



SKATEBOARD
STRATEGY

Acknowledgements

Parks, Forestry & Recreation would like to thank the many individuals and groups who contributed their time, resources, and ideas to the development of the Skateboard Strategy.

Particular thanks goes to the Toronto Skateboarding Committee, the PFR staff team, representatives from other City divisions, as well as those who participated in the focus groups/pop-up consultations or responded to the online survey. To all the contributors, Parks, Forestry & Recreation would like to extend our gratitude.



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List of Acronyms

FMP Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan **PFR** Parks, Forestry & Recreation **TSC** Toronto Skateboarding Committee



Executive Summary

This Skateboard Strategy was developed in response to Council direction from 2014 and 2015 Capital Budget approval that requested Parks, Forestry & Recreation (PFR) to work in consultation with the Toronto Skateboarding Committee (TSC), to develop a strategy that incorporates policy, operating and capital plans to support skateboarding in Toronto.

The Skateboard Strategy aligns with other City plans and strategies including the Recreation Service Plan (2013-2017), Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy, Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, and Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. The Skateboard Strategy will also inform the development of the Parks and Recreation 20-year Facilities Master Plan (FMP), that will guide the 10-year capital plan commencing in 2018.

To ensure that the needs of the skateboarding community are reflected, the Skateboard Strategy was informed by extensive community engagement, including:

- **Toronto Skateboarding Committee:** PFR consulted with the TSC to identify and confirm priorities, issues and opportunities.
- **2015 Skatepark Survey:** In fall 2015, PFR conducted a survey to better understand how skateparks are being used.
- **Youth consultations:** PFR held several consultations with skateboarders in summer 2016 to engage youth in the development of the Skateboard Strategy.



Skateboard Strategy actions

The Skateboard Strategy provides recommended actions in three core areas:

- **Skatepark planning** – provides a methodology to guide decisions in the development of future skateparks, including skatepark typologies, gap analysis, and site selection.
- **Engagement through skateboarding** – explores the ways in which skateboarding can be used as a tool for community building and engagement.
- **Animation, promotion & marketing** – looks at promoting skateboarding and promoting Toronto as a city for skateboarding. There is also potential for skateboarding to be a tool for economic development.

Implementation of the Skateboard Strategy:

1. The Skateboard Strategy will inform the 20-year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2017-2036) on the identification of additional skatepark facilities and associated 10-year capital plans, commencing in 2018.
2. Actions relating to programming, engagement, operations, and maintenance will be incorporated into existing operational work planning, service delivery, and budget. Connections will be made to other divisions within the City, as appropriate.
3. PFR will leverage strategic partnerships to enhance/increase skateboard programs, hold major events, engage youth, and develop new skateboarding facilities.



Summary of actions

Skatepark Planning

- Utilize the planning framework presented in the Skateboard Strategy to guide capital planning, design, and construction of skateparks, including:
 - Undertake innovative community engagement approaches in planning new skateparks.
 - Adopt the Skateboard Strategy's skatepark typologies.
 - Explore the integration of skate dots into the development of parks and trails.
 - Integrate the gap analysis and site selection methodology into the Facilities Master Plan planning process for future skateparks.
- Assess the need and priority for indoor skateboard facilities through the Facilities Master Plan and explore opportunities to better utilize or reconstruct existing facilities to allow year-round, seasonal, temporary, and indoor skateboarding.
- Consider upgrading supporting amenities for skateparks in state of good repair audits and planned park upgrades.

Engagement through skateboarding

- Develop a program model for City-run skateboarding programs.
- Explore partnerships to enhance and increase introductory program offerings.
- Monitor the skateboarding industry regarding the development of skateboard instructor certification programs.
- Work with the Toronto Skateboarding Committee to support youth in civic and community engagement and leadership.
- Explore the possibility of engaging youth as skatepark ambassadors to promote skateboarding
- Work with partners (like StreetARToronto) to integrate street art into existing and new skateparks using a youth engagement approach.

Animation, Promotion & Marketing

- Use social media and other channels to increase visibility/access of information on skateboard parks and programming, and improve quality of information.
- Cultivate partnerships to explore the opportunities associated with diverse skateboard programs and events, and the promotion of Toronto as a destination for skateboarding.
- Explore a pilot project to allow the issuance of occasional permits at a limited number of skateparks, for special events and programs that are open to the public.



Introduction

This Skateboard Strategy serves as a guide to the City of Toronto as it continues to advance its network of skateboard facilities, amenities and programs. It will help guide decisions for the development of future skatepark facilities to ensure a complete and diverse network of skateparks that are accessible and equitably/geographically distributed. It also identifies opportunities to support community engagement, development, and leadership.

The Skateboard Strategy:

- Articulates the City's role in supporting and advancing the growth of skateboarding and growing demand for skateboard parks and programming.
- Provides a planning framework to guide decisions in the development of future skateboard parks.
- Supports the Toronto Skateboarding Committee's work to promote and enhance skateboarding, and to represent the needs of skateboarders in Toronto.
- Supports strategies to partner and engage with communities on skatepark development and programming opportunities.
- Supports and advances the Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy, Recreation Service Plan, and the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan.

What are we doing now?

Parks, Forestry & Recreation has been actively working to advance skateboarding through the development of skateparks, maintenance and safety guidelines, programming, and working with the Toronto Skateboarding Committee.

In 2000, Toronto got its first permanent skatepark – Cummer skatepark. In 2004, Council approved the Recreation Facilities Report that identified skateboarding as one of the recreation areas with the greatest need, and recommended that PFR develop at least four new skateparks including one City-wide facility and one in each of the other districts. The report also recommended that PFR consider developing smaller skateboard facilities as opportunities arose. PFR has exceeded the direction in the Recreation Facilities Report and currently has 14 skateparks of varying sizes and styles across the city (12 permanent and 2 seasonal).

Skatepark infrastructure experiences wear and tear with regular use and seasonal changes. PFR has developed inspection guidelines for concrete skateparks. In addition to monthly and semi-annually routine maintenance, skateparks are also included in the regular state of good repair inspection cycle.

Skateparks have signage that provides users with information about how/when to use the park, potential risks, safety precautions such as the use of protective gear and important contact information. Signage is important in ensuring that skateparks are safe for the public.

Parks, Forestry & Recreation also offers a range of skateboarding programs such as drop-ins, instructional programs, and camps

that can be beneficial to teach younger skateboarders basic skills so they have increased confidence and are comfortable using public skateparks. Programs are offered at various community centres across the city.

Parks, Forestry & Recreation works with the Toronto Skateboarding Committee (TSC) to promote and enhance skateboarding, and to understand how to best support the skateboarding community. Some recent examples of engagement with the TSC include joint inspections of some skateparks, engaging the TSC in the development of this Skateboard Strategy, and working together to identify future potential sites for skateparks.

Why develop a Skateboard Strategy?

Increased interest

Skateboarding is an established activity that is gaining mainstream popularity. In recent years, some Canadian cities have hosted qualifying events for major skateboarding competitions and championships, such as X Games qualifiers in Montreal in 2015 and the 2016 Vans Pro Skate Park Series Qualifier in Vancouver. The International Olympic Committee recently announced that the 2020 Olympic Games will see park terrain skateboarding included as an official event for the first time to attract youth-oriented sports and audiences!

In Toronto, several community-based initiatives, including the Toronto Skateboarding Committee, Babes Brigade, Malvern Family Resource Centre, and Oasis Skateboard Factory, have developed in response to the growing interest in skateboarding.

A demonstrated need

The 2015 Skatepark Survey identified a need for more skateparks, with nearly all survey respondents expressing a desire for more skateparks and skateboarding opportunities in the city.

