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The Urban Grind: Skateparks - Neighborhood Perceptions and Planning Realities

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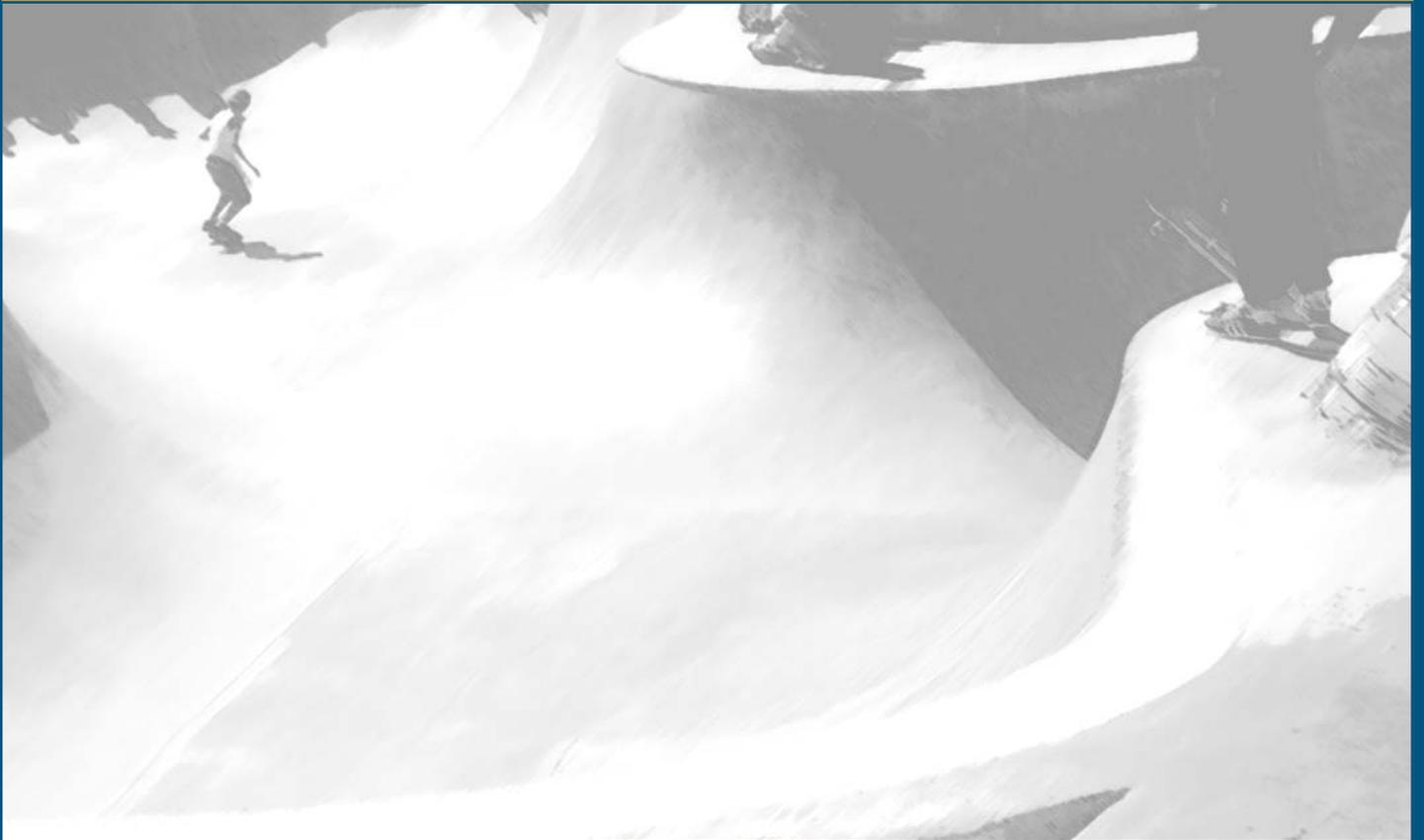
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The Urban Grind

Skateparks: Neighborhood Perceptions and Planning Realities



Aperio Consulting

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Aperio Consulting is composed of four graduate students, Ellie Fiore, Sarah Heinicke, Beth Ragel and Laura Weigel, enrolled in Portland State University's Planning Workshop. This course is the capstone course for Portland State University's Master of Urban and Regional Planning program and provides graduate students with professional planning experience.

Our team chose the name Aperio Consulting. *Aperio* is Latin for "to reveal the truth," which represents the primary goal of our project. Aperio Consulting would like to thank the following people for their assistance with this project:

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Every effort was made to find sources for the photos in this document. If we have neglected giving anyone credit we sincerely apologize.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aperio Consulting worked in conjunction with Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) on their Skatepark Master Planning process in the spring of 2005. This project was undertaken to help PP&R and their siting committee make informed decisions when siting a system of skateparks for the City of Portland. This document is also designed for use by parks planners and community members in other cities who are considering building skateparks.

Neighbors of proposed skateparks often voice their opposition to local siting efforts based on perceived impacts on their quality of life. Our goal was to uncover the realities of living near a skatepark.

Aperio Consulting selected four parks to study, two of which contained skateparks. Skateparks were paired with “control” parks on the basis of location, distance to homes, activity levels, and amenities. With this method, we hoped to uncover whether skateparks impact neighbors differently than other park features such as basketball courts.

We conducted questionnaires of neighbors within five blocks around each park and took noise level readings within each park. We also interviewed park staff from 12 parks in Oregon and Washington and reviewed existing literature on youth and public spaces, skatepark design, and land use conflicts.

The following are our primary findings:

- ◆ Skateparks do not contribute to serious crime
- ◆ Skateparks do contribute to nuisances such as litter, noise and vandalism
- ◆ Skateparks have similar impacts as basketball courts
- ◆ Neighbors of existing skateparks have predominantly moderate views of skateparks
- ◆ Neighborhood context matters

Together these findings suggest that there are differences between the perception and realities of skateparks.

This document demonstrates a method communities can use to uncover the impacts of skateparks in their neighborhoods. This project contributes to park planning by informing planners and community residents of the likely impact of skateparks on their neighborhood. We also provide suggestions for successful implementation and management of skateparks.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Foreword: Perceptions and Realities | 2 |
| Skateboarding and Public Spaces | 3 |
| What We Did | 4 |
| The Profile Parks | 5 |
| Neighborhood Questionnaires | 7 |
| Noise Readings | 8 |
| Park Staff Interviews | 9 |
| Advice from Park Staff | 10 |
| What We Found | 11 |
| Moving Forward: Design & Management Considerations .. | 16 |
| Afterword: Perceptions and Realities | 17 |
| References | 18 |
| APPENDICES | |
| The Guide to Learning More About Your Neighborhood Parks | 20 |
| Things to watch out for..... | 20 |
| Noise Readings | 21 |
| Neighborhood Questionnaire | 22 |
| Park Staff Interviews | 26 |
| Skatepark Manager Interview Questions | 27 |
| A Brief History of Portland Skatepark Advocacy .. | 29 |
| Park Staff Interviews by Location | 33 |



Foreword: Perceptions and Realities

Cities and towns across the country are beginning to recognize the increasing popularity of skateboarding. At the same time, skaters are becoming savvy about advocating for public places to call their own. Together, these two trends support the development of publicly funded skateparks.

Skatepark advocates and park planners frequently face resistance from neighbors and business interests in the communities where skateparks are proposed. Much of this opposition is grounded in misconceptions of skaters.

Our intention in taking on this project was to uncover the impacts of skateparks on their neighbors. In doing so, we hope to inform the public about the likely impacts of skateparks on communities based on the actual experiences of neighbors, not on speculation or fears of the unfamiliar.

This distinction between the perceptions of neighbors and the realities of existing skateparks lies at the heart of our interest in the topic, and at the center of planning conflicts such as those that surround skatepark siting.





Skateboarding and Public Spaces

Skateboarding is the fastest growing sport in the United States. It appeals to children, teens, and adults and provides recreation, entertainment, and exercise. The number of skateboarders across the country is up 128% over the past ten years. There are currently 11 million skateboarders in the U.S., which equates to almost 4% of the U.S. population¹.

Despite the fact that skateboarding has become so popular, there is a lack of allocated parks space for the sport. There is far less parks space dedicated to skateboarding than other sports such as baseball. For example, in Portland, there are approximately five million square feet dedicated to sports fields and only 8,500 square feet dedicated to existing skate parks. In the past, as baseball became more popular, parks departments responded by building more baseball fields. Parks and recreation departments across the country are currently struggling to provide the same opportunity for skaters.

