



Photo Credit: Ty James

# Downtown Skate Plaza Survey Report

January 2017

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Northeast False Creek Area Plan



CITY OF  
**VANCOUVER**



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

Prepared by: Sasha van Stavel

Date: January 2017

## The Downtown Skateboard Plaza User Survey

All information gathered through the online survey and on site engagement activities was transcribed (where necessary) and analyzed. Where applicable, open-ended responses were read and assigned a 'code' or a theme to allow for grouping of similar ideas. Answers that were off-topic, vulgar or illegible were given a code of N/A and not included in the results.

### ONLINE SURVEY

2,248 individuals completed the online survey between October 13th and October 31st. Over 1,872 open-ended responses were captured and 'coded' during the analysis phase.

### GENERAL TRENDS

The City of Vancouver has conducted a Skate Plaza user survey approximately every five years since its installation to assess the demand for skateboarding in downtown Vancouver. There have now been three surveys conducted to date: the initial survey in 2005 and subsequent surveys in 2010 and 2016.

#### Consistent trends over time – user profile, usage pattern, assessment of the facility:

- Plaza users/skaters identifying as males are the dominant user group (between 91 – 97%).
- Prime usage times are in the afternoon and in the early evening.
- The skill level of skaters at the Plaza has been consistent in the intermediate and advanced range, while also providing for beginners and professional skateboarders.
- A strong majority of survey respondents (between 64 % and 88% across all 3 surveys) visited the Plaza either daily or multiple times a week.
- The average visitor spends between 3.5 – 4.5 hours per at the Plaza per visit.
- All 3 surveys showed that the Skate Plaza is considered both a **community hub** and a unique, one of its' kind world-class & **globally recognized skateboarding facility**, with respondents from over 25 different countries in 2016.

# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

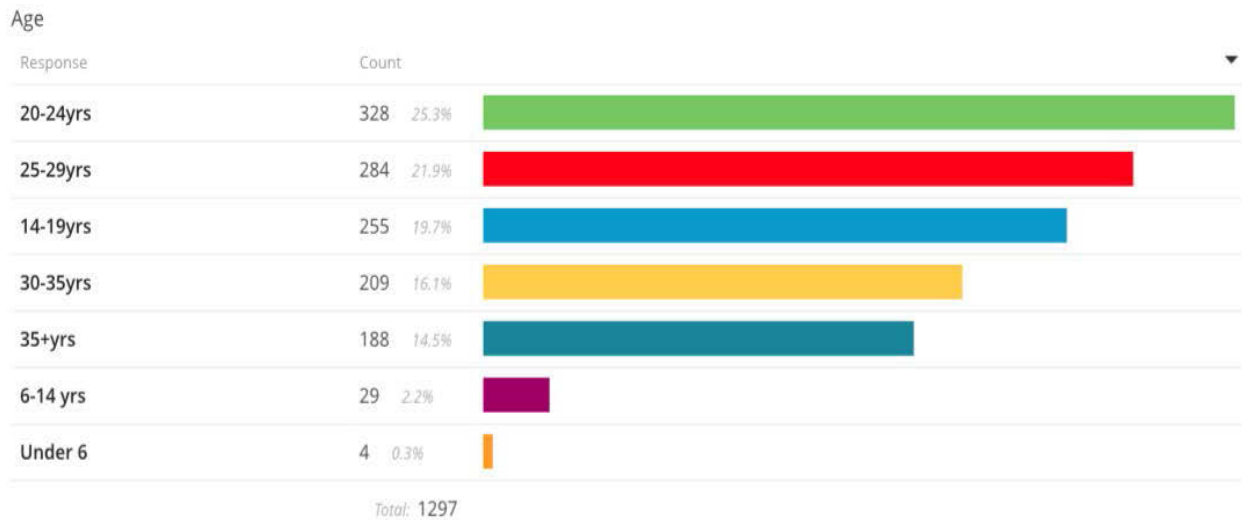
## Changing trends over time changes – user profile:

- The age profile of the users seems to have trended upward over the years. The **percentage of older users seems to have increased significantly** (decreased percentage of younger kids and teens, increased percentage of young adults in their twenties and thirties) – – there are numerous factors that may be contributing to this trend, such as perception of safety and the general maturing of the skateboard community as the popularity of the sport grows.

## QUESTIONS:

### 1. What is your age?

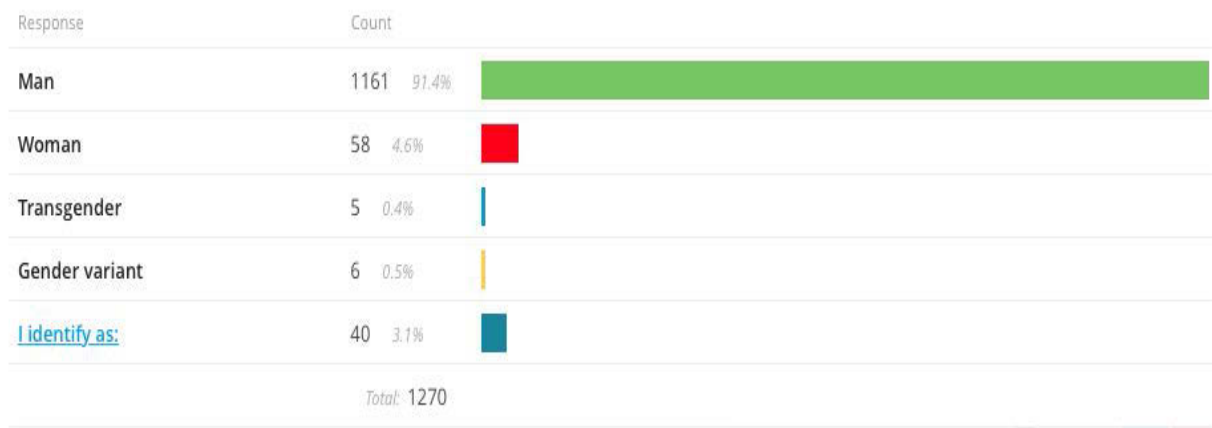
Survey responses indicated that 20-24 year olds are the dominant user group accounting for 25.3 % of the responses. This cohort was closely followed by 25-29 year olds accounting for 21.9% and 14-19 years olds accounting for 19.7%.



