

Skateboard Strategy for Vancouver



Approved by the
Vancouver Park Board
October 31, 2005



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Executive Summary

Skateboarding continues to be a popular recreational activity for many youth and young adults in Vancouver. A skateboard strategy will assist in guiding capital investments so that skateparks are successful in the short and long term for all involved - skateboarders, other park users as well as residents living near the facilities.

STRATEGIC ACTION #1:
provide additional skateparks in Vancouver.

STRATEGIC ACTION #2:
provide a better geographic distribution of skateparks in Vancouver.

STRATEGIC ACTION #3:
provide variety in the skateboarding system:

- a) some destination facilities; some local serving facilities;
- b) some aimed at entry level skateboarding; some aimed at advanced skateboarding; and
- c) some offering "bowls"; some offering "street style" .

STRATEGIC ACTION #4:
locate new skateboard facilities in parks or portions of parks that meet as many of the following criteria as possible:

- a) the proposed skateboard facility should be located where some support services are available nearby (e.g. public washrooms, drinking fountain, youth worker, first aid);
- b) the proposed skateboard facility should be located where noise can be minimized for nearby residents;
- c) the proposed skateboard facility should be located where it is visible from a Park Board building or from a nearby street;
- d) the proposed skateboard facility should not displace other established park uses or a group of park users; and
- e) the proposed skateboard facility should not be significantly out of character with the park.

STRATEGIC ACTION #5:
explore options to provide an indoor skateboarding facility in Vancouver.

STRATEGIC ACTION #6:
explore opportunities to purchase mobile skateboard equipment that can be used seasonally and at special events.

STRATEGIC ACTION #7:
explore opportunities for increased skateboard programming at community centres.

STRATEGIC ACTION #8:
explore partnership opportunities with other civic agencies including Engineering Services and the Vancouver School Board.

Background

At present, there are six skateboard facilities in Vancouver parks, with five skateparks added in the last five years:



China Creek South Park
(built in the late 1970s)



Hastings Park
(built in 2001)



Strathcona Park
(built in 2003)



Coopers' Park
(built in 2003)



Downtown Skateboard Plaza
(built in 2004)



Quilchena Park
(built in 2005)

Objectives

The existing skateboard facilities were all approved and built on a case-by-case basis, in the absence of a longer-term strategy, although the two facilities built most recently (the Downtown Skateboard Plaza and the skatepark at Quilchena Park) were rigorously reviewed prior to their approval, involving the application of locational criteria to assess the suitability of the proposed site and its comparison to other possible alternative locations.

The need for a longer-term strategy is best understood when considering the following facts:

- In recent years, staff have received requests for the inclusion of skateboard facilities at a variety of parks that are planned for renewal or in new parks.
- In early 2005, the Vancouver SkatePark Coalition submitted a total of seventeen proposals for new skateboard facilities as part of the preparation for the 2006-2008 Capital Plan.
- On October 3rd, 2005, the Park Board approved an allocation of \$375,000 for “youth parks” (which includes skateboarding) as part of the upcoming 2006-2008 Capital Plan.

The ongoing requests which are received and the presence of capital funds for construction require more than a case-by-case response by the Park Board. A longer-term strategy for skateboarding is therefore proposed.

This longer-term strategy for skateboarding will assist the Park Board in a number of ways:

- a) it will acknowledge skateboarding as an important recreational activity that needs a proactive approach;
- b) it will provide a framework for guiding capital investments in skateboarding facilities by identifying overall priorities; and
- c) it will set out locational criteria which will be used to identify and assess candidate sites for new skateboard facilities.

The overall skateboard system

Skateboarding is a popular recreational activity for youth and young adults in Vancouver, with more people skateboarding today than 20 years ago.

Many municipalities in Greater Vancouver have built new skateparks - there are now 35 skateparks in the region.

The Park Board has responded well in recent years: five new skateparks have been added in the last five years, for a total of six skateparks in 2005.



Each skatepark is well utilized, with the Downtown Skateboard Plaza and the Hastings Park skatepark - the two largest skateparks - attracting dozens of users during peak times. The popularity of the new skateparks indicates that we are not at a point where supply has fully caught up with demand.

**STRATEGIC ACTION #1:
provide additional skateparks in Vancouver.**

Five of the existing six skateparks in Vancouver are located east of Cambie Street and north of 12th Avenue - see map below. The skateparks are therefore concentrated in the northeast quadrant of the city, leaving significant geographic gaps where no skateparks currently exist. The addition of the skatepark at Quilchena Park is an important first step in distributing skateparks throughout the city.

The Park Board should aim to provide a better geographic distribution of skateparks so that skateboarders, especially children and youth, are not required to travel long distances from their homes to access a skatepark.