Because of a lack of publicly provided skateparks, skaters continue to use public and private parking lots, business plazas, streets, and sidewalks for their sport—none of which are intended or designed for skateboarding. Skateboarding on public streets is still illegal in most places in America. Many cities have responded by enlisting law enforcement to regulate skateboarding. The criminalization of this sport means that tickets and the possibility of arrest are common for skaters.

Skaters often occupy transitional spaces that are neither exclusively public nor private, generating hostility on the part of property and business owners. “Skaters have encountered a politics of space similar to the experiences of the homeless. Like the homeless, skaters occupy urban space without engaging in economic activity....”² Responses to these tensions include adding spikes or bumps to handrails or ledges or placing chains across ditches and steps to render them unusable for skating.

Past Approaches to Skatepark Siting

In the past, to remove skaters from public spaces, cities and towns relegated skateparks to isolated areas. While this offered a place for skaters and teens to gather and recreate separate from office workers or shoppers who may be hostile towards them, it created a ghettoized youth space. This facility-based approach supports the sport without supporting the needs of the users as people.³ This replicates the same problems skaters face on the street—stigmatization and prejudice.

Youth and adults need safe, legal, and accessible places for recreation. City parks help meet this need and contribute to public health by providing sites for outdoor physical activity. Tailoring parks to the needs and demands of residents helps ensure that they will be used in healthy, safe ways, and maximizes the public investment. Parks and recreation planners have a responsibility to consider all potential users of public parks,

“If you don’t have a skatepark, the city is your skatepark.”

—Rod Wojtanik





“ Why do businesses think a group of kids automatically means trouble?... Skaters equal losers. How can people think this? I know everyone of my friends that skate get good grades, listen to their parents and everything else a parent would want from a child. Even professional skaters promote school and discourage the use of drugs. As a result of these stereotypes many rules have come about that prohibit skateboarding.

Ryan Cochrane, 15, has been advocating for a skatepark in his hometown of Denver, Pennsylvania since it is now illegal to skate there.

Comments Regarding Proposed Skateparks

“The place proposed would be another place for unwanted late night partying. I have no idea how you would prevent that, and I’m not willing to take chances with our safety.”

“Our area already attracts a seedy element in the after hours...We don’t need to attract more teenagers to this area.”

“The skatepark will bring in the wrong element to our park and is a bad idea.”

—PP&R Public Outreach Process

including youth who struggle to find places to hang out when not taking part in an organized sport. Public spaces are needed that recognize and validate skaters’ needs while accommodating other users of shared public space.

Perceptions of Skaters

The needs of skaters have not been met in many cities because they have commonly been perceived as antisocial, destructive “thugs on drugs.” While some of this backlash against skaters can be tied to the wear and tear that the activity exerts on the urban environment, much of it is based on stereotypes of skaters.

It seems appropriate, however, to question whether to ostracize an entire group of public space users who are participating in a sport that is:

- 1) one of the fastest growing sports in North America
- 2) safer on an accident-per-participant basis than soccer and baseball and
- 3) promoting physical fitness, self esteem, and a sense of belonging for an age group sorely lacking in these type of opportunities.

Skateboarding is, in fact, a multifaceted activity that must be understood within its various contexts—as a sport, as a hobby, as transportation, or as lifestyle.

Balancing Neighbor Concerns and Skater Needs

Currently many cities are now locating skateparks in neighborhood parks alongside other commonly accepted facilities, rather than isolating them. However, this has shifted the conflict about skateboarding from commercial districts to residential areas. As a result, many cities are struggling with the tension between meeting the demand for more skateparks while accommodating concerns of neighbors.

This project examines the impacts of skateparks on neighborhoods. Towards this end, we conducted neighborhood questionnaires, noise analyses, and park staff interviews. We also reviewed planning literature on issues relevant to skatepark siting. This document is the result of that process.

NIMBY-ism and Siting Decisions

Public opposition to unwanted facilities is conventionally ascribed to the NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) syndrome. This label is often simplistic. An alternative to discounting NIMBY responses is to view them in terms of principles of community development—social inclusion and participation.

Social inclusion is one of the key principles of community development. All members of a community should be valued—even if they hold opposing views. Likewise, people should be allowed to alter their views or opinions without “losing face.”

While neighbors do often oppose land use proposals based on fear and speculation, they also have legitimate concerns and the right to express them. Planners’ roles should be broader than simply educating neighbors about the unwanted land use to elicit their support. It is critical to strike a balance between the public good and private rights when making land use decisions, even when advocating for underserved groups like skaters. Thinking in terms of NIMBY-ism can unfairly minimize the legitimate concerns of community members.



What We Did

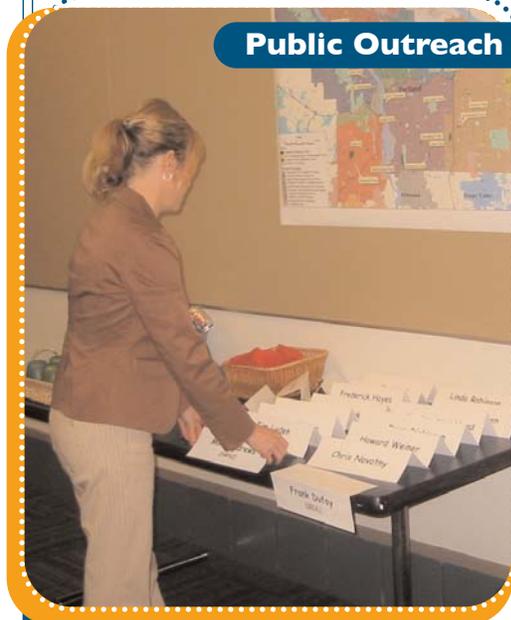
To determine the impacts skateparks have on neighborhoods, Aperio Consulting chose to study two skateparks, Pier Park in North Portland and Tanner Creek Park in West Linn. These parks were selected because they are concrete skateparks in the Portland region and are close to homes.

In addition to studying the neighborhood impacts of our selected skateparks, we also wanted to determine whether or not skateparks impact neighbors differently than common sport facilities, such as basketball courts. To this end, we chose to pair our skateparks with two “control” parks. By comparing skateparks to other similar parks, we hoped to determine if skateparks affected neighbors in some unique way.

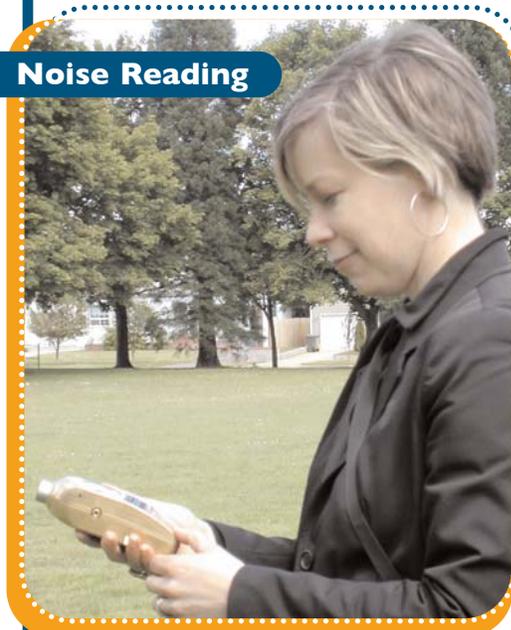
Our control parks, McKenna Park in North Portland and North Willamette Park in West Linn, were selected because they are also close to housing and have similar neighborhood demographics as the two skateparks. The control parks each contain a basketball court—a facility similar in size and noise level to the skateparks.

Through neighborhood questionnaires, noise readings, and park staff interviews, we developed profiles of our two skateparks and our two control parks and then compared the results. We enhanced our analysis by conducting a literature review and by interviewing skatepark staff in the region about the problems and successes of skateparks within their districts.