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

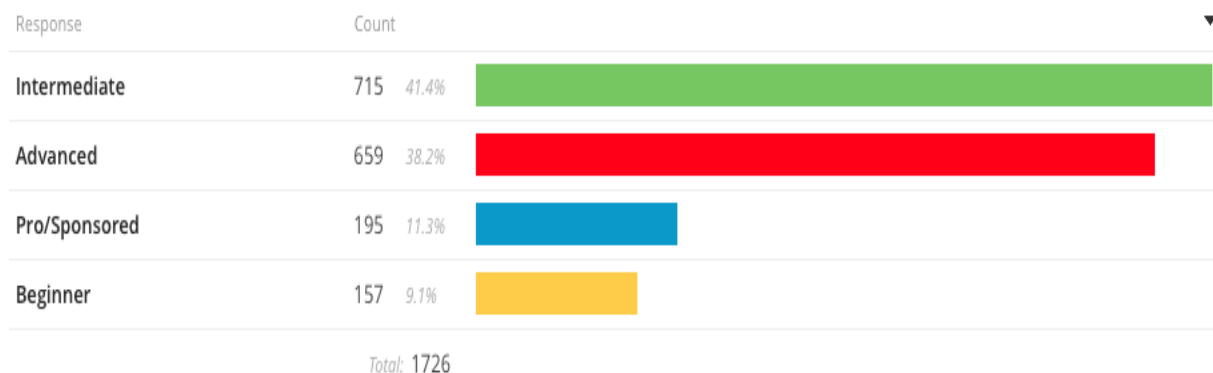
## 2. If you wish to do so please indicate your gender?

While the dominant demograph is male at 91.4% the City strives to be inclusive with respect to gender equity. This begs the question, how can the Plaza be improved to accommodate a more diverse gender group?



## 3. Please rate your skill level?

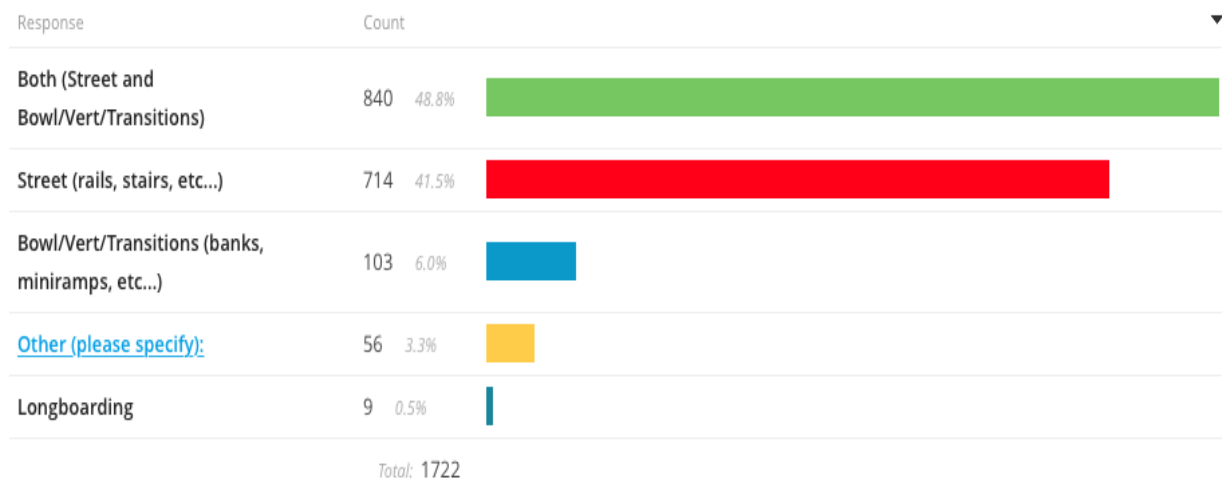
Respondents to this question indicated that Plaza caters to dominantly intermediate 41.4% and advanced 38.2% skateboarders. Additionally, given the difficulty of reaching a Pro/Sponsored skill level a high number of skateboarders 11.3% indicated being at this level. This was supported by a reoccurring theme in the general comment stating how Plaza's size, accessibility and unique design fostered the development of a large number of now pro/sponsored skateboarders.



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

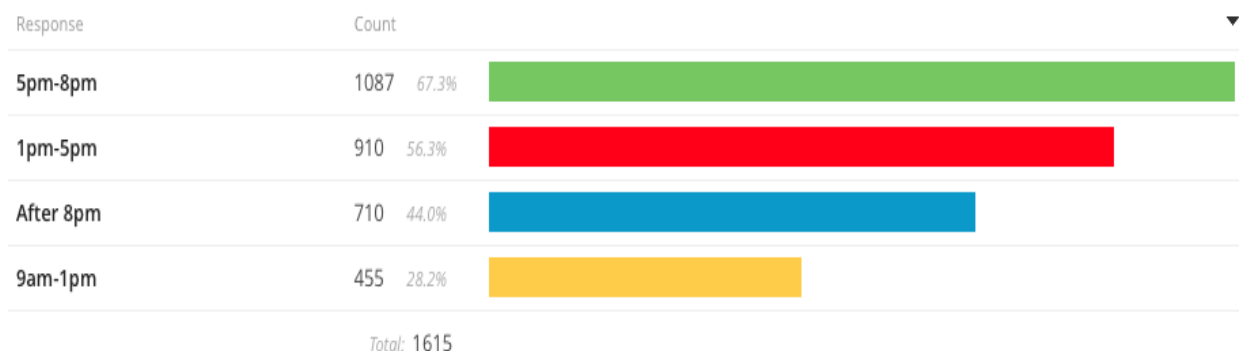
## 4. What is the main style(s) of skating you are interested in?

The two preferred styles expressed by respondents were both (street & transition) accounting for 48.8% while strictly street style accounted for 41.5%. Street style skating typically occurs in urban public spaces using features such as ledges, stairs, handrails, banks, curbs etc. While transition style refers to bowls, quarter-pipes and other curved surfaces that approach vertical. It is important to note that when adding the top two responses together that roughly 90% expressed a preference towards street style skating.



## 5. When do you most often skate Plaza? For how long? (Time)

Respondents indicated that they use Plaza the most between the hours of 5-8pm (67.3%) and 1-5pm (56.3%). A large reason for this increased usage during the evening time is that Plaza is equipped with lights.