Although PFR has taken many positive strides in recent years to build high quality skateparks, the current provision of skateparks in Toronto lags behind that of other major Canadian cities. One way to consider facility provision is square metres of skatepark per person. Using this lens, Toronto's 12 permanent skateparks¹ total 13,445 square metres, with one square metre of skatepark serving 195 people, which is lower than other Canadian cities, including Calgary and Edmonton. Skatepark provision is currently being assessed through the upcoming Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan.

Council direction

This Skateboard Strategy was developed in response to Council direction from 2014 and 2015 Capital Budget approval that requested PFR to work in consultation with the Toronto Skateboarding Committee to develop a strategy that incorporates policy, operating and capital plans to support skateboarding in Toronto. The Skateboard Strategy will inform the 20-year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2017-2036) on the identification of additional skatepark facilities and associated 10-year capital plans, commencing in 2018.

¹Dunbat and Dufferin Grove are excluded from this total, as they are located on multi-use dry-pads, and the wooden skatepark components are disassembled and stored away each winter to make room for other uses.

Alignment with other work

The Skateboard Strategy aligns with several other PFR plans and strategies:

- **Recreation Service Plan (2013-2017)** provides guidelines around the delivery of recreation programs and services including skateboard programs. It outlines the role that the City plays in meeting the recreation needs of Torontonians.
- **Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy** confirms youth as a priority area of service, and identifies the opportunity to use skateboarding as a tool to meaningfully engage youth and develop youth leadership.
- **Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan**, a 20-year plan to recommend and guide the creation of new facilities, including skateparks.

The Skateboard Strategy also aligns with other City strategies, including the **Toronto Youth Equity Strategy**, and the **Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy**.

Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan

Parks, Forestry & Recreation is developing a 20-year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (FMP) as directed through the Council-approved Recreation Service Plan (2012) and Parks Plan (2013). Once completed, the FMP will refresh and build upon PFR's 2004 Recreation Facilities Report, which guided recent recreation infrastructure development in Toronto.

The FMP will prioritize investment in indoor and outdoor parks and recreation facilities (including skateparks) over the next 20 years by recommending and guiding the creation of new facilities, the renewal of existing facilities, and recommending strategies to optimize the use of facilities in order to best meet local and city-wide needs.

The Skateboard Strategy provides tools and recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan for guiding future investment in skateboarding infrastructure.

Development of the FMP involved extensive public and stakeholder consultation, including an online survey, public town hall meetings, focus groups, online feedback, and Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings. The consultation findings will be used - along with information on demographics, facility utilization, recreation and leisure trends, facility best practices, and pertinent legislation - to inform the assessment of facility needs and the development of the draft Master Plan recommendations, including the need for skateparks.

In addition to these broader analyses and consultations, FMP recommendations for investment in skateparks will be informed by the Fall 2015 Skatepark Survey and the Skateboard Strategy. The Skatepark Survey informs the FMP on skatepark user behavior, preferences and trends. The Skateboard Strategy includes a gap analysis of the current skatepark network that will inform the needs assessment component of the FMP, and provides tools and recommendations for guiding future investment in skateboarding infrastructure.

Strategies to guide planning

There is no formal “standard” for public skatepark provision or development in North America. However, skateparks can be a significant investment, and a number of cities around the world have responded to the growth of skateboarding by developing strategies to guide the skatepark planning process. Skateboard strategies allow for an intentional community-based approach to support the development of a diverse network of skateboarding opportunities that serve the whole community.

The scope of the strategies produced by different cities vary, but generally include guidelines and tools to direct the development of skatepark infrastructure, and include establishing a network, site selection, planning and designing skateparks, and community engagement. In some cases, the strategies are complete documents with technical details, while in others, high-level strategies or guiding principles are integrated into larger planning documents. Vancouver, Vaughan, London, Kitchener and Calgary are among the Canadian cities with strategies or plans that address skateboarding.



Skateboard strategies allow for an intentional community-based approach to support a diverse network of skateboarding opportunities that serve the whole community.

Development of the Skateboard Strategy

Guiding Principles

Five principles guided the development of the Skateboard Strategy:

- ✓ **Equitable access** - Provide equitable access to skateparks on a geographic and demographic basis.
- ✓ **Quality** - Provide high quality infrastructure and programming to enhance skateboarding in the City of Toronto.
- ✓ **Inclusion** - Ensure access to programs and services that are planned and delivered in a way that recognizes diversity, and encourages participation of marginalized and racialized people and groups.
- ✓ **Capacity building** - Provide skateboard parks and programming that create a sense of community, belonging, and vitality.
- ✓ **Sustained engagement** - Ensure sustained, meaningful engagement in all aspects of skateboard planning and service delivery.

These guiding principles are referenced throughout the Skateboard Strategy.

Environmental scan

An environmental scan was conducted to understand issues and considerations around skateboarding and skateparks, as well as the skateboarding landscape in Toronto.

Community engagement

To ensure that the Strategy reflects the needs of the skateboarding community, the development of the Skateboard Strategy was informed through extensive community engagement that included consultation with the Toronto Skateboarding Committee, an online survey of skatepark users, and a series of consultations with youth and underrepresented skateboarders.

Toronto Skateboarding Committee

The Toronto Skateboarding Committee is an important stakeholder and advisory group of skateboarding advocates. Parks, Forestry & Recreation worked with the TSC to confirm priorities, issues, and opportunities.

2015 Skatepark Survey

In fall 2015, PFR conducted a Skatepark Survey to better understand how the City's skateparks are being used. The survey was promoted at skateparks and community centres, and through the Toronto Public Library, Toronto Skateboarding Committee, Youth Outreach Workers and the City's Youth Space Advisory Committee.

The survey received a total of 1,835 responses. 87% of respondents were male. The average age of respondents was 26, and 31% were over the age of 30. 70% have been involved with skateboarding for at least six years.

What we heard

- **Skateparks:** The City's most popular skateparks are Ashbridges Bay, Dunbat, Dufferin Grove, Vanderhoof, and Ellesmere. Many skateboarders prefer the street/plaza style terrain. Many also feel that more supporting amenities are needed at skateparks, with the top requests being lights, water, washrooms, shade, and seating.
- **Skatepark users:** Those who use skateparks tend to visit often and stay for extended periods - with the majority of respondents visiting a skatepark at least twice weekly, and staying for more than 3 hours each time. Most people go there to skateboard, but many also go to hang out with their friends. Respondents are interested in more programming opportunities at skateparks, such as competitions or demos, workshops, and skateboard instruction programs.
- **Skatepark non-users:** Although the survey was targeted at skatepark users, 143 respondents indicated that they don't use skateparks. They cited a number of reasons for not using skateparks - some simply don't know how to use skateparks, are not interested, or don't have time. Some said that the skateparks are not accessible to them, and others indicated that they do not feel safe in skateparks. The majority of safety concerns stemmed from the multiple uses and users of skateparks.

- **Skatepark demand:** Based on the survey and other consultations, there is a demand for skateparks and an interest in opportunities to expand the number of skateparks in Toronto. Survey respondents offered hundreds of suggested locations across the city, and indicated that locations near local parks or community centres would be a good fit. There were also suggestions to provide indoor facilities, to separate facilities for different activities such as BMX and rollerblading, and to improve existing facilities.

Calgary Skateboarding Amenities Strategy

The City of Calgary hired van der Zalm + associates to develop their Skateboarding Amenities Strategy 2011 to address the growth of skateboarding and the gap in services. The detailed document covers the need for skateboard amenities in Calgary, current network, skatepark typologies, site selection criteria, funding and implementation.

Youth consultations

Parks, Forestry & Recreation held several consultations with youth skateboarders in summer 2016 to engage youth in the development of the Skateboard Strategy, and to complement the results of the Skatepark Survey. Youth skateboarders were consulted on issues of skatepark planning, design and programming. Underrepresented groups in skateboarding, including females and newcomers, were also consulted regarding barriers to skateboarding.