Public Outreach



Noise Reading





THE PROFILE PARKS

Skatepark: Pier Park

Pier Park is located in North Portland, a part of the city that has traditionally been characterized by moderate incomes and ethnic diversity, and is now undergoing some reinvestment. The park has many facilities including a swimming pool that operates in summer, a frisbee golf course, basketball courts, playground, baseball diamond, and skatepark. Pier Park is 86 acres and draws many users from outside the neighborhood. While the park is large and heavily used, the skatepark itself is located at one end of the park somewhat separated from the larger, densely wooded portion that includes the frisbee golf course and pool. This arm of the park functions much like a smaller neighborhood park. The skatepark is 8,500 square feet and is used mostly by beginner to intermediate skaters as well as BMX bikers. There is a truck warehouse behind the skatepark and on the opposite side are single-family homes within approximately 250 feet. It has a parking lot with 30 parking spaces. The market value of homes in the area range from \$150,000 and \$250,000.⁴

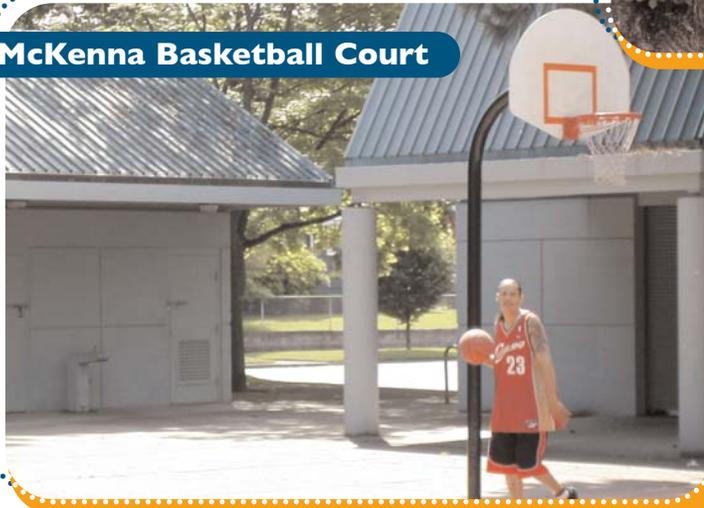
“The skatepark has given kids of all ages more to do ... I’ve seen young men really enjoying themselves, socializing positively and sharing with younger kids.”

—Pier Park Neighbor

Pier Skatepark



McKenna Basketball Court



Control Park: McKenna

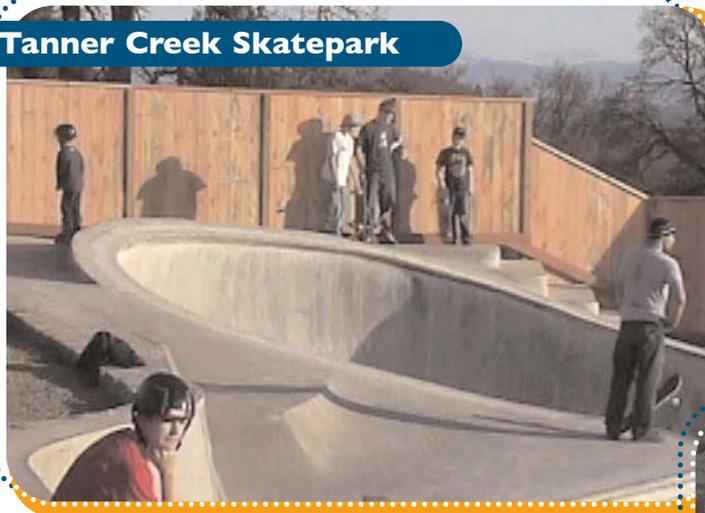
McKenna Park is located in North Portland and is approximately 4 miles from Pier Park. It is a neighborhood park surrounded by single-family homes on all sides. The park contains a playground, baseball diamond, and a basketball court. Though at 4.5 acres it is much smaller than Pier Park, neighbors report that the park and basketball court in particular, draw people from outside the neighborhood. The park does not have a parking lot. Home values in the area fall within the same range as Pier Park.



Skatepark: Tanner Creek

Tanner Creek Park is located in a relatively new neighborhood in West Linn, a suburb of Portland. It is surrounded by single-family homes; the closest is 75 feet from the skatepark. The park is 7.5 acres and has two distinct areas connected by a trail running through the neighborhood. The upper portion contains a large playground area and sports fields that are heavily used. The lower portion contains the skatepark. The skatepark itself is 14,000 square feet—a large and well-designed facility that draws skaters from throughout the region. The facility is designed for all skill levels, but is still primarily used by intermediate to advanced skaters. BMX bikes are allowed to use the park daily before noon. The skatepark side of the park has a parking lot with 13 parking spaces. Home values in the area range from about \$350,000 to \$700,000⁵.

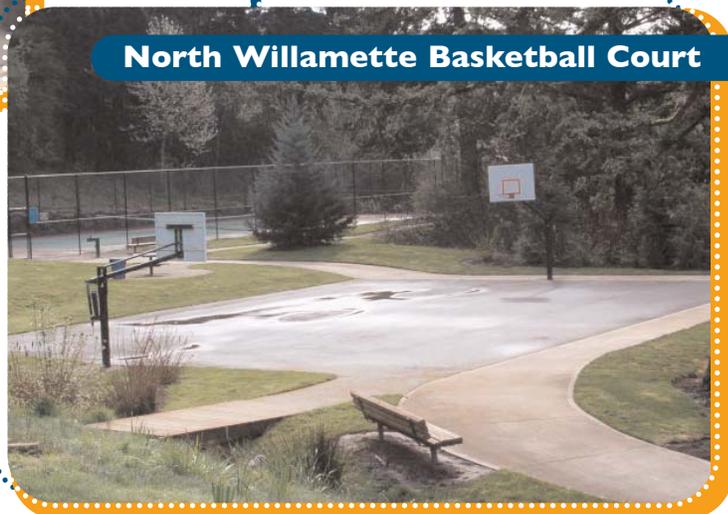
Tanner Creek Skatepark



“ Although I do not enjoy or appreciate the litter that is generated by the kids who frequent the skatepark, I think it is a great place for the kids to hang out.”

—Tanner Creek Park Neighbor.

North Willamette Basketball Court



Control Park:North Willamette

North Willamette Park is also located in a quiet suburban neighborhood in West Linn approximately 4 miles away from Tanner Creek Park. The 7-acre park is less visible and accessible than Tanner Creek Park and is primarily used by local neighbors. It contains two tennis courts, a basketball court, and a playground. It has a parking lot with approximately 10 parking spaces. The surrounding neighborhood homes are older, but home values fall into a range similar to Tanner Creek.



Neighborhood Questionnaires

To gauge neighbors’ perceptions of their parks, we distributed questionnaires door-to-door in a five-block area around each of the four study parks. We knocked on each household’s door and if they answered, we spoke to them in person. If they were not home, we left a questionnaire on a visible place on their home (e.g., screen door, exterior of mailbox). Neighbors could answer the questionnaire in writing and were provided a business-reply envelope so they did not have to pay for postage. They were also given the option to answer the questionnaire online. About ten days after the initial questionnaire drop-off, we once again canvassed neighborhoods and distributed a half-sheet flier as a reminder to complete the questionnaire. As an added incentive, we raffled off a \$25 gift certificate to respondents from each of the four neighborhoods. We distributed a total of 750 questionnaires and the overall response rate was 21% and 96% of respondents lived within three blocks of the park. Only 11 households reported that anyone in their household skateboarded.



Neighborhood Canvass

| PARK | DISTRIBUTED | RECIEVED | RESPONSE RATE |
|---------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| Tanner Creek | 125 | 36 | 29% |
| N. Willamette | 75 | 17 | 23% |
| Pier Park | 325 | 54 | 17% |
| McKenna | 225 | 54 | 24% |
| TOTAL | 750 | 161 | 21% |

The questionnaire consisted of 17 closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions. In order to be able to draw comparisons *within* parks (i.e., between the park in general and the skatepark) and *between* parks (i.e., between those with skateparks and those with basketball courts), we asked a series of questions about the park, and then repeated these questions for the skatepark and or basketball court.

Perception

Based on comments at public meetings, neighbors must have strong opinions of skateparks.

Reality

Neighbors have largely moderate opinions of skateparks.

Perception

Skateparks bring in the “wrong element.”

Reality

The tough appearance of some skaters is not an indicator that they are engaging in illegal activity. Busy parks are in fact safer parks.



Noise Readings

In order to determine if skateparks are louder than other park facilities, we took two noise readings at each of our four profile parks. We chose to conduct noise readings on two days to determine a range of noise levels. The first readings were taken on a dry, partly cloudy weekday when only a few people were present at each park. The second readings were taken on a dry weekend day when the weather was nicer—a day when user numbers are at their highest. Readings were taken 50 feet from the active facility and from the nearest residence.