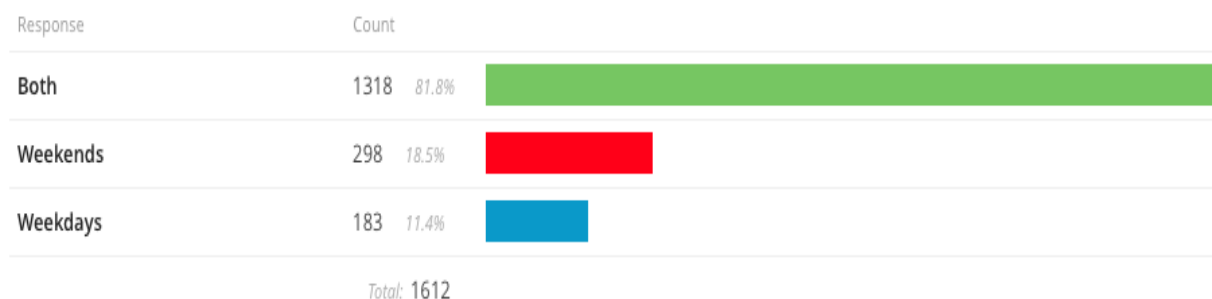
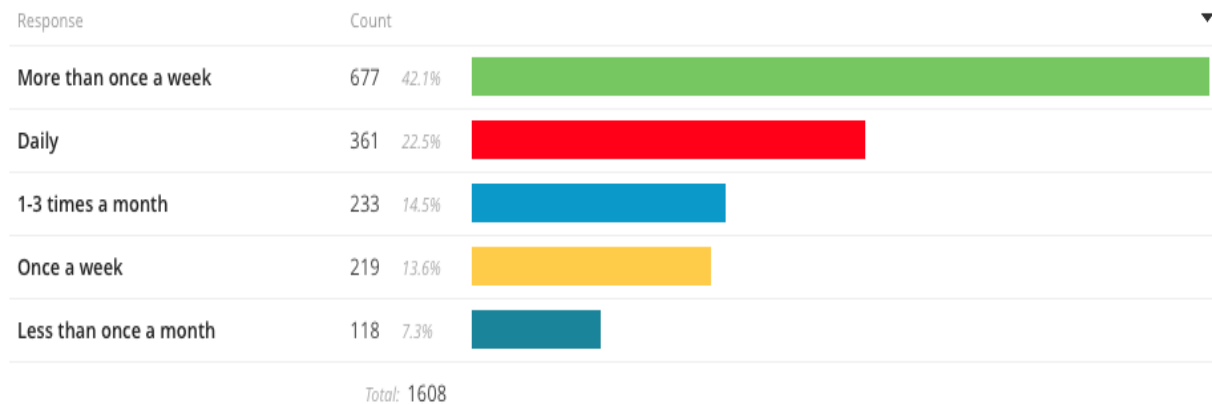
# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

Five categories were created for the length of time respondents indicated they spent at the park. 3 hrs. was the top response while 4+hrs was second. This indicates that skateboarders are spending significant amounts of time at Plaza and require basic amenities such as washrooms and a water fountain.

Number of hours	Number of respondents
1	38
2	343
3	428
4	365
4+	381

## 6. How often do you skate the Plaza? What days of the week?

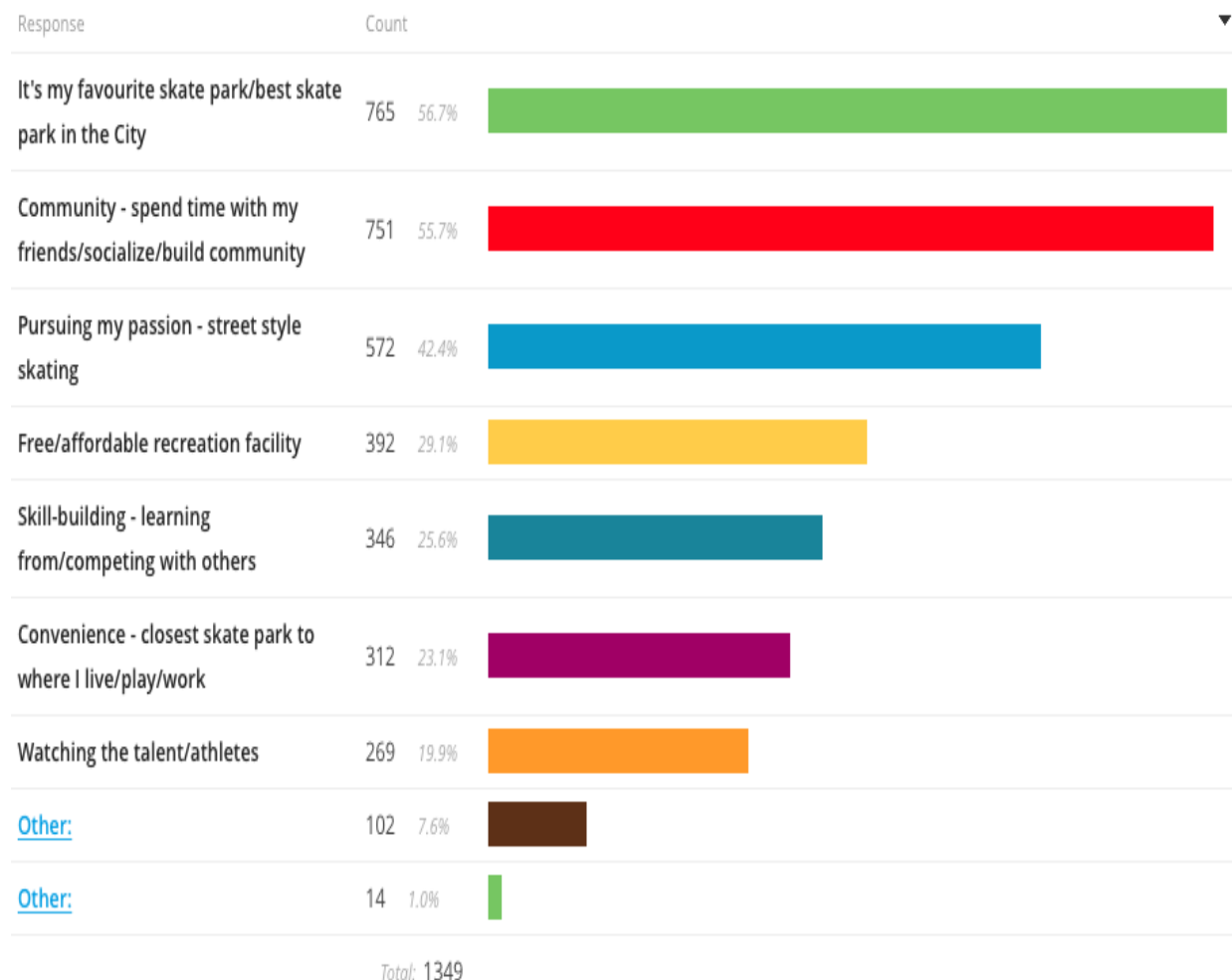
A clear majority of users indicated that they skate Plaza more than once a week 42.1% while the second largest response rate stated that they skate daily 22.5%. This spoke to the second part of the question which indicated that 81.8% of the respondents use the skate park both on weekends and weekdays.



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 7. What draws you to Plaza?