The consultation strategy included six focus groups and pop-up consultations.

- Malvern Recreation Centre, with Malvern Youth Skateboard Advisory and on-site users
- St. Marcellus Skateboarding Camp
- R.V. Burgess Park with Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee Youth Group
- Grandravine Community Recreation Centre
- Dunbat skatepark with Toronto Skate Stop
- Dufferin Grove skatepark with "Skate Like a Girl Day" participants

"Demos give something for kids to shoot for, take skateboarding seriously, and show the opportunities it presents"

Focus group participant

What we heard

- **Programming:** Almost all participants were interested in programming, including introductory lessons, skate clinics, skatejams, competitions, and demos. Both beginner and experienced skateboarders recognized the importance of introductory programming as a way to initiate new people to skateboarding and teach them proper etiquette and technique.
- **Planning and design:** When planning new skateparks, many youth stressed the importance of amenities, as well as the importance of selecting sites where there is community support. Skatepark design is just as important as location. Appropriate selection and design of skatepark features can help ensure that the park is not only accessible to skateboarders of all levels, but also interesting and challenging for more advanced skateboarders.
- **Barriers to skateboarding:** Respondents identified several barriers to participation in skateboarding - fear of injury, lack of proper technique, not knowing where skateparks are located, and being too intimidated to approach skateparks due to lack of skill.

Many female respondents reported feeling intimidated and unwelcome in skateparks, as they tend to be male-dominated spaces. Although this feeling tended to subside over time as they gained experience, many indicated that the biggest barrier to skateboarding is 'breaking the ice' and getting over that initial fear of

approaching skateparks. Suggestions to improve access to skateboarding include giving female skateboarders more exposure, and hosting girl-focused or girls-only lessons, contests, community-led meet-ups, and drop-in hours at skateparks.

- **Conflict mitigation:** The topic of skatepark conflict came up in several of the consultations - conflicts between multiple users, between skateboarders, and unsupervised children. Suggestions to mitigate conflict include ensuring that parks have proper signage, and having skatepark ambassadors monitor the park to ensure that everyone is welcome.



Overview of the Skateboard Strategy

The Skateboard Strategy has the following four sections:

- **Skateboarding context** – provides an overview of key issues and considerations integral to the understanding of skateparks and skateboarding.
- **Skatepark planning** – provides a methodology to guide decisions in the development of future skateparks, including skatepark typologies, gap analysis and site selection.
- **Engagement through skateboarding** – explores the ways in which skateboarding can be used as a tool for community building and engagement.
- **Animation, promotion & marketing** – looks at promoting skateboarding and promoting Toronto as a city for skateboarding. There is also potential for skateboarding to be a tool for economic development.

**"It's important to have different features...
don't just replicate others in the network"**

Focus group participant



Skateboarding context

A number of key issues and considerations integral to the understanding of skateparks and skateboarding in Toronto emerged through the development of the Skateboard Strategy:

- Understanding skateboarding and skateboard culture
- The skateboarding and skatepark experience
- Toronto's skatepark network

Skateboarding & skateboard culture

Benefits of skateboarding and skateparks

Structured sports like basketball, hockey, and soccer are popular ways to encourage youth fitness. However, data from Statistics Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth shows that participation in these sports tends to peak around age 10 and drops off considerably after the age of 20ⁱⁱ. Participation in skateboarding often extends into adulthood², because it is an unstructured, flexible and adaptable activity with low barriers to participation³.

² As identified in Toronto by PFR's 2015 Skatepark Survey, where over 48% of respondents were over the age of 25

³ Cost can create greater barriers to participation, particularly for at-risk youth or youth from low-income families.

Like other activities, skateboarding provides many benefits to participants, including full-body coordination, physical strength and flexibility, cardiovascular endurance, precision and agility, development of patience, perseverance, problem-solving skills and understanding of risk management and stress relief.

A sport or an activity?

There is debate around the characterization of skateboarding – is it a sport or an activity? In 2016, the International Olympic Committee announced that for the first time, skateboarding will be included in the 2020 Olympic Games¹. The international skateboarding community has mixed feelings about this, and thousands signed a petition against the inclusion of skateboarding in the Olympics.

In a statement released by the petitioners, they state that "skateboarding should not be viewed or used as a sport or game or used as a marketing tool for the personal gain of organizations." Skateboarders define competition as internal – they are not competing against each other, but instead always striving for self-improvement. Many members of the skateboarding community are fighting for skateboarding to stay true to its roots, and for it to remain as an activity that is about community, mentorship, self-development, and creative expression.

While this debate does not have any substantive impact on skateboard-related planning in Toronto, it is important to recognize the sensitivity of this characterization when engaging with stakeholders.

Creative expression and cultural transformation

Every skatepark or skateboarding environment is different, and each skateboarder has their own creative way to improvise and navigate their environment. Skateboarders can express themselves by analyzing situations, interpreting their environment, and developing ways to tackle each problem. Many young or beginner skateboarders first engage in skateboarding as a participant of the activity, but with time and practice, they become skateboarders and an integral part of the skateboarding community.



"We feel Olympic recognition will not do justice to the purity, individuality and uniqueness of skateboarding culture"

Petition to International Olympic Committee

The skateboarding and skatepark experience

There are many issues that affect the experience of skateboarding in Toronto - including managing multiple users in skateparks, perceptions of graffiti and street art, where people can skateboard (other than at skateparks), and community resources available to skateboarders.

Multiple users

Outdoor skateparks are not supervised, so multiple activities can occur in the space, requiring users to negotiate space. Larger skateparks can accommodate a higher number of users and multiple types of activities better than smaller skateparks. The design of Ashbridges Bay skatepark, in particular, considers BMX users. PFR's BMX Go Forward Strategy and the Facilities Master Plan consider other users of skateparks.

Graffiti and street art

Graffiti and skateboarding often go hand in hand, as both have "roots from the street", and are forms of creative expression. Skatepark graffiti is not usually created by skateboarders, but many skaters welcome the added colour and vibrancy that graffiti can bring to a space.

StreetARToronto has coordinated several graffiti art projects at various skateparks, including Ashbridges Bay, Dunbat, and Underpass skateparks.

Where to skateboard

According to the 2015 Skatepark Survey, the majority of skateboarders use a form of active or public transportation to travel to skateparks, including skateboarding. However, there are a number of By-laws that restrict where skateboarders can skate. They can skate on the sidewalk, for example, but not on the roadway or bike lanes. Some municipalities have recently adopted policies that soften restrictions on street skateboarding. Kamloops and North Vancouver, for example, recognize skateboarding as an environmentally friendly method of travel and allow skateboarding on most streets. In 2016, Montreal City Council passed a motion to officially recognize skateboarding as a form of active transportation, allowing skateboarders to use bike paths throughout the city.

When streets are redesigned, there is an opportunity to consider the needs of skateboarders. Skateboarders, like pedestrians and cyclists, may be considered vulnerable road users. The City of



Toronto is developing Complete Streets Guidelines to provide a context-sensitive approach for how we design our city streets. The Toronto Skateboarding Committee has been consulted on the Complete Streets Guidelines.

Toronto's skatepark network

Today, skateboarders have access to 14 City of Toronto outdoor skateparks (12 permanent and 2 seasonal), that provide safe and friendly environments for all users (see map on next page). PFR currently offers skateboarding programs at two indoor facilities – the one at Malvern Recreation Centre is in partnership with a community organization. City-run skateboard programs such as camps, drop-ins, and multi-week instructional courses are offered at many locations. Additionally, two privately-run skateparks (CJs Skatepark and Skate Loft) offer indoor skateboarding for a fee.