STRATEGIC ACTION #2:
provide a better geographic distribution of skateparks in Vancouver.

An important facet of the existing set of skateparks in Vancouver is that they offer variety to the skateboarding community in terms of:

- a) the scale and size of the skateparks (the Downtown Skateboard Plaza and the Hastings Park skatepark are clearly destination facilities, while the other facilities are mostly local serving);
- b) the level of difficulty/challenge of the skateparks (the Downtown Skateboard Plaza and the Hastings Park skatepark are mainly aimed at advanced skateboarders, while the other facilities are good for entry level skateboarders);
- c) the design and style of the skateparks (the skateparks at China Creek South Park and Hastings Park are mostly focussed on "bowls", while the other skateparks are mostly focussed on "street style" skateboarding).

The principle of embedding variety in the skateboarding system is good and should be pursued as the number of skateparks is increased in the years to come.

STRATEGIC ACTION #3:
provide variety in the skateboarding system:

- a) some destination facilities; some local serving facilities;
- b) some aimed at entry level skateboarding; some aimed at advanced skateboarding; and
- c) some offering "bowls"; some offering "street style" .



Locational criteria for new skateparks

How to decide where to locate new skateparks? How do we determine whether a specific park is suitable to accommodate a skateboard facility? The establishment of locational criteria will greatly assist in identifying and selecting candidate sites. Park Board staff have developed five criteria based on our recent experience with the Downtown Skateboard Plaza and the skatepark at Quilchena Park.

STRATEGIC ACTION #4:

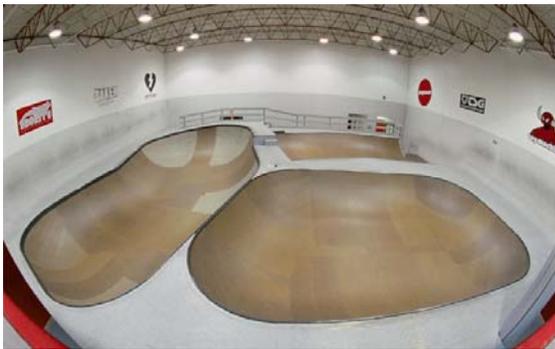
locate new skateboard facilities in parks or portions of parks that meet as many of the following criteria as possible:

- a) the proposed skateboard facility should be located where some support services are available nearby (e.g. public washrooms, drinking fountain, youth worker, first aid);
- b) the proposed skateboard facility should be located where noise can be minimized for nearby residents;
- c) the proposed skateboard facility should be located where it is visible from a Park Board building or from a nearby street;
- d) the proposed skateboard facility should not displace other established park uses or a group of park users; and
- e) the proposed skateboard facility should not be significantly out of character with the park.

Indoor skatepark

There is a desire by the skateboarding community to have an indoor skateboard facility in Vancouver. An indoor facility would allow for year-round skateboarding in a climate-controlled environment. Currently, there is one such facility in Greater Vancouver, located in south Richmond near Steveston Highway and No. 6 Road. An indoor facility in Vancouver would be more central and accessible by public transit. The size of the facility, whether the installation is temporary or permanent, whether the facility is in a new or renovated building, and the operating model all need exploration before a decision is made.

STRATEGIC ACTION #5:
explore options to provide an indoor skateboarding facility in Vancouver.



Programming and partnerships

Having mobile skateboard equipment would be helpful for:

- a) seasonal skateboard programming that can occur at/near community centres; and
- b) skateboard demonstrations at a variety of special events, e.g. the “Rain or Shine” event in Stanley Park.

Currently, False Creek Community Centre has three pieces of mobile equipment which are set up on the sport courts adjacent to the centre on a weekly basis in the summer months.



STRATEGIC ACTION #6:
explore opportunities to purchase additional mobile skateboard equipment that can be used seasonally and at special events.

Park Board should explore opportunities to increase skateboard programming at community centres to go hand-in-hand with an expanded set of skateboard facilities. Programming and outreach would focus on a variety of topics, including basic training for new skateboarders, instructor training, and sessions to reach out to groups who typically have lower participation rates in skateboarding.



STRATEGIC ACTION #7:
explore opportunities for increased skateboard programming at community centres.

There are other agencies in Vancouver that are major holders of public land, such as Engineering Services at City Hall and the Vancouver School Board, and there may be opportunities where partnerships with these agencies can yield skateboard facilities and/or programming.

STRATEGIC ACTION #8:
explore partnership opportunities with other civic agencies including Engineering Services and the Vancouver School Board.

Conclusion

Skateboarding continues to be a popular recreational activity for many youth and young adults in Vancouver. A skateboard strategy will assist in guiding capital investments so that skateparks are successful in the short and long term for all involved - skateboarders, other park users as well as residents living near the facilities.