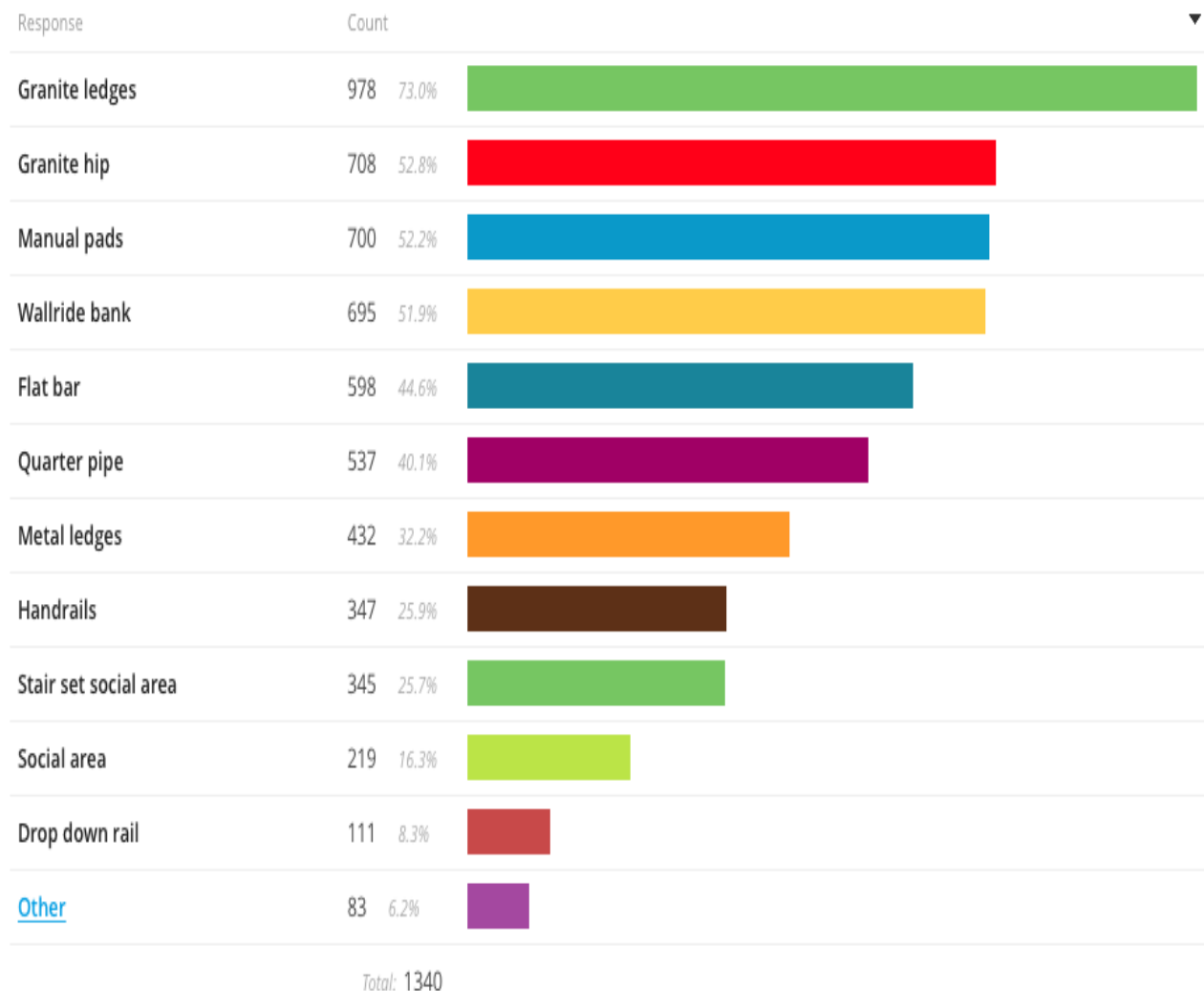
There were two factors that emerged neck and neck out of this question; the first being that respondents stated Plaza to be their favorite skate park in the city; and secondly that the Plaza offered a sense of community unlike any other park. The third highest response (pursuing passion for street style skating) supported these two responses as Plaza is the only park in the city offering exclusively street features, shelter and lighting, and as a result fostering this sense of community.



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 8. What are your favorite features at Plaza?

978 respondents ranked Plaza's granite ledges to be their favorite feature while the granite hip was second with 708 responses. Two important characteristics about these top two choices are that they are unique street style features because they are granite, which is unique to Vancouver. It is also important to note that the top five favorite features are all street style once again contributing to the preferred street style theme.