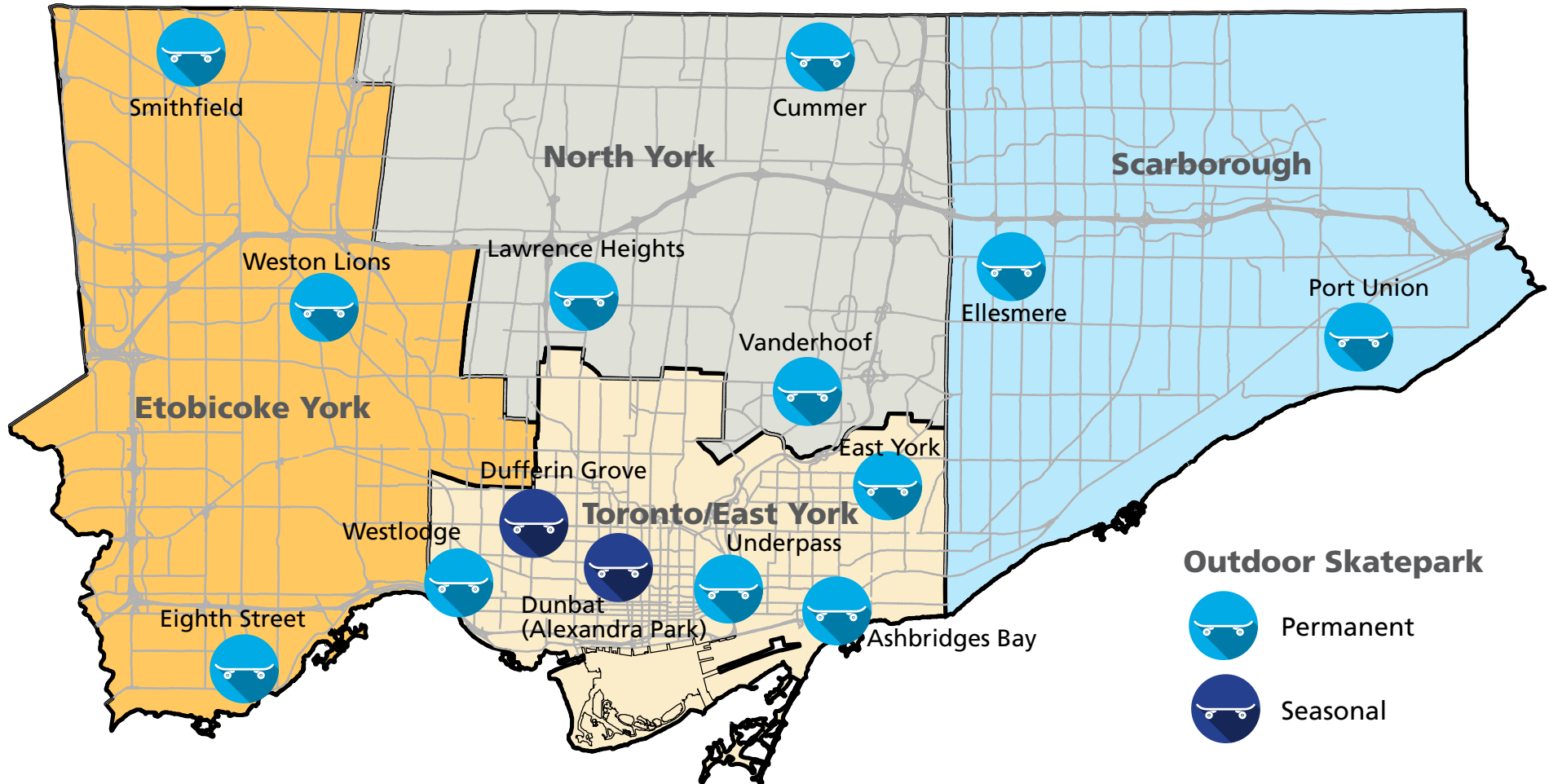


Community-based skateboarding initiatives

The growing interest in skateboarding is evident through the emergence of a number of organizations that work with or support skateboarding in Toronto, including:

- **Toronto Skateboarding Committee:** Promotes and enhances skateboarding in Toronto through consultation with the local skateboarding community and associated stakeholders.
- **Team East York:** A group of skateboarders of varying skill levels, that aims to promote a positive skateboarding community in Toronto, with a focus on East York.
- **Oasis Skateboard Factory:** Alternative high school designed for students who have struggled with school, and works by weaving the activity of running a skateboard business into the curriculum.
- **Babes Brigade:** A meet-up group for female skateboarders looking to break into the activity.
- **Malvern Family Resource Centre (MFRC):** MFRC partners with PFR to deliver skateboard programs in a temporarily repurposed indoor facility.
- **Toronto Skate Stop:** A grassroots initiative created by youth, for youth, to cultivate the potential of skateboarders through a series of workshops and events.

Toronto's Skatepark Network



Map credit: Parks, Forestry & Recreation
Policy and Strategic Planning, Research





Skatepark Planning

A strong planning and design process can help identify the best use of resources in order to maximize the accessibility of the city's skatepark network, and results in skateparks that are valued assets for a community. Skatepark design is important in creating an environment that is welcoming, challenging, and fun for skateboarders, and fosters a spirit of community and mentorship. Well-designed skateparks with appropriate amenities, good lines (conducive to skateboarding tricks), and a supportive community tend to be well-used, and are a source of pride for a community.

The Skateboard Strategy presents a strategic framework to guide skatepark planning and will support the Facilities Master Plan in identifying new facilities. This supports PFR's vision of a complete and diverse skatepark network that is equitably and geographically distributed, safe, challenging, and engaging.

This section includes:

- **Community engagement in planning and design** - Presents tools for partnering and engaging with the community in the development of skateparks.
- **Types of skatepark** - Introduces the various types of skateparks that may make up a network.
- **Future skatepark planning** - Outlines a strategy for planning the location of new skateparks.

Community engagement in planning and design

✓ Inclusion ✓ Sustained engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement is important when developing new skateparks. The engagement process not only helps generate support for the skatepark, but allows community and stakeholders to contribute valuable feedback and ideas on the design and program of the skatepark. This ensures that the new asset will be embraced by the community.

The degree of engagement varies across projects and can directly affect whether a skatepark is well-received. Skateboarders in East York worked closely with their local councillor, lead designer, and builder throughout the construction process for East York skatepark, resulting in a park that provides local skaters with the desired terrain. This skatepark is well-used, and is a source of pride for the local skateboarding community.

Many skatepark projects in the city are realized through years of strong community action and advocacy. Ashbridges Bay skatepark, for example, was a community-driven vision more than 10 years in the making before it finally opened in 2009. The community-driven nature of these skateparks tends to result in successful, well-used skateparks.

Tools for engagement

A range of methods have been used to engage communities and stakeholders in various aspects of the skatepark planning process, including the development of skatepark strategies, site selection, and skatepark design. Some examples of tools for engagement include:

- **Design charrettes:** Charrettes are intensive planning sessions in which citizens, designers, and others collaborate on a vision for a skatepark.
- **Design competitions:** Designers and skateboarders from across the region are invited to submit design proposals for new skateparks. Winning proposals can be evaluated by the City and/or the public.
- **Online project portals:** Online forums can be flexible and effective tools for engaging residents and other stakeholders who are unable to attend an in person consultation session.
- **Request-a-skatepark:** An online form or other channel through which residents can submit a request or idea for a new skatepark.

Community partnerships

City processes can be confusing, and community members are often unaware of the steps needed to realize a skatepark in their community. To ease navigation of these requests, PFR's Partnership Development Unit has established a process to partner with community members and facilitate skatepark development and improvements when there are opportunities for third-party funding. PFR's webpage provides a Fundraising Guide to help community members initiate the park development process, and a catalogue to promote opportunities for project sponsorship.