COMMON DECIBEL LEVELS*

Home

50 Refrigerator

55-70 Dishwasher

75-85 Flush Toilet

80 Ringing Telephone

Work

50 Large Office

65-95 Power Lawn Mower

95 Electric Drill

110 Leaf Blower

Outdoors

85 Heavy Traffic

95-110 Motorcycle

110 Car Horn

117 Football Game (stadium)

*All levels within close range

Source: League for the Hard of Hearing

At both skateparks, peak noise levels averaged 70 decibels when 50 feet from the skatepark. Beyond 200 feet, sounds were drowned out by other noises. Based on these readings, we found that skatepark sound levels are no louder than other park uses or other noises such as traffic passing by and airplanes overhead. Sound levels were similar to basketball courts and to children playing on playground equipment. Noise levels were within the City of Portland's code limits.

Perception

Skateparks are excessively noisy.

Reality

Skateparks generate noise levels comparable to other park facilities.

Noise Readings





Park Staff Comments

Foreground should be visible because skaters want to show off. —Gresham

Skateparks should be big enough for the community. —Gresham

When we get tagged I'll close the area for safety concerns, the serious skaters will help get the facility back open. —Milton

Perception of vandalism increased ... I don't think it has increased, but now there is someone to lay the blame on. —Eugene

Problems come to city parks in general ... Any public space where people can get out of sight will attract problems. —Portland

The skatepark makes the park better. The more people there are the fewer people engage in illicit activities. —Portland

Graffiti has gotten better with regular maintenance and the police and staff have been monitoring the grounds more frequently helping reduce questionable activities. —Burien

If the park is designed with both BMX bikers and skaters in mind they can co-exist. The biggest safety concern is having the beginning skaters in the park at the same time as BMX bikers. Beginner skaters have less control over their skateboards and that unpredictability may cause collisions. —Burien

Park Staff Interviews

In addition to determining neighbors' perceptions of skateparks we also sought the perspectives of professionals who deal with skateparks. We conducted 17 phone interviews with maintenance workers, parks planners and one beat cop from 12 parks in Washington and Oregon. The interviews were structured with 6 closed and 11 open-ended questions.

Skateparks were chosen because their facilities most closely match the sites and constraints that were considered in PP&R's siting process. All the skateparks are within 75 to 500 feet from housing, are made of concrete, and were designed by reputable design-build firms. (See sidebar on page 10 for information on design considerations for skateparks). The skateparks ranged in size from 2,500 to 10,000 square feet, and averaged 7,730 square feet.

We interviewed staff from the following cities: Yakima, Milton, and Burien, Washington; and Eugene, Aumsville, Newport, West Linn, Portland, Brookings, Molalla, Gresham, and Donald, Oregon. (see Appendix for interview format and details).

Donald, OR



photo courtesy of SkateOregon.com



Advice from Park Staff

Unanimously, the park staff reported that their skateparks were good investments. When asked what advice they would give other cities siting skateparks, they reported that it is important to involve skaters, neighbors and other stakeholders early in the siting process. Additionally, many staff mentioned that a key aspect of long-term skatepark acceptance is getting the police involved and prepared for increased patrolling as soon as the skatepark opens. Although few cities actually did this, staff reported that it would have prevented problems from developing and would have eased the transition of accommodating a new and heavily used facility. Staff also suggested that skateparks, like all youth-oriented facilities, should be sited in visible locations for safety and easy monitoring.

Staff reported that prohibiting BMX bikers from skateparks did not prevent them from using the skatepark. Planning for BMX use in advance may help to prevent potential conflicts between skaters and bikers before they develop. In our interviews, staff from six parks reported they eventually changed their rules to allow BMX bikers. In three other parks, they explicitly banned BMX use, but reported that bikers came anyway.

Skatepark Design Considerations

Designing and building a skatepark is not as straightforward as designing and building other types of recreational facilities such as basketball courts or baseball diamonds. Imagine a public baseball field with its bases arranged in a circle instead of the regulation diamond or a golf course with tees in the sand traps. Absurd as these examples sound, these examples are fairly analogous to what often occurs in the construction of public skateparks. Public agencies that would only build fields and courts with the help of professional design firms often don't think twice about awarding contracts to build skateparks to contractors with little or no experience (Fritzsche 2001).

Skateparks require many design considerations. The overall flow of the skatepark is extremely important. Ideally, skateparks should appeal to different styles of skating such as street skating (rails and stairs) as well as transitional (bowls and ramps) skating. Design should also include different areas for different skill levels. This helps to create a multi-generational park environment, which creates a family-friendly environment and provides positive role models for young skaters.

Lack of attention to such details will result in a park that cannot be effectively skated or isn't challenging — and therefore won't attract many skaters. Improper design can also contribute to increased risk of injuries. For example, if a bowl is too small or skill-levels are not separated, the risk of collision is increased.

Consulting and including local skaters in designing facilities is important. Skatepark designer Ken Wormhoudt starts the design process by meeting with local skaters to discuss what type of facility is going to work best for the community. During these meetings, the skaters are given clay to construct shapes that represent the obstacles they want. Wormhoudt believes that this approach works to ensure that these parks are both safe and fun. If the park can't hold the interest of the skater, it won't keep them there for very long.



Milton, WA

photo courtesy of Dan Hughes



What We Found

1) Skateparks do not contribute to serious crime. During Portland Parks and Recreation's (PP&R) public meetings, some neighbors of candidate sites expressed concern that the skateparks would bring crime to the park, such as drugs, fights, and even gang activity. We found in our questionnaires and interviews that neighbors and staff had not witnessed serious crimes at skateparks. At Pier Park in North Portland, neighbors reported that the skatepark actually served to improve the park's problems by bringing in more users and more "eyes on the park."

"This area already has a large and growing low-income population, and the level of property crime is going up. I believe this park should be used for soccer, basketball, baseball and softball fields. These would attract a large number of young people and families interested in group activities. It would help the crime level in the area stay low more so than a skatepark would. The skatepark would attract young, teenage, mostly single men."

—Comment from PP&R process

"The largest impact is noise. The second is fear of crime based on the appearance of some of the skaters. This is a perception, not a reality. There is no higher crime at the skatepark than anywhere else in the city, park or not."

—West Linn





2) Skateparks do contribute to nuisances. While neighbors and park staff did not report serious crime at skateparks, they did report that their skatepark contributed to nuisances such as litter, noise, and vandalism. Pier Park was the exception, with fewer nuisances reported at the skatepark in comparison to the rest of the park. Many staff reported that the skatepark had higher levels of these nuisances than did other facilities in the park. Eight out of 12 staff reported litter is worse; 6 out of 12 reported that tagging is worse; and 4 out of 12 reported that noise is worse at the skatepark and at the rest of the park. However, they noted that this was due in part to the fact that the skateparks were by far their most used facilities. Again, these skateparks averaged 7,730 square feet. A skatepark this size can accommodate approximately 20 users at one time.

As seen in Figures 1 and 2, neighbors of Pier Park reported vandalism or tagging (37%) and litter (28%) as the most frequent nuisances they have witnessed at the skatepark. Neighbors around the Tanner Creek skatepark reported litter (56%) as the biggest nuisance there, followed by excessive noise (39%), and vandalism or tagging (19%).

It is important to note that Tanner Creek's skatepark is only 75 feet from the closest residence, whereas the closest neighbor at Pier Park is 250 feet away.

Skaters and park staff reported that skaters themselves are not likely tagging their own parks, because this interferes with the quality of the skating surface by making concrete too slick.ⁱ

Staff reported that noise was usually related to music and yelling rather than skateboard noises. Our noise readings backed this up, as we found that skateboarding is no louder than other activities occurring in parks.

Questionnaire and interview results regarding vandalism and litter contradicted what we had heard from some older skaters and advocates that skaters sometimes initiate cleanup and maintenance of their skatepark. Most staff reported that this level of skater involvement was inconsistent. When it did occur, they mentioned that older skaters were more likely to clean up the skateparks than younger skaters.

Q: Have you noticed any of the following in Pier Park?

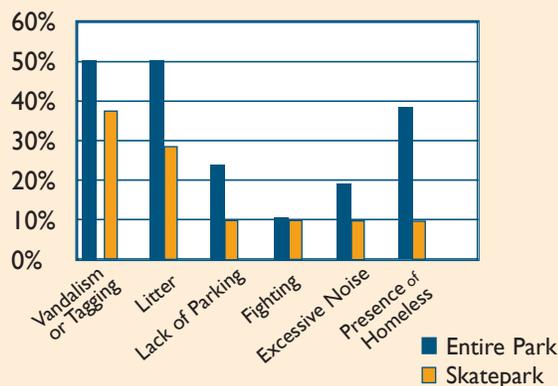


Figure 1

Q: Have you noticed any of the following in Tanner Creek Park?

