be designed with the assistance of skaters, they are the ones that know what is necessary to have in a skatepark in order for it to be used by the majority of skaters. They know what is cool.” (Respondent 108). MYC sees two ways this could occur. First, skateboarders could vote on entire designs for larger parks. Second, skateboarder could vote and rank components e.g. ledges, ramps, etc. to decide which components should be included in smaller parks.

Operation Supervision

4.8 % of surveyors mentioned the need for supervised skateparks. Surveyors cited drugs as a risk to skaters and expressed that supervision of parks could mitigate this risk. One way this could be done, is through a public-private partnership that “skate companies can run the parks and be present on site” (Surveyor 136). This method was supported by 1.1% of surveyors.

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This report was written by the Mayor's Youth Council, a program of Youth Central (www.youthcentral.com). Youth Central's mission is to inspire, engage and celebrate youth through community participation by way of ten programs for youth ages 12 - 18. This report was presented to Mayor Nenshi on June 7, 2012. If further information is required, please feel free to contact Youth Central, 403-266-5448 or myc@youthcentral.com