Community engagement and good design

The skateboarding community has been engaged in the design of Toronto's skateparks and also in shaping some of the skateboarding programs. These skateparks (e.g. Ellesmere, East York, Eighth Street, Ashbridges Bay, Vanderhoof, among others) are highly popular and exemplify a culture of stewardship. They have strong communities that are supportive of skateboarding, learning, sharing space, and leadership development.



Actions

- Undertake innovative community engagement approaches in planning new skateparks, to reflect the needs of skateboarders. All future consultations should:
 - Engage local youth, skateboarders, other skatepark users, and experts.
 - Employ innovative consultation techniques.





Types of skateparks

✓ Quality

A complete skatepark network has a variety of skateparks that are equitably and geographically distributed throughout the city. There are two ways to classify skateparks: by style of terrain, and by size. These two typologies can be paired up to describe a very specific type of skatepark (e.g. a plaza style skate spot).

A strong network includes skateparks of varying terrains and sizes.

Typology 1: Style/terrain

There are many different styles of skateboarding, each characterized by manoeuvres that have evolved around specific forms of terrain. Styles of terrain include:

- Skateable art
- Transition/bowl
- Street plaza
- Hybrid

In the planning and design process for new skateparks, unique features can be considered to diversify the network of skateboarding experiences, and also to distinguish individual skateparks (e.g. Vanderhoof is known for its bowl).

Concrete vs modular

Through the 2015 Skatepark Survey and consultations with the TSC and other stakeholders, a strong preference for skateparks made of poured concrete has been referenced, rather than those made from modular steel or wood features. Other jurisdictions like Calgary and Nova Scotia have skateboard strategies that also acknowledge the unique benefits of concrete skateparks.

Poured-in-place concrete allows for design flexibility and smoother rides, and although more expensive from the outset, they present a cost-effective and functional option in the long run.

Poured concrete is preferred, particularly for large community and city-wide skatepark facilities. However, modular options may be more suitable in certain situations - for example, temporary or smaller skateparks, or where concrete is not feasible.





Redbull Skateable Public Art, Jefferson Park, Seattle, WA. Credit: flickr user dreaming_of_rivers, distributed under a CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 license

Skateable Art

Skateable Art refers to creative structures designed and built specifically to be “skateboarding friendly.” Most have forms that are compelling to a broader pedestrian audience.

Toronto’s skateboarding community has expressed interest in introducing skateable art in Toronto, and has recently put forward proposals to place skateable art along trails.



Transition/bowl

This style of skateboarding mimics the back and forth carving of surfers on waves and originated with skateboarders who challenged their skills on the walls of empty swimming pools. Today, most skateboarding that occurs on curved surfaces that approach vertical are known as transition style skateboarding.



Street plaza

Street plazas are designed to mimic the type of structures found in an urban environment. They are characterized by ledges, stairs, and railings. Modern street plazas create a space that does not resemble a “traditional” skatepark by incorporating structural and cosmetic enhancements such as dyed concrete, atypical textures or materials, as well as integrating small green spaces into the space.



Hybrid

Hybrid parks include elements that provide for both street and transition style skateboarding. They have become more popular recently as skateboarders strive to expand their capabilities.

Typology 2: Hierarchy

Skatepark hierarchies classify skateparks according to their size and describe them in the same language that planners use to describe city parks. Skatepark hierarchies complement the "style/terrain" typology, and can be used to develop a diverse network that serves various communities and interests. Just as a swimming pool in a residential building serves a different interest than an Olympic-sized swimming pool, smaller skateparks may be an appropriate size to serve a small residential community, while a city-wide skatepark will be a destination that draws visitors from across the city.

Parks, Forestry & Recreation's 2004 Recreation Facilities Report presented an introductory four-tier hierarchy (city-wide, district, local, and micro) to guide recommendations for skatepark planning. Based on PFR's experience developing these facilities over the past decade, this Skateboard Strategy presents an updated skatepark hierarchy that captures the function and use of Toronto skateparks, and includes (from largest to smallest):

- City-wide skateparks
- Community skateparks
- Skate spots

These three tiers provide a system/network approach to guide future skatepark planning, to support a complete and diverse network of skateparks.

In addition to these three tiers, skate dots are single skateable features that can be integrated into existing park infrastructure to further enhance the city's skateboarding experience.

City-wide skateparks

Size	Over 2,000 m ² (over ~22,000 ft ²)
Catchment	Large geographic area - a "destination" skatepark
Skill level	All

City-wide skateparks often have zones to accommodate different styles of skateboarding. They can accommodate a greater number of users and multiple types of uses. These skateparks are appropriate for special skateboarding events and can accommodate a large number of spectators.

Toronto's city-wide skatepark, Ashbridges Bay skatepark, attracts skateboarders from across the city and province.

Community skateparks

Size	~600 to 2,000 m ² (~6,500 to 22,000 ft ²)
Catchment	Surrounding neighbourhoods
Skill level	All

Community skateparks typically have features arranged so that the skater can move from one feature to the next in a single run. Smaller skateparks may cater to a specific style of skating (e.g. bowl), whereas larger ones can accommodate different styles, and may therefore attract users from a greater distance.

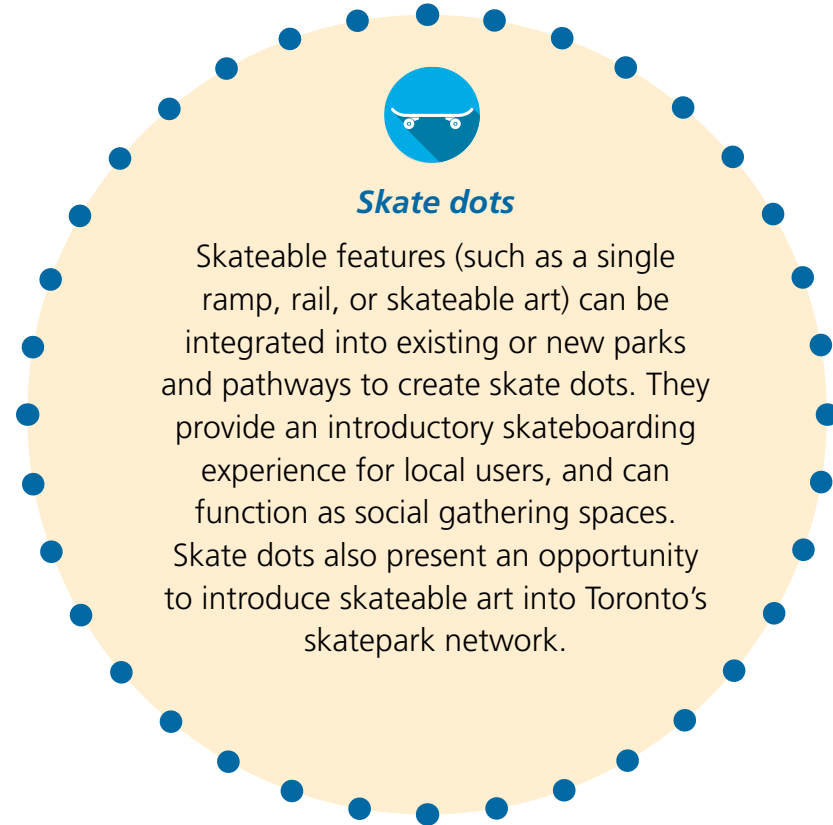
Toronto currently has 11 skateparks that fit within this tier of the hierarchy; Cummer, Dufferin Grove, Dunbat, East York, Eighth Street, Ellesmere, Lawrence Heights, Port Union, Underpass, Weston Lions, and Vanderhoof.

Skate spots

Size	Less than 600 m ² (less than ~6,500 ft ²)
Catchment	Local users within walking distance
Skill level	All, with a focus on novice and intermediate users

Skate spots incorporate skateboarding features within neighbourhood parks.

Toronto currently has two skateparks that fit within this tier of the hierarchy; West Lodge and Smithfield.