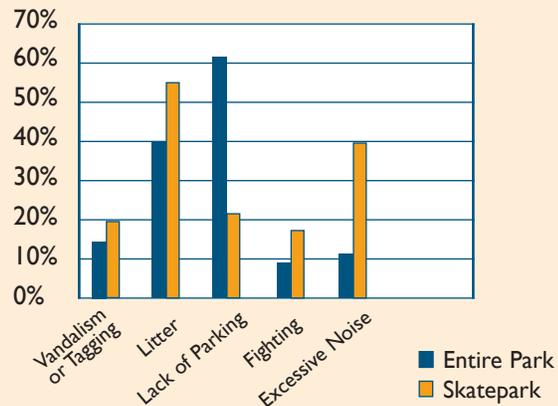


Figure 2



3) Skateparks have similar impacts as basketball courts.

While skateparks seem to contribute to nuisances, the majority of neighbors of Pier skatepark and McKenna basketball court thought the impact of the facility on the neighborhood was positive, as shown in Figure 3. The similarity in responses is noteworthy, especially in light of the fact that basketball courts are more commonly accepted facilities.ⁱⁱ

Q: In general, what do you think the impact of the facility is on your neighborhood?

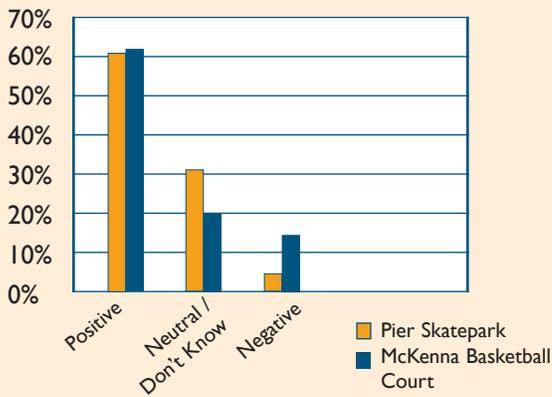


Figure 3

Q: What is the General Impact of the Skatepark on your neighborhood?

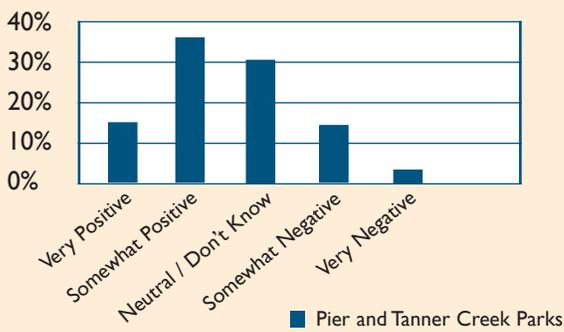


Figure 4





4) Neighbors have predominantly moderate views regarding skatepark impacts. Our neighborhood questionnaires revealed that neighbors had fairly moderate opinions about the skatepark and its impacts. Figure 4 shows the majority of neighbors around both parks were somewhat positive (35%) or neutral (31%) about the skatepark.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate that of those neighbors who lived in the neighborhood before the skateparks were built, 43% at Tanner Creek and 61% at Pier Park, reported that there was no difference between what they expected at the time it was constructed and what they now experience.

Homeowners often raise concerns about whether an unwanted facility will lower their property values.ⁱⁱⁱ If skateparks lower property values then one would expect neighbors to express negative opinions about their skatepark. This study investigated neighbors' perceptions of this issue. Figure 7 shows that most neighbors either were not sure if the skatepark impacted their property values or thought there was no impact. Those few who thought it increased or decreased property values were evenly split. This suggests that neighbors do not have strong opinions about the impacts of skateparks on their property values.

Likewise, when asked "What is the best and worst thing about having the park in your neighborhood?" very few questionnaire respondents in either neighborhood mentioned their skatepark. When given the opportunity, the skatepark and its impacts are not foremost in neighbors' minds.

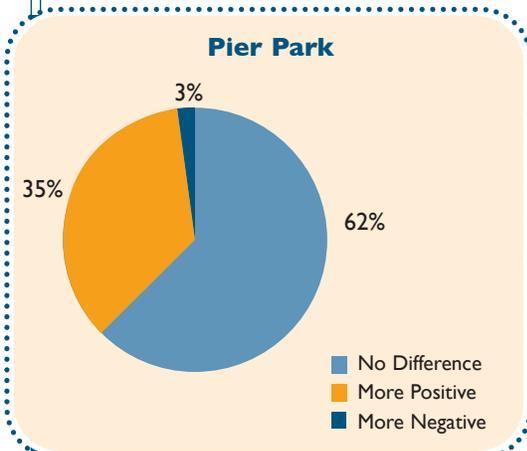


Figure 5

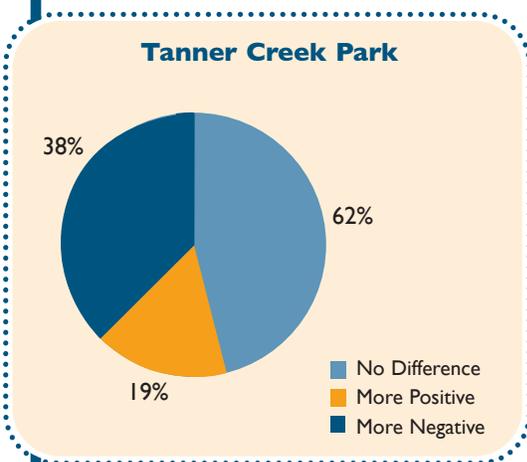


Figure 6

Perception
Skateparks will decrease the value of my home.

Reality
Home value is a complex combination of factors including local market supply and demand and other market conditions.

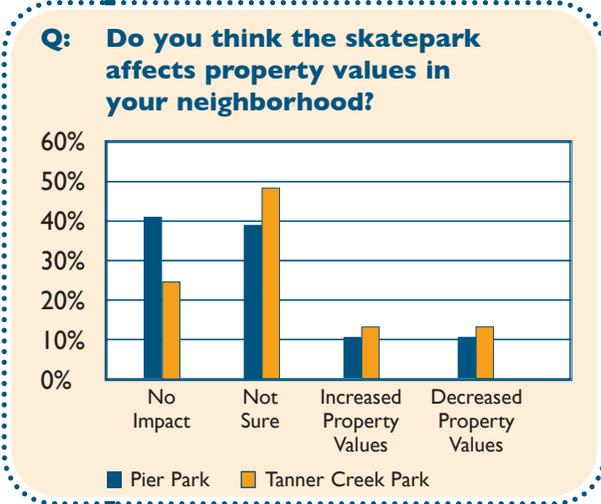


Figure 7



Q: Do you think having the skatepark makes the park's problems better or worse?

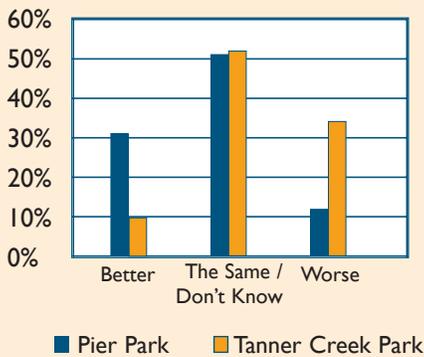


Figure 8

5) Neighborhood context matters. At Pier Park, neighbors consistently reported fewer problems at the skatepark than in the rest of the park. West Linn neighbors reported more problems with the skatepark itself than with the rest of the park. Likewise, neighbors around Pier Park felt more positively about their skatepark than did the residents near Tanner Creek Park. As seen in figure 8, Pier Park neighbors reported that the skatepark made their park's problems better, while in West Linn neighbors reported the opposite—that the skate park made the park's problems worse. The results suggest that neighborhood expectations and tolerances can vary from place to place.

It seems that this is due not only to the differences in the parks themselves, but also to differences between the neighborhoods. Nuisances such as noise and litter are more commonplace in urban settings. Therefore, urban residents may tolerate them better than their suburban counterparts. Suburban residents are attracted to the suburbs in part to get away from urban annoyances, and may have lower tolerance levels for such nuisances.