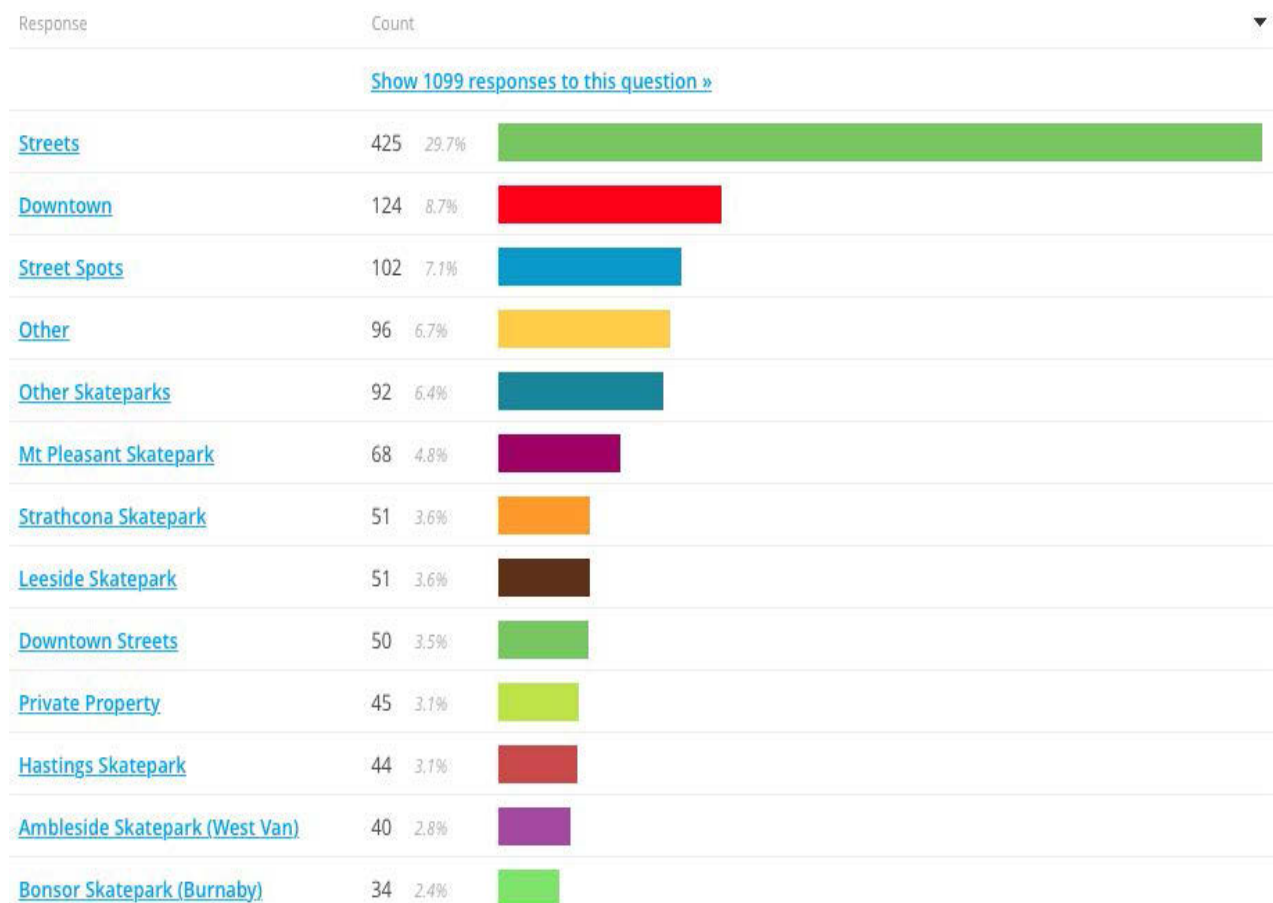




# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 9. Where would you skate if the Plaza wasn't available (i.e. due to construction/demolition of viaducts)?

A clear number of respondents stated they would turn to skating the streets, downtown and street spots (eg. Building plazas like 800 Robson) should the Plaza not be available. These top three responses are indicative of a preferred theme of street style skateboarding.



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 10. What would you like to see in the re-designed plaza?

### Top 4 re-design themes (1135 responses)

#### 1. Street features:

1. Granite ledges
2. Granite hip
3. Manual pads
4. Wallride bank
5. Smooth flatground
6. Flatbar

#### 2. Amenities

1. Roof with lights
2. Washrooms
3. Water fountain
4. Seating / social area
5. Access to food
6. Art (sculptures, murals, totem poles)

#### 3. Location

1. Downtown (central)
2. Same
3. False Creek (near water)
4. Close to transit
5. Under a bridge
6. Inner city Industrial areas (Jonathan Rogers Park)

#### 4. Maintenance

1. Resolve homeless encampment
2. Weekly Cleanups
3. To be respected and treated as any other public park in the city

*The majority of respondents expressed their desire to have the re-design of Plaza similar to its existing design, consisting of primarily street style features made out of granite. Inclusion of amenities such as a roof, lights and washrooms were adamantly expressed alongside areas to socialize, observe and rest. Additionally, a majority of respondents requested for the re-designed Plaza to be based in the downtown core or in the same location. Lastly, a desire for frequent maintenance rounded out the top 4 re-design themes focusing on resolving the homeless occupation of the Plaza.*

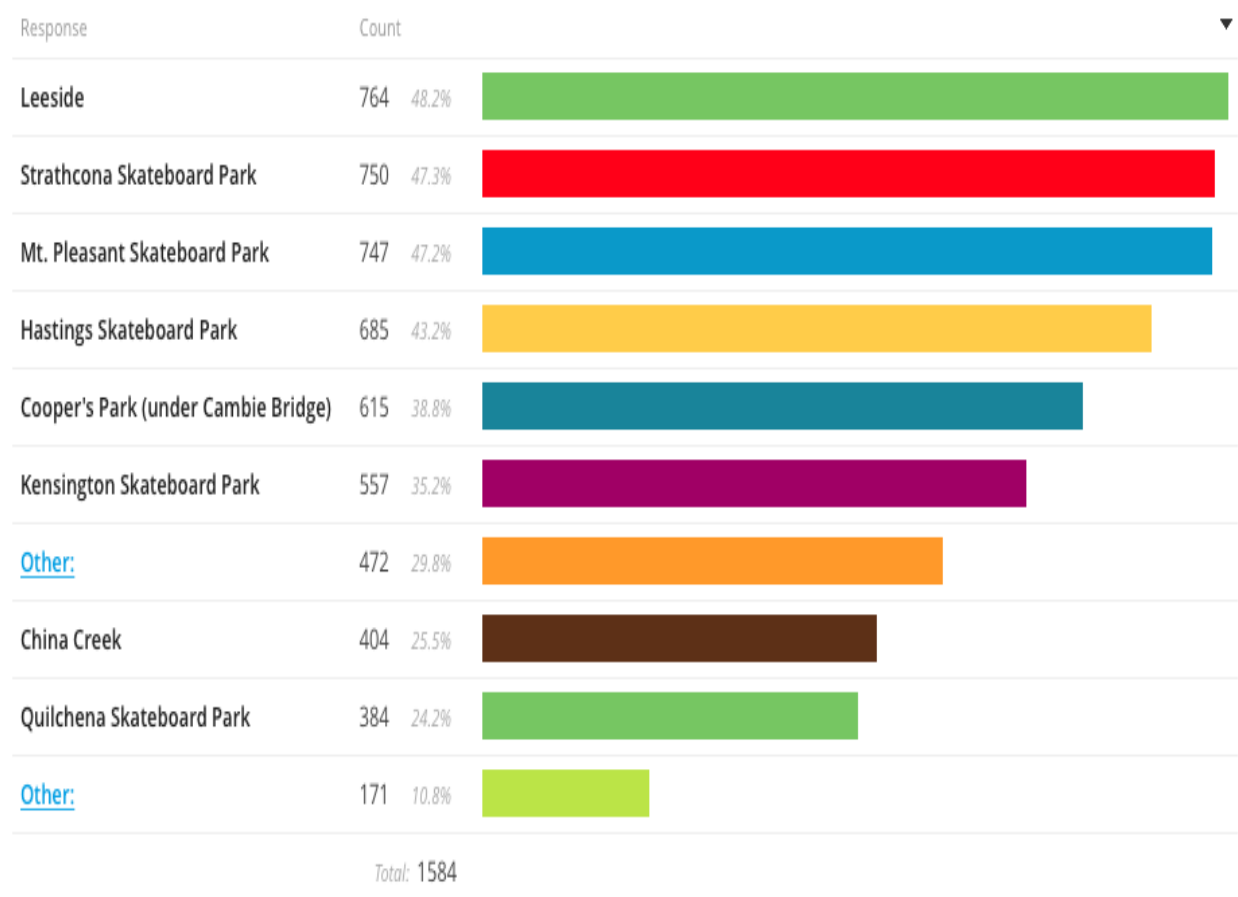
# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 11. What other skate parks and skate spots do you use in and around Vancouver?