Actions

- Adopt the Skateboard Strategy's skatepark typologies (style and hierarchy) to guide future skatepark planning.
- Explore the integration of skate dots (including skateable art) into the development of parks and trails.

Future skatepark planning

- ✓ Equitable access
- ✓ Quality
- ✓ Sustained engagement

Most of Toronto's existing skateparks were not developed with an intentional service planning approach, but were instead developed in response to opportunities as they arose. This has resulted in a greater concentration of skateparks in certain parts of the city.

Parks, Forestry & Recreation will adopt an approach to planning the location of new skateparks based on the principle of equity. This approach ensures the equitable provision of skateparks on a geographic and demographic basis.

This section presents a methodology to identify the locations of new skateparks moving forward, that involves two steps:

1. A city- wide gap analysis
2. Site selection and evaluation

Through the development of this strategy, PFR engaged with the Toronto Skateboarding Committee, youth, and other stakeholders to identify key criteria to determine priorities. Future skatepark locations will be planned using this criteria.

Step 1: Gap analysis

The first step in determining the location of new skateparks is to undertake a city-wide gap analysis to identify areas lacking in skateboarding facilities.

Priority areas within this gap analysis are those with:

- **High concentration of youth population:** Youth are a service priority area for PFR. Youth population projections will be considered in future planning.
- **Areas with greater need:** This analysis will consider areas with greater need for recreation facilities in general, including prevalence of low income households and designated Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.
- **Community interest:** PFR will explore community interest through regular skatepark surveys, engagement, and connection with the TSC.
- **Areas lacking skateparks:** Areas that lack skateparks are high priority. The gap analysis will take into consideration the distance to nearest skateparks and size/hierarchy of nearest skateparks.

Priority areas for development are areas that meet all four of the above criteria, however, PFR may also identify future opportunities as a result of growth, development, and donation/partnership opportunities. The Facilities Master Plan will identify the need for additional skatepark facilities, and establish a process for identifying geographic areas for new skateparks.

Step 2: Site selection

Once the gap areas within the city have been identified, potential sites can be identified and then evaluated using the site selection criteria outlined below.

Location

There are several aspects of location to consider:

- Location relative to existing skateparks
- Displacement of other ongoing recreational uses
- Proximity and potential impact to residential areas

Proximity to youth services and facilities

Skateparks should be located near youth-focused facilities, such as schools and community centres, to ensure that they are easily accessible to youth.

Community interest

Strong community interest and engagement supports community pride and stewardship, and is essential.

Access

Skateparks should be accessible by walking and public transit, since most skateboarders use active or public modes of transportation.

75% of survey respondents travel to skateparks by walking, skateboarding, or by transit. *2015 Skatepark Survey*

Safety and security

Skateparks should be sited in busy parks or areas with multiple uses and be highly visible from the street. It is also important that there is emergency access.

Physical site conditions

Potential sites must be of a sufficient size, and should consider future expansion potential. The site's topography and geotechnical conditions must be assessed for feasibility of skatepark development.

Supporting amenities

Skateparks should be placed where supporting amenities exist (e.g. lighting, water fountains, washrooms and shade). These can often be found in parks or adjacent to community centres and schools. The level of amenities required will vary based on the skatepark's position within the hierarchy – larger skateparks will require more amenities than smaller skateparks.

Facility conversion opportunities

As the FMP identifies recreation facilities for repurposing, opportunities to convert existing infrastructure (such as skating trails, rinks, courts) into permanent or seasonal skateparks should be considered. Similarly, as part of the regular reconstruction of certain facilities, modifications can be made to enable skateboarding as a secondary use. Facility conversion supports a graduated approach to skatepark building, as a way to build community support for skateparks.

Integration opportunities

During the development of new parks or enhancement of existing parks, there may be opportunities to integrate skateboarding features into paths and trails for skateboarders to use and enjoy.

Skatepark amenities

The 2015 Skatepark Survey indicated that the majority of skateboarders visit skateparks at least twice a week, and stay for more than three hours, indicating that basic amenities should be available. Survey respondents identified light, water, washrooms, and shade as most important.

Indoor skateboarding

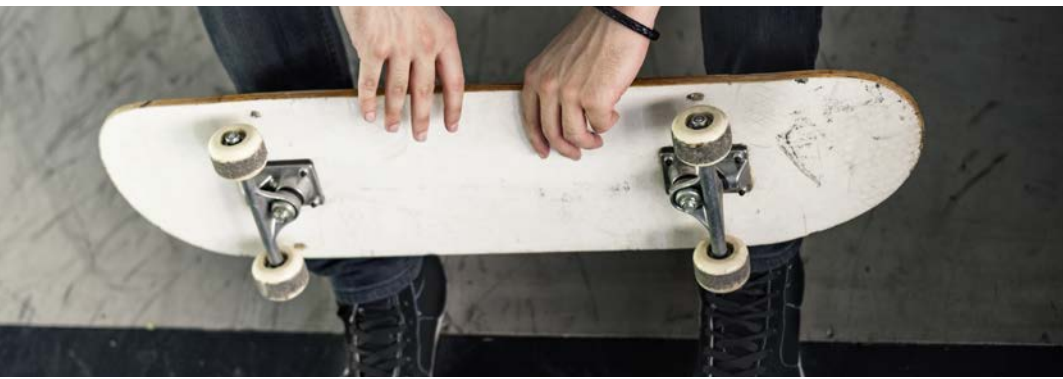
During the winter, options for skateboarding are limited. Underpass skatepark is sheltered from rain and snow. There are also two privately-run skateparks that charge a fee for use. In the past, PFR has utilized some indoor facilities for skateboarding; however, these facilities serve multiple uses, and were not built to accommodate skateboarding.

There is strong interest from the Toronto Skateboarding Committee for indoor facilities to accommodate skateboarding year-round.



Actions

- Integrate the gap analysis and site selection methodology into the Facilities Master Plan planning process for future skateparks.
- Explore the following opportunities through the Facilities Master Plan:
 - Assess the need and priority of indoor skateboard facilities.
 - Utilize existing infrastructure to provide a year round indoor skateboarding opportunity.
 - Convert underutilized parks and recreation infrastructure into skateboarding facilities when not in use.
 - When reconstructing parks and recreation facilities, consider modifications to allow seasonal or temporary skateboarding.
- Consider upgrading supporting amenities for skateparks in state of good repair audits and planned park upgrades.







Engagement through skateboarding

Skateboarding provides many benefits to health and well-being such as improving physical strength, flexibility, and endurance, as well as providing self-motivation and stress relief. Skateboarding can also play a role in animating or engaging communities, and creating a shared sense of community through programming, youth engagement and leadership development, strategic partnerships, and creating opportunities for local initiatives.

This section includes:

- **Introductory programming** such as formal skateboard instruction programs, camps, and mobile skateparks.
- **Youth engagement** – Skateboarding provides opportunities to engage youth, helps build youth leadership, and helps build a supportive community around skateboarding.

Introductory programming

✓ Inclusion ✓ Capacity building

Formal skateboard programs and instruction can teach younger skateboarders about safety, skatepark etiquette, and maneuvering skills so they have increased confidence and are comfortable using public skateparks.

Parks, Forestry & Recreation offers formal skateboard programs through various community centres. Programs include indoor drop-in sessions, multi-week instructional, summer camps, and are geared to children and youth up to age 24. Programs are developed at the community centre level, and vary across the city. Most are unstructured, and are open to children and youth of all skateboarding abilities.

Ellesmere skateboard camp

The summer skateboard camp at Ellesmere follows a structured-but-flexible two-week curriculum that defines the overall objective for the camp, and supports the progression of skills.

Before the camp sessions begin a workshop is held for parents and campers to prepare for the skateboard camp. Participants learn about selecting appropriate skateboard equipment that will allow them to progress.