Pier Park is an urban park and has a history of crime and other problems. Pier is also located in a long-established neighborhood with moderate-income residents. As a result, neighbors did not think the nuisances the skatepark generated were a major problem. They reported, in fact, that they thought the skatepark made the park better by bringing more “eyes on the park” and discouraging illegal activities.

In contrast, Tanner Creek is a new neighborhood in an affluent suburb. When asked to compare their expectations of the skatepark with their current perception of it, neighbors at Tanner Creek had a more negative perception than Pier Park neighbors (as seen in figures 5 and 6). Since the Tanner Creek neighborhood had very few problems to begin with, the nuisances that the skatepark generated were considered the most significant in the neighborhood.

Nuisances such as noise and litter are more commonplace in urban settings. Therefore, urban residents tend to tolerate them better than their suburban counterparts. Suburban residents are attracted to the suburbs in part to get away from urban annoyances, and may have lower tolerance levels for such nuisances.



Moving Forward—Design and Management Considerations:

Proper design and management are critical to the success of your skatepark and can help foster community acceptance.

Successful skateparks attract a steady number of users. Poor quality design and/or construction will lead to neglect by skaters. Under-used skateparks, like other public spaces, are more likely to attract problems. Hence, quality skatepark design and proper construction are critical. It is important to have a reputable design-build firm create your skatepark. Likewise, skateparks should include different skill levels and include street-style and transitional elements. This will help to attract a broader range of users—making the facility more family friendly. Having a range of users can also provide an opportunity for older users to model good behavior to younger skaters.

Anticipating maintenance needs is just as important as planning for proper design. To build and maintain successful relationships with neighbors, planners and skatepark advocates should develop strategies to deal with common nuisances like litter and vandalism before problems arise. Planning ways to address nuisances is a powerful way to validate and address neighbors' concerns and build acceptance for local skateparks.



Good Neighbor Agreements: the Local Approach

Good neighbor agreements have been used in cities to establish expectations and communication methods about controversial sites. In Portland, The Office of Neighborhood Involvement helps monitor and negotiate Good Neighbor Agreements that may serve to facilitate communication between stakeholder groups and develop strategies for dealing with problems, should they arise. Our study found that the majority of complaints from neighbors living near skateparks centered on litter, vandalism and noise. These are all issues that can be mitigated through the establishment of Good Neighbor Agreements. (For more information visit www.portlandonline.com/oni)

Foot Patrols are a community policing strategy used by neighborhoods. In Portland, the Office of Neighborhood involvement also trains neighborhood association in forming neighborhood Foot Patrols. Foot Patrols are groups of volunteer neighbors who actively monitor the area of concern. (Please visit <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=78612> for more information on foot patrols.)



Afterword: Perceptions and Realities

This document demonstrates that there are distinctions between the perceptions about skateparks and the day-to-day realities. Skateboarding as a sport is on the rise. Like other athletes and community members, skaters deserve their fair share of park facilities in which to practice and recreate. Neighbors of parks should also have their concerns acknowledged and addressed by planners and park staff.

Skateparks, like many other land uses, will continue to be controversial. The more we can educate the public about the impacts of skateparks, the better able they will be to make well-informed decisions. Based on our research, we believe that with proper skatepark siting, design, and management, skateparks can be successful and have positive effects on neighborhoods. We believe this is particularly true in urban settings since skateparks bring more people to the park which can discourage crime that is often present in an urban environment.

Successful public spaces add to the vitality of cities and towns, and minimize existing problems. Skateparks are no exception.



photo courtesy of O'Meally

¹ Norcross (2005)

² Borden (1998)

³ Travlou (2003)

⁴ Regional Multiple Listing Services

⁵ Ibid

ⁱ (A lack of parking was also reported as a problem by 22% of Tanner Creek respondents. However, this is likely attributable to the other side of the park near the playground since this area does not have dedicated parking, whereas the skatepark does.

ⁱⁱ Tanner Creek Skatepark and North Willamette's basketball court were not compared. The two facilities had very different levels of use, limiting their use as comparisons. During field observations, we realized that North Willamette Park was too different in terms of use, accessibility, topography and access to make meaningful comparisons between the skatepark and the control park.

ⁱⁱⁱ Analyzing property value impacts, however, requires using a complex statistical analysis. This analysis factors in variables such as age, condition, and size of the home, market and sub-market condition, demographic trends, and neighborhood amenities.



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APPENDICES



The guide to learning more about your neighborhood parks

For parks planners or neighborhoods advocates who want to conduct a similar study using their local parks, we have included some of our materials and a few thoughts about our process. Anyone doing this kind of fact-finding project in their own community can benefit from some of the lessons we learned in embarking on this process. We share them here.

Things to watch out for:

Limitations

Our project is not, and could not be, an exhaustive study. For future work on this topic, we recommend increasing the number of parks and pairing skateparks with control parks on the basis of amount and frequency of active uses, and less on the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood. Comparing regional attractor parks to skateparks is likely more effective than analyzing two parks with close parallels in neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics. Skateparks are very popular and well used parks. That is the main driver of comparison.

Timing

If you are working with a community group responsible for skatepark siting, it would be most effective to convey findings that may influence perceptions as early as possible before the siting committee inadvertently allows misperceptions and emotion to inappropriately influence the process.

Questionnaire Design

If you distribute a door-to-door questionnaire, use a business reply envelope. In our experience, few people used the online questionnaire. Also, if you live in a wet and rainy climate do not use Astro-Brite® or deeply dyed paper for your questionnaire, unless you want to inadvertently dye your clothing and the neighbors' doors!

Have fun!

Learning about what the neighbors think and listening to their concerns is a great way to be an ambassador for the project and to keep alive the spirit of a participatory community. Approach all feedback you receive (in person or otherwise) with an open mind and a sense of humor.



Noise Readings

If you want to assess noise levels in your community parks we recommend that you first consult your city's noise control or noise enforcement officer. Taking noise readings requires knowledge of how to use the equipment and what to pay attention to. For this project we used a standard Radio Shack decibel meter.

Wet or windy weather can interfere with accurate readings, so plan accordingly. The noise meter's microphone picks up wind gusts. Dry conditions are necessary for accurate "baseline" readings since ambient noise from car tires is much higher when roads are wet than when dry.

We suggest taking several readings to get a broad understanding of the noise levels. We took readings two different days at each park. At each park readings were taken at 50 feet from the active facility (the skatepark or basketball court) and then at the nearest residence. The first day that readings were taken had few of users present. The second readings were taken on a weekend when there were more park users present. This method allowed us to determine a range of noise levels on both slow days and busy days.

When in the field take detailed notes about the following:

- ◆ Weather and wind conditions
- ◆ Traffic—frequency, distance from park, noise levels
- ◆ Other neighborhood noises (lawn mowers, construction sounds, airplanes, etc)
- ◆ Average decibel levels
- ◆ Peak decibel levels and what causes peaks
- ◆ Distance that readings are taken at from active facility (use a tape measure for accuracy).



Neighborhood Questionnaire

Here are a few recommendations for conducting your own neighborhood surveys:

- ◆ Distribute questionnaire to neighbors living around parks with a skatepark and parks with a basketball court in order to determine the similarities and/or differences neighbors experience with each facility.
- ◆ Distribute the questionnaire door-to-door. This provides an opportunity to talk to people about their experiences with the parks and provides a “face” with the project, increasing your likelihood of receiving a response.
- ◆ After distributing the questionnaire wait about ten days and then go back out to the neighborhood and drop off a reminder card.
- ◆ Provide an incentive for people to fill out the questionnaire. We raffled off a chance to win a \$25 Target gift card. We believe this increased our response rate.
- ◆ When asking about crimes or nuisances, you may want to ask about the frequency or timing of occurrences.
- ◆ Only distribute questionnaires within three blocks of the park. Ninety-six of our respondents lived within three blocks of the park.
- ◆ Provide a postage paid envelope to increase response rate. Make it easy for them to respond!



Would you like a chance to win a \$25.00 TARGET gift certificate?

Dear Tanner Creek Park Neighbors,

Portland State University graduate students are gathering information in your area about how Tanner Creek Park affects you and your neighbors. The results of this questionnaire will assist us in understanding park uses and their potential impacts. This information will also be made available to public agencies.

We appreciate your response to the attached questionnaire. **Please complete the questionnaire by April 4th, 2005.** This questionnaire will only take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

You can either complete the questionnaire on paper and mail back to us with the postage paid envelope included or you can **complete the questionnaire** online at the following address:

<http://questionnaire.oit.questionnaire.edu/wsb.dll/heinicke.TannerCreek.htm>

By completing this questionnaire you will be entered into a drawing for one of four \$25 gift certificates to Target. Please use the coupon or form below to be entered, or fill out the information at our website (listed above).