The top three skate parks respondents indicated they use alternatively to Plaza are Leaside, Strathcona and Mount Pleasant. All three are located in East Vancouver and are valued for their social aspect as much as their skate features.

Due to their small footprints (all being less than 3200 square feet) Newline has defined them as skate spots as opposed to skate parks.

Meanwhile, the top three skate parks respondents indicated using outside of Vancouver included Ambleside, Bonsor and UBC.



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 11. (Continued) Top Three Skate Parks Used in Vancouver

The following section will examine these top three skate parks in Vancouver as an attempt to explore the reasons why Skateboarders have chosen these specific sites and their similarities with the existing Plaza.

### 1. Leaside – Designed by Antisocial/DIY

**Site details:** Only skate park fully covered in Vancouver; flatground & transition features including, quarter pipes, banks, wallrides, rail and hip.



**Location:** Cassiar St. Connector at the intersection of East Hastings St and Highway 1 / 3200 square feet.

#### Positives:

- Covered with lights
- Cultural hub (painting/ events)
- Variety of transition features

#### Negatives:

- Only transition
- Not easily accessible by transit
- Rough ground / features are weathered and need maintenance
- No social area i.e. Seating
- No amenities
- Too advanced for some users



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 2. Strathcona – Designed by Newline

**Site Details:** Close to plaza and centrally located; grassy hill to relax and observe primarily Street features including, Hip, ledges, bank, rail, down rail, hubba, flatground and a parking barrier.



**Location:** Venables St at Campbell Ave / 2500 square feet.

### **Positives:**

- Street features
- Central location
- In a park
- Social area
- Amenities (washroom & fountain)
- Good for learning how to push

### **Negatives:**

- Too small
- No roof/ lights
- Ground/ features are weathered and need maintenance





# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 3. Mount Pleasant – Designed by Newline

**Site details:** Replaced an under-used wading pool; Street & transition features including ledges, manual pads, hip, wall-ride, banks, quarter pipe and a flat rail.



**Location:** 16 Ave and Ontario  
3,000 square feet

### Positives:

- Central location
- Water Fountain
- Both street & transition features
- In a park
- Good for beginners

### Negatives:

- Too small
- No roof/ lights / seating
- Fence closing it off
- No social area



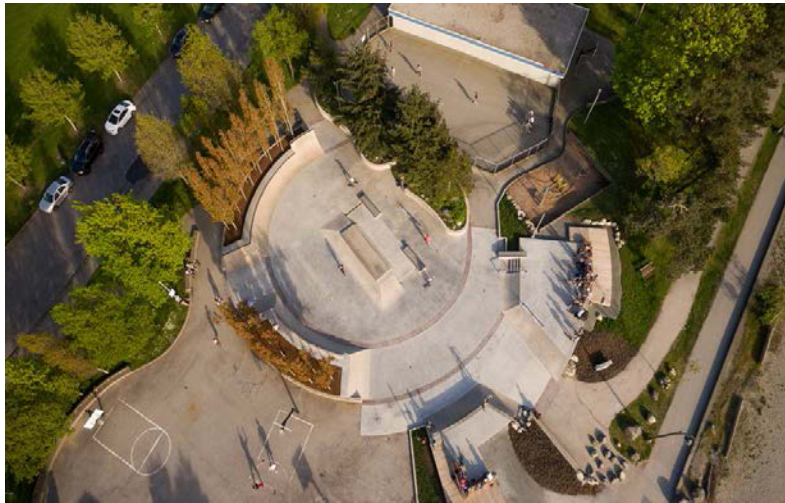
# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 12. Top Three Skateparks Used Outside of Vancouver

This section explores the reasons why Skateboarders have chosen these skate parks outside of Vancouver, and their similarities with the existing Plaza.

### 1. Ambleside – Designed by Newline

**Site Details:** Beach front, seating to watch skaters & attached to main beach promenade; Plaza design offers both street & transition features including ledges, manual pads, rails, down rails, hip, wall-ride, banks and quarter pipe.



**Location:** 1150  
Marine Dr. Ambleside  
Park, West Vancouver

#### **Positives:**

- Both street & transition features
- In a park/ on beach
- Social area
- Located next to other sporting amenities



#### **Negatives:**

- Too small
- No roof/ lights
- Not close to transit
- Outside of Vancouver



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 2. Bonsor – Designed by Spectrum & Space2Space

**Site Details:** Located in a park with ample seating and social spaces while also offering a wide variety of skateboarding styles including, street, transition & vert features. These features include ledges, manual pads, rails, down rails, hip, wall-ride, banks, halfpipe, snake bowl.



**Location:** Northwest corner of Imperial Street and Jubilee Avenue, Burnaby, BC

### **Positives:**

- Provides features for all skateboard styles
- Close to transit (Metrotown Skytrain Station)
- In a park
- Sheltered social area
- Near a community centre



### **Negatives:**

- No roof/ lights
- Outside of Vancouver
- Money for transit
- Rough ground



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 3. UBC – Designed by Newline

**Site Details:** Attached to a basketball court, and small green space. The skatepark offers both street & transition including ledges, manual pads, rails, down rails, hip, banks, halfpipe, and a quarterpipe. It is a good location to warm up before skating the area.



**Location:** Health Sciences Mall and Thunderbird Boulevard.

### Positives:

- Provides both street & transition features
- Close to transit
- Social area

### Negatives:

- No roof/ lights
- Outside of Vancouver
- Money for transit
- No amenities
- Rough ground



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

## 13. Top 'skate spots' used in Vancouver

1. Hot spot - (may be lost with park renewal) Curved ledges, stair set.

Location: Andy Livingstone Park



2. Slappy Curbs - (will be lost with area development) smooth ground and curbs.

Location: Carrall & Pacific blvd



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

3. *Terry Fox* - Smooth ground, manual pad, ledges, stair set.