Campers learn about skatepark etiquette, safety, stretching, and more. At the end of the two week camp, report cards and certificates are issued and campers do a demonstration event, showing off their new skills to their parents.

"Camps like this [with outings] are good because you get to go places you wouldn't normally go" *Summer camp participant*

The importance of introductory programming

Over a third of 2015 Skatepark Survey respondents indicated an interest in more instructional programs. A common theme from the youth focus groups was the importance of introductory programming such as lessons, skate clinics and summer camps. Most youth reported that they were directly introduced to skateboarding by a friend or family member, and approximately half participated in some form of formal or informal lessons to learn proper skateboarding techniques.

Introductory programming not only helps to reduce some of the reported barriers to skateboarding including a fear of injury, but also introduces new skateboarders to different terrains and styles of skating, expanding their range of experience. Female skateboarders and parents of young girls indicated that introductory programming geared towards females and other underrepresented groups helps build confidence in their skills and makes them feel welcome in skateparks.

Respondents tended to prefer drop-in lessons and skate clinics in skateparks and indicated the importance of providing some skateboards and safety gear for those without equipment. Summer skateboarding camps were considered successful in teaching children and youth proper skatepark etiquette and exposing them to different skateparks across the city during outings.

"Events like [Skate Like a Girl] are great – just knowing there will be lots of girls there, and of all skill level, who can provide an example for the younger ones"

Parents of young girls learning to skateboard

Instructors

Given the specialized nature of skateboarding, instructors with skill and expertise often offer PFR skateboarding programs.

Because of the relatively recent rise and growth of skateboarding as a programmed and instructional activity, there is not yet an established training program or standard for skateboard instructors (such as Bronze Cross and Swim and Lifesaving Instructor Certification, or National Coaching Certification Program for skating).

Instructor training workshop

The Malvern Family Resource Centre piloted a new skateboard instructor workshop in 2016. During this one-day workshop, instructors learned how to conduct assessments, build lesson plans, and teach components like safe falling, basic maneuvering, skatepark etiquette, and riding ramps.

Mobile skateparks

The skateparks discussed so far are all firmly rooted in a physical space. Some municipalities are experimenting with mobile skateparks - trailers or vans that contain modular skatepark equipment that can be set up to serve different communities. This model can be a responsive and cost-effective way to reach a broader skateboarding community.



Toronto's PLAYmobile

In response to high demand for skateboarding facilities in gap areas in the north-east and north-west areas of the city, PFR launched a mobile skateboarding pilot program in summer 2016. The PLAYmobile van is outfitted with equipment for various recreational activities, including skateboarding (obstacles, skateboards, safety equipment). The PLAYmobile travels to seven North York district community centres, and provides opportunities for supervised drop-in skateboarding, with an instructor present to teach skateboarding tips and tricks.

Partner programming

Some municipalities engage partners for program delivery. For example, in Waterloo, Mississauga, and Richmond (BC), skateboard camps are offered by the municipality, but delivered and supervised by Evolve Skate Camp. The fees for these partner programs are partially subsidized by the municipality.



Actions

- Develop a program model for City-run skateboarding programs.
- Explore partnerships to enhance and increase introductory program offerings.
- Monitor the skateboarding industry regarding the development of skateboard instructor certification programs.

Youth engagement

- ✓ Capacity building
- ✓ Sustained engagement

The previous section described how formal skateboard programs can play an important role in teaching younger skateboarders about safety, skatepark etiquette, and basic maneuvering skills. Through skateboarding, there is also an opportunity to engage youth, support youth leadership, and help build a supportive community around skateboarding.

Youth leadership

The Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy identifies several ways to engage youth, such as the development of interest groups to empower youth and ensure that recreation programs are responsive at the local level. The strategy also identified the opportunity to use unique programs like skateboarding to engage newcomer youth.

Parks, Forestry & Recreation engages youth directly in advising on recreation program development through Youth Advisory Councils and other initiatives, and can inform future opportunities for engaging youth through skateboarding.

Development of the Skateboard Strategy

The Skateboard Strategy has advanced the Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy by consulting with youth in its development and providing recommendations that ensure sustained youth engagement in skatepark planning, design and programming. PFR can also work with the TSC to support youth leadership by identifying potential youth leaders who can participate in TSC activities.

Programs and events

Other organizations also run skateboard-related programs or events that have a specific mandate to engage youth. For example:

- In 2015, the Toronto Skateboarding Committee hosted a youth engagement event that attracted dozens of youth, and included a jam session and demo with prizes, membership drive, and focus groups.
- In fall 2015, the Chill Foundation partnered with the Skate Loft to deliver a 6-week skateboarding program for youth in the west Scarborough community.
- Babes Brigade is a skateboarding meet-up group for females looking to break into skateboarding.

Oasis Skateboard Factory

Oasis Skateboard Factory is an alternative high school designed for students who have struggled with school, and works by weaving the activity of running a skateboarding business into the curriculum. Activities include designing, building and marketing skateboards, and creating local skateboard-related exhibits.

PFR youth engagement

- **Ellesmere skateboarding youth council:** A youth council at Ellesmere Community Centre for youth interested in skateboarding, where youth learned about civic engagement, and successfully advocated to get a new "box" added to Ellesmere skatepark.
- **Go Skateboarding Day:** Staff organized skateboarding programming at Ellesmere Skatepark to celebrate Go Skateboarding Day.
- **Grandravine girls skateboarding club:** A girls skateboarding club to engage female youth in a traditionally male-dominated activity.
- **Skatepark day trip:** A skatepark day trip for youth to visit three City skateparks. The trip included a BBQ, and small events or challenges at each skatepark, and exposes youth to new skateparks.

Skatepark ambassadors

Some municipalities, like Mississauga, have introduced skatepark monitors. The monitors are on-site staff with equipment like a tent, and perhaps extra skateboards and protective equipment, and their presence in the skatepark can help animate the space. They can also offer informal instruction to children and youth who are learning to skateboard.

Consultations with youth and parents identified that skatepark ambassadors could play a useful role in mitigating conflicts, teaching beginner skateboarders basic tricks, and promoting skatepark etiquette.

Graffiti and street art as tools for youth engagement

Graffiti and street art often go hand-in-hand with skateparks and can be leveraged as tools to engage youth.

StreetARToronto has developed and supported many graffiti and street art projects to engage youth. One recent project with VIBE Arts in Toronto's Little Italy neighbourhood engaged professional and emerging artists in painting a mural composition, and provided opportunities in skill development, collaboration, and learning art techniques for youth.



Actions

- Work with the Toronto Skateboarding Committee (TSC) to support youth in civic and community engagement and leadership.
 - Facilitate a connection with the TSC to ensure youth representation on skateboarding issues.
 - Explore the possibility of engaging youth as skatepark ambassadors to promote skateboarding.
- Work with partners (like StreetARToronto) to integrate street art into existing and new skateparks using a youth engagement approach.

"Having a community has been pretty instrumental in my growth over the past couple years"

Stephanie Battieste, founder of Babes Brigade^{iv}



Animation, Promotion & Marketing

In addition to providing infrastructure and programs for skateboarding, the City of Toronto also plays a role in promoting skateboarding and promoting Toronto as a city for skateboarding. At a local level, various communication tools and channels can be used to provide information to the public and communities. Programs and strategic partnerships can also help to raise the profile of skateboarding. As the popularity of skateboarding continues to grow, there is also an opportunity to explore ways to leverage skateboarding for tourism, for example, by hosting world class skateboarding events.

This section includes:

- **Promoting skateboarding in Toronto** - Using various types of media, programs, and partnership opportunities to promote Toronto as a city for skateboarding.
- **Promoting Toronto as a city for skateboarding** - At a larger scale, skateboarding can also be leveraged as a tool for economic development.