If you would like information about our research project please email Beth Ragel at bethragel@earthlink.net or contact our faculty advisor at Portland State University, Deborah Howe, at 503-725-4016.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING OUR QUESTIONNAIRE!

To be entered to win one of four \$25 gift certificates to Target, please fill out the following information and send it in with your completed questionnaire by **April 4th**. You can also enter online at

<http://questionnaire.oit.questionnaire.edu/wsb.dll/heinicke.TannerCreek.htm>

HERE.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

We will hold our drawing on April 8th. If you are a winner, you will be contacted at the phone number or email address you provide. Thank You.

TANNER CREEK PARK QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I

1) How long have you lived in this neighborhood?

Less than one year One to five years Five to ten years More than ten years

2) How far do you live from Tanner Creek Park?

One block or less Two or three blocks Four or five blocks More than five blocks



3) Can you see Tanner Creek Park from your house? Yes No

4) Can you hear noise from Tanner Creek Park from your house?
 Yes, when indoors Yes, when outdoors only No

5) In general, what do you think the impact of Tanner Creek Park is on your neighborhood?
 Very positive Somewhat Positive Neutral/ Don't Know Somewhat Negative Very Negative

6) When the weather permits, how often do members of your household use Tanner Creek Park for the following activities? Please specify "other" activities.

| ACTIVITY | TIMES PER MONTH |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Baseball / Softball | |
| Basketball | |
| BMX Biking | |
| Picnics | |
| Skateboarding | |
| Soccer | |
| Tennis | |
| Walking / Jogging | |
| Walking the dog | |
| Use of Play Areas | |
| Other _____ | |
| Other _____ | |

Part II

7) Have you noticed any of the following in Tanner Creek Park? Please check all that apply.

- Litter Fighting
- Vandalism, graffiti, or "tagging" Excessive noise
- Lack of parking Presence of homeless or transients
- Other (please specify) _____

8) Have you ever seen illegal activities or crime taking place in Tanner Creek Park?

- Yes No Not sure

9) Have you ever called the police because of illegal activities or crime taking place in Tanner Creek Park?

- Yes No If so, please explain:
-
-

10) Do you think these problems (question 7-9) are better or worse than other parks in the area?

- Much Better Somewhat Better The Same/ Don't Know Somewhat Worse Much Worse

**Part III**

11) Did you live in the neighborhood before the skatepark was constructed? Yes No
If no, please skip to question 13.

12) If yes, what did you think at that time the impact of the skatepark on the neighborhood would be?
 Very positive Somewhat Positive Neutral/ Don't Know Somewhat Negative Very Negative

13) In general, what do you now think the impact of the skatepark is on the neighborhood?
 Very positive Somewhat Positive Neutral/ Don't Know Somewhat Negative Very Negative

14) Do you think the skatepark affects property values in your neighborhood?
 Yes No Not sure

15) If so, do you think the skatepark has:
 Increased property values Decreased property values Not sure

16) Have you noticed any of the following in or around the skatepark? Please check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Litter | <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism, graffiti, or "tagging" | <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive noise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of parking | <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of homeless or transients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ | |

17) Do you think having the skatepark in Tanner Creek Park makes the problems in the park better or worse?
 Much Better Somewhat Better The Same/ Don't Know Somewhat Worse Much Worse

Part IV

18) What is the best thing about having Tanner Creek Park in your neighborhood?

19) What is the worst thing about having Tanner Creek Park in your neighborhood?

20) Do you have any other comments about Tanner Creek Park in general or about the skatepark that you would like to share?

Thank You for completing our questionnaire!



Park Staff Interviews*

To learn more about the experiences of skateparks in your region or around the country, consider the following points about interviewing skatepark staff:

Select parks that are similar to the park your community is planning:

- ◆ Size (square footage)
- ◆ Proximity to housing
- ◆ Design
 - ◆ Skill level
 - ◆ Street Style/ Transitional
- ◆ Construction
 - ◆ Material
 - ◆ Design-Build Firm
- ◆ Site
 - ◆ Sports Park
 - ◆ Neighborhood Park
 - ◆ School
- ◆ Adjacent land uses and noise levels

Identify the city staff who are most knowledgeable about their skatepark. It is particularly helpful to find staff members who experienced the planning and opening of the skatepark. These people include city managers, parks and recreation directors, or planners.

Talk to beat cops and maintenance workers. They have a different perspective than other city staff, and can tell you what the “on the ground” reality of the skatepark is.

Be sure to ask about the issues that are most important to your neighbors, skaters, and other community members (for example, crime or BMX use).

Ask staff to compare their skatepark to other parks or other active facilities.

Be sure to ask what’s changed over time, and what lessons they’ve learned that your community can benefit from.

* See page 33 for Park Staff Interviewed by Location.



Skatepark Manager Interview Questions

Portland State University graduate planning students are working with the Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation on their Skatepark Master Plan siting process. We are seeking to understand the perceived and actual impacts of skateparks on neighborhoods. To this end, we are interviewing skatepark managers to gain their perspectives and compare them with responses we have received from neighborhood questionnaires. We would appreciate your assistance. This interview should take between fifteen and twenty minutes.

| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Name | Park Name |
| Email | |
| Phone | City Size |
| City | Park Designer |
| Proximity of skate facility to nearest residence | Size of Skate facility |

1. Number of users per day Skatepark _____ Park in general _____ per year
 Skatepark _____ Park in general _____

2. What other activities occur in this park?

None, it is only a skatepark
 Basket ball, softball/ baseball
 Soccer
 Picnics
 Playground
 Running/jogging
 Dog walking
 Other

3. Please describe your responsibilities as skatepark manager

Maintenance
 Supervision
 Enforcement
 Policy & Planning
 Events/ activities coordination
 Other

4. How many years has this skatepark facility been in operation?

5. Compared to other parks in your city, how would you rate this park in terms of (1=Much worse, 2= worse, 3= same, 4= better 5=much better)

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Noise | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Tagging/ graffiti | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Vandalism | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Fights | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Litter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Parking problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reported crime | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Popularity/Use | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



6. Compared to the rest of the park, how does the *skatepark facility* rate in terms of (1=Much worse, 2= worse, 3= same, 4= better 5=much better)

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Noise | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Tagging/ graffiti | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Vandalism | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Fights | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Litter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Parking problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reported crime | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Popularity/Use | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

7. What do you think the impact of the skatepark has been in the neighborhood?

8. What is your sense of neighborhood perception of this facility?

9. Have you had complaints from the public about this facility?

Yes No unsure

If so, what were they?

How did you or your organization address them?

Has the nature of any complaints changed over time? If so, how?

10. Has the skatepark attracted problems (as defined in Question 6)

More fewer same don't know? Please explain

11.. Do the other activities (if your park is park of a larger park) attract problems (as defined in Question 6)?

More fewer same don't know? Please explain

12. What kind of restrictions do you place on skateboarders, if any? (i.e., signage indicating required helmets, limiting inappropriate language)

How do you enforce restrictions?

13. We have heard that skaters themselves take pride and ownership in the skate facility and even sometimes maintain skateparks. Is this true for your park? If so, how and to what extent do the skaters contribute?

14. What advice would you give a city considering a skatepark facility? (i.e. design, location)

15. In your opinion, was your facility a good investment?

16. Do you consider the skatepark a success or failure? Please explain.

17. Is there anything else you'd like to add?



A Brief History of Portland Skatepark Advocacy

The following history has been culled from many sources. A historical document created by Portland Parks and Recreation was a critical source for the much of the following information.

For almost 30 years, skateboarders have advocated for development of public skateparks in the City of Portland. "As early as 1977, the City has received letters of interest from individuals requesting a skateboard facility" (Skatepark Task Force Mission Statement, 1990). Following is a brief history of skatepark advocacy in the City of Portland.

1985 - Couch Park Skateboard Committee

In 1985 the Couch Park Skateboard Committee, formed through the Metropolitan Learning Center, prepared a package of materials including site plans for a proposed skatepark in Couch Park in NW Portland. The City denied the request to support the project. A letter from Commissioner Mike Lindberg to the Committee (April 29, 1985) stated "it seems to me that it would not be in the best interests of the neighborhood or of the skaters to proceed with the Couch Park facility." The basis for rejection was opposition from the surrounding neighbors. Commissioner Lindberg did encourage the Committee to work with the Parks and School District staff in the construction of a temporary park located away from residents. Lindberg states "It does appear that these facilities can, at least for some period of time, serve their intended purpose of getting the kids off the streets, out of the way of cars, and into an appropriate facility."