Location: South Robson at BC Place



Other 'skate spots' highly used in downtown Vancouver:

- 800 Robson - Vancouver Art Gallery
- Georgia St banks
- Victory Square
- CIBC building
- 401 Georgia

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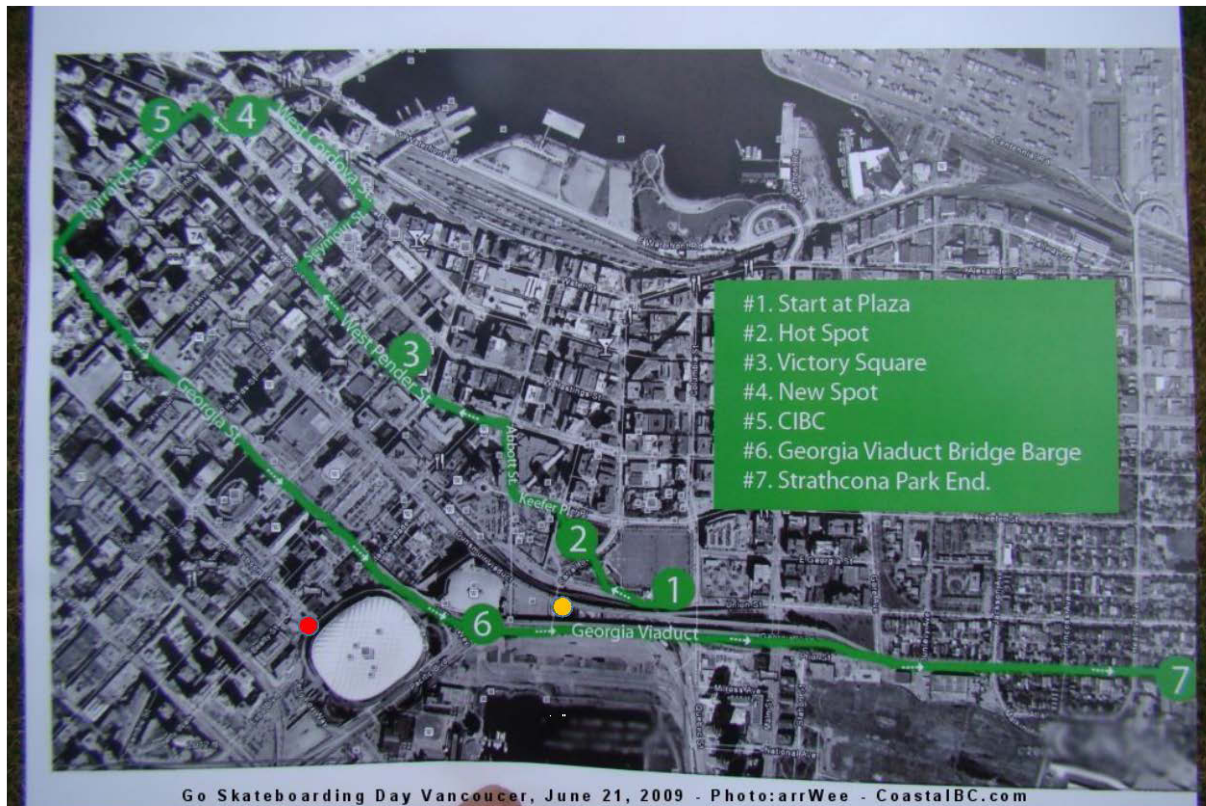
## 14. North East False Creek's importance in Vancouver's Skateboarding Community

Focal point for greater Vancouver skateboarding scene. Go skate day annually held there since 2004.

- Gathering spot for community (cultural hub)
- Easily accessible (close to work, school, food)
- Best skateable terrain in a compact area



# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT



Skate spots 2016:

- Terry fox
- Slappy Curbs

## 12. Is there anything else you would like us to know?

This question was left open ended for respondents to share their personal values, interests and worries regarding the future of the Downtown Skateboard Plaza. The 579 responses highlighted the importance of the Plaza being a community hub bringing together individuals from all socio economic backgrounds and skill levels. In addition to the cultural aspects emphasis was expressed towards the unique design and features that have allowed users to excel at street style skateboarding while simultaneously inspiring others.

# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

currently I skateboard at many of the existing facilities in the city but, the one and only park that is designed with this particular skateboarding in mind is the plaza. Removing it will displace a whole community of skateboarders that will absolutely have no where to go. A intern park is a DEFINITE MUST !

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The Plaza is significant historically for a number of reasons (for example, being the first of it's kind in the world and a template for hundreds of parks around the world), but the surrounding space is also quite significant for skateboarders. With the viaducts coming down, skateboarders will also likely be loosing two other important skateboard hubs ("Hot Spot" on the footpath in Andy Livingstone park and the Curb Spot on Carrall St. by the sea wall). It is important that these spaces be recognized and somehow reflected or incorporated in the new Plaza design or design of the new developments in the Northeast False Creek area.

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I'm from Newfoundland living in Toronto however have grown up watching and have been lucky enough to skate the plaza while visiting/travelling.

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be very careful of where drains are. Too often parks put them right where you are getting ready to pop your tail to do a trick. Drain the park in areas that are not within a few feet of any obstacles.

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Please understand that plaza is more than a skatepark its a cultural hub for skateboarders and the scene to meet up and skate and hang out. It's asthetic of obstacles mimicking the real streets is unlike any skatepark and its essence has brought together skaters all across B.C and Canada (even worldwide people know it's fame from America to Japan) it's also so spacious and designed so well. Thanks for your time

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# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

The Vancouver Skate Plaza is a globally recognized skatepark and the first of its kind in North America. Not only does it provide a community-building atmosphere and a place to improve skills, it's a destination for skaters visiting from around the world. Its central location is ideal in terms of accessibility from the rest of the city. The facility also captures the essence of street skating in a skatepark environment, which is appreciated by locals and visitors alike. It's well-used and if it can't remain in its current location it would be a worthwhile investment to create something similar in a central location.

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Totem poles and Longhouse style roof. Lets create a even more iconic park that is instantly recognizable to the world and which honours the indigenous cultures of Canada and of more importantly the nations on whose traditional lands Vancouver sits.

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The skate plaza is a place where kids can feel welcome, safe and involved. It is an environment where younger kids can be surrounded by the people they look up to and be acknowledged by their role models.

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consult with skateboarders - old ones - and LOTS OF DIFFERENTNESS - so that you know what to build. time and time again these sort of things go down without real skater input and it blows up in everyones face .. take the nightmare 16th for example... i've been skating for over 30 years and don't know anyone who was involved in the design or locating of that park .. and now it's a complete failure - the skaters are in a cage , the whole thing looks ridiculous and ugly , and nobody is happy but the money still went down the drain. please please call for input - and make that call heard. I didn't hear about this survey from the city - and I never would have known about it if it wasn't for other concerned skaters who are making an effort to make sure that the design and implementation of a new downtown skatepark for vancouver is done properly. don't pull a calgary and build a million dollar millennium dud. keep the downtown park a street park - it's meant to keep the kids off the streets in the first place so it has to be primarily a street park so that you get that feel from it - but everyone skates the quarter pipe at the plaza - everyone - it's part of skateboarding - so include some transition - include some creative obstacles - but please please please don't do this without as much real skater input as you can get - take UBC for example - that park may look fun but it has so many epic design flaws in that most people don't even bother skating most of it - same with Quilchena park - the park that puts 'ache' in mistake. ultimately skaters will skate whatever you build - but don't build it for the spectators - build it for the skaters. thanks for reading

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# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

I'm not sure if this is coming up in the planning of the new park, but the current plaza is a space regularly used by homeless populations in that neighbourhood and I for one would like to see this sharing considered and continued with the new park. this is obviously a much larger and complex conversation in the city but I skate the plaza at night a lot and see how many people come together and depend on this space. skateboarding has its use as a marginal activity that reappropriates public space and I think its a wonderful thing that spaces purpose built for the now legitimized activity of skating can be used by the truly marginalized communities for much more urgent and vital needs than just fun and exercise. I realize this might not be a popular stance and there are certainly considerations around safety, litter, etc that should be addressed but in my experience there is a respectful rapport between skaters and homeless users and unspoken agreements about time and space use of the park that function quite well. I have been coming to this park since it opened and have never seen any significant issues.