Promoting skateboarding in Toronto

✓ Equitable access ✓ Capacity building

There are many ways to promote and enhance skateboarding in Toronto, by using communication tools such as websites and social media, supporting programs and events, and engaging in strategic partnerships and collaborations. At a larger scale, skateboarding can also be leveraged as a tool for economic development.



Sharing information

Website

The PFR website presents basic information about skateparks - location, skateboard style, major features, amenities, and contact information.

Skateboard programs are promoted through the biannual FUNguide.

Social media

Toronto's skateboarding community maintains a very active social media presence, and frequently shares local skateboarding news, events and videos on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Skateboard enthusiasts use social media as a way to profile themselves as skateboarders, and showcase their skills to the skateboarding community. Through this process, the videos produced often highlight the local skatepark features and amenities as well.

The Youth Recreation Engagement Strategy recognizes the importance of using social media to improve communication with youth and attract new youth to recreation programs. Promoting Toronto's skateparks and programming through social media will ensure improved communication with members of the skateboarding community who may not use more traditional media, such as the PFR website or FUNguide, to obtain information.

Promotional videos

In December 2014, Chicago's new world class Grant Park Skatepark was opened. For the grand opening, the skatepark contractors commissioned a promotional video. Many other cities have also created promotional videos to highlight their skateparks and encourage locals and tourists to visit.

Programs, events, and other activities

City-run events and programs such as camps, drop-ins, and instructional programs help introduce young skateboarders to the activity and also make skateboarding accessible. Other programs, events, and activities in the city, run by various organizations, also promote and enhance the skateboarding experience in Toronto. There is an opportunity to promote these types of events and programs through the City's communication channels.

- The Toronto Skateboarding Committee's promotion efforts include newsletters, blog articles, interviews with the media, hosting community skate jams, educating the public through events like Jane's Walk, and promotion of other events and competition around the city.
- Various organizations offer skateboard camps, lessons, and other programs
- Toronto Board Meeting, an annual "flash mob" style event for longboarders to take back the streets.
- Go Skateboarding Day, an annual holiday (June 21) for skateboarders show their love and support for skateboarding by holding fundraisers, contests, parades, rallies, and demos.

- Oasis Skateboard Factory is a TDSB alternative school with a curriculum built around skateboard entrepreneurship.

Engaging in partnerships, sponsorships, and collaborations...

Partnerships, sponsorships, and collaborations are important ways raise the profile of skateboarding and provide responsive services to the community to further enhance the skateboarding experience in Toronto. Different organizations can work together to deliver programming, build skatepark facilities, and deliver larger-scale events, demonstrations or competitions.

...To deliver programs

For the past few summers, the dry pad at Malvern Community Recreation Centre has been transformed into a temporary indoor skatepark through a partnership between PFR and Malvern Family Resource Centre (MFRC). MFRC runs skateboarding programs and clinics in the skatepark, including intro to skateboarding clinics, newcomer clinics, and open skate times.

...To hold major events

There is an opportunity to work with other organizations to offer world class events like demonstrations or competitions that can attract participants and spectators from beyond the city. Sponsors can support event promotion, infrastructure development, and more.

Detroit Hart Lines

In May 2015, Red Bull worked with City of Detroit to transform their Hart Plaza into a skateboarding course for Detroit Hart Lines, a two-day street skateboarding competition. Created by pro skateboarder Ryan Scheckler, the competition featured nearly 20 pro skateboarders from around the world, and drew huge spectator crowds. Among other things, Red Bull built new obstacles to complete the Hart Plaza course, offered prizes, and developed videos and other marketing materials to promote the event.

...To develop new skateboarding facilities

Lawrence Heights Skatepark is the product of a partnership between PFR and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) that allowed the use of the east corridor of the TDSB property for the construction of a skatepark. TDSB provided the space for the skatepark, and PFR paved the court and hired the Canadian Ramp Company to design the skatepark and provide the equipment for the park.

A lasting legacy – West LA Courthouse

Major events today often provide the opportunity for municipalities to work with host organizations to establish agreements that can leave a legacy in the city long after the event is over.

For example, in 2014, Nike SB renovated the West Los Angeles Courthouse for Go Skateboarding Day. An arrangement was made for Nike SB to not only leave the skatepark open for public use after the event, but to also provide financial support to maintain the skatepark for five years.

Permitting

In order for many partnerships, sponsorships, and collaborations to be successful, there must be a permit process in place to allow partner organizations to permit skateparks and other venues for the purpose of skateboarding. Currently, Toronto skateparks cannot be permitted, but there is public interest in having skateparks become permit-able spaces. In the absence of a permitting process, any events that take place in a skatepark must be organized and run by the City. Making skateparks permit-able presents opportunities to encourage community and equity-driven programming and enables opportunities for economic development.

However, some considerations must be kept in mind including the fact that permitting a skatepark means closing the skatepark (or section) for certain periods of time. There would also be an increased need for administration, monitoring, and maintenance.

Promoting Toronto as a city for skateboarding

Skateboarding destinations

Many skateboarders travel to other cities not just for special events like competitions and demos, but also to skate in other well-known skateparks. In 2011, TransWorld Skateboarding named the 10 best cities to skate in the world as: Barcelona, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Paris, Melbourne, London, Shenzhen, Berlin, and Tel Aviv.

42% of the 2015 Skatepark Survey respondents indicated that they travel to other cities to skateboard. Of those, more than half visit other cities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, with Mississauga, Hamilton, and Brampton being the most visited. Many travel across North America to skateboard in cities like Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Los Angeles, New York, and Detroit/Ann Arbor. Some even travel internationally, to skateboard in places like Barcelona, London, Hong Kong, Paris, and Tokyo.

Although PFR's current skateboard-related partnerships and collaborations are focused on delivering infrastructure and programming, corporate sponsorships can present opportunities for hosting larger events that draw participants and spectators from the city and beyond.

Economic and other benefits

Skateboard tourism can boost economic development in many ways. A world class skateboarding facility or event can draw pro skateboarders and spectators from far and wide. Large skateboarding events are popular in Canada and their popularity is likely to grow with the introduction of skateboarding in the 2020 Olympics. Some cities, like Montreal, are also exploring the possibility of using revenue generated from event ticket sales to fund skatepark development^v. In addition to revenue generated by event ticket sales there is an increase in hotel room stays, a boost to local businesses, and numerous residual effects^{vi}.

One researcher has also linked a strong skateboarding culture with other benefits such as increased enrollment in local colleges and universities, creation of new businesses catering to a growing population of artists and skateboarders, and the city's increased ability to attract businesses and new media enterprises^{vi}.

A world class skateboarding facility or event can draw pro skateboarders and spectators from all over the world.





Actions

- Use social media and other channels to increase visibility/access of information on skateboard parks and programming, and improve quality of information.
- Cultivate partnerships to explore the opportunities associated with diverse skateboard programs and events, and the promotion of Toronto as a destination for skateboarding.
- Explore a pilot project to allow the issuance of occasional permits at a limited number of skateparks, for special events and programs that are open to the public.

Implementation

This Skateboard Strategy serves as a guide to the City of Toronto as it continues to advance its network of skateboard facilities, amenities and programs. It will help guide decisions for the development of future skatepark facilities to ensure a complete and diverse network of skateparks that are accessible and equitably/geographically distributed. It also identifies opportunities to support community engagement, development, and leadership.

Implementation of the Skateboard Strategy:

1. The Skateboard Strategy will inform the 20-year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2017-2036) on the identification of additional skatepark facilities and associated 10-year capital plans, commencing in 2018.
2. Actions relating to programming, engagement, operations, and maintenance will be incorporated into existing operational work planning, service delivery, and budget. Connections will be made to other divisions within the City, as appropriate.
3. PFR will leverage strategic partnerships to enhance/increase skateboard programs, hold major events, engage youth, and develop new skateboarding facilities.

Endnotes

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