1986 – Proposed skatepark in Northwest Portland

Skateboarders were denied a facility again in 1986 although this time the City was advocating for a facility. The city was considering leasing a parcel of land in Northwest Portland at NW 18th and 19th bordered by NW Savier and NW Thurman for a skatepark. Although there was some support for the facility from the Northwest District Association (the neighborhood association), others opposed it: St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Norm Thompson Management. One area resident wanted to know why this particular site had been chosen. According to Ethan Seltzer, assistant to City Commissioner Mike Lindberg, there was not a city-wide site selection process due to a lack of resources and broad support ("Opposition spells demise of skateboard project," *The Neighbor*, November 1986).

1987 - Skateboard Task Force Committee

In 1987 the Metropolitan Youth Commission of Portland assembled a Skateboard Task Force Committee. The impetus for its formation was a letter from Good Samaritan Hospital and Medical Center to Mayor Bud Clark stating "we are increasingly concerned regarding the impact associated with the opening of Rebel Skateboard outlet and the resulting congre-



gation of young skateboard enthusiast in northwest Portland.” The letter notes an increased number of pedestrian/skater conflicts and intensified skater activity in a newly created park meant to provide a “quiet oasis” for hospital employees and neighborhood residents. GSH&MC “urges the City of Portland to ban skateboarding on public rights-of-way... on streets and sidewalks.” (September 25, 1986).

The Skateboard Task Force recommended that the City develop solutions to skateboarding concerns. The final report included the following recommendations stated in a Memo to Mayor Bud Clark from the Metropolitan Youth Commission, May 7 1987:

Transportation concerns

- ◆ A skateboarding Code of Conduct manual should be developed.
- ◆ Develop a public education campaign to promote skateboard safety from the user and pedestrian perspective

Recreational concerns

- ◆ Modify City ordinance to permit skateboarding in specific parks
- ◆ Conduct poll to determine the interest the public has in designing and using skateboard parks
- ◆ Skateboard park development is beyond the scope of this Task Force

As a result of this process the City conducted a skatepark survey targeted at skateboarders in the spring of 1987. However, the results seemed to have little influence on getting a skatepark built.

1987 - Skatechurch

In 1987 due to a lack of public facilities and as a result of getting kicked out of various locations in their neighborhood, skateboarders, led by two students from the Multnomah School of the Bible who were top-flight freestyle skateboard competitors, approached Central Bible Church in Northeast Portland about a place to skate. Hence the nation’s first “SkateChurch” was born. According to a recent article in the New York Times (March 18, 2005) the pastor at the church “saw an instant bond that skateboarding forged between the two men and the kids and prevailed upon the pair to form a new kind of youth ministry.”

What started out as throwing together some ramps in a parking lot once a week for an hour and an half evolved into an 11,000 square foot indoor skate facility managed by a 40 member staff. Paul Anderson, one of the two original skaters from the Bible School, leads Skatechurch in Portland. If you skate there you also hear the “gospel.” According to the New York Times, “Mr. Anderson estimates that there are now at least 300 skateboard outreach ministries affiliated with churches nationwide, as well as 30 to 50 skateboard teams that travel locally to skate and preach.”



Although Skatechurch is a private organization and not a part of the public skate advocacy history, it is important to note due to the widespread influence the Portland movement had nationwide.

1988 – Portland Development Commission

Records indicate that in 1988 the Mayor's office requested Portland Development Commission develop a schematic design for a skatepark near north Waterfront. PDC created the design then recommended "that the City not pursue an expensive and sophisticated facility at this time, but rather ... investigate the purchase or construction of temporary, movable equipment for location at an indoor site."

1990 – Another Skateboard Task Force created by the city

This Task Force was charged with siting and building a skate facility. First, the Task Force conducted a skater preference survey regarding the type of facility preferred by skaters. Second, the Task Force selected sites based on the following criteria:

- ◆ Minimum hassles with neighbors and other park users
- ◆ Access to public transit
- ◆ Positive Image (Portland Parks and Recreation, History Document)

Three parks were selected for a skatepark: Laurelhurst, Grant and Mt. Tabor. Additionally, four alternative parks were proposed for further study: Gabriel, Creston, Montavilla, and Grant. According to Portland Parks and Recreation, community opposition squashed further development efforts.

Early 1990's - Burnside: Frustrated skaters get creative

Frustrated with the public inertia skateboarders in the early 1990's took matters into their own hands and built a world-class skatepark under the Burnside Bridge. Burnside, as it is known, was built and designed illegally by skaters. They used their own funds and worked with local businesses who donated materials.

Prior to the skaters building the park the location was inhabited by drug dealers, the homeless, and prostitutes. The creation of the skatepark effectively cleaned up the area and business owners on the Central Eastside embraced the park as a result. Positive effects on the neighborhood prompted the City Council to pass a resolution in 1992 sanctioning the park.

Burnside is an internationally renowned skatepark. Skaters from across the globe travel to skate the park. Tony Hawk, possibly the most famous skateboarder in the world, features Burnside in his Pro Skater video game. Oregon Public Broadcasting aired a documentary about the park titled "Full Tilt Boogie." Although Burnside is the "most famous skatepark, it is also the most intimidating" according to Kent Dahlgren, the Executive Director for Skaters for Public Skateparks. It is not a skatepark designed for beginners.



Out of the Burnside efforts emerged what are now several world-famous skatepark design-build firms located in the Pacific Northwest: Dreamland, Gridline, Airspeed and Place to Ride. The same skaters who built Burnside illegally are building skateparks, legally and for money, as far as Austria and Italy.

2001 - Pier Park: Portland's only public skatepark

Portland's first public skatepark was built in Pier Park in the St. John's neighborhood. This skatepark is the only publicly owned and operated skatepark in the City. It is 7,500 square feet and was built by local skaters and the Army Corp of Engineers with private funds. Due to design and construction flaws Pier Park does not meet the demands of intermediate and advanced skaters. Beginner skaters from the neighborhood and BMX bikers are the primary users of the park. Skaters for Portland Skateparks, a local non-profit advocacy group, recently accepted a \$75,000 challenge grant from NikeCo to improve the park. Efforts are underway to raise \$150,000 by the end of 2005 to begin construction. The neighborhood surrounding the park supports these improvements.

2005

Despite the lack of skateparks within Portland, the City has gained a reputation for being relatively supportive of skateboarders because of its acceptance of the Burnside skatepark and because Portland is the only metropolitan City in the United States that has legalized designated skateboarding on downtown city sidewalks. Oregon as a state has embraced the emerging popularity of skateboarding; there are currently approximately 75 skateparks across the state.

In 2002, voters passed a parks levy, which provided funding for two public skateparks for the City of Portland. This levy was the impetus for Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) to develop a skatepark master plan.



Park Staff Interviews by Location

Aperio selected the following parks staff to interview based on:

Size = Less than equal to 10,000 (except Tanner Creek which was a profile park)

Skatepark creator = Reputable design-build firm

Proximity to Housing = 75' to 100' feet.

Park Staff Interviews completed

| City | Name of Skatepark | Size | Creator | Distance from Housing |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| OR Skateparks | | | | |
| Aumsville | Brian Haney Memeporial Park | 8000 | Dreamland | 500 |
| Brookings | Bud Cross Park | 8000 | Dreamland | 100 |
| Gresham | Davis Park | 2800 | Walker Macy | 200 |
| Eugene | Bethel | 8100 | Airspeed Skateparks, LLC | 200 |
| Molalla | Mollala Community Youth Center | 7600 | Serena de la Cruz & Army Corps | 150 |
| Newport | Sam Moore Parkway | 6500 | Dreamland | 100 |
| Portland* | Pier Park | 7800 | Army Corps of Engineers | 250 |
| West Linn* | Tanner Creek | 14000 | Grindline | 75 |
| Donald | Donald Skatepark | 2500 | Dreamland | 100 |
| WA Skateparks | | | | |
| Burien | Burien Community Center & Grounds | 7500 | Purkiss | 100 |
| Milton | Milton Common Skatepark | 10,000 | Grindline | 100 |
| Yakima | Chesterley Park | 10,000 | Skateparkiture | 500 |

*profile parks

Note: all parks are concrete