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I'm a foreigner and the Plaza skatepark has been a great way to get into the local skate community. Plaza is world famous and 2.0 should be up to the same standard.

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This park is incredibly valuable to the CULTURE of skateboarding, unlike any other skate spot in the country. It is important that you don't think of this park in athletic / sporting terms. This is not a training facility, this is a community hub. Some skaters like to just hang out here and not skate. This place is iconic for the vibe that it fosters, which can easily be ruined if the plaza is redesigned to look like a sports facility. It needs to maintain that raw, "street" feeling to it, imperfections and all. Please do not look to Street League or the Xgames as models for building a new plaza. Look to big city centres around the world and the outdoor public spaces they have for use by citizens. Build spots that replicate real-life obstacles that one might find in say, Vancouver's business district downtown. The more "real" it feels, the better.

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Needs to be in the currecnt area Skateboarding builds community and saves life. Gives kids from lowincome backgrounds something to do express themselves, build community. Keeps kids out of trouble. This park is like a big family the kids that skate with me are like brothers to me. We are a community and we need this space to express ourselves. Painters paint with a brush we paint with skatebaords, its like a martial art

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# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

Plaza is one of my most frequented spots in the city. All my friends in the city I have met because of skating at plaza. It has a great location and it build community and friendship.

The fact that there are lights on all night also allows me to still skate on days I work late. It also provides a night time activity that is constructive

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I used to love taking my kids (I answered for them) to this park. It is close to home and has good features for beginners. But we had to stop due to needles, garbage and the fact that you have let it become a homeless camp.

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As for the local skateboard community the park has held numerous events that have brought skateboarders, Vancouverites, and skateboarding broadly (not limited to Canadian) together. Places like this really are community hubs. There's an entire generation/breed of kids today who grew up skateboarding at the plaza; they're now moving on to get recognized in the industry and even forming careers in an activity they love. Having the right place with the right features is a huge catalyst for progression. The bar is so high in Vancouver now that your average Vancouver skater is sometimes as good or even better than those pursuing careers.

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Plaza is a skatepark where skaters gather from all around the world. It's an internationally renowned skate spot and it allows foreign skaters to thrive and grow with locals. I myself have made many friends from different countries and it has inspired me to travel to Japan to expand my experience in life through skateboarding. I know when I return to plaza I will continue to exchanging friendship with these skaters.

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The plaza has a great history in Vancouver/North America as the first legit street style plaza. It's been a meeting place for many years and a great place for street skaters to enjoy skating that style without having to hit the streets or business properties. If any parts of it can be recycled into the new plaza i think it would mean a lot to the people who currently skate it.

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# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

The park has been a staple for me ever since it was built. Helped me gain the skills to be a professional skateboarder. And I believe it will continue to help kids like me follow their dreams.

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I'm 44 and this is an activity I do with my 15 year old son.

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The Vancouver skateboard plaza is world renowned, for good reason. It is one of the most "street" skate plazas anywhere, and it may technically have been the first one. It has such an important significance to skateboarding, not only in Vancouver, but world wide. It gets more use than any other skatepark in Vancouver. Replacing it with a more traditional park that has bowl features etc would be completely missing the point, and doing a disservice to street skateboarders/skateboarding. Vancouver has plenty of different options for skaters that enjoy bowls and transition features, but only one plaza that is intended to replicate street features exclusively, and it's days are numbered. That is paramount. It would crush the souls of countless skaters should it's significance and roll in skateboarding not be honored during the process of deciding it's fate.

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The plaza is more than a skate park, it is a place to meet up before skating spots around the city, it is a social hub for raw street skating talent blossoming in Vancouver. The design is amazing and world renowned. Whatever comes next must be designed flawlessly and have the same aesthetics. The plaza keeps a strong community vibe for the youth, keeps kids off drugs and gives younger kids good role models to look up to. Older skateboarders that frequent the plaza are often outstanding citizens in the community and provide the youth with insight into being better people as well as skateboarders.

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The size of plaza and way that all the features have almost a sort of traffic space ,for skaters to hit different obstacles without being worried of collisions. So the open space and the fact its a plaza and that all of the features visually look like they're not something meant for a skatepark. It Creates a grungey vibe that recreates street skating in a safe environment is what has captivated so many generations, and is the most important to the Community.

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# DOWNTOWN SKATE PLAZA SURVEY REPORT

Vancouver is currently an internationally renowned destination for skateboarders around the globe, largely because of the existing downtown plaza skatepark. The city should attempt, in every possible way, to consult with the local skateboard community to replace the plaza so as to retain the strong and existing local skateboard community while continuously attracting new skateboarders from around the globe.

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lots of open space with well places objects, It should look like a street plaza, the granite ledges should be one solid piece of granite so it doesn't chip and crack in the middle of the ledge. Should have flow so you can skate every spot in the plaza.

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The plaza is raw and feels like the streets, so new park should be that as well. Having lights and being covered are super important too. Having a reliable place to skateboard in the rainy months is super important

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The Plaza is one of the most important and unique skateparks this city has. If it is demolished, there needs to be somewhere for people who can't travel to other parks to go. Vancouver needs to realize that we can't take away spaces. We need far more parks! Everyday I visit parks that are packed with kids. The supply does not meet the demand. Also, most of the parks in Vancouver are reaching an older age... They need upgrades and maintenance.

Skateboarding is going to be in the Olympics! The Plaza is training ground for locals that could qualify to compete in Tokyo in 2020.

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The Vancouver skate plaza is the best downtown parc of it's kind in Canada. As a skate company owner and professional skater I think the plaza is an essential part the industry in Canada and the health of the sport in BC. The key component is it's location and "street" oriented course. It's prime location serves as a healthy sport and social venue that promotes skateboarding perfectly on every level. I would go as far as saying that the plaza is the heart and soul of the Vancouver skate scene and it's associated retail/economic partners, and should be kept alive at all costs!

Thank you!